

Incremental Change and Dislocation: One Organization's Attempt at a Communicative Syllabus in a University Setting

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Abstract

“Communicative” has been a buzzword in the EFL industry for some years now, and it is often used by both universities and private companies when describing their own methods and materials. Unfortunately, it seems that curriculum developers often have little idea as to what “communicative” entails. This paper evaluates the communicativeness of the syllabus and materials being employed by a privately owned institution operating in a university setting, using Harmer’s continuum (1982). It finds that changes should be made if the organization wants to do more than pay mere lip service to Communicative Language Teaching.

Key words: communicative method, curriculum design, curriculum evaluation

1. Introduction

Although communicative language teaching is accepted by many applied linguists and teachers as the most effective approach among those in general use, there are still a number of misconceptions about what it involves.

(Thompson, 1996: 9)

Geoff Thompson draws attention to what many observers believe is a common problem in ELT curriculum development in Japan: privately owned language institutions here often develop their own “communicative” curriculums with little idea what “communicative” entails. The result is that the term “communicative” has largely become devoid of meaning in the Japanese ELT industry. This author was involved with a university language program that was conceived several years ago with the goal of providing truly communicative lessons to its students. After initial successes, this “communicative” language program has taken several steps in a direction that compromises both the communicative nature of its classes and the learning potential of its students.

The purpose of this paper is twofold: first, to bring attention to a widening gap between one language institution’s teaching practices and the communicative approach it espouses. Secondly, to introduce a proposed curriculum change that would narrow this dislocation. Introduction of the proposed change will be coupled with an explanation of the conditions that would be necessary in order for the change to be successful.

The first section of this paper will concern itself with introducing the practices of the institution in question

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and the “communicative” curriculum its program employs. The next section will examine the curriculum’s perceived shortcomings in view of current theories as to what communicative language teaching (CLT) is. This will be followed by sections detailing a need for change within the curriculum, a change proposed by this author, and suggestions as to how this change could be implemented. Finally, this paper will present a cost-benefit analysis, weighing both the positive and negative effects the proposed change would have for all major stakeholders involved.

2. The Company

2.1 History

The private company was initiated by a major university in Tokyo in 2001 in response to a perceived failure of the general EFL programs within the university at that time. It should perhaps be noted that this perceived failure is not isolated to this particular EFL program alone, or even to Japanese universities. The Japanese Ministry of Education is notorious for its continued inability to produce English language proficiency among its students with any consistency. Students in Japan generally undergo six years of English instruction at the junior and senior high school level. Many students go on for another two to four years of English study (be it as an elective or compulsory subject) at post secondary education institutions, but as one researcher has bluntly noted, Japanese students cannot speak English (Weschler, 1997). Creating a business entity separate from the university was an effort by the university to make a neutral body that would be accountable for the success (or lack thereof) of English proficiency within the university. The company is a self-sustaining corporation, 51% owned by the university, 49% by other interests.

The company has emulated the “eikaiwa” model of English language teaching in Japan. English conversation schools, or “eikaiwas” proliferated in the 1980’s, fueled by a bubble economy and a distrust of the national education system caused by large classes and an adherence to the grammar-translation method. Although eikaiwas differ in many respects, two generalizations may be made about all: 1) they espouse a “communicative” approach to ELT and 2) they retain relatively small class sizes.

2.2 The Tutors

The company’s program is staffed primarily by instructors, referred to as “tutors” by the institution, who have left behind teaching jobs at other conversation schools in Japan. The reasons for tutors leaving their previous jobs vary, but ultimately the prestige of working at an organization sharing the name of the university and the promise of better working conditions lure many tutors to the company. Privately owned eikaiwas have a long history of mistreating staff, and the company has strived to create better working conditions in an attempt to extend tutor longevity. Appendix 1 provides a comparison of the working conditions at the company and what might be considered a typical eikaiwa school.

Due to the unprecedented success and growth of the company’s program, tutors have been hired in larger and larger numbers. The company currently undertakes two mass hiring sessions a year. Successful applicants must possess a four-year university degree, some kind of ELT experience (preferably in an eikaiwa) and pass a short interview, which also includes a 10-minute teaching demonstration.

2.3 The Program

The company's English program is a compulsory credit for university students enrolled in six different departments. Students are placed in one of three class levels: Basic, Intermediate or Advanced. Class size is limited to four students per class and students attend the 90-minute lessons twice a week. Besides receiving a mark for attendance and participation, students are assessed on their ability to perform two "Can-Do" functions using target language that has been prescribed by the program's textbook series.

2.4 The Textbooks

The textbooks each consist of 20 units, each unit in turn consisting of six to nine sections or activities, which focus on the overall topic and target language of that unit. Unit structure is largely the same throughout the text, and activities are labeled as one of the following types: preparation, warm-up, language one, language two, listening, speaking, extension and wrap-up.

A look at the series will verify that the texts are based on what seems to be a mixed topical-functional-notional syllabus, this type of eclecticism not entirely uncommon in the creation of language textbooks (see Brown 1995: 12). Appendix 2 consists of a list of all the textbook series unit titles and their deemed corresponding syllabus type.

3. Evaluating the Communicative Method at the company

The company's tutor's handbook states the methodology of the program is based on the Communicative Approach (Communicative Language Teaching), incorporating aspects of task based learning. To accept this at face value might be difficult for experienced educators, given that one would be hard pressed to find any language institution in Japan that does not tout its own materials and methods as "communicative". To judge the true worth of the "communicative" badge at the company, it will be necessary to initiate some system to evaluate the communicativeness of not only the overall curriculum, but the materials the curriculum employs, namely the textbook.

3.1 Evaluation of the Textbook

Harmer (1982) distinguishes between non-communicative and communicative activities with the following continuum:

Figure 1

| Non-communicative Activities | Communicative Activities |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. No communicative purpose2. No desire to communicate3. Form, not content4. One language item5. Teacher intervention6. Materials control | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A communicative purpose2. A desire to communicate3. Content, not form4. Variety of language5. No teacher intervention6. No materials control |

It becomes obvious that if every criterion on Harmer’s continuum was placed at the extreme communicative end for every activity, the activity would cease to be an “activity” at all, but resemble something closer to a regular conversational exchange. A lesson consisting entirely of these kinds of exchanges might be welcomed by some students (and no doubt a few weary teachers as well), but would certainly have limited usefulness. As Harmer writes “The job of a syllabus- or course-designer is surely to work out an efficacious balance between non-communicative and communicative activities, and the many possibilities between these extremes” (1982: 168).

If Harmer’s continuum is given a quantitative value of one to five, one representing the non-communicative extreme of the continuum and five representing the communicative end, a subjective communicative value can be assigned for each activity in a textbook. Following is a brief description of each activity type in the textbooks, as well as its subjective score on the scale of communicativeness.¹

Preparation – These are activities students are expected to complete on their own before each lesson. Preparation activities often involve a reading excerpt and/or questions involving critical thinking. These activities are designed with the purpose of getting students to think about the upcoming unit’s overlying theme or topic.

Communicative score

| Criteria | Score |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Communicative Purpose | 1 |
| Fostering of Desire to Communicate | 1 |
| Content Preference over Form | 5 |
| Variety of Language Involved | 5 |
| Teacher Intervention | 5 |
| Materials Control | 1 |
| Total Points (out of 30) | 18 |

Warm-Up – As the name suggests, these activities are used to get students speaking at the beginning of the lesson. Warm-Up activities involve pair or group work and often ask students to recall information from the preparation activity.

Communicative score

| Criteria | Score |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Communicative Purpose | 4 |
| Fostering of Desire to Communicate | 3 |
| Content Preference over Form | 3 |
| Variety of Language Involved | 3 |
| Teacher Intervention | 4 |
| Materials Control | 1 |
| Total Points (out of 30) | 18 |

Language One and *Language Two* – These sections of the text explicitly lay out the target language that

¹ Harmer’s criteria were also used to evaluate the communicative nature of other aspects of the program’s curriculum. Notes on these evaluations are included with this paper as Appendix 3.

students’ ability to use will be evaluated later in the lesson. In addition to accompanying conversational models, each *Language* section includes a practice exercise. These practice exercises are most often drill-like in nature, but sometimes contain an information-gap activity instead.

Communicative score

| Criteria | Score |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Communicative Purpose | 2 |
| Fostering of Desire to Communicate | 2 |
| Content Preference over Form | 2 |
| Variety of Language Involved | 2 |
| Teacher Intervention | 2 |
| Materials Control | 1 |
| Total Points (out of 30) | 11 |

Listening – Some, but not all of the units in the textbook include a listening activity. Listening activities consist only of comprehension questions, but tutors are encouraged by the administration to design their own pre-listening tasks.

Communicative score

| Criteria | Score |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Communicative Purpose | 1 |
| Fostering of Desire to Communicate | 2 |
| Content Preference over Form | 4 |
| Variety of Language Involved | 2 |
| Teacher Intervention | 3 |
| Materials Control | 1 |
| Total Points (out of 30) | 13 |

Speaking – There are two Speaking sections in each unit, and these are generally the activities in which tutors assess the students’ use of the target language. Speaking activities are most often a role-play of some sort, but some activities consist of a discussion based on the unit’s overlying theme or topic.

Communicative score

| Criteria | Score |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Communicative Purpose | 4 |
| Fostering of Desire to Communicate | 3 |
| Content Preference over Form | 1 |
| Variety of Language Involved | 2 |
| Teacher Intervention | 4 |
| Materials Control | 1 |
| Total Points (out of 30) | 15 |

Extension – These activities consist of questions that are meant to stimulate further discussion of topically related themes and ask students for their personal opinions. Extension exercises have been added to the current series of textbooks to assist tutors who finish the other text activities and have time remaining in their lesson.

Communicative score

| Criteria | Score |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Communicative Purpose | 4 |
| Fostering of Desire to Communicate | 4 |
| Content Preference over Form | 3 |
| Variety of Language Involved | 4 |
| Teacher Intervention | 3 |
| Materials Control | 2 |
| Total Points (out of 30) | 20 |

Wrap-Up – Every unit of the textbook finishes with a wrap-up exercise, which consists solely of the question “What was useful in this lesson?”.

Communicative score

| Criteria | Score |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Communicative Purpose | 4 |
| Fostering of Desire to Communicate | 4 |
| Content Preference over Form | 4 |
| Variety of Language Involved | 4 |
| Teacher Intervention | 4 |
| Materials Control | 1 |
| Total Points (out of 30) | 21 |

The activities receiving the highest communicative scores are the *extension* and *wrap-up* activities, the two activity types that are probably most often excluded from lessons due to time restraints. The other activities, as they are currently used, do not seem to strike the “efficacious balance” Harmer recommends.

Textbooks have played a vital role in the evolution of the company’s curriculum, with the current text being the fourth series employed since the program’s inception in 2001. Hutchinson and Torres believe that the use of textbooks are especially important in language institutions undergoing periods of change (1994: 315), but the company’s curriculum has progressively called for a closer and closer adherence to the textbooks, contributing to a “dependency culture” among tutors and learners in which “the precise instructions which the materials give reduce the teacher’s role to one of managing or overseeing a preplanned classroom event” (Littlejohn, 1992: 84).

3.2 Evaluation of the curriculum in relation to a current paradigm shift in ELT

Kennedy and Edwards (1998) describe a paradigm as a mindset or set of beliefs, and argue that *paradigm shifts* in ELT are influenced by discontinuous change in other fields (pg. 73). Jacobs and Farrell (2001) cite a shift from *postivism* to *post-postivism*² as an influencing factor on a gradual shift in ELT to communicative language teaching. They list eight ongoing changes that fit with this paradigm shift. These changes involve:

- 1) Learner autonomy

² See Appendix 4 for a chart detailing the contrasts between postivism and postpostivism

- 2) Cooperative learning
- 3) Curricular integration
- 4) Focus on meaning
- 5) Diversity
- 6) Thinking skills
- 7) Alternative assessment
- 8) Teachers as co-learners

Following is a brief evaluation of how the company's curriculum is faring in relation to these changes:

Learner autonomy is very much encouraged at the company. In addition to the lesson preparation tasks that students are expected to complete on their own, Lesson Review Tasks (LRTs) are assigned to students via the company's student website after each class. Tutors are also required to write final review sheets for individual students each semester. Besides providing general feedback, these sheets give students additional ideas for self-study.

Cooperative learning is being fostered at the company through both the use of pair/group work in the classroom, and the teaching of "collaborative" language targets such as disagreeing, giving feedback, and asking for assistance. Another idea that might further stimulate cooperative learning would be the implementation of some form of group project work. While students may sometimes work on "mini projects" over the course of a lesson, such ongoing project work is not currently being utilized at the company.

Curricular integration is unfortunately nonexistent at the company. Being a separate entity from the rest of the university, the company's tutors have little idea about what happens in their students' other classes. Interest has been shown by both tutors and the university's professors as to what happens in each others' classrooms, but so far nothing has been done by either administration to benefit from this mutual curiosity.

Focus on meaning, while perhaps currently viewed as a commonsensical approach to language instruction, is facing an uphill battle at the company. While the text shuns any grammar practice activities per se, students are expected to master the target expressions of each lesson word for word. Any errors in form result in the loss of points during their evaluation by their tutor, no matter if their message was successfully conveyed or not. This present focus on the Can-Do functions, and the rigidity with which they are evaluated contribute to a focus on form, not meaning.

Diversity may at long last be becoming accepted in Japanese classrooms. The company accommodates student diversity by allowing students the opportunity for self-placement in the class they think they belong. Students are also encouraged to become aware of their own individual learning strategies through the lesson review tasks, many of which are geared towards students' self-reflection of their learning.

Critical and creative *thinking skills* are now seen as an essential part of education. The company seeks to foster these skills with the textbooks' preparation and expansion exercises, most of which involve some degree of critical thinking. Group activities during the lessons also often focus on collaborative problem solving.

Alternative assessment may be less consistent in terms of scoring, but is gaining prominence in the ELT field as traditional language tests fall out of favor. The company's use of roleplays in the assessment of the

can-do functions, while perhaps not entirely communicative (Thompson, 1996), seems to be consistent with the paradigm shift away from paper tests.

Teachers as co-learners is a concept in which the company seems to fall woefully short. Indeed, it appears as if, in this regard, the company is moving in the opposite direction of the paradigm shift. Tutors are being given less and less control of their lessons and there are no kind of training or professional development programs in place. Opportunities for these tutors to grow as language teachers are, at best, severely limited.

After this brief examination of eight changes taking place in the current paradigm shift towards CLT, it would seem that the company's program receives passing marks in most of these areas, but has failed to foster curricular integration, a focus on meaning, or teachers as co-learners. Are these areas critical to true "communicative" language teaching? Jacobs and Farrell argue that regarding these changes as part of one overall paradigm shift has two implications:

First, these are not unrelated changes to be grasped one by one. Attempting to learn about these changes in such an isolating fashion impedes understanding because it flies in the face of the interconnections that exist and it violates a fundamental concept of human cognition – we learn best by perceiving patterns and forming chunks. Second, when we attempt to implement these changes, if we do so in a piecemeal fashion, selecting changes as if they were items on a la carte menu, we lessen the chances of success. These innovations fit together, like the pieces in a pattern cut to make a jigsaw puzzle. Each piece supports the others.

(Jacobs and Farrell, 2001)

This would seem to support an "all-or-nothing" approach to CLT, and suggest that under current circumstances, the company's curriculum is not reaching its full potential for serving students' needs.

4. The Need for Change

Kennedy and Edwards (1998) describe three types of change that a learning institution can undergo: *incremental*, *continuous* and *discontinuous* change, representing evolutionary, adaptive and revolutionary movement respectively. The company would seem to be involved primarily in incremental change; that is it is continually evolving through a process of self-evaluation and amendment, and reacts little to the external environment. Granted, there are elements of continual change within the organization; student feedback questionnaires have the potential to be an effective tool for continuous change, but these seem to be currently utilized more for assessment of individual tutors than for the institution as a whole. The danger posed by such incremental change is that a gap is growing between the company's practices and the external environment's expectations (in this case, the students the program serves and current communicative methodology). This gap, or *dislocation* as Kennedy and Edwards refer to it, will eventually have to be narrowed, and this will probably have to be done through discontinuous or revolutionary change that may well result in stress for all involved.

While avoiding many of the problems associated with other large privately owned conversation schools in Japan, the company still faces many challenges. Perhaps the largest contributor to the problems of the program is its own success. Figure 2 illustrates the growth of the program from the time of its inception to the present year.

Figure 2

| | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 |
|--------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Number of students | 450 | 1500 | 4700 | 7200 | 9500 |
| Number of tutors | 18 | 42 | 67 | 92 | 118 |

Obviously, as a conversation school (or perhaps any business for that matter) grows larger, it becomes more difficult to maintain a minimum level of consistency. One way for it to do so is to introduce “sweeping” or “blanket” rules and regulations to ensure that all its employees are operating within the organization’s standards. The company, after seeing tutor numbers grow over 500% in four years, has implemented many changes that seem geared towards maintenance of consistency among its tutors. These changes include:

- The introduction of the Can-Do functions for every lesson
- An increasingly strict adherence to the textbook exercises
- The transfer of responsibility of creating the Lesson Review Tasks (LRTs) from individual tutors to administration

While the introduction of such rules may be seen as necessary for quality control, such coercive strategies of change do encroach on tutors’ autonomy. Indeed, if continued, a teaching position at the company might become as regulated and unattractive as the eikaiwa jobs many of these tutors left behind them.

5. The Proposed Change

Tutors and students want to retain some degree of autonomy within their classrooms. The administration is concerned with maintaining consistency, especially in terms of students’ assessment. Surely there must be an obtainable happy medium for everyone involved in the company’s curriculum. One suggestion that has been made by others at the administration level, and one that I would like to advocate in this paper, is the reduction of Can-Do functions assessed in each lesson from two to one. Although the proposed change is best described on paper as the elimination of one assessed Can-Do, it is probably best thought of as the introduction of more tutor (and therefore more learner) autonomy into the lesson, one of the original reasons the company was conceived (Mizui, 2005:16).

One of the problems that tutors most often cite with the Can-Do functions is that there isn’t enough time in class to effectively cover both Can-Do’s appropriately. Students apparently feel the same way; in a survey of 6236 students, only 49.3% truly believed that they had adequate opportunities to perform both Can-Do functions in class. When the prescribed English targets are covered to the full extent of the textbook, there is little or no time for students to follow up or touch on any other areas of English they may be interested in. Certainly this flies in the face of what is now regarded as “communicative” lessons. Limiting Can-Do functions to one per unit would give tutors and students the time to address alternative English targets they perceive to be important. If the current textbook remained in use, this would also give tutors the option of continuing on with a second Can-Do function in a lesson in the case they didn’t have the resources (time, materials, knowledge) to create lesson plans catering to individual class needs.

6. Implementing the Change

Kelly (1980, as cited in Kennedy and Edwards, 1998) points out that in order for change to take place, there must be an initial dissatisfaction in the current state of affairs. This dissatisfaction must apply to all “stakeholders”, a term used to describe any group of people with an interest in an innovation. In this case, the two major stakeholders are the company’s tutors and their students. A third stakeholder is comprised of those responsible for the creation of the program’s design (syllabus) and materials (textbook). This group would consist of the program’s head tutors, the textbook writers/editors, the company president and the director of the university’s Faculty of Education, who represents the university’s interests. At the risk of over-generalizing, I will refer to this third group of stakeholders as the “administration”.

Experienced tutors at the company often begrudge the fact that calls for an increasingly strict adherence to the Can-Do functions is taking away almost all the genuine communicativeness of their “communicative” classes. The company’s students themselves seem to be unsure of the benefits of this current lesson style. In a 2004 survey of 6242 students, only 37.9% replied “yes” when asked if the Can-Do assessments were helpful for their learning. Two thirds of the relevant stakeholders apparently recognize a need for change. Elements within the third group of stakeholders have also called for change, suggesting the same innovation I have proposed in this paper. However, *resistors* remain within the company’s administration who are wary of relinquishing classroom control to language instructors that many in the industry see as having a lack of experience and qualifications (Weschler, 1997). Ultimately, it is an issue of quality control that is currently preventing this change from being implemented.

Implementation of the proposed change, as I am suggesting it, would be done in the following fashion:

1. The same textbook series would continue to be used.
2. Tutors would use the first half of class to teach Can-Do function #1 to their students, just as it is done now. Tutors would assess their students’ use of this language just as they currently do.
3. The second half of the class could be used to teach (but not assess) Can-Do function #2. Alternatively, other areas of English could be addressed as the tutor and students see fit.

In this author’s own experience at the company, students average a score of four to six (out of zero to eight) on their Can-Do assessments. If assessment scores are consistently grouped in this range, it would seem that the second Can-Do assessment is largely unneeded to ensure the reliability of the tutors’ judgment. The company’s administration should perhaps conduct a pilot study of students being evaluated via one Can-Do function and compare the reliability of this assessment method to the method currently employed. It is believed the results of such a study would go some distance in alleviating the third group of stakeholders’ fears of inconsistency within the program.

7. Cost-Benefit Analysis

Kennedy and Edwards (1998) cite a “cost-benefit calculation” (pg. 46) as an important aspect of any change to take place. This calculation is a comparison of the likely costs (losses) and benefits (gains) of different courses of action. While often performed unconsciously, a carefully considered cost-benefit analysis might prove detrimental to the success of any impending innovation in an ELT curriculum.

Any change in the curriculum at the company is going to affect the three major stakeholders in the organization, thus any cost-benefit analysis of proposed change to the curriculum should consider the losses and gains of these three groups of stakeholders.

7.1 The Students

The creation of the company was originally conceived to give the university's students more communicative language classes, and the most tangible benefit of reducing the Can-Do functions would be to further push the company's lessons in a positive direction on the communicative cline. A potential problem for students would be that lesson quality could be compromised; it is conceivable that some tutors might not have the motivation, or even ability, to create their own lessons or lesson supplements. For students, it is largely a matter of lesson consistency versus learning potential.

7.2 The Tutors

Tutors also have much to gain from the suggested change to the curriculum. Much has been made in recent years of learner autonomy within ELT, and it would seem logical that little autonomy can be given to students if the tutor has no autonomy of their own. The increased "free time" in class that would come with the proposed change would allow for tutors to address areas of English that both they and their students feel is needed. This extra time would also allow for tutors to experiment with different teaching techniques and materials, and while not a substitute for proper training programs, is a step towards giving the tutors some chance towards professional development.

Time is probably always going to be a resource in short supply for teachers in privately owned conversation schools. By providing what amounts to readymade lesson plans for their employees, the company's administration has largely absolved their tutors of most of what real lesson planning entails and no doubt there would be tutors who would like to maintain the status quo. Full time tutors at the company are in a classroom for six hours a day and a hesitancy to adapt to an innovation that is ultimately going to create extra work must be expected. It is for this reason I have suggested that tutors be given the option of continuing to teach the second Can-Do function directly from the textbook.

7.3 The Administration

Any innovation in an ELT curriculum is going to involve some economic cost in terms of time and funds (White et al., 1991). The change I have proposed attempts to minimize these costs to the the company's administration by retaining the current series of textbooks and giving the tutors the option of continuing teaching their classes using the same methods they do now. Economic costs would be negligible. What administration would have to be prepared to give up is some control over what happens in the classroom.

The introduction of the Can-Do functions in 2004 was considered necessary if the company's tutors were going to be allowed to award students university credits. The Can-Do's main function was seen as a method of standardizing the students' assessments by their tutors. If Can-Dos were decreased from two to one, some of this standardization would undoubtedly be lost, and this is a concern for the administration. Standardization is said to be a trait that is often valued over actual learning in Japanese higher education institutions (McVeigh, 2002). If the university wants to produce "global literates" (Mizui, 2005), it must balance this need for standardization with the academic potential of the company's program.

8. Conclusion

The change proposed in this paper is by no means a solution to all of the company's pedagogical shortcomings. It does not address the lack of curriculum integration in the university's English program, and as Jacobs and Farrell contend, this integration is a necessary aspect of a truly communicative language curriculum. What the proposed change does provide is a greater chance for a focus on meaning and for tutor professional development to take place within the current curriculum. Of course, more radical changes could bring about more pedagogical benefits, but this paper has concerned itself with proposing change that can be balanced with all stakeholders' sense of security.

The creation of the company seems to have been a step forward in the creation of a truly communicative language curriculum at the university in question. Unfortunately, after this initial step, incremental change has seen the program backpedaling towards a text-centered syllabus and traditional eikaiwa teaching methods. The company is eventually going to have to address the problems outlined in this paper, or continue to be a program of unrealized potential and missed opportunity.

Appendix 1

Following is a comprehensive, though certainly not exhaustive comparison of working conditions at the company and what might be considered a typical eikaiwa school.

| Conditions for tutors at the company | "Typical" eikaiwa conditions |
|--|---|
| No dress code | Rigid dress codes, including at least one institution which allows no facial hair. |
| No sales required | Teachers are often required to encourage students to buy extra materials and lessons, sometimes against the teachers' professional judgment |
| Opportunities for financial advancement | Since the collapse of the bubble economy, there has been little, if any chance for teachers to receive raises, even if they are promoted to "teacher trainer" by their company. |
| Freedom to socialize with students | At least one large eikaiwa chain forbids any interaction between students and teachers outside of the school. |
| Paid holidays (depending on the type of contract, some full time tutors have more than eight weeks of paid holiday). | Few paid holidays. Teachers often work on national holidays and Sundays. |
| Excellent facilities provided to tutors, including computer labs, TV lounge, and libraries. | Facilities are often outdated, rundown or nonexistent. Some teachers complain that they don't even have access to photocopiers. |

Appendix 2

The text's unit titles, Can-Do functions and perceived syllabus type

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Basic Text

| | Unit title | Can-do Functions | |
|---------|--------------------------|--|---------------------|
| Unit 1 | Meeting People | 1. Meet people and introduce yourself 2. Use conversation management language | functional |
| Unit 2 | Chatting | 1. Be a good listener 2. Continue conversations | functional |
| Unit 3 | Free Time | 1. Talk about daily routines 2. Talk about free time activities | topical-functional |
| Unit 4 | Likes & Dislikes | 1. Express likes and dislikes 2. Explain likes and dislikes | topical-functional |
| Unit 5 | Feelings | 1. Describe feelings 2. Discuss recent events | topical-functional |
| Unit 6 | Describing Places | 1. Describe and compare places 2. Talk about the features of places | functional |
| Unit 7 | Review | Review units 1-6 | |
| Unit 8 | Times & Dates | 1. Use times and dates 2. Make arrangements | |
| Unit 9 | Food | 1. Describe food 2. Order at a restaurant | topical-functional |
| Unit 10 | Homes | 1. Describe homes 2. Visit friends | topical-functional |
| Unit 11 | Describing People | 1. Describe appearance 2. Describe personality | functional |
| Unit 12 | Shopping | 1. Talk about numbers and prices 2. Go shopping | topical-functional |
| Unit 13 | Fitness | 1. Talk about fitness activities 2. Ask for and give advice | topical-functional |
| Unit 14 | Review | Review units 8-13 | |
| Unit 15 | Locations and Directions | 1. Describe locations 2. Ask for and give directions | notional-functional |
| Unit 16 | Getting Things Done | 1. Talk about things you have to do 2. Ask for help | functional |
| Unit 17 | Travel | 1. Talk about a future trip 2. Describe a past trip | topical-functional |
| Unit 18 | Decisions | 1. Make suggestions 2. Agree and disagree | topical-functional |
| Unit 19 | Future Plans | 1. Discuss goals and plans 2. Talk about levels of importance | topical-functional |
| Unit 20 | Review Game | Review units 1-19 | |

Intermediate Text

| | Unit title | Can-do Functions | |
|---------|-------------------------|--|--------------------|
| Unit 1 | Greetings | 1. Start and end conversations 2. Use conversation management effectively | functional |
| Unit 2 | Chatting | 1. Respond using appropriate expressions 2. Continue a conversation with comments & questions | functional |
| Unit 3 | Personality | 1. Describe personality 2. Discuss compatibility of personalities | topical-functional |
| Unit 4 | Movies | 1. Describe a movie 2. Evaluate a movie | topical-functional |
| Unit 5 | Clothes | 1. Describe clothes 2. Talk about dress | topical-functional |
| Unit 6 | Food | 1. Describe food 2. Give cooking instructions | topical-functional |
| Unit 7 | Review | Review units 1-6 | |
| Unit 8 | Opinions | 1. Express an opinion 2. Agree or disagree with others' ideas | topical-functional |
| Unit 9 | Health | 1. Describe illnesses and ailments 2. Give advice | topical-functional |
| Unit 10 | Feelings | 1. Describe feelings 2. Offer congratulations and sympathy | topical-functional |
| Unit 11 | Places | 1. Describe places 2. Compare similarities and differences | topical-functional |
| Unit 12 | Housing | 1. Describe houses and apartments 2. State preferences | topical-functional |
| Unit 13 | Celebrations & Memories | 1. Describe celebrations and festivals 2. Talk about memories | topical-functional |
| Unit 14 | Review | Review units 8-13 | |
| Unit 15 | Hotels | 1. Make reservations and related requests 2. Explain problems and ask for solutions | topical-functional |
| Unit 16 | Academic Life | 1. State degrees of importance 2. Ask for and make suggestions | topical-functional |
| Unit 17 | Stories | 1. Tell a story 2. Listen with interest | topical-functional |
| Unit 18 | Discussion | 1. Support opinions 2. Restate others' ideas | topical-functional |
| Unit 19 | Presentations | 1. Give a well-structured presentation 2. Evaluate and give feedback on a presentation | topical-functional |
| Unit 20 | Review Game | Review units 1-19 | |

Incremental Change and Dislocation: One Organization’s Attempt at a Communicative Syllabus in a University Setting

Advanced Text

| | Unit title | Can-do Functions | |
|---------|-----------------------------|--|--------------------|
| Unit 1 | Making Conversation | 1. Respond to and continue conversation with people you’ve just met 2. Use communication management language to improve communication | functional |
| Unit 2 | Character & Compatibility | 1. Describe people’s characters 2. Discuss and assess the compatibility of people | functional |
| Unit 3 | Issues | 1. Introduce issues and concerns 2. Restate ideas | topical-functional |
| Unit 4 | Eating Habits & Restaurants | 1. Express dietary preferences 2. Recommend and describe restaurants | topical-functional |
| Unit 5 | Tourism | 1. Discuss the pros and cons of tourism 2. Offer solutions to problems caused by tourism | topical-functional |
| Unit 6 | Problems at Home | 1. Bring up a problem and apologize 2. Negotiate a solution to a problem | topical-functional |
| Unit 7 | Review | Review Units 1-6 | |
| Unit 8 | Culture | 1. Make and respond to generalizations 2. Examine cross-cultural influences | topical-functional |
| Unit 9 | Stories | 1. Tell a story 2. Listen with interest | topical-functional |
| Unit 10 | Statistics | 1. Compare preconceptions with facts 2. Interpret information and suggest conclusions | topical-functional |
| Unit 11 | Consumerism | 1. Describe shopping habits and what influences them 2. Influence someone’s decisions through persuasion | topical-functional |
| Unit 12 | Achievements | 1. Describe the impact of major achievements on society 2. Predict future achievements | topical-functional |
| Unit 13 | Music | 1. Describe the appeal of musical artists 2. Explain favorite songs and music | topical-functional |
| Unit 14 | Review | Review Units 8-13 | |
| Unit 15 | Education | 1. State and support opinions on education 2. Discuss what makes a good language course | topical-functional |
| Unit 16 | Mass Media | 1. Compare various forms of mass media 2. Evaluate an example of mass media | topical-functional |
| Unit 17 | Gender | 1. Discuss gender roles in society 2. Talk about change | topical-functional |
| Unit 18 | News | 1. Summarize a news story 2. Raise and discuss issues in the news | topical-functional |
| Unit 19 | Presentations | 1. Give an effective presentation 2. Evaluate and give feedback on a presentation | topical-functional |
| Unit 20 | Review Game | Review Units 1-19 | |

Appendix 3

Evaluation of the company's curriculum using Harmer's continuum

Communicative purpose/Desire to communicate

Tutors might be able to craft supplementary activities for the texts that serve some communicative purpose (criteria #1) and facilitate the students' desire to communicate (criteria #2). Many information gap activities would meet these two criteria for being communicative, but it should be noted that these are perhaps the two most subjective criteria on Harmer's continuum.

Form vs. Content

The third criterion on Harmer's continuum does not seem to cast a favorable light on the current curriculum. While the text shuns any grammar practice activities per se, students are expected to master the target expressions of each lesson word for word. Any errors in form result in the loss of points during their evaluation by their tutor, no matter if their message was successfully conveyed or not.

Variety of language items per activity

The introduction of the two Can-Do functions per lesson (three can-do functions for review lessons) stipulates that many classroom activities are going to focus on solitary language items needed to master a Can-Do target. It is very common to overhear lessons in which tutors are using such listen-and-repeat exercises commonly associated with the Audio-lingual Method. Such activities obviously belong at the extreme "non-communicative" end of Harmer's continuum.

Tutor intervention

The role of the tutor is to act as "initiator of (the) activities" and "the facilitator of the students' learning", according to the tutor's handbook. Of course, tutors are also expected to be a source of error correction for their students, but the company's position on error correction seems a little ambiguous. While the tutor handbook encourages tutors to wait until after a student has finished speaking to offer error correction, tutors are sometimes encouraged by their senior tutors to correct every error their students make. While teacher feedback is undoubtedly an important aspect of any second language classroom, such excessive error correction may of course have negative effects on learners (see Lightbown et al 1999: 167).

Materials control

The company has a rather extensive library of supplementary lesson materials, and tutors are encouraged to share their own lesson ideas and materials. Unfortunately, with the introduction of the latest series of textbooks, tutors have been required to spend more time covering the text exercises and have had fewer opportunities to introduce self- or student-derived materials in the classroom. The stringent requirements of the texts, coupled with a lack of preparation time, has led several tutors to teach directly from the text with no additional materials at all.

Appendix 4

Contrasts between postivism and post-postivism

| Postivism | Post-Postivism |
|---|--|
| Emphasis on parts and decontextualization | Emphasis on whole and contextualization |
| Emphasis on separation | Emphasis on integration |
| Emphasis on the general | Emphasis on the specific |
| Consideration only of objective and the quantifiable | Consideration also of subjective and the non-quantifiable |
| Reliance on experts and outsider knowledge – researcher as external | Consideration also of the “average” participant and insider knowledge – researcher as internal |
| Focus on control | Focus on understanding |
| Top-down | Bottom-up |
| Attempt to standardize | Appreciation of diversity |
| Focus on the product | Focus on the process as well |

(Jacobs and Farrell, 2001)

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