JALT Forum: Reimagining Contemporary EFL Curricula

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This paper summarizes a 4-part forum describing ongoing efforts to transform Freshman English, a key course in the 1st-year English program at a private university in Japan. Recognizing rapid, consequential changes in the global view of English and the nature of communication, faculty and staff determined to thoroughly reimagine an English program that would authentically address fundamental concerns of our historical moment. This evolving, decidedly hybrid approach is founded on philosophical principles derived from sociocultural theory, social semiotics, multiliteracies, and the New Literacy Studies. The first contribution underscores the need to move away from a skills-based, communicative approach to language teaching. The second outlines the theoretical framework shaping the new curriculum development process. The third provides an example task sequence within a process-oriented syllabus, illustrating how this theoretical position has been implemented. The fourth addresses assessment issues both in general and with respect to specific institutional needs and constraints.

本論文は、日本のとある私立大学における1年次英語プログラムの中核を成す「フレッシュマンイングリッシュ」変革のための、進行中の取り組みを類型化する四部構成の公開討論をまとめたものである。英語及びコミュニケーションの本質に対する

捉え方について、時代の要請に応えるべく、英語学習および英語教育について、根本的な変革を与えることが当大学の教職員により決定された。本稿で提言するカリキュラムは、社会文化論、社会記号学、マルチリテラシー、ニューリテラシースタディーズなどの学術分野から知見をうけている。本稿は第一に、言語教育のスキルベースドでコミュニカティブな方法からの離脱の必要を明示する。第二に、新カリキュラム構築過程を方向づけた理論的枠組みを要約する。第三に、「プロセス指向シラバス」内でのタスク組みの具体例を用いて、当理論の実践方法を解説する。第四に、学生の成績評価をする際の問題点について、一般的な知見と本大学に特有の条件を交えて指摘する。

The purpose of this forum was to describe and discuss the rationale, principles, and organization behind an ongoing curriculum development project at Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS), focusing on the redesign of Freshman English (FE), a key course within the English Language Institute (ELI) program. KUIS is a small private university established in the late 1980s, a period in Japanese language education associated with the implementation of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme in 1987. The implementation of this program, with young, native speakers of English—mostly recent college graduates—being employed at schools across Japan, marked the start of a shift away from the grammar translation methodologies that had dominated in Japanese secondary and higher education to that point (see Sasaki, 2008). The ELI operates English language courses for 1st- and 2nd-year students across the departments that comprise KUIS and currently employs 60 MA-qualified lecturers, from a variety of backgrounds, on staggered 4-year contracts. As with many other university language programs, the overall course structure at KUIS was organized so that in the first 2 years learners studied language skills, primarily taught through the ELI, followed by 2 years of content-based elective courses. FE is an English Department course that meets for four 90-minute classes a week and currently has 24 sections of 20 students each, divided into high, mid, and low tiers on the basis of performance on a TOEFL Institutional Testing Program (ITP) test and in-house oral assessment scores, considered in combination. The range of student proficiencies at the time of matriculation can be very wide, with top tier students coming in with ITP scores of 450 and higher and being streamed for academic preparation to study abroad. In the lower tiers, these scores can go as low as 330, owing to institutional pressure to maintain the desired number of entering students.

The FE initiative was first begun by lecturers working under the guidance and philosophy of ELI founder Dr. Francis C. Johnson, who sought to develop a course enacting a strong version of communicative language teaching (CLT), whereby language acquisition is seen to arise from comprehensible input and social interaction. Another important defining principle of the ELI program at its inception was that of individualized learning (see Johnson & Paulston, 1976), with learners encouraged to take control of their own learning, most notably within the structure of FE. This philosophy was meant to meet perceived shortcomings of language education in Japan's junior and senior high schools, which often resulted in learners with a relatively high understanding of abstract grammar but with little functional ability even in daily conversation. The original, overarching goal of the course, then, was the development of "global proficiency," or the means to communicate in spoken English to native speakers on a broad range of topics and themes. Since April 2011, members of the FE Curriculum Development Committee within the ELI have been involved in a collaborative process of reviewing, reimagining, and redesigning the FE syllabus. This project is taking place within a broader program-wide reconsideration of what language and language education might and can mean in ever-changing times in the increasingly global and digitized contexts of Japanese higher education and Japanese society in general.

Foreign Language Education in Changing Times

Johnson, N. H.

In common with many other tertiary institutions in Japan, KUIS faces an increasing challenge to maintain student numbers and attract learners with appropriate levels of motivation and language proficiency (see Goodman, 2010). There is a widely felt concern over falling academic standards across Japan, associated with the *yutori kyoiku* (reduced intensity education) initiative (Butler & Iino, 2005) that was introduced into Japanese junior and senior high schools in the early 1990s. This relaxation of study intensity has perhaps compounded the demographic situation whereby the number of 18-year-olds in Japan has been decreasing steadily, meaning that it is increasingly easy for Japanese youth to enter higher education. Japanese universities have therefore been keen to expand the number of international students they admit as part of the drive to ensure that enrollment is maintained and that schools conform with the Japanese government's wishes to internationalize higher education and produce the "global citizens" it sees as important for successful participation in the new global economy (Burgess, Gibson, Klaphake, & Selzer, 2010). KUIS was awarded grant funding as part of the "Global 30 Project" that is expected to attract some 300,000 overseas students by 2020 to English-only degree programs established at core universities. The global initiative also incentivizes increases in numbers of Japanese students travelling and studying abroad as a key part of the initiative. A necessary entailment of this process is realizing high levels of student achievement on examinations such as International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and TOEFL, the entrance benchmarks set by schools in the west, to ensure that visiting students are able to cope with the language demands of studying in an L2 context (see Cho & Bridgeman, 2012, for discussion).

Indeed, meeting these redefined needs of different levels of students impacts upon curriculum development work in several important ways. At KUIS and similar institutions, achieving concrete score targets on internationally recognized standardized tests such as the TOEFL while also having to admit students with generally lower English proficiency is a challenge in itself. Establishing English-medium courses and having Japanese learners interact and study with greater numbers of international students in a common language other than Japanese poses an additional challenge. Moreover, institutions sending learners abroad also have a responsibility to ensure that students possess the high levels of digital and cultural literacy that will enable them to participate successfully once there. Other students, perhaps those aiming for the Japanese workplace in an increasingly global context, also require multiple literacies and cultural sensitivities in order to have the best opportunity for success. Rapid changes in technology and the nature of communication in the digital age provide further impetus for reconsideration of the nature of English language education in our context. This idea of globalization and changing needs in higher education is discussed in more detail in the following section by M. E. Nelson.

Development of the FE syllabus has taken place collaboratively and iteratively through the work of successive generations of ELI lecturers and management. In the first generation of the FE course, in operation between 1989 and 2010, learners worked through thematically organized units of study at their own pace and according to their own interests, strengths, and weaknesses. The role of the instructor became largely one of facilitator and guide, helping learners to navigate their own path through each unit towards a culminating project. The content of each thematic unit (e.g., music, travel, study abroad, interpersonal relationships) was developed to typically include readings and communicative tasks built around an array of media, affording different learning experiences and outcomes for the same cohort of students.

Over time, however, the original theoretical vision for the course was lost, and the former self-access syllabus came to resemble a loosely organized set of CLT-oriented materials: Many ideas, tasks,

and texts were dated, and contradictory approaches to language teaching were often present within the same instructional units. Consequently, incoming lecturers increasingly indicated that they saw the course as confusing and ineffective. Moreover, the focus on daily interaction around common themes was unchallenging for the higher proficiency students, yet at the same time increasingly too difficult for those with lower proficiency. The problem with having a prescribed set of materials is that they are, by definition, in constant need of adaptation for individual classes, typically only serving the needs of a very narrow band of learners in the middle proficiency range. The materials bank approach also contradicted the foundational notion of the course, that learners should navigate their own learning pathway, according to interest and need.

It is important to acknowledge the success of the original version of FE in establishing the principle of learner development as key within the ELI program. In the review process it became clear that part of the issue with FE was that the educational experience offered by a cognitive skills-based approach to CLT looked increasingly unsuitable for the new landscape of higher education in Japan, as elsewhere. As Kern (2001) has emphasized, while language and literacy learning naturally include a cognitive dimension, important aspects such as the sociocultural and the semiotic have often not been given sufficient prominence in language education. Such a conclusion is supported by researchers interested in better understanding the sociolinguistic implications of emergent global and digital communication (Blommaert, 2010) and the impact of media technologies on literacy, language, and education (e.g., Knobel & Lankshear, 2008). In particular, the role and impact of the English language in an increasingly globalized world has been an area of much interest and critical reappraisal (see Pennycook, 2006). The MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages (2007), in turn, in light of what they describe as these *changed times*, made an important call for a general shift in objectives towards what they term *transcultural competence* and highlighted the need to *operate between languages*, as useful goals and directions for language programs to adopt, essentially moving beyond the dominant CLT approach and well-established constructs such as communicative competence. The MLA report was particularly critical of the notion of culture in CLT, which, it argued, is realized as a straightforward and stable construct that is reliant on an oversimplification of what it means to learn a second or foreign language and interact with, learn about, and adopt different cultural perspectives. Coelho (1998) termed such a one-dimensional approach as one of culture through "food, festivals and famous men." In such a view, culture is simply a set of practices that can be learned *about* rather than a transformative experience that shapes identity and ways of being in the world. This critical position reflects earlier re-evaluations of the place of education in the global and digital world (New London Group, 1996) and more recently the work done by Kramsch (2006), who, in reviewing the state of the foreign language teaching and learning field reflects on the ways in which CLT has often been implemented, wrote:

> Not only has communicative competence become reduced to its spoken modality, but it has often been taken as an excuse largely to do away with grammar and to remove much of the instructional responsibility from the teacher who becomes a mere facilitator of group and pair work in conversational activities. (p. 250)

This is arguably an apt critique of language programs in many different parts of the Japanese educational system, in which native speakers have often been employed primarily to facilitate what are seen as *fun* communicative language learning activities. The *serious* business of preparing students for entrance examinations, and otherwise undertaking the important role of teaching English as an academic subject, has generally been the domain of Japanese professors and teachers, thus creating a two-tiered system in high schools and colleges, characterized by an unhelpful pedagogical fracture between communication and culture on one hand and language form and academic content on the other. Kramsch (2006) wrote that

> It is no longer appropriate to give students a tourist-like competence to exchange information with native speakers of national languages within well-defined national cultures. They need a much more sophisticated competence in the manipulation of symbolic systems. Hence the renewed attention to discourse in a range of modalities (spoken, written, visual, electronic), the focus on semiotic choice, and the ability to interpret meanings from discourse features. (p. 251)

As Kramsch suggested, language programs suffer when language itself is abstracted out of cultural and academic contexts to be taught as a system for the everyday exchange of interpersonal information. Tourist-like competences will adequately serve neither learners who need to study and live abroad nor those who interact with international friends and fellow students on campus and in digital spaces. As Kramsch made clear, part of the underlying reason for this call for a paradigm shift in language education can be traced to technology-driven changes in the way language is actually being used in social contexts. Kress (2003) has convincingly argued that in the current global media age, a profound change has taken place in the way meaning is constructed and communicated. Kress and others (e.g., Hull & Nelson, 2005; Nelson, 2006; Nelson & Johnson, 2014) have been concerned with describing the range of representational and communicational modes involved in communicating learning through image, animated movement, and interactive written and spoken texts. It is this expanded kind of textual awareness that defines the new *sophisticated competence*, described above, that can inform a new direction for language programs in Japan. The target of global proficiency, or the means to communicate in spoken English to native speakers on a broad range of topics and themes, no longer seems to match the emergent needs of learners in the Japanese or global context, where constructs such as *English* (whose English?) and *native speaker* (native where exactly?) are increasingly problematic (see Canagarajah, 2014).

Issues associated with organizing university language programs around a skill-based language focus in years 1 and 2 and then a content focus in years 3 and 4 have been well documented elsewhere (e.g., Byrnes and Maxim, 2004). From a functional perspective, in important ways, both language and academic content are ultimately the same thing (Byrnes, 2008). As practitioners in content and language integrated learning (CLIL; see Coyle, 2008) have also argued, one cannot meaningfully abstract the discourse of science away from *the science*, for example; science, as with other domains of inquiry, is created and realized in and through language and other semiotic means. More specifically for language programs in tertiary contexts, Byrnes and Maxim (2004) pointed out that the 2-year period is neither sufficient time to produce high levels of proficiency, nor is it time enough to develop sufficient content knowledge to prepare the kinds of graduates that are going to be well equipped for the challenges of the global and so-called "post-Fordist" workplace, in which new technology and collaboration in horizontal team relationships are now central (see Cope & Kalantzis, 2000).

In the revised KUIS English program, through courses like FE, we have sought to end the artificial and unhelpful schisms between language, communication, culture, and content. Focus and attention ought, and can, be given to spoken communication through analysis and extended discussions of different text types, allowing for the sociocultural content of texts to provide opportunities for understanding and discussing the linguistic and other representational choices that comprise different texts and genres. In analyzing the needs of the program, a tripartite conceptual framework was created to ensure that different courses develop along similar conceptual lines. The acronym AIM represents a way of thinking about the needs of our students: *A* standing for different kinds of *awareness* (linguistic, self-as-learner, semiotic), *I* foregrounding the importance of *interaction* with both peers and cultural artifacts, and *M* representing the educational proposal that is known as *multiliteracies* (New London Group, 1996). We argue that this approach permits English courses previously, perhaps even pejoratively, classi-

fied as communicative to now include rigorous academic content as well as a metafocus on what it means to communicate effectively in different rhetorical contexts.

In summary, for reasons related to the changes in institutional, national, and global contexts, as well as shifts in understanding about the trajectory and purpose of foreign language education (see Schulz, 2006), it was clear that, by 2011, the ELI program, including FE, required a complete reimagining and revision.

Multiliteracies: Theoretically Grounding an EFL Pedagogy for the Future

Nelson, M. E.

The need for curriculum reform in the local KUIS context is most clearly perceived against the global background of social, communicational, and economic patterns from which particular exigencies for EFL education and program design have emerged. The most appropriate response to these emergent needs, it will be proposed, is a pedagogical approach principally informed by the theory and practices of *multiliteracies* (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012; New London Group, 1996). Indeed, the present moment is a perplexing, but also intellectually and practically exciting time for English language education and educators, within and without Japan. Vital work over the past two decades in the areas of communications theory, cultural studies, sociocultural studies, social semiotics, linguistic anthropology, and the so-called New Literacy Studies, among other diverse fields, has recommended a bewildering number of powerful conceptual lenses through which to view and potentially better understand what it means to live, communicate, cooperate, and collaborate in the world of today and tomorrow. A very short list might include *cosmopolitanism, neoliberalism, post-Fordism, fast-capitalism, post-nationalism, transnationalism*, and *internationalism*; to which one could also add *super-diversity, reflexivity, hybridity, intertextuality, liminality, hospitality,* and *multimodality*. Perhaps most salient and consequential among such notions is *globalization*, a construct that, despite its widely varied and often vague interpretations, is now in Japan a notably influential factor in educational policy and funding decisions at all levels, as outlined in the preceding paper by N. H. Johnson. While a thoroughgoing definition of each of the abovementioned concepts is beyond the scope of this report, it may suffice to state for present purposes that these concepts, taken together, were conceived to critically frame a set of interrelated social and economic phenomena that importantly characterize the individual and collective experiences of people at present, summarized as follows.

The first overarching concern relates to the rapid, dynamic movement today of people and texts, or "cultural flows" (Appadurai, 1996), around the globe, facilitated especially by developments in transportation and information and communications technologies (ICTs), most obviously the World Wide Web. A second observed trend relates to shifts not in the locations, but rather in the affiliations of people around the world. That is, human interconnectedness is seen as increasingly determined less by sociopolitical boundaries and geography and more by what might be termed *affinity*. J. P. Gee (2004) coined the term "affinity space" to describe the real and (increasingly) online spaces in which more and more of us "affiliate with others based primarily on shared activities, interests, and goals, not shared race, class culture, ethnicity, or gender" (p. 67). Third, just as personal affiliations are now structured and distributed beyond traditional limits and borders, so too are individuals' working lives; now, in what scholars commonly call the "post-Fordist" age (see Cope and Kalantzis, 2000; Jessop, 1992; New London Group, 1996), interactions with coworkers, clients, students, and so on seem practically unfettered by former constraints of time and distance, for example, creating complex new economic relationships, opportunities, and problems. Finally, there is what Kress (2003) has discussed in terms of the ascendance of the screen over the printed page and of the image over the written word, referring to the rapidly changing, ever more "multimodal" and textually mediated nature

of human communication. Deeply implicated in this, and in all of the trends described above, are digital, globally networked ICTs, the profound significance of which, for our field, cannot be denied or overestimated.

Admittedly, the foregoing summary of our emergent context is unavoidably partial and insufficiently nuanced; however, even so reductively expressed, these trends nonetheless provoke renewed interrogation of the most fundamental aspects of our work as language and literacy educators. Questions we must now grapple with include these:

- What are languages? (Does English, as such, even exist as a discrete entity?)
- What is language itself? (Does language have meaning independent of other attending forms of communication, such as gesture or the images on a website?)
- What are the collective and individual interests and affinities of our students? (What is it to teach Japanese young adults, for example, and might easily applied labels and ready assumptions obfuscate more than clarify?)
- What must we prepare our students to do and be, and how? (Where and to what might our students' aspirations take them, and how do we expand rather than constrain these possibilities?)

Still, paramount among all questions we are now compelled to ask is "What constitutes learning in the world of today and tomorrow?" While the dynamic movements, shifting needs, and fluid boundaries of this late-modern moment are perhaps impossible to fully accommodate, multiliteracies is proposed as a useful starting point and overarching framework.

Multiliteracies is the construct of an international collection of leading scholars known as the New London Group, who first gathered in 1994 in New London, New Hampshire, to discuss the very same trends and concerns outlined above and their implications for education and social justice. In 1996, the Group released a highly influential position paper, published in the *Harvard Educational Review*, entitled "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures," which called for a radical, fundamental reconsideration of education and learning as processes of meaning-making and *design*, rather than mere acquisition of skills and knowledge, toward the realization of positive *social futures*, that is, a view of pedagogy as "a teaching and learning relationship that creates the potential for building learning conditions leading to full and equitable social participation" (New London Group, 1996, p. 1). In very broad strokes, design, as the term is applied here, refers to the active, intentional, informed, *designful* construction of meanings and texts, for purposes of transforming existing understandings and creating new material, conceptual, and social resources on which to base further acts of meaning making and transformational learning. Learners consider, evaluate, and discuss the affordances and constraints of pencils, paper, textbooks, pixels, genres, friendships, ideas, emotions, images, and intuitions, among myriad other potential resources to be recruited and designfully combined with the aim of fulfilling an identified meaning-making purpose. Crucially, in this sense, answers and knowledge are always composed and constructed, not simply found, and the design process is uniquely shaped and enriched in each instance by the diversity of artifacts, backgrounds, feelings, thoughts, and abilities that teachers and learners have and make available to one another. Necessarily, too, the meaning designer is always critically alert. Criticality is at the very core of multiliteracies pedagogy, in that *critical framing*, seeing what is presently known and understood from new and different perspectives, is the catalyst for transforming understanding.

This, of course, is only the briefest abstract sketch of how multiliteracies pedagogy may be operationalized; the reader is referred to the original New London Group (1996) manifesto and an edited volume by Cope and Kalantzis (2000), in which the original coauthored paper is reprinted, for a more comprehensive explanation. Expectedly, though, these fundamental principles of multiliteracies,

and their value within the broader global landscape and the local contexts in which we live, teach, and learn ourselves, will lend clarity and cogency to the programmatic outline described as follows.

Multiliteracies Pedagogy in Practice

Selman, A. and Worth, A.

Core Processes

In redesigning the 1st- and 2nd-year program, which falls under the purview of the ELI, three interrelated organizing principles, represented by the acronym *AIM*, were identified that tie together the needs analysis for the program overall: *Awareness* (linguistic, self, semiotic), *Interaction* (interpersonal, cultural), and *Multiliteracies*. Using the AIM framework, the course goals were redefined as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Goals of Freshman English

AIM focus	Freshman English course goals
A	1. Develop learners' awareness of both language and other semiotic means for making meaning
	2. Develop learners' awareness of themselves as learners
I	3. Give learners at very different incoming proficiency levels equal opportunity and support to improve their spoken and textual (reading/writing) English proficiencies as far as possible
M	4. Provide learners with meaningful and rigorous academic content on language, communication, and culture to bridge the divide with later content courses
	5. Engage learners with a broad array of texts and provide tools for approaching texts through analysis and discussion on aspects of communication such as genre, register, and multimodality to improve reading proficiency
	6. Develop learners' ability to synthesize information and data from multiple sources and represent it in multiple ways

A corollary goal of FE at the program level was to provide a structure that allowed considerable freedom for lecturers from different backgrounds and with different beliefs to work creatively with their students across different levels yet within a coherent course. With these challenging goals in mind, it was decided to maintain the basic structure of the original course. That means that the syllabus is still organized into thematic units that last for around 5 weeks and culminate in a short project. Learners cover an introductory Orientation unit and then five content units through two 15-week semesters.

At the program level, it was also decided to employ a process-oriented syllabus. Breen (1987) described a process syllabus as a set of processes that negate the need for preselected material to be brought into the classroom by the teacher. This approach fosters the individualization that allows for, in principle, accommodation of the particular learning needs of each student in the program, at whatever level they happen to be upon entering. Following Kalantzis and Cope (2012), we define knowledge and its creation, or *learning processes*, quite simply as "foundational types of thinking-in-action . . . things you can do to know" (p. 356). These processes become the organizing thread of the course lessons and the learners themselves are able to select the resources to be employed in working through a particular process. Similarly, the choice of topics for each unit is negotiated with the learners through in-class discus-

sions and surveys and based upon teacher-student interaction in learning journals. In class, each student is required to use an iPad, with which he or she can use any information or application he or she deems necessary for the completion of a process. The iPads facilitate access to the full range of texts available online and enable audiovisual recording, composing, and editing, which may also be brought to bear in achieving students' meaning-making purposes.

Six core processes have been selected and designed to provide learners with a variety of learning experiences that each contribute to the explicit goals of the course, building on some of the strengths of the previous version of the course (e.g., extended interaction and self-analysis, described below, were both common activities in the old version of FE). These six processes allow us to meet each of the goals within a structure of three cycles each semester. The repetition is important as it provides the means for reflection on performance, feedback from the instructor, and development of learner proficiencies. The six core processes, introduced in turn in the Orientation unit, are as follows:

1. Self-Analysis: Students choose and analyze an area of personal concern in their own learning (e.g., vocabulary, grammar, turn-taking, pronunciation). For example, if they want to investigate their use of gesture, they can analyze a video of a recent presentation. If they want to examine turn-taking during a conversation, they can use an audio recording of a conversation on the unit theme, transcribe it, and reflect on strengths and weaknesses.
2. Audio-Visual Interpretation: Students examine audio or visual texts within a framework of different modes of communication. For example, students might look at a TV commercial and identify how sound and music are used to convey meaning. Students can also look at a segment of video and highlight new language that is of interest for their own communication needs. Different tools are introduced by instructors to facilitate this analysis.
3. Data Analysis: This process is concerned with the ways in which data might be analyzed and used to support a point of view. For example, students can carry out a class survey based on a topic they are studying and practice representing and extrapolating meaning from the outcomes. After the analysis, the conclusions can contribute toward a culminating project at the end of the unit.
4. Extended Interaction: For this process, each student typically leads a 10-to-20-minute discussion based on a text that he or she has sourced and which is related to the topic being covered in the unit. Students learn to extract key words and points from the text and then relate them to the other students in a small group. They also compose discussion questions based on the text.
5. Communication Strategies: Students examine how different strategies can be employed for effective communication. For example, they might take a complex scientific process, such as that for cloning a sheep, and decide how best to convey the concepts to a particular audience in a given context. This core process can often be used as a planning stage for a presentation project.
6. Problem Solving: Students discuss and consider options for solving a problem, which can be social, personal, or linguistic. For example, during a unit on the environment students might have the opportunity to discuss local, international, and world environmental concerns. The process could equally be turned inward to address a problem arising in class.

During a 4-to-5-week content unit, each process is usually carried out once. The processes can be taught in any order, and each process should contribute to the culminating unit project. It is also possible to link processes so that information is retrieved during one process and developed during another. Additionally, by employing a process rather than a lesson, each individual teacher and student can interpret it in his or her own way. This means that the scope for

imagination and variety is vast while maintaining consistency at the program level across the different classes.

An important aspect of the process-approach is the self-reflection and interaction with the instructor in learning journals that follows completion of each process and each unit. Here, small class sizes are key. Fortunately, KUIS is able to cap class size for proficiency courses in years 1 and 2 at 20 students. This means that it is relatively easy for an instructor to monitor and respond to student self-reflections in an ongoing dialogue. Learners will typically reflect on their own progress through the unit and the suitability, for their purposes at hand, of the resources they may have chosen.

For example, in one class, a student with high English proficiency did a unit on a popular music theme and came to the Extended Interaction process. Based on her experience in the Orientation unit, this learner looked back at her notes and reflections and used this knowledge to select her next text for the extended discussion. In this case, the student had struggled with the meta-language required to move the extended interaction along the first time that she did the process. In dialogue with the instructor, new vocabulary and grammatical structures appropriate for task management emerged, not only for immediate study but also for later review before the next cycle. Also, since that first discussion experience, the class had an explicit lesson on different ways of representing popular culture in the media. The main point of that lesson was also reviewed before the text was selected for the discussion. Since the student had an interest in jazz, she was able, through an online search, to find an accessible and quite short article in English that talked about the popularity of jazz in Japan in the 1950s. In the article, the popularity was related to airplay on local and armed forces radio and the increasing visibility of American culture in cinema in the postwar years. This content provided the material for the discussion questions that the student prepared for the group and for some key vocabulary that the student thought was, based on her own understanding, important to continue the class work about representation and media. The student then prepared a short script with bullet points and key vocabulary and proceeded with her presentation to the group. After the lesson, the following types of questions would typically form the basis for further reflection: *Was the task or text too difficult? Did it provide enough interest for class discussion? Did doing the extended interaction itself prove difficult? Why might that have been? What language forms did I struggle with to achieve this process? What parts of the text could I not explain? How can I do this process better the next time? What was better this time?*

In response to such reflection, the instructor is able to provide explicit advice and targeted instruction to specifically help each learner or group of individuals, depending on the types of issues that arise, and learners are encouraged to use this analytic work as a resource for improvement in succeeding process engagements. This process work eventually feeds into a project, as described below.

Unit Projects

Implementation of the core processes requires a thematic narrative that links the work together as students collaborate and proceed through each unit. This cohesion is provided by unit projects. A project consists of students working in a team to design, transform, or perform a text. Over a period of 24-30 class hours over the course of a unit, there is a progression from introducing and working through the unit concepts, followed by research in preparation for a project, and finally production. The topic and genre for each project are negotiated between the teacher and students according to interests, abilities, practicalities, and perceived needs. Though not strictly mandated, the unit topic should be quite general (e.g., business and marketing, the natural world, communication technologies) to allow a wide range of subtopics for students to choose from. Teachers may restrict topics to ones they feel comfortable with or impose a choice for the sake of balance or to broaden the range of discourses over the year.

Because the syllabus is no longer tied to actual materials, a class can cover any topic of interest. Deciding on the content of units is one way in which self-direction by students is realized in the course. However, convergence is necessary for class cohesion, whole group instruction sessions, and valid assessment. To give coherence to the course, culminating projects are defined by one or more of four rhetoric types: exposition, narration, description, and argumentation. These rhetoric types are the building blocks of meaning making in academic contexts, and we want learners to experience each one of them in turn. Adapted conceptually from the modes of rhetoric originating in 19th-century writing courses (Bain, 1867), these rhetoric types provide a central discourse to be explored throughout the project phase of each unit. Examples are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Rhetoric Types for Project Work in Freshman English

Rhetoric type	Description	Project example
Exposition	Information is explained to the listener. Text is presented as accurate, fair, and clear. The rhetorical appeals to the reader are explicitly to ethos and logos.	Presentation (KeyNote)
Description	The text evokes a representation in the listener's mind. It consists of metaphoric or modal transformation (e.g., a verbal description of a painting transforms a visual experience and may attempt to convey emotional experience, technical details, etc. depending on particular purpose).	Presentation (Poster)
Narration	Ideas are expressed as some kind of story. Text is concerned with agents and their roles in the causes and outcomes of events. Time and space are significant in ways that may be absent from other text types.	Folk tales as Readers' Theater
Argumentation	A central concept is given with supporting evidence. Text is concerned with the connections and interrelationships between concepts. Appeals are made to logos, ethos, and pathos.	Environment Debate
Mixed	The focus is on the communicative power of, and movement between, the different rhetoric types.	Travel Fair

For purposes of more practical illustration, it may be instructive to return to the example from above, with the student in a high-tier class working through a thematic unit on popular music. Having completed each of the six core processes as follows, the learner is given the rhetoric type of *narration* to define and structure her project work.

1. Self-Analysis: A short conversation with a partner on the traditional music of Japan is used as the basis for analyzing speaking fluency, which the teacher and student have previously discussed as an area for improvement. The student records, transcribes, and analyzes her conversation on the iPad, noting evidence of weaknesses and strengths. She then tries the conversation again, with a different partner, and reflects on any changes in her performance.

2. Audio-Visual Analysis: As a class, the group examines a sample music video. In particular, the lesson looks at how sound, lyrics, and visual images are artfully combined to create narrative meaning in the video. Learners choose their own videos to analyze in a similar way after the process has been modeled.
3. Data Analysis: The class designs a survey on the topic of favorite music genres from high school days to the present and then administers it to another class. The data are analyzed and interpreted in relation to a short article about Japanese teenagers and recent trends that the teacher has previously introduced.
4. Extended Interaction: The learner chooses an article based on the popularity of jazz in Japan and uses her prior work on multimedia representation to inform her textual analysis and explanation.
5. Communication Strategies: The class works on a process where, in small groups, they create a pitch for a music video designed to promote a little-known artist of their choice. They highlight a theme for a music video and create strategies for visually communicating the theme of the song as a sales pitch for the artist. Learners reflect on the different linguistic and other communicative strategies needed to effectively persuade their "client," the artist.
6. Problem Solving: The class reads an article from a newspaper about lack of music facilities in rural junior and senior high schools. The students, in small groups, try to work out a solution for an actual school in northern Japan. Proposals differ across groups in the approaches taken, from fund raising activities to different and creative ways of teaching and doing music in a school context. The proposal is composed as a formal document addressed to relevant schools, community leaders, and corporate partners.

Again, the rhetorical concentration for this unit's project is on narrative, which has been subtly interwoven throughout the six core processes on the general popular music theme, with students' accrued experiences with music-related vocabulary building, textual analysis, historical review, social connection, and so on all coalescing in the project-based narrative synthesis. The student decides, after discussion with her team and instructor, to explore narrative more deeply by investigating the story of how, when, and why jazz came to be popular in Japan. The group explores the history and developments of jazz as a musical form within the United States and in the Japanese context. Attention is paid to the different time scales of history involved, from the social to the personal. This research is then presented as a historical documentary project with eight slides digitally composed on an iMovie app, including musical, spoken, and written narrative text in accompaniment. Further reflection is given in a short written text about how different representational modes were used to create meaning in the short documentary. In particular, the group discusses the problem of visually representing jazz as a Japanese phenomenon, when the iconography of jazz typically indexes American culture. Further discussion revolves around representing the passage of time in a visual manner. The unit concludes with assessment and reflection. This project format provides a way to broaden students' academic and linguistic awareness, establishes goal-oriented teamwork, and allows for investigation into multiple modes of communication and multiple literacies. It is adaptable to all levels of linguistic proficiency and retains a familiarity that facilitates adoption by teachers.

What should be clear from this description is that many of the tasks and texts that come to comprise this unit of work for this learner are quite familiar. There is nothing particularly new about working through thematically linked units, culminating in group project work. Indeed, the extended interaction and self-analysis processes were adapted from existing materials and activities from the old FE course (see Stillwell et al., 2010). What the process approach offers that is different, however, is the flexibility to have each

learner engaged with and working at his or her own learning within the class framework. The multiliteracies perspective also offers a different disposition towards text and meaning making that really allows learners to focus in on the affordances and constraints of different meaning-making resources. The role of language in meaning making is then highlighted, and linguistic forms in context are recast as resources, or *available designs* (New London Group, 1996) that the creator of meaning has at his or her disposal.

Planning for Assessment of Multiliteracies

Lyddon, P. A.

The stated aims of the Promotion of Global Human Resource Development Funding Project are "to overcome the Japanese younger generation's 'inward tendency' and to foster human resources who can positively meet the challenges and succeed in the global field, as the basis for improving Japan's global competitiveness and enhancing the ties between nations" (MEXT, n.d., para. 1). On the surface, these aims might appear highly congruent with those of a multiliteracies curriculum designed to promote the necessary intercultural competence for students to negotiate complex linguistic and cultural differences and to design their own characteristic professional, public, and private social futures. Both seem to imply individuals who can make the most of opportunities to work, study, and travel in an increasingly globalized society.

In reality, however, the operationalization of these two broadly defined sets of goals is quite different. For instance, one of the indicative outputs proposed to the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science for the purposes of project evaluation is that at least 40% of students in the class of 2016 not only qualify for a study abroad program but actually participate in one sometime before graduation (Kanda University of International Studies, 2014, p. 2). While the caliber of the host institution and the duration of stay may leave room for interpretation, the specifics of one other commitment does not, namely that 100 or more students should also score 600 or above on the TOEFL Institutional Testing Program (ITP) test (Kanda University of International Studies, 2014). It should be noted that the English Department also requires a self-imposed minimum TOEFL ITP score of 480 for enrollment in 3rd-year elective courses, effectively keeping performance pressure on the least as well as the most able students.

In response to these challenges, the ELI has used a combination of TOEFL ITP scores and scores on an in-house group oral assessment to place all incoming freshmen into three tiers, with the top and bottom each comprising approximately one quarter of the population and the middle nearly half. To put students on an internationally recognized measurement scale as well as prevent the hijacking of the new curriculum by TOEFL preparation courses, the ELI has also adopted the proficiency bands of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2001), to describe the general starting abilities of students in each group (see Table 3), although it must be admitted that these are based, for now, on rough TOEFL equivalents (see Vancouver English Centre, 2015).

Table 3. Initial Student Abilities by Placement Group

Group (proportion)	Bottom 1/4	Mid 1/2	Top 1/4
TOEFL Range	333-427	403-470	440-547
CEFR Equivalent	A1-B1.1	A2.1-B1.2	B1.1-B2.2

Following the adoption of CEFR, a set of broad attainment targets was developed, not just for FE but also across the entire four semesters of the ELI program. Accompanying each target are four thresholds to define student abilities that exceed, attain, near, or fail to near it by the end of the given semester (see Table 4). Once again, the CEFR levels here are derived from TOEFL scores. However, it is at this point that the assessment plan begins to divest itself of its

reliance on this single measure of receptive academic literacy to address the full scope of the new curriculum, which includes general linguistic, cultural, and informational literacies and targets the development of productive abilities as well.

Table 4. Program Standards by Semester

Semester	CEFR (TOEFL ITP)			
	Fails to near	Nears	Attains	Exceeds
1	A1 (<400)	A2.1 (400)	A2.2 (420)	B1.1 (450)
2	A2.1 (400)	A2.2 (420)	B1.1 (450)	B1.2 (480)
3	A2.2 (420)	B1.1 (450)	B1.2 (480)	B2.1 (520)
4	B1.1 (450)	B1.2 (480)	B2.1 (520)	B2.2 (550)

Given the constraint that classes must continue to be taught even as the new FE and other courses are still being developed, the next component is still a work in progress, but it starts with a framework identifying the three main foci of our program: awareness, interaction, and multiliteracies, or AIM. Within each of these areas, we have tentatively outlined a number of learning objectives and begun to describe student performances with regard to them in terms of exceeding, attaining, nearing, or failing to near a set of provisional standards that will eventually need to be differentiated to distinguish projected "+" levels (e.g., A2.2 from A2.1), tested for feasibility, and then rigorously validated against CEFR (North & Jones, 2009).

One of the main goals currently identified for multiliteracies, for instance, includes *synthesis of information from multiple sources*. A CEFR A2 descriptor for an associated learning performance outcome might then read something like the following:

> Can understand and produce simple connected text on topics that are familiar or of personal interest. Can give a prepared straightforward presentation on a familiar topic within his/her field which is clear enough to be followed without difficulty most of the time and in which the main points are explained with reasonable precision and supported by more than one primary data source.

The plan is to establish a system of up to six key performance assessments (i.e., one for each 5-week instructional unit) for each course in the program. In the case of FE, the first step will be to match the performance outcome statements with the most relevant rhetoric types (i.e., narration, description, exposition, or argumentation) so that teachers can begin to suggest appropriate culminating projects to serve as these key assessments. For instance, the objective of synthesis of information from multiple sources as described above might best apply to exposition or argumentation. As such, the course instructor would be required to design a task requiring research on a topic of personal relevance including firsthand data collection as well as an oral or written presentation, or both, of the findings.

Once these culminating projects have been elaborated and piloted, course coordinators will compare the resulting student projects for the purposes of developing standardized rubrics to eventually be used for benchmarking, by which all new and returning course instructors thereafter will be able to independently evaluate samples of previous student work and then collectively determine which performance descriptor (i.e., exceeds, attains, nears, or fails to near the standard) best applies for each relevant target outcome. Although the actual degree of inter-rater reliability cannot be determined, as it would be impractical to require more than one evaluator for each student project, we hope that the benchmarking process will at least ensure that all students are held accountable for obtaining the same skills across all course sections and that everyone is evaluated by the same standards.

As marking systems vary from institution to institution, a comprehensive explanation of the proposed translation of the standards-based performance evaluations on the objectives within the key assessments into letter grades is well beyond the scope of this paper. In terms of a given assignment, however, task performance might be judged as attaining the overall standard if, for example, the following two criteria were satisfied: (a) performance in *all* categories of the rubric at least nears the relevant categorical standard and (b) performance in 80% or more of the categories at least attains the standard. With this kind of longitudinal data, encompassing multiple performances over the duration of an entire year, we hope to not only improve upon the placement system for 2nd-year classes, but also facilitate meaningful communication among all the various stakeholders in the program in order to celebrate our successes as well as continue to address any outstanding needs.

Concluding Reflections on the Forum

The forum concluded with 20 minutes of discussion based on comments and questions from attendees. Three central questions were the basis for lively interaction, and each of these is highlighted here in turn. First, a concern was raised as to the relation of history and historical meaning to the process- and project-oriented work in which the students are engaged. The principal issue was that, to the commenter's understanding, such iterative progression through a set of generic and rhetorical types and continual analytic focus on communication in the present and immediate past might serve to underemphasize the more gradual, longitudinal qualities of linguistic and cultural development. The resulting discussion focused on the importance not only of introspection and awareness, but also of retrospection, memory, and prospection, as vital functions in any act of meaning making, as defined and operationalized according to the AIM framework and FE syllabus.

A further question was raised with the issue of elitism and the production of inequality in Japanese society. If schools such as KUIS, with considerable financial support from the Japanese government, are able to offer innovative initiatives and provide access to new technology-based literacies, does this not only serve to widen the already unequal distribution of opportunity for young people in Japan? This is certainly a valid and important concern. Indeed, the multiliteracies framework is above all else concerned with situating learning and creating awareness about the social context in which the interaction is taking place. The ability to critically engage with a given context and to negotiate access to opportunities need not, as Cope and Kalantzis (2000) argue, be incompatible goals for education. The idea of *productive diversity* captures the sense of genuine plurality of democratic and fair engagement with people of different backgrounds, cultures, and languages in the forging of new civic spaces and a new, equitable public realm.

A related point was raised about implementing a pedagogy of multiliteracies in contexts that do not have well-developed technology resources, as is still often the case in high schools and colleges in Japan as elsewhere. The point was made in response that a pedagogy of multiliteracies is not essentially about access to technology. Rather it is about understanding the role of media and mediation itself and how choice of mode and mediation is implicated in the communicative act and the social production of meaning. It is true that the tablet technology that KUIS students use certainly allows for exploration of online resources and discourses; however, it is not a necessary part of the desired disposition towards language and meaning making that is central to the approach. Moving towards a program based on meaning-making marks a decisive shift in thinking and practice. It remains to be seen exactly how this shift will impact on our students, who are generally coming to our school out of an educational culture that is still resolutely based on exam preparation and a structural orientation towards language. Also, as reported in research in other contexts (Allen & Paesani, 2010), such a shift represents a considerable challenge at the institutional level, requiring at the very least, support and cooperation from administrators and training for, and buy-in from, the lecturers who deliver the program. We have started

to meet some of these challenges through in-house workshops on such topics as *multiliteracies pedagogy* and *multimodality*. We are also able to invite guest speakers from the field to give lectures and workshops on an array of related topics. Though many challenges remain, the initial response from students and lecturers has generally been very positive, and we continue to invite feedback and comments from those participating in the program.

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