

## 国内大学の子供発達学科における教員養成コースの作成を担当した教員4名の協働

### Cooperation Between Four Teachers in Designing a Teacher Training Course in English for Child Development Majors at one Japanese University

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#### Abstract

This paper explains how four teachers worked together to build a coordinated course with a shared goal, whilst maintaining a balance of teacher autonomy. The course was a one-year Child Development Major course. Through keeping common goals and sharing pedagogical principles along with a shared grading system the teachers built a framework which underpinned the course. The framework facilitated the coordination of the programme while each teacher focused on a chosen area. The outcome of the programme was an intensive one-year teacher training programme in English.

#### Background

Four native English teachers, including the author, were employed to teach a one-year compulsory English course in one university in 2013, in Japan. The students were all first-year Child Development majors, who after graduation would be teaching English in elementary schools in Japan, and the students were divided into four classes by English level. The four teachers had specialised backgrounds in teaching children. Two of the teachers were new to teaching the course, and so the four teachers decided to re-create the course syllabus and contents. All the teachers had over 10 years teaching experience in Japan, and some more experience in Japan and overseas. This paper outlines the process through which the teachers worked and the outcome.

Two of the teachers were from New Zealand and two of the teachers were from the UK. Two of the teachers had founded and run their own English immersion kindergarten programmes in their own English schools. One teacher was a trained Elementary school teacher in their native country and one teacher had a Master's in teaching English

to Young Learners (MA TEYL). Three of the teachers were employed full-time at the university, and one was a part-time teacher. With these backgrounds and logistical factors the teachers quickly decided common pedagogical practices for language learning for younger learners, from which a framework was built.

This paper is divided into four parts. The decision-making process used in making the course is explained first, after which the pedagogical practices are outlined. Next, the third part, details the course framework, and finally the course outcomes are outlined.

#### 1. Decision Making

During the process of the decision making, which brought about the completion of the syllabus, contents and grading, there was an unspoken mutual respect between the teachers that determined that all suggestions were plausible, and that all teachers were of equal standing. Therefore, there was no leader of the group, all decisions were consensus determined, and ideas were discussed

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until the best way forward for the group was determined.

While collaboration, and collegiality, have been termed as the “keys to educational change” <sup>(1)</sup> there are also specific indicators attributed to collaboration which were evident in this situation. They were shared goals <sup>(2)</sup>, the aim being to serve the students <sup>(3)</sup> and, there also being one common goal <sup>(4)</sup>. Furthermore, while the initial goal was to create a syllabus and content for the course, the amendments of the curriculum were still ongoing at the time of the writing of this paper. Thus, the elements of the decision-making process as illustrated above align with key elements of collaboration as discussed by Sato, 2012 <sup>(5)</sup>. So, on the foundation of collaboration, pedagogy was discussed by the teachers. This is outlined next.

## **2. Pedagogy**

Due to the future occupations of the students in the classrooms and the skills they would need in the language classroom in the future, a communication orientated pedagogy coupled with a learner-centred approach was taken <sup>(6)</sup>. To attain this the content for the course, its delivery and grading structure were discussed. These are explained below starting with the content, and the core teaching of Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences (MI) in relation to language acquisition in younger learners. Also, based on the premise that younger learners learn by doing, it was decided that practicum would be part of the course structure. The first step, however, was to discuss the Multiple Intelligences and find a way forward.

### **2.1. Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences**

Gardner identified eight ‘intelligences’, and subsequently extensive research has been done into Multiple Intelligences in pedagogy, including learning English as a foreign language. However, the extent to which teacher-training in Japan is based on the intelligences is little documented. The four teachers in this paper were all familiar with the concept of MI, and were all open to developing a course that achieved a two-fold aim;

1. to teach the students about MI

2. to help the students apply MI in teaching English as a foreign language to elementary school children in Japan.

Based on this two-fold aim the teachers discussed the eight intelligences: and discussed the possibility of teaching one each per semester around which to create a three-week teacher training module (these were eventually termed *blocks*, which is explained below). Through dialogue between the teachers it was decided that while it was possible for MI to underpin the curriculum, to facilitate the students’ learning, the presentation of the material needed a different approach. Ultimately, the goal was for all the intelligences to be introduced while activities around them practiced. For teacher training purposes, the following intelligences were chosen to be focused on specifically: spatial, kinaesthetic, musical, linguistic & logical. Inter- and intra-personal could be covered under the topic of classroom management, and topic-based learning provided a platform through which activities for all intelligences could be explored.

It was then decided that in the first two weeks of the semester the students would be introduced to the intelligences, after which they would then learn how to apply them in foreign language teaching to elementary school students using age and culture appropriate activities. However, the English language level of the students in the course also needed consideration.

### **2.2. Language acquisition and levels**

With the diverse teachers’ backgrounds and rich experience in teaching EFL the teachers could pinpoint their students stage in second language acquisition. Drawing from the five stages of second language acquisition (preproduction, early production, speech emergence, intermediate fluency and advanced fluency) it was acknowledged that most of the students in the classroom would be between the second and third stages. Considering the level of the students’ language acquisition and the content for the course, next the delivery and teaching methods were

addressed which gave rise to the course framework.  
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### **3. The Course Framework**

The aspect of language acquisition and aims of the course were to be woven into the fabric of the course. Having decided teaching content, which made the way for teachers focus on areas of specialisation, this gave rise to 'blocks', and 'teacher rotation' which are explained next. Following, the grading system which gave coherence to the framework, is explained.

#### **3.1. Blocks**

Each block consisted of each teacher delivering their content of instruction, from which a three-week cycle was developed. The first week would be the delivery of the course content which was to include participating in example activities to execute in a children's EFL classroom, based on the topic, or MI chosen by the teacher. The second week, was for the students to develop their own activity based on the precepts taught in the first week, and the third week was for each of the students to deliver and practice their own activity in class, with their classmates. This cycle: acquire/practice - reflect/produce - produce/practice was what was constituted a block. The next question was how to deliver all the blocks to all the students in the academic calendar. The solution was found in the rotation system and grading which are explained next.

#### **3.2. The Rotation System**

There are many types of teaching <sup>(8)</sup>, however, to maintain teacher autonomy in the coordinated curriculum, to deliver the same course content and minimise extra burdens on each teacher it was decided that the teachers would rotate classes after each block. The outcome would be each teacher would teach the same block four times, delivering the same course content to four different classes in each semester. This enabled each teacher to ensure uniform content delivery across the classes, whilst constructing a way for each class to receive the complete syllabus. This also gave the classes the opportunity to learn from all four teachers. With

the rotation system in place the grading system needed establishing. This is explained below.

#### **3.3. Grading**

To give consistency with grading throughout the course, uniformity in grading the blocks was desired. Therefore, once the grading of the blocks was established, the weightings and other assignments could be considered. Also, it was necessary for teachers to be able to use a system that would allow grades to be collected for all students and all blocks, where input was accessible by all teachers. Using the university's Moodle courseware, a Moodle course was created and the students were enrolled as groups by class into the Moodle course with all four teachers having access to the course. This enabled all the teachers to grade all the students in the academic year. Moodle also opened the way for the collection of qualitative feedback on the course by the students after each block which gave rise to teacher reflection and the course outcomes which are outlined below.

### **4. Course Outcomes**

Students' learner outcomes were measured through presentations throughout the course, while feedback from students on each block was collected through the Moodle course, along with anonymous questionnaires at the end of the academic year. From the data collected the teachers could monitor students' progress and attendance throughout the semesters, and the efficacy of the course. The teachers noted that there were both advantages and disadvantages to the course for both teachers and students, which are beyond the scope of this paper and so are not discussed here. However, the overall outcome of the cooperation and coordination of the teachers working collaboratively was the establishment of an intensive, one-year teacher training programme in English.

### **Conclusion**

With the teachers' backgrounds and desired goals, it was possible to work collaboratively to create a teacher training course for first year Child

Development majors using the underpinning tenets of MI, and language acquisition in younger learners, coupled with practicum sessions for the students. By dividing teaching content, which allowed teachers focus on areas of specialisation, teacher autonomy was maintained. Consequently, this gave rise to blocks and the teacher rotation system. Through the grading of the blocks the teachers could coordinate and ensure course consistency which was facilitated through the university's Moodle open courseware. The results and outcomes were measured through presentations and feedback on each block, and anonymous questionnaires. Through this process, the teachers established an intensive one-year teacher training programme for students of which the majority had limited English language skills.

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