

ANNUAL REPORTS

A. Basic English Proficiency Project (English): 2009 Year-End Report

Project Coordinators: Christopher Stillwell and Andrew Kidd

Committee members: Kamsin Alexander, Jennie Roloff, Tara McIlroy and Paul Stone

Introduction

The Freshman English programme has been running at Kanda University of International Studies for over 20 years. The Basic English Proficiency Project is responsible for the Freshman English course, with duties including implementing changes to the curriculum, developing materials and researching various aspects of the course. Over the 2009-2010 academic year, BEPP focused on gaining feedback from students and teachers on the Freshman English materials for the purposes of curriculum and materials development, promoting student reflection on their own learning, supporting professional development amongst teachers, and establishing an efficient and institutionalised feedback process. The first stages of this enterprise were documented by BEPP members in a chapter titled 'Mutual Benefits of Feedback on Materials', which will be included in the upcoming Tomlinson and Masuhara book *Research for Materials Development: Evidence for Good Practice*.

Preparing for the research and feedback process.

Tomlinson writes, 'it is very important that evaluations...are driven by a set of prin-

ciples and that these principles are articulated by the evaluator(s) prior to the evaluation' (2003, p.17). In order to gain an understanding of the principles and history of Freshman English so that a more effective evaluation could take place, BEPP members reviewed articles and reports written by previous individuals who were involved with the course. Based on Ford and Torpey (1998) and other in-house literature (Johnson 1989; Johnson, Delarche, and Marshall, 1995; Lee and Crozier 2000), the following list of principles was compiled:

- Learner-learner interaction
- Learner interdependence (reliance on one another)
- Learner independence
- Different rates of progress
- Improved fluency
- Improved accuracy
- Improved complexity of student language production
- Critical self-reflection

Through this reading, BEPP members gained further understanding of the Freshman English principles and an indication of earlier efforts at materials and curriculum development at Kanda.

The approach BEPP took to materials evaluation was based on how teachers and students responded to the materials as used in the classroom. It was decided that a post-use evaluation processes would be the most valuable as this would focus on the effect of the materials on the learners and allow for the incorporation of the views of all Freshman English teachers (Tomlinson 2003). Moreover, it was hoped that such an approach would be most likely to facilitate the opening of

dialogue between the members of BEPP and the Freshman English students and teachers. In combination with a post-use approach, the choice was made to conduct a micro-evaluation of the materials focussing on specific lessons and activities, which would hopefully be easier for both teachers and students.

Online Surveys

BEPP decided that conducting surveys on SurveyMonkey.com would be the most effective way to facilitate the feedback process. In previous years, teachers and students had given qualitative feedback in response to open-ended questions regarding the materials in general, with teachers typing their opinions into Microsoft Word documents and students completing paper-based surveys. The student surveys in particular resulted in a lot of data that was difficult to analyse, while teacher feedback was not always collected and teachers were infrequently consulted directly or asked follow-up questions in relation to their comments. In contrast, the online surveys employed multiple-choice style questions in order to gather a large amount of quantitative data that would hopefully be more easily analysed. Students and teachers would also be requested to add comments explaining their responses, qualitative data that could then be used to clarify and aid interpretation of the feedback.

Student Surveys

In 2009, there were 15 Freshman English Classes, out of which 13 gave feedback on the Orientation unit and 14 on the content-based units. Students completed the survey on the Orientation Unit in class resulting in a 100% response rate, while surveys on the following units were mostly conducted as homework, which lead to

a drop in responses. As was hoped, the quantitative data was generally easy to analyse, despite some areas where the feedback was contradictory. The first question on the survey asked students to rate the activities on a scale from terrible to excellent, while the following two questions asked them to rank the three most useful and two least useful lessons. The combination of these questions allowed for the lessons that students perceived as being weaker or stronger to be identified. Weaker lessons could be put on the 'to be improved' list, while elements of the stronger lessons might be identified and replicated in future materials. Through student comments, qualitative data was gathered leading to further exploration of students' perceptions. One general area of consideration was that the aims of certain activities were not clear to the students, causing them to believe that these lessons were not useful for them, as was the case with the Shapes in Boxes lesson.

Teacher Surveys

The teacher surveys contained the same first question as in the student surveys- respondents were asked to rate all the activities of the units. In general, teachers were more prepared to be critical of the materials, providing a better indication of where improvements could stand to be made. The second question on the teacher survey addressed how much they had adapted the materials, which proved useful in showing which materials were perhaps most in need of overall improvements. In addition, it created an opportunity for BEPP members to find new material that might be useful to all teachers.

At the end of the survey, teachers were asked to rate how effectively the materials incorporated the key principles of the course. While teachers found 'student

interaction' well represented in the curriculum, 'improving accuracy' and 'complexity', and 'promoting learner independence' were not so evident. This is an indication that these principles need to be taken more seriously into account in the future.

Post-survey pizza sessions

After the surveys were completed, teachers were invited to review the data, share their materials and suggestions, and discuss possible directions for the future. These discussions were held at 5pm, so as compensation for their time and as an incentive to attend, pizza was provided, leading to the meetings being referred to as 'pizza sessions'. Teachers were asked to review the results of the student surveys for their classes and share their interpretations based on their first-hand experience. This yielded additional insights that BEPP members would not have attained otherwise, particularly with regard to student comments. The pizza sessions also offered an opportunity for BEPP members to ask follow-up questions based on the teachers' own responses to the teacher survey. In addition, a portion of the session was dedicated to giving teachers a chance to preview and discuss their upcoming units.

In follow-up surveys and conversations, the teachers were asked to comment on the value of the pizza session to them in terms of professional development, and though generally positive comments were given, on the whole it was the new teachers who expressed the greatest enthusiasm. It was also discovered that teachers felt the opportunity to share ideas with their peers was the most beneficial aspect, so in subsequent sessions attempts were made to maximise this

portion of the meetings.

Conclusions

Collecting feedback from a large number of people on a range of topics poses a number of challenges. One challenge that may not be evident during the exciting early days of gathering data is that the more feedback is collected, the longer the list of suggestions becomes. Where opinions converge on an area in need of improvement, it becomes the mission of the project members to make it better, and for exceptions in which change is not feasible, some sort of explanation should be made public. It is essential to the whole process for this feedback to be taken into serious consideration, or teachers and students will cease to take the surveys seriously and the whole process will collapse.

If handled in a principled fashion, the surveys can provide some benefit to the participants as well, for the act of giving feedback can promote reflection on students' learning and benefit teachers' professional development. One approach taken to encouraging student reflection was for the teacher to make a class handout of the students' comments on the class survey and for students to work in groups to discuss which comments they felt were most representative of their experience, thus leading to further discussion of what had been achieved in class and possible ways learning might be improved in the future.

Sharing the results

In the first semester, BEPP documented the materials evaluation process and results for the teacher and student surveys in relation to the Orientation Unit and

submitted a chapter titled 'Mutual Benefits of Feedback on Materials', for inclusion in the Tomlinson and Masuhara book *Research for Materials Development: Evidence for good Practice*. When approaching the task of writing the chapter, duties were divided equally among BEPP members. Chris Stillwell took responsibility for the introduction and conclusion, as well as presenting the results of the surveys; Kamsin Alexander, Paul Stone and Andrew Kidd wrote the literature review; Tara McIlroy analysed student comments; and Jennie Roloff focused on professional development, which included conducting a further (paper-based) survey and interviews with teachers with regards to the usefulness of the entire feedback process for them as individuals. At the time of writing this report, the chapter is in the second-stage of editorial review. In addition, the work was shared at a JALT CUE conference in Nara by Andrew and Jennie, and Chris, Kamsin, and Jennie presented on this and the previous year's student transcription work at JALT in Shizuoka.

Second Semester

In the first semester, BEPP had conducted two solid rounds of surveys and subsequent pizza sessions, resulting in a large amount of feedback. A third survey was conducted involving a few teachers, but many teachers opted not to participate due to lack of time and a sense of 'survey burnout', for themselves and their students. For this reason, it was decided that only one pizza session would be run in the second semester, although surveys would still be done.

A priority for BEPP during the second semester was updating the Freshman English materials based on the feedback gathered since the beginning of the year. Each BEPP member had been assigned one or two units, with Kamsin Alexander

being responsible for the Travel Unit, Andrew Kidd for the Adverting and Japan Units, Tara McLroy for the Environment Unit Jennie Roloff for the Relationships Unit, Chris Stillwell for the Orientation and Film Units, and Paul Stone for the Music Unit. It is relevant to note that, as Tara was on maternity leave during the second semester, Jennie took on additional general responsibilities for the Environment Unit.

In addition to implementing changes based on student and teacher feedback, BEPP members ensured that each unit contained three vocabulary lessons (an introduction lesson, a vocabulary recycling lesson, and a quiz) and a self-transcription task. In these transcription tasks, students record their interactions on an mp3 recorder, transcribe the conversations, and make improvements. The teacher then gives feedback on the improvements and the whole process is repeated again. This work is influenced by BEPP's research on self-transcription and task repetition in 2008, which was accepted and published in *ELT Journal* in the fall of 2009 (Stillwell, Curabba, Alexander, Kidd, Kim, Stone, and Wyle).

Future directions

One of the key elements of Freshman English is that the materials have been produced by teachers who have been involved in delivering the course. However, it has proven difficult in reality to efficiently incorporate ideas, approaches and lesson plans of all Freshman English teachers, especially since KUIS has grown significantly over the years. The feedback process implemented this year was a step towards addressing this issue. The use of online surveys and discussions with teachers has contributed to the evaluation and subsequent improvement of the

Freshman English materials, which will be beneficial to future teachers and students alike. However, the success of this feedback process depends on the efforts and commitment of the BEPP committee, without which the opinions and suggestions of all participants cannot be fully realised.

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B. The Basic English Proficiency Project: Department of International Communication – BEPP (IC)

Project Coordinators: Dwayne Cover, Rob Hirschel

Committee members: Kristjan Bondesson, Stephanie Farrell, Thomas Lockley,
Damian Rivers, Brian Shoen, Jennifer Yphantides

Introduction

The BEPP IC committee has been hard at work again this year with extensive materials renewal, materials development, and research seeking to inform the curriculum. Our two base courses – English for International Communication I (EIC1) and English for International Communication II (EIC2) – received the majority of focus for materials revision and development from the committee members. A total of eight research projects were also undertaken looking at a range of subjects from classroom practice and the appropriateness of existing materials to student perceptions of technology and learner motivation.

Materials Development

EIC1 – Stephanie Farrell, Rob Hirschel, Thomas Lockley, Damian Rivers

Following the successful piloting of two units last year (*Video unit, Global Issues unit*), the committee members undertook the task of revising these materials based on instructor feedback. All units underwent numerous revisions and, at the end of the academic year, will be ready for individual teacher adaptation for the 2010 academic year and beyond. The four teachers above each took responsibility for the revision of two units, both before and after the 2009 implementation.

Feedback for these revisions was collected from among the following sources:

- Surveymonkey data collected from EIC1 teachers following each unit
- Surveymonkey data collected from EIC1 students for the first four units
- Interviews with current and former EIC1 instructors
- Materials developed and shared by fellow EIC1 instructors

Each committee member revised former activities, developed new activities, and thought of new approaches to the materials. Additionally, they worked to streamline the formatting of units, the organization of materials on the network, and the layout of teachers' notes. It is hoped that these revisions result in materials that are more student and teacher friendly and intuitive to use.

Stephanie Farrell took charge of the *Pragmatics* and *Travel* units. For the *Pragmatics* unit Stephanie included a section about pragmatics and cross-cultural communications, addressing varying norms of interaction for different cultural, ethnic, political and language discourse communities. Stephanie also developed an activity for practice in natural leave-taking communications and an activity that explores appropriateness on the part of students when conducting surveys with ELI teachers. For the *Travel* unit, Stephanie added a section for students to discuss how to enrich their travel experiences and an interesting new activity to warn students of the dangers of con artists.

Rob Hirschel was responsible for making changes to the *Orientation* unit, the end of semester *Video* unit, and the *Cultures of Japan* unit. For the *Orientation* unit, Rob put together a new warm-up activity, a communicative pictures activity, and added a group work activity suggested by Joe Geluso. Classroom sets of

laminates have been produced for the latter two activities. For the *Video* unit, Rob revised the assignment guidelines, contributed script and storyboard templates, and created a sample video for students to watch. For the *Cultures of Japan* unit, Rob put together a new advertisement analysis activity using current HSBC advertisements. Rob also developed a new activity on perspectives of Japanese culture using the *The Japanese Tradition* series to complement the existing activity using the film *Lost in Translation*.

Damian Rivers was responsible for making changes to the *Sounds of English* unit and the *World Englishes* unit.

Thomas Lockley worked extensively on the *Vocabulary* and *Global Issues* units. For the *Vocabulary* unit, Thomas re-ordered learning strategies to provide more scaffolding and put greater priority on vocabulary learning strategies that students are less likely to have used in the past. Some similar strategies were combined. For the *Global Issues* unit Thomas collaborated extensively with Kristijan Bondesson to remold the unit and make it more teacher and student friendly. The number of activities was reduced, directions were revised for clarity and additional examples were included. Additions were also made to increase student accessibility to complex issues facing the world community.

EIC2 – Kristijan Bondesson, Dwayne Cover, Brian Shoen, Jennifer Yphantides

EIC2 materials development focused upon the creation of supplementary lessons for all units. After establishing eight well-organized units (four per semester each with vocabulary, introductory lessons, and final presentation activities) in the

previous year, the primary goal for 2009 was to add optional lessons from which the EIC2 instructors could select. Each of the four committee members responsible for EIC2 materials development was assigned one unit per semester and asked to design an additional lesson that would be complementary to the already existing materials.

Kristjan developed a circumlocution activity, a crossword puzzle and fill-in the blank/matching exercises for the *Culture* unit, as well as for the vocabulary lists in several additional units. This was necessary since the BEPP IC committee had, for some time, discussed the inclusion of vocabulary development activities which would recycle words and expressions from the individual vocabulary lists. Kristjan also put together a short introductory reading activity for the *Culture* unit which specifically included the terms from the unit vocabulary sheets. He created additional introductory reading sections, utilizing relevant vocabulary, for other EIC2 units as well.

Dwayne's materials development responsibilities included editing and preparing the *Introduction* unit for the first semester, as well as editing and preparing the year-end project for the final unit – the *Model UN*. Additionally, he added one supplementary lesson to the *Introduction* unit.

Brian's first semester responsibilities were to review, edit, update, and add to the *Religion* unit. This included significant rewriting of the reading selections on the Major World Religions lesson to be more accurate and logistically coherent, as well as amending and clarifying lesson materials for the Values and Beliefs lesson.

Second semester responsibilities were to streamline, edit, and organize the *Global Economics* unit which involved reworking of the introductory lesson as well as the materials on globalization. The primary addition was to include a lesson-by-lesson set of teacher's notes.

This year, Jennifer compiled the *Conflict* unit into a lesson package and developed several additional lessons to support this material. She also edited the *Global Government* unit and created a supplementary activity.

Research projects

In 2008-09, the BEPP IC committee ran two group projects – a needs analysis and a task-based learning project - with all members participating in either one or the other. For 2009-10, committee members opted to conduct individual or partnered projects covering a broad range of topics. The projects for the current year examined both the effectiveness of the curriculum and explored the ideas of the IC student population. A short summary of each project is included below.

a) Global Issues Unit Evaluation

Kristijan conducted a study looking into the extent to which the *Global Issues* unit met the stated IC department objectives. The evaluation criteria was drawn from a previous publication by Ford and Torpey describing the principles underlying English language courses offered at Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS). Findings revealed many positive aspects of the materials with regard to learning principles, topic content, texts and overall design. At the same time, they revealed some aspects of the unit that could be revised such as a more explicit

focus on form, a greater need to explain complex input such as “average life expectancy” and concern that students’ unfamiliarity with topic content could inhibit active participation. The findings from this project encouraged discussion regarding teacher autonomy in the area of materials revision and on the place of form-focused interaction in writing skills courses.

b) Student Perceptions and Expectations of Native English-speaking Instructors

Brian and Dwayne worked on a joint project investigating student perceptions and expectations of native English-speaking teachers at KUIS. The project was based upon previous studies with Japanese learners in post-secondary institutions (Shimizu, 1995; Makarova, 1998). Areas of focus included personal traits (e.g. be kind, be funny, dress appropriately), classroom management (e.g. easy to understand, creates a good atmosphere), and knowledge (e.g. knowledge of English grammar, knowledge of Japanese culture). Data was collected through questionnaires administered to freshmen classes and through one-to-one interviews with freshmen students from the IC department. The results from this study will be used to provide a fuller understanding of IC student perspectives and help to inform incoming (and experienced) instructors of the cultural expectations in an English-focused classroom at a Japanese university.

c) Us, Them and the Other: Japanese Positioning of Accented English Speech

Damian conducted a study assessing the attitudinal responses of a group of 48 Japanese university freshmen toward ten different accented English speech samples across nine evaluatory criteria. Of the ten samples, one was a Japanese English speech sample (Us), seven were ‘non-native’ English samples originating

from a variety of Asian countries (Them) and two were 'native' English samples originating from America and England (the Other). Framed within sociopsychological inter-group theories of ethnolinguistic and social identity as well as current debates concerning English as an international language, the results illustrated that although the students favored 'native' forms of English speech, they were generally unsuccessful in identifying where each speech sample originated. As such, a number of significant misunderstandings occurred, most notably - the Japanese English speech sample was perceived to be the 'native' American English speech sample. Through a process of quantitative data analysis and 'accent positioning', the paper suggests that the 'native' English speech samples are afforded a kind of 'quasi' 'in-group' status among the Japanese students whilst the 'non-native' Asian English speech samples are positioned firmly within a distant 'out-group'. The results are discussed in relation to the development of positive intercultural relationships, the domestic presence of the foreigner and the implications for the future of ELT within Japan. The paper was presented at the International Association of World Englishes Conference in the Philippines in October 2009.

d) A context specific investigation into the motivational factors which shape intended English language learning efforts

Damian also contributed a second project during the year. Driven by a lack of contextually focused motivational research within the Japanese university environment, the investigation sought to identify the prominent attitudinal, situational and self-related motivational factors which act to shape the intended English language learning efforts of a sample of 131 Japanese university freshmen.

Based upon the foundations created in previous L2 motivational research (e.g., Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Clément, 2001; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002, 2005; Dörnyei, Csizér & Nemeth, 2006; Higgins, 1998; Noels, 2001; 2003; Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009; Ryan, 2008; Ushioda, 2001) the study employed a multiple-item online survey. Through a quantitative analysis of the data, two multi-factor models which predicted *Student Intended Learning Effort* (SILE) and *Attitude Toward Learning English* (ATLE) were produced. This paper was presented at the International Association of Intercultural Studies Conference in Kumamoto during September 2009.

In her BEPP IC research this year, Jennifer Yphantides carried out two research projects: one, evaluating intensive reading strategies employed by IC students and two, testing modifications made to the extensive reading component of these classes.

e) Use of Intensive Reading Strategies

The focus of this project was to examine whether or not explicit strategy instruction and student reflection on that instruction increased students' metacognition of their reading process since, according to most research, good readers are metacognitively aware. A summary of the methodology of this study is as follows.

1. Pre-semester questionnaire: Administered to gauge students' reading skills and metacognition of reading strategies.
2. Strategy Logs: Students were taught one strategy per week and practiced using it immediately on one intensive reading from the textbook. Then,

- students reviewed and assessed the strategy in their logs.
3. Mid-course Assignment: Students completed an ungraded assignment which aimed at assessing their metacognition of strategies, including their ability to choose and apply strategies appropriately, and their ability to assess that use.
 4. Re-administration of the pre-semester questionnaire to gauge students' use of and metacognition of reading strategies.

The main finding was that explicit strategy instruction did increase students' metacognition of their reading process and, as a result, their ability to cope with English texts improved. A full report of this study can be found in the 2010 issue of the Kanda University Journal. An application has been made to present on this research at TESOL Arabia in March, 2010.

f) Extensive Reading

Jennifer's second project looked at the Extensive Reading (ER) component of the IC Reading course. A literature review on the topic of Extensive Reading was completed and minor changes were made to the curriculum based on the recommendations of the most recent studies conducted in the field. The simple action research question driving this inquiry is whether or not the changes implemented will result in students spending more time reading outside the classroom than in the first semester when they had to read one graded reader per week at level 3 or 4. This is an important question because, as other studies have shown, more extensive reading is synonymous with more language gains. It is hoped that the results of this research will serve as a guide to potential curriculum renewal. An application to present on the preliminary findings of this research at

TESOL in Boston in March, 2010 has been made.

g) Student Perceptions of Technology in the Classroom

In his BEPP IC research this year, Rob Hirschel examined student perceptions of CALL instruction. The project investigated the use of the MOODLE applications known as glossaries, quizzes, and forums. The background for this project is explained as follows:

Chambers and Bax (2006, p. 466) called for the “normalization” of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) such that “computers will be at the centre of no lessons, but will play a part in almost all.” Such a view of CALL instruction is very much compatible with Chapelle’s (2007, p. 108) statement that “the march of technology throughout all aspects of the lives of language learners is expanding whether it be through formal education or in their everyday lives.” While researchers have addressed the need for CALL training of L2 instructors (see Kessler, 2006), there has not been much in the literature regarding students’ perspectives on the use of technology in the classroom. Such a perspective is critical if the field of language education is to successfully utilize the technology.

An open-ended survey was piloted with a small group of students and administered to two classes at Kanda. The resultant data is being analyzed with Nvivo software and a presentation of the findings will be made at the 2010 TESOL conference in Boston.

h) Students' Self-perceptions of Grammatical Competence and Oral Communication in English

Stephanie and Thomas's project was concerned with the relationship between students' self-perception of grammatical competence and oral communication ability. The study began with the acknowledgement that the classroom is a dynamic and organic space where the teacher and students are influenced by a multitude of factors. For the teacher, some of the relevant considerations included his/her educational training and possible previous experiences as a language learner, as well as ideas about the nature of language and how it is learned and taught. For the students, significant factors included their preferred learning style and their perceptions about their language abilities. After an extensive literature review, the relationship between students' self-perceptions of grammar and actual oral performance emerged as the project focus. The researchers employed a questionnaire, developed from focus group findings, to explore student perceptions of their own grammar skills. English ability was measured by TOEIC score and actual oral performance was ascertained with a standardized speaking test, assessed by independent evaluators. The findings from this project will shed light upon both student confidence and performance in speaking situations.

Looking Ahead

In the upcoming year, the BEPP IC committee intends to continue the cycle of gathering feedback from EIC1 and EIC2 class instructors and then utilizing the information to revise, update and improve the units for our two base courses. The long-term goal remains to create basic materials that are interesting and challenging for the learners, as well as flexible and easy-to-employ for the

teachers.

In terms of research, committee members have again expressed interest in developing their own individual or partnered projects for next year. Some of the potential areas of investigation include:

- further inquiry into the use of a range of different materials for the Reading classes
- exploration of different methods to increase vocabulary acquisition
- the trialling of new tasks and materials for the Media classes
- study into in-class tasks or events that contribute to a positive classroom atmosphere

C. The Basic English Proficiency Project

Department of Languages and Culture (BEPP-ILC)

Project Coordinator: Ashley Moore

Committee members: Simon Cooke, Trang Nguyen, Adam Slobodniuk,
Kalina Stoyanova, Kentoku Yamamoto

Introduction

The 2009-2010 academic year saw extensive change within the membership of the BEPP ILC committee, with Kalina Stoyanova being the only remaining member from the previous committee. Ashley Moore moved from the English department to take up the position of project coordinator. Kanda University of International Studies and the ILC department were pleased to welcome Simon Cooke, Trang Nguyen, Adam Slobodniuk and Kentoku Yamamoto who joined the faculty this year.

Amongst the purchases made by the group this year was a computer which will serve as a hub for research work and curriculum back-up storage and archiving. It is the committee's intention that research software such as SPSS and NVivo can be centrally stored and shared by committee members and thus prevent the loss of expensive software licences when ELI teachers leave and their computers are reconditioned. The computer is remotely accessible to all BEPP-ILC teachers and time blocks can be booked through the new BEPP-ILC Google email account. It is hoped that this new system will also contribute to the ongoing endeavour to increase institutional memory within BEPP-ILC and KUIS as a whole.

Thanks to the work carried out by the BEPP-ILC group in previous academic years, the committee members were now able to form materials development teams for each of the core courses (Freshman English, Sophomore English, and Media English) and begin work on revising and stabilising existing lessons whilst also developing additional materials. New materials development procedures were also put in place in order to better develop institutional memory and promote the trialling of new lessons.

The situation created by a high proportion of new committee members meant that the research agenda within the committee was functionally a blank slate. With this in mind, Ashley Moore worked with the Assistant Director of Research & Professional Development, Ben Fenton-Smith, to implement a first semester orientation and research development programme, designed to scaffold the process through which committee members established and developed their research projects. The following report will firstly offer an overview of the

materials development work undertaken by each development team before presenting the research projects currently underway within BEPP-ILC.

MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT

Freshman English – Kalina Stoyanova, Trang Nguyen

The ILC Freshman English (FE) curriculum comprises five distinct units that incorporate the development of the four macro skills framed around specific themes. While the core FE framework has been maintained, many classroom materials and activities have been revised, enhanced and supplemented towards the aim of offering more choice to teachers and students within the one curriculum. The introduction of comprehensive student journals and the use of graded-readers, in particular, have enhanced the existing curriculum, as has the practice of developing and maintaining a bank of students' works to be used as samples for future classes. The final unit of study has been revised and a new unit, 'Introduction to World Issues', has been designed and implemented. This unit will enable students to learn about and explore in-depth various current issues that are taking place in the world. The unit will draw on the presentation skills that students have developed throughout the year and will culminate with students choosing a topic of interest, undertaking individual research and making a presentation to the class on their subject of choice. A new project also initiated this year in the ILC FE curriculum has been the design and development of a series of lessons that focus on the core skill of writing. These lessons will cover the basic skills involved in formal writing such as process-writing, paragraph formatting and structure, as well as address some of the most common grammar points identified as having been the most challenging to the ILC FE student body. These lessons will be

completed by the end of the second semester and will be trialled during the next academic year.

Sophomore English – Kentoku Yamamoto, Adam Slobodniuk

The materials development for ILC Sophomore English in semester one was both student and teacher focused. The student centred development consisted of adapting and updating existing learning materials, primarily focusing on increasing student usability and maintaining relevance. Through student feedback it was determined that some fonts used in the materials were difficult for students to decipher so these have been modified. The student instructions to lesson tasks were simplified in order to allow more class time to be devoted to lesson content. Thanks to the work of previous ILC members, the existing materials within the three core units, Community, Culture and Identity, are of high quality. It was decided after consultation with new teachers of SE that teaching notes accompanying some lessons would allow them to be utilized more effectively and fully. These teaching notes were drawn up based on ideas garnered through successful teaching of the existing materials. It is hoped that these notes will allow future teachers to use these lessons with ease.

For the second semester of ILC Sophomore English, existing World Investigations lessons created by the previous members of the ILC have continued to be trialled to get an understanding of how to effectively use the material. These lessons have been edited and altered to make the Investigations more cohesive and reusable for the following academic years. Feedback from students regarding the Investigation tasks is also being collected. Based on the student feedback, the development team

is working on developing the tasks and materials further by providing improved scaffolds to help students with their English learning and critical thinking skills.

Media English – Simon Cooke, Ashley Moore

In the 2008-2009 BEPP-ILC annual report the necessity of creating a strong framework for the ILC Media English course was noted. With this in mind, the ME materials development team set about delineating distinct yet complementary frameworks for the first and second semesters respectively. To this end, the first semester has been consolidated and focuses on orientating students to various news media sources and the structure and discourse features of news media English. Several new lessons such as a newspaper article writing project were trialled and revised. The second semester was completely redeveloped and now introduces the notion of media literacy to students. Informed by both L1 media literacy educational programmes and theories of critical pedagogy within EFL, the course is designed to empower students to deconstruct various media messages that they encounter when reading in English (or another language). The range of media that students are required to read has been widened to include magazines and advertisements. The media reading journals that students complete on a weekly basis have also been redeveloped for the second semester in order to encourage students to question what they read in the news media and how it can shape their opinions and behaviours. The final project asks students to individually complete a 1500-plus-word essay, utilising the skills scaffolded during the second semester in order to deconstruct both the content and format of a magazine. It is hoped that the work carried out in the development of the media literacy course can be communicated to the wider academic community through presentations and potentially a publication. Future work will focus on further

revising and developing the existing lessons and further consolidating the first semester.

Basic Writing – Kentoku Yamamoto

This elective course focuses on developing the students' enjoyment in using English to write through a number of creative genres, such as short stories, personal essays, news articles, and movie scripts. At the end of each semester, the class will create a book that contains a compilation of their works. Students will also work on improving their writing through self-editing, peer feedback, and explicit grammar lessons taught by the teacher or the students themselves.

Business English –Trang Nguyen

The ILC Business English course offers students a broad overview of certain aspects of business including learning about companies, the principles of marketing, and entrepreneurialism while also placing strong focus on developing students' self-understanding in the context of career development. Students are supported to write their curriculum vitae in English, and learn the use of business language through engaging in a number of group projects and role-plays. While the main framework of the Business English course has been retained, new classroom materials and activities have been introduced to complement the existing resources. This year has seen the introduction of a Business English Journal which the students complete and submit bi-weekly. The Journal comprises four elements including a Learning Reflection component; Vocabulary Journal; Business Conversation Journal; and a writing section where students write about a topic of their choice around the theme of 'business'. The Journal arose

out of student-identified needs to develop their English vocabulary, their understanding and knowledge of business-related themes as well as their desire to be able to use the language that is framed around this knowledge. In consultation with students, the course has also introduced a new project whereby students select a company or private organisation to conduct research into and in the process, interview personnel from the chosen company. The project culminates with students making a class presentation and submitting a report of their research with audio-recordings of their interview. The project content and processes are being created and trialled in a partnership between the students and the teacher. Future work will focus on further revising and consolidating the existing course materials.

RESEARCH

1) BEPP-ILC Research Meta-Project – Ben Fenton-Smith, Ashley Moore

The Research Meta-Project sought to better understand the processes through which incoming committee members orientate themselves to the project committee and establish research projects in order to develop a flexible system which could be used in other research project groups. Committee members participated in a series of feedback surveys that attempted to identify their needs and preferred research development processes. In addition to the normal documentation procedures for committee meetings, discussions were also audio-recorded in order to capture some of the discursive practices that best engendered the development of research projects. The data collection phase of the study has been completed and a coding system is being trialled and developed. The prospective outcomes of the project include both a paper detailing the findings and a set of

guidelines for future project coordinators.

2) Getting students to notice: The development of discourse marker usage in the Sophomore English classroom – Simon Cooke

Ellis (1993) has spoken about the use of consciousness-raising activities to help make language learners aware of the structural regularities of a language that will in turn enable them to learn it at an increased rate. Ellis was mainly talking about developing grammatical awareness through specific, focused activities “...pushing learners to make their output more comprehensible and, in the process, improving the accuracy with which they perform particular grammatical structures.”(p.8)

Drawing upon these ideas and those of Dörnyei & Thurrell (1994) and others, this study explores whether the same approach can be followed to bring learners’ attention to some of the organisational principals of language use and communicative competence; in particular the use of discourse markers in conversation.

Several studies have promoted the use of student transcription activities in helping students to make their output “more comprehensible, elaborate or sophisticated” (Stillwell et al., 2008). This study aims to follow and compare the use of discourse marker usage among a group of students who are asked to transcribe and reflect upon their L2 output with a control group of students who are not asked to transcribe or reflect upon their conversations.

The transcription task has taken the place of the students' "Speaking Journal" which they were required to complete in the previous semester. For the past six weeks, both of the above groups of students have been recorded on a regular basis at the beginning of their classes. The recorded audio files from this group have been uploaded to these students' class Moodle page for them to transcribe, reflect and comment upon. The recording/ transcribing process will be finished towards the end of the second semester, at which time both the transcriptions and the reflections will be analysed for any changes/ developments in discourse marker usage. Early indications are that the process has indeed led the students asked to transcribe and comment upon their utterances to increase their usage of discourse markers in these classes.

3) The use of reflective journals in language learning and teaching – Trang Nguyen, Kalina Stoyanova

This research initiative seeks to examine the role student journals have in facilitating reflective thought and written expression in language learning; and the ways in which student journals contribute to the process of language teaching and learning. The conceptual premise of the current research initiative embodies four distinct but interrelated elements – student reflection of the 'self', student reflection of the 'other' and teacher reflection, which are all interwoven and embedded within a 'Community of Inquiry'. The current phase of the project incorporates ongoing teacher reflection and the use and analysis of Freshman English Journals that are completed and submitted bi-weekly as part of the core ILC Freshman English (FE) curriculum. Through a process of information and consent where students were invited to participate in the project, a total of 46

students out of 60 in two of the ILC FE classes have opted to take part in the project. Presently, data collection is ongoing and a coding system is being developed and trialled with plans for this phase of the study to be completed by the end of the second semester. Once data coding has been finalised, analysis of the data will be documented and preliminary findings reported. It is envisaged that the prospective outcomes of the project will provide documentation of the value of the use of journals that make up an important component of the ILC curriculum and teaching approach, while also contributing to the refining of teaching materials in the FE curriculum based on students' feedback and their reported needs. The research initiative will potentially offer new ways to conceptualise the notion and practice of 'reflection' and 'reflective teaching and learning' that may have wider implications for the field of Language Learning and Teaching.

4) Language Lab research – Adam Slobodniuk

This research is focused on analysing and addressing pronunciation weaknesses in Japanese learners of English engaged in pronunciation tuition by comparing the effectiveness of using CALL technologies versus traditional materials.

The purpose of undertaking this research is to identify ways to strengthen the existing Language Lab course with a view to making fuller use of the new language lab classroom facilities.

The initial batch of data has been collected and is currently being analysed with further data to be collected at the conclusion of the current semester.

5) Student perceptions: How do I learn best? – Kentoku Yamamoto

This research study investigates ILC sophomore students' perceptions about how they feel they learn English most efficiently. Q-methodology, a qualitative research method with quantitative features based on factor analysis (Watts & Stenner, 2005), will be used to analyze participant responses and create "learning profiles" of the participants. These learning profiles will indicate the different trends and patterns of the participants' own learning preferences. As such, the learning profiles discovered through this research project can be used to help guide and fine tune ILC course curricula and materials to better address the preferences of its students and promote student motivation.

This project is currently in its data collection phase. The 2009 fall semester is being used to collect data in the form of statements related to learning made by students in their ILC Sophomore English class journals. Furthermore, to supplement the student produced statements, language learning statements will also be selected and compiled from the theory- and research-based literature in the field. Some of the supplementary field-based language learning topics under consideration for this project are: learning strategies (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990), learning styles (MacWhinney, 1997; Nunan, 1999), and psychological factors (Massimini & Carli, 1992; Dörnyei, 2003). Sophomore ILC participants of this study will then be asked to sort each statement based on its relevance to the participant's own preference of learning. The resulting patterns of the various participants' sorted statements will then be analyzed to produce the learning profiles.

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D. The Self Access Centre Learning Project (SALC)

Project Coordinators: Scott Crowe

Committee members: Asa Brinham, Brian Morrison, Chris Wyle, Diego Navarro, Katherine Thornton, Jared Baierschmidt, Jo Mynard, Junko Noguchi, Matthew Kershaw, Tanya McCarthy, Yuko Momata

INTRODUCTION

Research continues to inform the development of the Self-Access Learning Centre at KUIS. In the previous academic year a new system was developed to ease new members into the research process to help them become familiar with the concepts of autonomy and self-access learning. This process has again proved extremely productive for the 5 new entrants to the research group in 2009 to help produce some valuable and interesting research projects in the current academic year.

RESEARCH

The 2009-10 academic year has been the busiest yet for the SALC Research Group with 13 research projects underway and at various stages of completion. Group members have undertaken research on a wide variety of topics including self-access and autonomous language learning both in the SALC and the classroom, student usage of SALC materials, effects of particular text types on autonomy and an analysis of learner beliefs and perceptions. A general overview of each project is presented below.

1. Investigating the Feasibility of Creating a SALC Student Committee

Scott Crowe

The aim of this research was to set up a committee of interested students, independent of educator input, capable of planning and organizing events for their fellow students in the SALC as well make suggestions about the types of resources and materials that are created and purchased for the SALC.

At the end of the spring semester, a meeting of interested students was called and a committee known as the SALC Student Committee (SSC) was formed. The SSC reports to the SALC Research Coordinator and has been allocated a modest budget according to the committees needs. Subsequent to the initial meeting potential ideas were discussed at various informal meetings of the committee and it was decided that the first event organized by the SSC would be a Halloween party. In conjunction with the Student Activities Committee, the SSC organized and promoted a Halloween party to be hosted by SSC members with various competitions and prizes. The event was a resounding success with a record number of students turning out.

Subsequently the SSC has conducted further meetings and has come up with various proposals for ways in which the SALC could be improved and better utilized for student needs. These proposals will be discussed at a meeting involving teachers and Learning Advisors in early December.

2. *SALC Website – Jo Mynard*

<http://thesalc.wordpress.com>

Based on research conducted last year with ongoing input from colleagues this year, a SALC student website has been launched. Some of its aims are:

- to provide an online reservation system for SALC services (currently in trial stage 2)
- to inform students of events, facilities and services in the SALC
- To provide students with additional opportunities to practice English
- To capitalize on available technology for innovative learning possibilities
- To publicize the SALC and raise the profile of KUIS
- As an archive
- To be able to expand the SALC (and not be restricted by physical space)

Over the coming year the website will be promoted and feedback will be gathered in order to implement ongoing changes and improvements. Students will also be involved in generating content for the site. This research is ongoing.

3. *Writing resources for students – Jo Mynard*

Following on from research conducted on the POWC (Peer Online Writing Centre) last year, a working group has been meeting 2-3 times per month in order to research ways to improve the out-of-class writing support given to students. The group has achieved the following this year:

- Conducted research into the effectiveness of the Writing Centre cards
- Created new questions which are currently being piloted with students
- Created new Student Forums for writing on Moodle.
- Promoted the Student Forums and are currently researching them. Since its launch in November, 233 students have contributed to 64 discussions.
- Planned and created an Online Writing Centre (OWC)
- Currently trialing the OWC with Writing Centre users and 2 writing classes. In its 2 week initial trial period in November, the OWC received 9 submissions from 6 students (3 repeat users).

Members of the group are Jo Mynard, Phil Murphy, Rachael Reugg, Ben Lehtinen and Dirk McKenzie. Research will continue.

4. The Effect of Pre-KUIS Language Learning Experiences on Motivation and the Development of Autonomous Behaviour – Asa Brinham

In this qualitative study, several KUIS students have or will be interviewed with a view to investigate the effect of pre-KUIS language learning experiences on motivation and the development of autonomous behaviour.

During the first semester a review of some of the relevant literature was undertaken and the transcripts from last year's research project (The effect of early learning experiences on motivation and autonomous behaviour) were completed and analysed. This served as the basis for the design of a set of interview questions. The questions were then trialed on a number of volunteers to ascertain which ones would be both easily understood by the participants and be most likely to prompt

relevant responses. At the time of writing (November, 2009) four language learners have taken part in interviews (each interview is between 5 and 25 minutes long) and the interviews have been recorded. The aim of the interviews is to elicit anecdotal evidence of pre-KUIS experiences that have had an effect on motivation and/or the development of some kind of autonomous learning behaviour, defined as “the ability to take charge of [their] own learning” (Holec,1981:3, cited in Benson (2001:48). The questions have focused on memories of English language experiences which occurred prior to the students’ arrival at KUIS and which the students feel were influential in the development of autonomous behaviour and/or affected their motivation. So far, the interviewees, irrespective of the level of their language ability (all interviews are conducted in L2) have discussed their experiences articulately; have shown self-awareness with regard to their roles as language learners; and have displayed willingness and indeed eagerness to talk about events which have informed their language learning. The narratives are proving to be very revealing, not only because of the common patterns which emerge, but also because of the uniqueness of each participant’s experience. More interviews will be conducted before the end of the semester.

5. Forced Compliance Paradigm: Increasing the uptake of advising sessions

Tanya McCarthy

The advisory service at KUIS was designed for learners to talk with advisors about language learning problems. However, due to its voluntary nature and lack of ongoing advertising about the service, it remains largely underused. Students entering university as freshmen are usually very keen and eager to try new

services, however after a few weeks they tend to get busy with classes and forget about the advising services offered. This study aimed to raise awareness of the advising service with the advisor visiting classes and asking students to meet with the advisor once during the semester. It was also hoped that by making it compulsory for students to see an advisor, there would be an increase in students using the advisory service. Research questions were:

1. How aware are students about the advisory service and learning advisors?
2. After the first initial compulsory meeting, how many students returned for advice about learning?
3. What are students' feelings about voluntary vs. forced advising?

Students were given a needs analysis to complete before coming to the session to help them prepare for it. The session intended to provide basic information about the advisory service and of how it could help learners to approach/overcome language learning problems. Most sessions lasted 10 minutes, but for students who came prepared to talk about their learning, the session continued for 30 minutes or longer with a promise of a follow-up session. A survey with open- and close-ended questions was given at the end of the semester to answer research questions. Data was collected and is currently being analyzed to see if attaching advisors to freshman classes would be helpful in encouraging learners to adopt more autonomous behaviors immediately upon entry into the university.

6. *Research - Developing Listening Tasks for Self Access Learning*

Matthew Kershaw

The aim of this research is to determine the type of tasks most appropriate for self-access authentic listening materials. A questionnaire has therefore been developed to investigate how students actually approach listening materials available in the SALC, what skills they incorporate when listening, and how (or if) they utilize accompanying task material.

Brian Tomlinson argues in his book *Materials Development in Language Teaching* that there has been little in the way of research into the actual learning outcomes of language learning materials. In addition, it has been difficult to investigate this matter in the SALC at KUIS due to limitations in the availability of in-house materials usage. However, there have been recent additions to the SALC, such as materials to accompany DVD's and podcasts, which enable the usage to be monitored. This in turn provides a database of students who have used the materials and therefore can be incorporated into this study.

Once enough data has been collected, conclusions will be drawn on how students approach listening tasks, and what kind of tasks may be most beneficial to students. The information gathered will be used to inform future material development for the many listening sources in the SALC.

7. *Student perceptions of the Advising Service – Katherine Thornton*

Learning Advisors' conversations often focus on ways, in which improvements can be made to the running of the SALC and the advising service to make them more user-friendly, but some of the ideas that are voiced have the tendency to be based on advisor intuitions and assumptions of what students may want and need. In

order to inform decisions which may have an important influence on SALC policy, so that they better reflect the actual views and opinions of SALC users, it was decided that information and advice should be collected directly from students. As the take up rate for non-module advising sessions is still reasonably low, at the present time this research focuses solely on current student perceptions of the advising service. It is hoped that by gathering student views on the service, any changes that the advising team make to enhance advising will be more successful.

An online questionnaire was chosen as the most appropriate format for gathering this information. In its initial stage, it was decided to administer the questionnaire with a sample of sophomore students from all departments, as they have had a chance to settle into KUIS and may have used the service. It will be extended to other year groups in the coming semester.

The questionnaire addressed the following areas:

- How students think they can use the advising service (what is its purpose?)
- Students current experience of using the advising service (no. of times, content of session etc, degree of satisfaction, approachability of advisors)
- Why they don't use the service
- What factors would affect their decision to consult an advisor, positively or negatively.

At the present time data from about 120 students has been collected and in the process of being analysed. It is hoped that the findings will inform future research and any changes made to the advising service in the future.

8. *Shared Reflections – Katherine Thornton*

Reflection is a core component of the First Steps Module offered to all freshman students, and in its current format, reflections made by students about the content of the module and their own learning experiences form a private dialogue between the advisor and the advisee. This study was designed to look at the effect of sharing student reflections with the rest of the group (often from different departments and tiers across the university) on the following aspects of the course:

- Ability to write reflections
- Understanding of the module content
- Motivation to complete the module
- Group cohesion

Throughout the module, records were kept of typical, high quality or interesting reflections, and these were included on a feedback sheet each week along with the advisor's personal comments to the student. Students were given space to comment on their classmates' reflections and records were also kept of all these reflections. This was combined with an end of module questionnaire, where students were asked their views on the shared reflections activity.

Results

Unfortunately it has not been possible to track accurately the extent to which students read the shared reflections, but the comments from the module and the questionnaire were coded for evidence of any advantages offered by the shared reflections. Evidence was found in all 4 hypothesized areas, with the ability for students to learn study tips and strategies from their classmates being seen as a

particular advantage. This research was presented at JALT 2009.

9. *Authentic Texts and Autonomous Learning Examining the Role of Authentic Texts, Inside and Outside of the Classroom – Chris Wyle*

This research project examined the relationship between ‘authentic texts’ and autonomous learning. Specifically this work examined how students fared using authentic texts on their own (in the SALC, at home, in libraries) compared to their use in the classroom in an environment where materials are scaffolded by the instructor.

A literature review on reading, authentic texts and autonomous learning was carried out in order to best frame this research study and formulate questions distributed as surveys to students via online survey tools in to their habits outside of the classroom in regards to the utilization of authentic texts. The purpose of this survey was to determine a) the frequency of utilization of texts, the preferred materials in regards to authentic texts and c) the comparison between classroom usage of authentic texts (primarily in 3rd and 4th year Sogo/Eiso classes) and the students autonomous usage of the texts.

An examination of the student preferences and perceptions regarding the usage of authentic texts both in the classroom and autonomously is being analyzed and will provide more information in an area of research that has been less than fully developed in language learning research.

10. Effectiveness of feedback on IELTS task 1 writing - Brian Morrison

This research focuses on a 5-part self-access writing course and seeks to investigate the following:

- In what ways do students who follow the IELTS task 1 writing self-study materials improve?
- Does written feedback affect improvement in writing? If so, in what ways?

The data collection phase is underway. Participants are submitting first drafts of essays before being given course material to refer to before amending the draft and resubmitting it. Half of the participants are receiving feedback on how to improve their writing. The aim is to collect 2 drafts of 5 IELTS task 1 essays from 2 groups of 12 students, with a target date of January 2010 for the complete collection of the 240 drafts.

Once the data has been collected the researcher will analyze the first draft of both the initial and final writing tasks. Unlike previous research which has focused on grammar errors, this study is investigating development in task achievement, structure, grammar and lexis with particular focus on complexity and sophistication i.e. the exam grading criteria.

11. Investigating and comparing the English language learning beliefs of students at Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS) – Diego Navarro

This research aims to answer:

- 1: What do Japanese students at Kanda University of International Studies

(KUIS) believe about English language learning?

- 2: How do these students' beliefs in 2009 compare with those of other Japanese university students (Sakui and Gaies 1999) and (Riley 2002)? (i.e., what effect might 'institution' and 'time' have on students' beliefs?)
- 3: How do KUIS students' learning beliefs compare across different year groups?

(i.e., how do the beliefs of 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year students compare?)

Data on the English learning beliefs of KUIS students was collected during the first two weeks of the second semester through online administration of a 45 item (likert-scale) instrument. (1st year n=153; 2nd year n=140; 3rd year n=186; 4th year n=77).

The instrument used is a context-specific instrument, written in Japanese and created specifically for Japanese learners, and has been tested for reliability and validity (Sakui and Gaies 1999; Riley 2002).

The data is currently being analysed using various statistical tests including factor analysis, ANOVA, t-tests, and Pearson correlation.

Next semester, the KUIS students' results will be compared with the results of the two previous studies.

Finally, the language learning beliefs of KUIS students across all four years of study will be compared and discussed.

12. Effects of vocabulary journals on learner autonomy – Jared Baierschmidt

This research is investigating whether instruction in both how to self-select vocabulary words and the various methods of keeping a vocabulary journal leads to more autonomous vocabulary learning. First, students in an International Communications Media English class were given a survey designed to elicit their attitudes towards and use of vocabulary journals. The results of the survey indicated that most students were familiar with vocabulary journals, thought they were useful language learning tools, and enjoyed using them. However, the survey also found that most students only kept words in the journals that were required for their classes and did not feel confident in their ability to select words to learn themselves.

Currently, the students are being instructed in how to effectively self-select vocabulary using Barker's (2007) cost-benefit questions as a guideline. Furthermore, the students are being exposed to various ways of recording information about new vocabulary in their journals, such as semantic mapping, the keyword method, and collocations.

Students must include in their vocabulary journals the vocabulary words introduced in words lists that are handed out at the start of each Media English unit. For these required words, the students need only to write the definition of the word and the part of speech in order to receive a satisfactory grade on their journal. However, the students are encouraged to use the techniques being learned in class to help them record and remember not only the required Media English words but any other words which they wish to learn. At the end of the

academic year, the vocabulary journals will be collected and analyzed to see what words and information the students recorded. Any information in excess of the required words and definitions will be interpreted as an indication of autonomous behavior on the part of the students.

13. Investigation of speaking booth usage – Junko Noguchi

This research investigates:

1. what kind of activities students do in the Speaking Booths
2. which programs or SALC materials students use while in the Speaking Booths
3. what kind of activities students want to do in the future

Speaking Booths Reservation forms, which include data on how much time students were planning to spend in the Speaking Booths, are being analyzed to see if there are any trends in usage. Furthermore, all students who used the Speaking Booths last semester will be sent a questionnaire that asks how they used the Speaking Booths.

A draft of the questionnaire is being written and needs more revision and feedback from other advisors. Once the draft is completed, the questionnaire will be piloted by volunteer students and the final questionnaire will be conducted through Survey Monkey with analysis to follow. Follow-up interviews are planned with some of the questionnaire takers to gain more detailed results.

Since the online reservation system for the Speaking Booths has been

implemented and the system can elicit from users the reasons why they want to use the Speaking Booths, this data will also be analyzed in addition to the questionnaire results.

MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT

SRG members have been very active in producing a variety of materials and resources this academic year to enhance the range of self-access materials offered to students in the SALC, these include;

1. SALC Modules - Brian Morrison, Diego Navarro, Katherine Thornton, Jo Mynard, Junko Noguchi, Scott Crowe, Tanya McCarthy,

Revision of the First Steps, Learning How to Learn and Sophomore modules is an ongoing process and as usual, all members of the learning advising team are constantly engaged in editing and updating the SALC Modules.

TOEIC Modules

Although we do not want the SALC to become a testing centre, we recognize that some students need additional help with preparing for the TOEIC exam in order to improve their job prospects after they graduate. An optional module was created for students preparing for the TOEIC and is currently being trialed with volunteer students. The module includes exam information and test-taking tips, but more importantly (from the SALC's point of view) activities that promote learner autonomy and life-long learning including needs analysis, self-evaluation and opportunities for reflection. Students submit their packs to a learning advisor

each week as they do with the other modules, but receive no credit.

Modules online

Research conducted last year with students taking a CALL Sogo course indicated that some elements of the modules could be successfully delivered online. The following elements could be trialed in future semesters: online activities to supplement the module pack, online forums for reflecting on activities, and student reviews of resources.

2. Excel Database Manual – Scott Crowe

Over the past 3 years, numerous databases and excel spreadsheets have been designed to record data and help learning advisors administer the SALC independent Learning Modules. During the academic year, a manual was created to ensure that these resources continue to serve their purpose and to facilitate the continuity of knowledge within the Learning Advising Team. The Manual covers the Drop-in Database, the Booked Advisory Database, the Materials Discovery Database and the Module Control Spreadsheet.

3. CALL section – Jo Mynard

The CALL section now occupies two shelves containing:

1. CD ROMs that do not fit well in other sections of the SALC
2. Passwords for various online materials that are available to students via the SALC website
3. Activity sheets that help students to use internet resources and tools

meaningfully for language learning

4. Guidelines for using various software (developed by Craig Langdon)

Activities have also been produced to help students to use Skype, blogs and also provide follow-up online learning possibilities for movies.

4. *DVD Screenplay Linking - Asa Brinham*

A series of worksheets based on the DVD, reader, and screenplay of *Love Actually*, a perennial favourite of SALC users, is being produced. At the time of writing (November 2009) a number of worksheets are in various stages of design, trialing and feedback. SALC borrowing records show that the *Love Actually* materials are some of the most popular in the SALC and there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that SALC users will often read the reader or the screenplay after seeing the film and vice versa. One of the aims of these worksheets is to exploit this link by including a number of interactive activities. Several students have been invited to take part in the trialing and their feedback is being used to create ideas for additional materials. The materials also contain linking activities which help students to discover other SALC materials and to use technology to take advantage of external resources.

5. *SALC Listening Section – Tanya McCarthy*

After positive feedback from the previous semester about the karaoke program, it was downloaded to all six computers. New songs were added based on feedback from students who used the program. A manual was completed with permission from Karafun™, to help learners understand how to use the program by

themselves. It was then tested by SALC student staff and placed in the booths.

The “songs by genre” booklet was completed and tabs put on pages for easier searching. This continues to be updated as new albums are bought.

6. Developing Authentic Self-Access Listening Materials - Matthew Kershaw

This is a series of lessons offering students an interesting and motivational way to study independently in the SALC. The materials are based on authentic interviews with KUIS teachers (therefore avoiding sensitive copyright issues). Students can utilize the lessons for listening practice, to learn new words and phrases, and to notice and practice natural pronunciation and intonation.

The developers are in the process of interviewing teachers individually. However, the aim is to also conduct conversational interviews with pairs/small groups of teachers. A variety of accents will be included, including Japanese speakers of English. Each lesson will then include a transcript of the interview, along with vocabulary exercises, comprehension questions, pronunciation points and other activities.

After trialing the lessons with teachers and students, the final interviews and lessons will be available individually on the SALC computers and the SALC website, and we also plan to compile a DVD for the SALC including all the interviews.

7. Guide to using Grammar Worksheets – Katherine Thornton

The grammar section of the SALC contains many reference books and a wide selection of worksheets broken down into different grammar points that students

may like to focus on. In its current format, however, the sheer quantity of worksheets can make it very difficult for students and advisors alike to navigate and find what they need. To better facilitate students' use of this section, the following materials have been developed.

- Flowchart (how to find and use grammar worksheets)
- Diagnostic test,
- Index of grammar terms linked to individual worksheets
- Japanese translation of grammar terms

The materials are available in a pack which students can work through. The flow chart explains how they can be used. The diagnostic test is designed to help students identify their weak areas of grammar, and then also to identify what they should focus on WITHIN that area. An informal survey of SALC users has shown that students have quite a good idea of their general weak areas, but often do not know what exactly they should do to improve. The Index has been designed to help students find worksheets to help them with a precise grammar area they have identified. By looking up a grammar term in English or Japanese (e.g. relative clauses) or an English word commonly used in that grammar (e.g. who, which) students can easily access grammar sheets on that topic.

8. *VOCABubbles - Katherine Thornton & Diego Navarro*

Vocabulary is a huge area is a focus area for a significant number of students who take SALC modules. Making and keeping good vocabulary records is, however, far from an easy task. Students are often confused as to the kind of vocabulary they should be learning, the best way to record and do not always use effective

vocabulary learning strategies.

These materials grew out of a SALC workshop on vocabulary, in which these issues were raised with students. Many students keep vocabulary notebooks, but these are not always systematic. The VOCABubbles are vocabulary recording sheets which can be added to and re-arranged at will to create a flexible vocabulary notebook. As the sheets are detachable, they can be more effectively used for vocabulary learning than a standard workbook. An explanation sheet with an advisor-made example, and actual student-made examples accompany the VOCABubble sheets. Advice is given as to the kind of information students may wish to include in their bubbles, but the sheet is designed so as each student can decide what to record for each word or chunk they record. Student feedback on the format and language used was sought before the final bubbles were produced and made available.

9. *SALC Newsletter – Katherine Thornton*

The SALC newsletter has been around in one incarnation or another since the SALC opened in 2001, but has been revamped since Sept 2008 to have a stronger student and SALC-specific focus. Its production is a collaborative project between learning advisors, with one advisor assuming the role of editor and writing the main feature each issue, assistant managers, who are involved creatively in deciding what kind of articles to include and translating English copy into Japanese, and the production design team, who are responsible for the concept and production of the newsletter. It is bilingual, in the hope of appealing to students who may not be English majors, or prefer some Japanese support when reading

English. It is delivered to all staff and freshman students at the university.

It is hoped that the newsletter can promote the SALC in general, concepts and ideas that support learner autonomy and specific news and events which are going on in the SALC. It appears 4 times a year, and so far 6 issues have been developed, on themes including:

Good Language Learners, Motivation, SALC FAQs, and Independent Learning. In the future the editing team hopes to involve students more in the creative process, possibly with a view to passing responsibility for content over to students themselves.

10. Reference guide to websites related to international politics/foreign affairs

Chris Wyle

This is a guide of online materials available to students that will help them study independently, find material for use in Sogo classes or for presentations in classes such as Media English in addition to their own interest. This guide hopes to present an apolitical and non-partisan guide to vetted and respected news, journal and popular magazines, websites and newspapers available online and applicable for primarily high-level students' research work.

11. Political Speeches handouts – Chris Wyle

These handouts contain the actual transcript materials with reading comprehension and vocabulary sections as well as answer keys. These worksheets include speeches such as the inaugural speech by President Barack Obama and Winston Churchill's famous wartime speech to rally the United Kingdom behind the

war effort. Students can challenge themselves by reading and researching the speeches and building vocabulary. These speeches, due to content, would be appropriate for higher-level students.

12. Comprehensive IELTS Study Materials - Brian Morrison

IELTS self-study workbook to promote autonomous learning in test-taking

Following on from the successful development of self-study workbooks for TOEIC and TOEFL, there seemed to be demand for an IELTS self-study workbook covering the same areas. The result is this 21-page workbook for IELTS which gives an overview of the exam before moving on to detail each of the 4 test modules to give study tips and exam strategies for each. This then leads to the final section where the learner sets study goals, outlines a study plan and chooses resources. All three workbooks are available in the Exam section of the SALC for learners to take and keep and are proving to be popular.

Self-study speaking packs for IELTS

A need was identified based on student enquiries and advising sessions for skills specific self-study material in the SALC. Therefore, 15-minute exam speaking packs were written. These packs contain instructions, scripts and prompts for students to practice the speaking module of the IELTS exam. These can be used in the practice centre or in student pairs. The first pack was trialed with an LA who was not familiar with the IELTS exam and a student she was advising to check clarity of instruction. After revision, several more packs have been created, each containing feedback sheets to allow for further user input.

IELTS Speaking Exam DVD

In preparation for an IELTS speaking workshop in November 2009, and to provide further support for the IELTS speaking packs, a mock IELTS speaking exam was filmed and edited into a 15-minute video clip. This video gives learners a clear idea of the format of the speaking exam and the reality of the amount of time given to each question and each section.

The student who came for advice on IELTS preparation was successful in boosting her speaking score and therefore achieved her required score for entry on to a study abroad programme. She also agreed to help make a DVD of a mock IELTS speaking exam. This is something she identified that would have been useful for her to have had access to.

5-Part self-study course for Task 1 IELTS writing

KUIS writing classes address the type of discursive essay required in Task 2 of the IELTS writing exam. However, when teachers teach writing based on data description, they do so briefly and are unlikely to cover the range of IELTS Task 1 diagrams. They are also not focusing on the restricted genre expected in IELTS Task 1, nor should they. Given the specialist nature of this genre and the growing number of students interested in the IELTS exam, it seemed appropriate to offer a set of self-study materials focused on this specific form of writing. The material has now been written, it is being trialed as part of a research project this semester and will be available from April 2010.

13. TOEIC Study Materials – Diego Navarro

Self-study TOEIC workbook to promote autonomous learning in test-taking

To manage the significant interest in the TOEIC exam expressed by KUIS students a self-study workbook was created.

Modeled after the TOEFL guide, this workbook includes an overview of the TOEIC test, general information about the different sections and types of questions, helpful advice to score higher, a study planning activity, useful web links for TOEIC help and information, and finally recommended SALC TOEIC materials organized into different focus areas (grammar, reading, listening, and vocabulary).

It is currently one of the most popular materials available in the examination section.

Questionnaire to assess the quality and usefulness of (TOEIC) self-study workbooks

To account for the usefulness of the testing (TOEIC/TOEFL/IELTS) workbooks created for students, a feedback questionnaire was constructed.

Students are asked to answer a variety of questions ranging from the appropriateness of the level of activities and information to ideas for improving the guides.

Although there has been little response, it is important that we provide opportunities for student feedback. Constructive criticism will help us become better aware of our students' needs and wants and ensure that we provide the best possible resources for them.

14. Strategy worksheets (Diego Navarro and Katherine Thornton)

Learning advisors are often faced with the dilemma of balancing the time consuming struggle of “autonomously” letting learners manage learning problems with being overly prescriptive and “telling them” what we think they should do.

In response to this conundrum, 6 strategy worksheets were created to help students identify, for themselves, possible learning problems and also set up pathways to the learning advising service offered in the SALC.

It is hoped that these sheets will help learners:

- Reflect on the kind of strategies they use (or don't use) when concentrating on a particular language skill (writing, reading, listening, speaking, vocabulary, grammar)
- Identify possible problems with learning that may not have been previously considered.
- Become come aware of different strategies that can help facilitate improvement.
- Introduce students to the kind of assistant offered by learning advisors.

The reason for the creation of these sheets was more intuitive than empirical. Therefore justifying their continued use and production needs to be accounted for. A limited number of sheets will be displayed in the respective sections (a max. of 20 sheets). If the sheets are taken by students then it will warrant continued production.

15 “Could” versus “Was Able To” Grammar Usage Worksheets – Jared Baierschmidt

Japanese learners of English often mistakenly assume that “could” and “was able to” are completely interchangeable expressions and therefore form awkward constructions such as, “I could make many friends at British Hills last week.” These worksheets take an inductive approach to teaching students in which situations either “could” and “was able to” are synonymous and grammatically correct and in which situations only one or the other can be used. The inductive worksheet is complemented by an explicit listing of the rules and practice worksheets to help students solidify their knowledge of these rules. Finally, students are encouraged to write their own example sentences which follow the rules and check their sentences with teachers on duty in the ELI lounge.

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16. Pronunciation power Worksheet - Junko Noguchi

A Pronunciation Power 1 worksheet is being developed to help students use the software more effectively and learn how to study pronunciation independently. A draft of the worksheet has been used in a workshop and it was found that it needs more revision. The revised worksheet will be piloted before the end of semester.

THE FUTURE

Going forward, the direction of the SALC Research group will continue to be guided by the accumulating body of work done to date, developments in the field of self-access and autonomous language learning, consultation with external consultants and not least of all, the imagination and motivation of group members. In addition, former ELI members working on projects as part of the KUIS External Language Consultancy Centre (ELCC) at other Universities in Japan will provide

new opportunities for collaborative research projects in future years.

An issue that still dominates much discussion is the future of the First Steps Module. After much planning and negotiation an agreement has been reached with the IC department to trail an in-class, credit bearing SALC module. Credit bearing status adds credibility to the importance of autonomous language learning skills facilitated by the modules and recognizes the efforts of students and learning advisors. This exciting project will be instrumental in shaping the modules and has the potential to produce some of the most important and informative research from the SALC Research Group to date.

E. Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) Project Annual Report

Project Coordinators: Dirk MacKenzie

Committee members: Roman Delgado, Daniel Jenks, Jason Ropitini, Joachim Castellano, Joe Geluso, Lara Promnitz-Hayashi

Introduction

The role of the CALL project is to study, enhance and facilitate the use of technology in the various KUIS English curricula. CALL committee members thus divide their time between research, materials development and technology support. Our major focus is Moodle, our course-management system, but all forms of technology in language learning have a place in our work. This year, we changed our name from IRP (Internet Research Project) to CALL in order to adopt the term

prevalent in the literature on technology in language learning.

At the beginning of the year, we launched a CALL-representative system in an effort to improve communications with the other research projects. Each CALL committee member was assigned to a particular research project. The idea was to provide personalized technology support (with Moodle in particular) and to invite requests for custom-made CALL materials. The system had three goals: to facilitate technology support ELI-wide; to give CALL members a chance to develop expertise and technology support skills (and improve institutional memory as members leave); and, most importantly, to ensure that the materials we develop will be used across the ELI now and in the future. Representatives were assigned as follows:

BEPP English: Daniel Jenks

BEPP IC: Joe Geluso

BEPP ILC: Joachim Castellano

Basic Skills: Roman Delgado

Advanced Skills: Jason Ropitini

SALC: Lara Promnitz-Hayashi

KEPT, ELI management and KUIS faculty: Dirk MacKenzie

Research

Blended Learning Spaces: Patterns of use

Daniel Jenks, Joe Geluso, Joachim Castellano, Roman Delgado, Lara Promnitz-Hayashi and Dirk MacKenzie

The BLS study group investigated patterns of BLS use across the ELI. The study

comprised two phases: an online teacher survey (n=38) and follow-up interviews (n=12). We found that most teachers want more BLS time because it affords them greater flexibility, and they are more innovative in their lesson design—the largest factor being internet access. Laptops are used at some point in 87% of BLS lessons, most often for word processing, internet research and watching videos. Laptops are being used less for technologically social activities like collaborative writing, blogs, discussion forums and social networking sites—perhaps because BLSs are social environments by nature, and teachers strive to maintain an orally communicative environment, with laptops often being shared by students, for example. When teachers do not have access to BLSs, the CALL mode becomes homework, and we have the asynchronous model of blended learning prevalent in the blended learning literature (where the face-to-face mode is separated in time and space from the CALL mode). While we didn't investigate the nature of the homework being assigned by ELI teachers, we can assume the CALL component becomes more technologically social—with students at their own homes or in the computer lab interacting virtually, and more through writing than speaking.

While teachers note that BLS teaching requires more preparation and complicates classroom management, they see benefits in terms of: individualization, with students being able to access their own input online and control playback of audio and video files themselves; interaction, with desks moving easily and laptops folding closed to promote face-to-face communication; and interdependence, with learners working together at one laptop. Switching back and forth between BLSs and non-BLSs in a given week is frustrating for teachers, with lesson-to-lesson continuity often being disrupted.

Since we did not speak to or observe students, it could be argued that ours was a study of blended teaching, not learning. It is possible that the study will continue next year with more attention on the nature of learning in a BLS—using a more ethnographic approach.

Student aptitude using productive software

Jason Ropitini

Jason has been investigating the level of aptitude students have with software applications used as part of students' productive endeavors in the classroom. His research focuses primarily on applications from the Microsoft Office Suite, particularly Word, PowerPoint, and Excel. His initial survey targets teachers and classroom practices, the second survey students and their perspectives regarding self-efficacy using said applications. Having analyzed and interpreted the initial data collected from this investigation, he will then examine measures that better integrate the learning of these applications into the various teaching programs in the ELI, envisaging such measures to have a positive flow-on effect across other departments at KUIS.

Materials development

The following materials were produced this year:

Moodle course template for Freshman English (English department)

Daniel Jenks

This template includes a variety of Moodle resources and activities designed to complement the Freshman English curriculum.

Revised MS PowerPoint 2003 manual

Joe Geluso

This revised manual includes information on adding sound clips to presentations.

Webportal for ILC students

Joachim Castellano

This webportal brings together a variety of relevant materials, including useful Kanda links, news information, and a link to a cleaned-up ILC Moodle page/portal.

Moodle resources and activities guide

Roman Delgado

This paper guide provides descriptions of Moodle resources and activities so teachers can decide quickly and easily how Moodle can or cannot help them.

Student worksheets for MS Word 2003

Jason Ropitini

This collection of worksheets helps students practice using a wide variety of common Word functions.

Student manual for Wordle

Lara Promnitz-Hayashi

This manual guides students through Wordle, a web application for making “word clouds”, which give greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in user supplied text.

Student manual for MSExcels 2003

Dirk MacKenzie

This manual walks students through a variety of basic Excel functions, including creation of illustrative charts.

Freshman Reading credit system spreadsheet

Jason Ropitini

This dynamic Excel spreadsheet helps teachers of Freshman Reading calculate the chaos that is the credit-accumulation system.

Glogster manual

Lara Promnitz-Hayashi

This manual explains the interactive poster-creation application, step-by-step.

ESL PodCards manual

Lara Promnitz-Hayashi

This manual explains how to download and use podcasts with accompanying worksheets and puzzles.

Moodle course for new ELI teachers

Joe Geluso

This course is designed to introduce new teachers to Moodle and provide instruction on how to use some of Moodle's features before they get to KUIS.

Blogs manual for Basic Writing (English department)

Roman Delgado

This teacher's manual outlines ways to use blogs for a multiplicity of tasks such as schema activation for in-class activities through authentic online sources, jigsaw exercise preparation and peer revision for Basic Writing classes.

CALL materials and resources collection: Analysis

Joachim Castellano, Jason Ropitini and Dirk MacKenzie

Joachim, Jason and Dirk analyzed usage of the collection across KUIS over three semesters, drafted a revised sitemap to facilitate access of the collection, and are investigating the possibility of hosting the collection outside of Moodle.

Technology support

CALL members led three orientation sessions this year: a BLS orientation and a Moodle orientation for new ELI teachers, and a Moodle orientation for all ELI staff and faculty.

CALL representatives provided technology support to their assigned project members over the year, helping them get set up with new Moodle courses, troubleshooting student enrollment glitches, etc.

Looking ahead

There is growing interest in the CALL group in mobile learning technologies, which may become a research focus for some next year.

There may be significant changes to the CALL materials and resource collection stemming from this year's analysis. The CALL team would like to have a more inviting, dynamic, social web space to host existing materials and facilitate the development of an online CALL community.

F. The Kanda English Proficiency Test (KEPT)

Project Coordinators: Dennis Koyama and Rachael Ruegg

Committee members: Alun Roger, Erik Fritz, Eric Setoguchi, Yuko Sugiyama, Emily Ryan, Andrew Schouten, and Dr. Gary Ockey (Assistant Director of the ELI: Assessment).

Introduction

At the beginning of this year KEPT spent most of its time and energy on committee research. During the second half of the year, the committee focused its efforts on upgrading the 2005 Argentina KEPT for the January and March 2010 administrations. In the upcoming KEPT, the English department will take the writing and speaking sections only, while the ILC will take the complete KEPT, including the listening and reading sections. In an ongoing undertaking, the KEPT committee and the ILC department are collaborating closely to determine how to best use KEPT data to guide incoming 2010 student placements and current student grades.

Test administration

Preparing Argentina 2005 for readministration in 2010 required:

- a. replacing the 2005 anchor reading and listening passages with the new ones created in 2008
- b. making video recordings of the listening anchor passages
- c. rerecording the instructions of the test in Japanese
- d. reformatting the test booklet
- e. creating a new writing prompt
- f. writing six new speaking prompts.

Leading up to the January and March administrations of the test, norming sessions were carried out for both the writing scales and the speaking scales. Norming sessions improve the validity and reliability of the scores in these two sections of the test.

Committee research projects

Assessment of presentations

Erik Fritz and Andrew Schouten are researching about performance assessment, specifically examining how to assess oral presentations in the course, English for International Communication One (EIC-1), in the Department of International Communication. EIC-1 is made up of nine units, all of which are assessed via group and individual projects, mainly consisting of presentations. The researchers will focus on current and best practices for assessing presentations in the classroom environment. They will do this by using interviews, surveys, and by reviewing relevant literature. Thus far a review of the literature has been undertaken and preparation for writing survey questions and conducting interviews is underway.

Prompts bank project

Alun Roger created this project in 2007 to aid the KEPT test development. The project architecture, survey creation, translation and piloting was completed in 2007 and the first phase of data collection was completed in 2008 with 230 first year students within 2 weeks of their first KEPT experience. The data was analysed with Winsteps and a summary of the findings was presented to the KEPT research group. In 2009 Alun completed the research paper and sent this paper for review. He then revised the paper based on the feedback received.

Vocabulary manipulation

Rachael Ruegg and Erik Fritz are conducting a follow-up study on the previous year's research project by the same authors focusing on the lexis scale of the KEPT writing rating scales. The current study aims to show more conclusively what raters are sensitive to when rating lexis by manipulating the lexical items in terms of word frequency, accuracy, and range. A sample essay has been written by a student (not taking the KEPT), and the essay has been rewritten in 27 different versions with the aforementioned lexical manipulations, which were already determined by the authors. The essays will be rated during the January administration of the KEPT. After the essays are rated, the authors will run analyses on the data and aim to ascertain more concretely which lexical variable raters are more sensitive to.

Measuring the Impact of Opening Gambit on KEPT Examinee Rating

Dennis Koyama, Emily Ryan, and Eric Setoguchi, are investigating the impact on examinee rating of initiating an opening gambit (i.e., making the first turn in a

communicative task such as the group oral discussion) in the group oral section of KEPT. In the initial phase of the study, the researchers reviewed 172 group oral sessions (roughly 43 hours of video) from the January 2008 administration. Of 172 total sessions reviewed, 113 were deemed adequate for inclusion in the analysis phase of the study. In cases where technical difficulties with the recording device or irregularities in test procedure made it impossible to accurately observe the opening gambit, such sessions were not included in the study.

After identifying the examinee who initiated gambits (i.e. initiator) in each of the 113 remaining sessions, the sessions were categorized based on the type of gambit observed. Four gambit types were identified by the researchers as noticeably frequent gambit types appearing in the KEPT group oral: (a) direct question, (b) open call, (c) soliloquy, and (d) interruption. In the initial categorization, 31 initiators (27%) used the Type 1 gambit, 61 initiators use the Type 2 gambit (54%), 19 initiators used the Type 3 gambit (17%), and 2 initiators used the Type 4 gambit (2%).

Following this finding, it was decided to eject the Type 4 gambit from the study and focus exclusively on the other 3 gambit types, as the low frequency of use of the Type 4 gambit would be unlikely to result in statistically sound results. Further analysis of the data have produced interesting patterns and suggest the possibility of an effect on examinee rating for gambit initiators, however ongoing further research and expansions to the scope of the study must be completed before final results can be concretely stated.

Organisation scale project

Rachael Ruegg and Yuko Sugiyama carried out a deeper analysis of the organization of ideas within KEPT essays in order to ascertain what organizational qualities lead to a higher score on the organization scale. Although clearly the organization of ideas (sometimes called “Essay structure”) is an important aspect of timed writing to assess, different raters come from different backgrounds and therefore have different ideas about what the ideal essay structure is. Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to determine what raters are more sensitive to when rating writing for organization using the KEPT organization scale.

A review of the literature revealed that the existence of paragraphs and transitions, the unity of ideas within paragraphs and the coherence of ideas within paragraphs are the main organizational qualities usually sought. Therefore, in order to determine what KEPT raters are more sensitive to, a multiple regression was run with the organization score as the dependent variable and the content score, essay length, number of paragraphs, number of transitions, unity of ideas within paragraphs and coherence of ideas within paragraphs as the independent variables.

It was found that KEPT raters have difficulty distinguishing between organization and content. In addition to this, raters are sensitive to the number of paragraphs and the number of transitions but not to the unity or coherence of ideas. The strong relationship between the organization scores and the content scores implies that more rater training is required to assist raters in distinguishing the two qualities. The sensitivity of raters to the number of paragraphs and the number of transitions implies that these would be the most useful skills to teach in order for our students

to achieve better on timed writing tests.

Content Scale Project

Rachael Ruegg and Yuko Sugiyama conducted a study that examined the ratings given for content on the KEPT writing test. Currently, the content band of the KEPT writing test focuses on relevancy, connection, support and development. However, the idea of content varies among raters which may often lead to the inconsistency of scores. The purpose of this study is to examine which of these qualities in a student's written work raters are sensitive to when rating for content. In addition, the researchers were interested in whether it is easier for students to connect their ideas to their thesis statement, to support their ideas or to develop their ideas. One hundred and sixteen essays were randomly chosen from a range of scores and were analyzed based on length, the number of ideas, how many ideas were connected to the thesis statement, how many ideas were supported and/or developed.

The results indicate that word length and the organization score contributed to the content scores while there were no statistically significant results on connection, support and development. The overlap between the content and organization scores indicate that further rater training would be necessary to develop a deeper understanding of the two qualities. Furthermore, the terms connection, support and development in the content bands should be clearly defined for better consistency among the raters. In addition to this, it was found that supporting ideas and developing ideas were both significantly more difficult for students than connecting ideas to the thesis statement. However, there was no significant

difference between their ability to support and to develop ideas.

G. Basic Skills Research Project

RILS report 2009-2010

Project Coordinator: Julie Matsubara

Committee members: David Bollen, Craig Langdon, Michael Shanley, Nathan Johnson, Shelley Wright

A. Research Component

In the first semester, the committee read articles published by (former) ELI members to gain a strong understanding of the course principles (Bollen & Osboe, 2007; Laskar, 2006; Matsubara & Lehtinen, 2009). The experienced teachers continued their projects from the previous year, and the new teachers spent time developing research ideas. The committee also met with Chris Candlin to receive feedback on research and curriculum development. Individual project folders were created on the listserv, and committee members were asked to be in charge of their own folders.

In the second semester members moved ahead with their projects and a few presented their Skills research at JALT 2009 (Langdon, Bollen, & Murphy, 2009; Matsubara, 2009). In order to solidify timelines and goals for ongoing projects, the new teachers have been encouraged to present their Skills research projects at JALT 2010.

Continuing projects

Julie Matsubara continued to explore the integration of pronunciation in the reading classroom. Data concerning student perceptions of pronunciation awareness had been collected in Second Semester 2007 and 2008. This data was analyzed and presented on at JALT 2009, and she will submit to the proceedings. Additionally she investigated how Moodle can be used effectively in the writing classroom, on which she presented at JALT Hokkaido 2009. David Bollen continued the taxonomy project that was handed over from former member Nicola Galloway, in which they created a taxonomy to be applied to the Basic Reading comprehension questions. Bollen also joined Craig Langdon and Phil Murphy in a project investigating the effects of computer-mediated feedback in the reading classroom. It was found that students who received live feedback from teachers performed better than those who only consulted peers. This finding among others was presented on at JALT 2009. Langdon also continued his previous project on computer use in the writing classroom. In December 2009, he asked paid students to perform computer tasks, in order to determine what should be included in a future questionnaire which will be administered to students on a wide scale.

New projects

Michael Shanley was inspired by Chris Candlin's lecture in May 2009 to investigate the acquisition and student use of lexical phrases. Initially he searched for categories or a taxonomy for lexical phrases that may have been established already. At JALT 2009, Matsubara attended a presentation which discussed a similar topic (Chen, R. H, 2009) and took notes to facilitate Shanley's research.

Nathan Johnson's interests lie in investigating whether the genres of writing taught at Kanda actually coincide with the writing demands which students face upon graduation. He has gathered some literature and also some information from the career services office. He has been advised to consult the IC Department as they have been exploring the same issue for several years.

Shelley Wright's project involves action research regarding the effect of interactive tasks in the writing classroom. Having two Basic Writing courses, she trialed a task in the first class and made notes of the class results. Upon revision of the materials if necessary, she trialed the task in the second class, and made notes again.

B. Materials Development Component

This year, as there were an equal number of experienced vs. new teachers, a pair system was devised for feedback collection and materials revisions. Supplemental materials were also collected from all teachers of Basic Reading and Basic Writing. In addition, experienced teachers were asked to revise and develop materials for the second semester, while new teachers were given the task of creating teachers' guides for the first semester materials.

Basic Reading

In the Spring Semester, committee members were mostly busy collecting feedback and revising the *Holiday into Yesterday* episodes. One matter that was brought up by Candlin was the use of vocabulary mindmaps to help students retain the words they learned in the story. This mindmap activity was trialed, and

positive outcomes were seen; therefore, the committee discussed the purchase of an online mindmap software application with the help of the SALC budget. However, the software company never responded to SALC Director Joanne Mynard's requests, leading to a standstill for now.

Upon extensive discussion among the experienced committee members, the Fall Semester Basic Reading materials format was greatly modified to facilitate the course: (1) A core packet was made and given out to the students; (2) Individual activities were placed on MOODLE by Langdon to encourage individual work outside of the classroom; and (3) Pair and group activities remained on the trolleys as before. This system seems to be working well and we have not had as many complications as in previous years. In addition, the committee members have been asked to keep track of which activities the students have chosen in order to determine which activities need revising. A template created by Dennis Koyama and revised by Jason Ropitini has greatly facilitated this process.

The committee met with Paul Nation in October 2009 to discuss Basic Reading, and he gave us positive feedback. By introducing multi-skills tasks such as dictations, discussions, and speedreading, he said the course is promoting fluency development in various skills effectively. The only weakness is that the course needs more actual reading, both for meaning focused input and fluency development. This should be addressed by the committee in the years to come.

Basic Writing

Similar to Basic Reading, Spring Semester of Basic Writing was mostly

feedback collection and revision of materials. One significant change was that the fourth unit (Film Unit) was deleted as most teachers could not cover it with the time constraints. Therefore, it was decided that the unit would replace the Fall Semester Critical Unit with substantial modifications. This decision was also influenced by a meeting with the Advanced Skills committee and the English Department: Because students heavily focused on a critical essay in the first semester of Advanced Writing, it was not necessary for students to dive into this genre to the extent that they were required to in Basic Writing in the past. Siwon Park also requested for the basic skills classes to include more summarizing activities. Therefore, we decided that the Film Review genre was most appropriate to address the above concerns. Future committee members are encouraged to further explore the addition of more summarizing activities, as students have the most difficulty with this skill in their second year, according to Park.

C. Administrative Matters

One of Matsubara's personal goals this year was to build a strong foundation for the committee through extensive organizing. This first started by setting up clear-cut guidelines for the members, whether it be on the minute-taking at committee meetings or the pair system when revising the materials. A materials development calendar was created on the shared folder, in addition to a document spelling out three levels of changes when revising materials. For instance, typos and outdated information (Level 1) did not need any approval; addition and deletion of tasks should be consulted with an experienced member (Level 2); and any overhaul of the theoretical underpinnings such as the Writing Process or the Autonomous Classroom needed to be presented to the coordinator and the

research director (Level 3).

Next, an inventory list was created on the shared folder to be updated regularly. Committee members were regularly reminded that they have access to all Skills resources in the inventory. Another document was created for any books or articles owned by the committee that could be of use for members' projects. Matsubara also tackled the Basic Reading materials on the shared folder, which have been a source of much headache for the committee in past years. Based on all feedback compiled and past experience in the classroom, the materials were revised and edited uniformly to the best of her abilities.

Matsubara believes all of these fortifications to be sustainable as long as there is communication between her and the next coordinator. She can confidently say that the above extensive organization has greatly facilitated the committee's effectiveness.

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H. The Advanced Skills Committee – 2009 Year-End Report

Project Coordinators: Ben Lehtinen (Semester 1)

Jenn Holland (Semester 2)

Committee members: Siwon Park, Masaki Kobayashi, Marc Sakaguchi

INTRODUCTION

Advanced Skills is a new research group for the 2009-2010 academic year. Advanced Skills oversees materials development and research for two of the second-year courses in the English department: Advanced Reading (AR) and Advanced Writing (AW). This year's focus was primarily on materials development and getting an idea of what teachers of these courses were doing in their classes. Although both courses have overall goals, teachers have a lot of freedom in determining how those goals are achieved. Past and current teachers have developed a

lot of their own materials for these courses, particularly for AW, and the committee has tried to encourage teachers to upload those materials to the shared folder on the KGNFS02 server.

In addition, new textbooks were introduced in both courses, so a lot of time was devoted to developing materials for and gathering feedback on those books. Unfortunately, these textbooks, *Academic Encounters: Life in Society* (for AR) and *Reason to Write: Strategies for Success in Academic Writing (Intermediate)* (for AW) were not well received for various reasons. In the case of AW, the textbook was chosen in an attempt to provide some structure for new teachers, who typically find teaching AW for the first time to be quite challenging. Teachers revealed that they felt much of the content is inappropriate for KUIS students, too U.S.-focused or simply too difficult, to the point that teachers use existing or develop new supplemental materials. Most returning AW teachers have developed their own materials in previous years and chose not to use the textbook. In AR, the previous textbook, *Beyond Language: Cross Cultural Communication*, is becoming quite outdated and a trial of *College Reading 3* last year as a potential replacement was not successful. *Academic Encounters* has proven to contain very challenging content and vocabulary, even for top tier classes, and most classes are not progressing through the text at the rate originally anticipated. Ideally, we would like to eventually move away from having a textbook for these courses and create a full set of materials produced by teachers, similar to those used in Freshman English and the Basic Skills courses. In order to do this successfully, both an understanding of how the courses are being handled and research into the entrance and exit competencies for AR and AW are needed.

To inform some of the materials development and to attempt to deal with unpopular textbook choices, Advanced Skills purchased several books on rubric development, extensive reading and syllabus design, as well as acquiring examination copies of other potential AR textbooks both in the *Academic Encounters* series and others.

Most importantly, the creation of the Advanced Skills committee has allowed for increased communication among teachers of AR and AW. Several meetings, both one-on-one between a committee member and teacher and group meetings for all teachers of each course, were held periodically throughout the year. These meetings were very valuable in bringing the state of these courses into view for the committee members, as well as providing teachers opportunities to give feedback on all aspects of the course. In the case of new teachers, these meetings have also served to clarify questions and address concerns being encountered in these courses.

ADVANCED READING (AR)

Curriculum Development

- o **Course objectives** – The objectives for the AR course are being revised based on teacher feedback. The intent of the revisions is to make the course goals more achievable for students of all levels, while still allowing teachers the freedom to adapt course materials and activities to the particular needs of their students.
- o **Quizzes** – In Semester 1, the committee devoted a lot of time to developing quizzes for the early chapters of *Academic Encounters: Life in Society*. These

quizzes consisted of both comprehension and vocabulary questions. Through teacher meetings, we found out that teachers were not really using these quizzes; therefore we did not continue this development in Semester 2. However, several teachers have been developing and sharing quizzes they have made for their classes, and many of these are now available on the server.

- o **Vocabulary lists** – For teacher reference, Marc created lists of AWL words appearing in *Academic Encounters* as well as word list and frequency data for those words. Masaki created vocabulary lists for each chapter so that students can keep track of new words. The lists allow students to fill in each word's part of speech, definition, and synonyms and antonyms, where applicable.
- o **Start-up lessons** – Development of suggested activities for the first one or two weeks of classes is under way.
- o **Reading strategies** – Teachers have indicated that they would like to promote more reading strategies in AR classes. As far as intensive reading is concerned, the *Academic Encounters* book introduces several very useful reading strategy activities, but does not carry them well through the book. The committee is looking at making strategy sheets available for teachers, possibly adapted from other books or developed by teachers, which can be used at any point in the course and with any reading materials.
- o **Other** – Marc created Word documents of the text from each section of *Academic Encounters* for teacher use and vocabulary analysis.

Research – Research this year has taken the form of investigating what is happening in the AR classes. There was a meeting for all AR teachers to discuss the course at the end of Semester 1. A recording and summary of this meeting are

available in the Advanced Skills folder on the server. In Semester 2, Marc has been having individual meetings with teachers to gather materials, answer questions, address concerns and generally find out what teachers have done in their classes this year. Next year, this information will hopefully be used for further materials development, as well as research to determine which materials are most useful.

The committee is also considering administering vocabulary levels or size pre-tests at the beginning of the 2010-2011 academic year. The purpose would be to get a better idea of the students' abilities and to have a clear indication of the vocabulary level appropriate for AR course materials. This idea was discussed with Paul Nation when he visited KUIS in October.

ADVANCED WRITING (AW)

Curriculum Development

- o **Course objectives** – The objectives for the AW course are being revised based on teacher feedback. The goal of these revisions is to make the course goals more achievable for students of all levels, while still allowing teachers the freedom to adapt course materials and activities to the particular needs of their students. Specifically, the number and types of writing assignments required in Semester 1 are being updated. Standardization of the grading scheme for the course has also been proposed.
- o **Preparation for the April orientation meeting** – Materials such as course syllabuses and sample essays are being collected in preparation for distribution to teachers at the April orientation meeting.
- o **Rubrics** – Siwon has developed grading rubrics for each of the different pieces

of writing students produce in AW. A small committee of AW teachers will assist in ensuring these materials are as useful as possible for teachers.

- o **Basic Writing overview** – A document is being prepared to help AW teachers be aware of what skills students are expected to have upon completion of Basic Writing. Julie Matsubara of the Basic Skills committee has assisted with this project.
- o **Start-up lessons** – Development of suggested activities for the first one to two weeks of classes is currently under way.

Research – Research this year has taken the form of investigating what is happening in the AW classes. There have been two AW teacher meetings to discuss the course this year. At the end of Semester 1, we met to discuss the course in general. In Semester 2, we met to discuss the research paper, an assignment to which many teachers devote the bulk of the semester. Successful completion of the research paper is the overall goal for AW. Recordings and summaries of these meetings are available in the Advanced Skills folder on the server. In Semester 2, Jenn held individual meetings with teachers to gather materials, answer questions, address concerns and generally find out what teachers have done in their classes this year. Next year, this information will hopefully be used for further materials development, as well as research to determine which materials are most useful.

FUTURE

The committee has been discussing a research project for next year on entrance and exit competencies in both AR & AW. Many teachers perceive a large gap between the Basic Skills courses and the Advanced Skills courses and this issue

urgently needs to be addressed.