

Challenge and Change in OC5

Mathew White

Abstract

During the 2001 and 2002 academic years, a considerable number of changes were made to the Oral Communication 5 course. In addition to the selection of a new textbook, a poster presentation was implemented as a form of midterm and final exams. This paper reviews the changes made to the curriculum, reasoning behind the changes, and suggests possible improvements to be made in the future.

Introduction

OC5 is a 26-week elective course consisting of two 13-week semesters. Classes are 90 minutes long and are held once a week. The course is open to both 3rd and 4th year students. In order to improve the quality of instruction, class size is usually limited and entrance requirements implemented in order to reduce size when necessary. This year the OC5 course consisted of four classes with approximately twelve students per class. All classrooms used for this course come equipped with a whiteboard, a television, a VCR, and easily moveable tables and chairs which facilitate organizing the class into pairs or groups as appropriate to each activity.

Course Description

The following course description was provided in the Chukyo University Syllabus (2001):

This course is designed to provide students with an opportunity to become more fluent. At the first class meeting, students will be given a placement test to evaluate their ability. Class groups will be assigned on the basis of students' scores on the placement test, and enrollment will be limited to sixteen students per class. The course is designed to prepare students to challenge themselves to take the TOEIC, TOEFL and other

competitive English language proficiency tests. Above average motivation and effort are expected. Attendance, punctuality and class participation are required. Grades will be based on these, and completing the OC Program's required Language Laboratory student practice, the AVC's weekly required movie viewing, assignments and final examination scores.

This class will utilize the multimedia classroom to conduct research on the internet, view cyber-lectures with Chukyo University's sister schools, communicate with other students and professors using on-line chat rooms, bulletin boards and E-mail. Required movie viewing will also be conducted in the multimedia classroom. (p. 190)

It might be helpful to point out that the four instructors who were teaching the course were not involved in compiling or reviewing the course description before it was posted in the syllabus. The required language laboratory practice and the Audio Visual Center's (AVC) weekly required movie viewing were not included as components of the course. This was mainly due to potential overlapping of assignments with other courses. For example, students enrolled in Oral Communication 3 would already be receiving credit for the AVC movie viewing as part of their assessment in that course. Thus, it was not seen as beneficial to the students or the program to give double credits or require duplicate copies of movie viewing assignments for the two classes. The language laboratory was not included specifically because no such program has been introduced to the teachers.

In the future, it may be beneficial to the department to involve the teachers in this facet of the course development in order to assure that all those involved can be better informed and relate more to the specific aims of the class as well as encourage the exchange of ideas and activities among peers for facilitating the achievement of those aims.

Aims of the Course from the Teachers' Perspective

One of the main focuses of the course agreed upon by the teachers during meetings held prior to the course was that the classes would allow students opportunities to exchange opinions on various issues and raise their awareness of various perspectives. As 3rd and 4th year students, the immediate discussions with their peers were seen as preparation for future discussions with native and highly proficient non-native speakers of English. In order to achieve this, teachers would strive to facilitate opportunities for exposure to, introduction, and recycling of related vocabulary and expressions for stating, eliciting and reacting to opinions on selected topics. An additional aim was to allow students opportunities to improve their listening skills in preparation for TOEFL and TOEIC tests that the majority of students would most likely be taking in the future.

Challenges

As recently appointed coordinator of the OC5 course, I saw one of the main challenges consisting of resolving the various discrepancies that inevitably arise between the teachers' needs for flexibility in order to accommodate their individual teaching styles and the classroom dynamics and the school administration's desire to have some degree of uniformity in the course. Therefore, the challenge was mainly to find a win-win resolution in which the demand by the administration for a degree of uniformity in content could be reached while limiting the interference by external forces on each teacher's individual methodologies and approaches for maximizing students' improvement in the target language.

From the administration's viewpoint, we might cite Stern (1992: 26) in order to provide some rationale for requesting some kind of uniformity. He states:

A language teaching policy is better to the extent that it identifies as clearly as possible both the objectives and the content of language teaching, and justifies on rational grounds why it emphasizes one or the other content area of this or that objective.

Furthermore, Brumfit (1984) asserts that, "not to have a syllabus is to refuse to allow one's assumptions to be scrutinized or to enable different teachers to relate their work to each other's". He concludes that, "it is consequentially an essential feature of work in a democratic profession or as part of a democratic education."

Meanwhile, from the vantage point of the individual OC5 teachers, any attempt to incorporate an overall policy or syllabus will reduce the opportunities to make subjective and intuitive decisions based on one's own teaching experience and preferred teaching styles. Candlin (1984), and Breen (1984) note the unpredictability of responses by any individual class to what the teacher offers. While readers might find these statements to be self evident, it is worth noting them when attempting to appreciate the situation of curriculum design from various perspectives.

In addition to the aforementioned challenges, the fact that all four teachers of the OC5 course were part-time instructors at Chukyo University was another hurdle. The limited amount of opportunities for discussions and relating to the work of colleagues on campus posed a significant challenge in achieving a sense of cohesion in the course.

Overcoming the Hurdles

As noted by Sheldon (1988: 237), "Coursebooks... represent for both students and teachers the visible heart of an ELT programme." Meetings among the teachers prior to the course and the process of agreeing on a text provided a chance for the teachers to relate to one another and discuss the aims of the course. The text selected for the course, *Impact*

Issues (Day and Yamada, 1998), alleviated much of the initial tension between expectations of the administration and the teachers. The textbook is comprised of a topical syllabus which consists of 30 issues, each supported by a range of activities expected to take anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes to complete. While the textbook is organized into five themes, each unit, or topic, is presented independently from the others. No references are made to the vocabulary or content of previous chapters. Therefore, the text provides the teachers a great deal of latitude for how they adapt, reject or employ its contents. In addition, each student text contains an audio CD providing listening practice of the model dialogues or texts in the textbook. While this is not necessarily the ideal form of listening activity, it does allow for some student autonomy in working to develop better listening comprehension and understanding of connected speech and other items related to phonology.

As for the problem of limited opportunity for interaction among teachers, this was overcome partially by the use of E-mail and partially by impromptu meetings held before classes in the Audio Video Center (and now held in the new English Learning Support Wing). In order to assure that individual teachers were kept up to date with discussions, communications between myself and other teachers were relayed to all mainly through E-mail. For myself, anytime I wished to elicit suggestions or opinions from my colleagues, I addressed a letter to the OC5 teachers group on my E-mail service. If an incoming message was addressed only to me, but I believed that the other teachers could benefit from the communication, I included the original text in my reply and sent it to all the members of the group.

A Curriculum Folder

In order to provide more opportunities for the exchange of ideas and activities employed by the various teachers and to allow them to relate better to what was happening in the OC5 classes being taught by their colleagues, a curriculum folder was introduced and kept in the Audio Visual Center. The curriculum folder is basically a work in progress. Teachers are encouraged to submit copies of lesson plans or activities they use in the class. Keeping copies of various lesson plans or activities on file for other teachers to peruse allows for a better understanding of what methodologies and approaches each teacher is providing. It is a window into the classrooms of one's peers from which more cohesion in the program can be fostered, but allows each teacher to decide for him/herself what will or will not be adapted.

In order to reduce the possible obtrusiveness of the folder, teachers were asked to submit items from their lessons on a volunteer basis. The folder itself consisted of plastic A4 size envelopes into which copies of lesson plans or activities related to the various units could be inserted without requiring any hole punching or other possibly time consuming activities. I had hoped that keeping the folder in the Audio Visual Center would facilitate contributions, seeing as classes were held rooms in the same building. However, as of this time, the

curriculum folders have received little, if any attention. Time constraints on teachers may still be a limiting factor. This might be improved by increasing the course load of part-time teachers at Chukyo in order to increase the time they spend on campus before and after classes.

A Uniform Exam

In order to encourage a certain amount of cohesion in the course, the administration requested that the midterm and final examinations for the course be uniform for all classes. As one might imagine, this proved to be quite a challenge considering the degree of flexibility each teacher had in terms of individual class content. The task of creating any type of assessment that would be uniform and would test students on items covered in their classes regardless of their respective teachers seemed formidable. It was determined that the best way to achieve this might be by implementing an assessment that evaluated students on items listed under aims of the course. The reasoning being that while individual teachers employed various content and methods, the aims of the course for all teachers were similar.

Poster Sessions: A Possible Solution

After reflecting on the aims of the course and the specific context of the situation, I suggested that a poster session might fulfill both the need to have a uniform type of assessment and the need for latitude in specific content on which the students would be assessed. It was later determined that students would be asked to create and present in pairs a poster on an issue of their choice in front of audiences of their peers, the OC5 teachers and members of the Chukyo faculty. The length of the presentations and other details were yet to be determined. The idea was sent out through E-mail to the OC5 teachers and administration for discussion.

Initial responses to the idea of a poster session included a number of concerns. Questions were raised as to a poster sessions' relativity to the course itself. It was suggested that the implementation of such an exam would transform (through the backwash effect of preparing for the final) the course into a public speaking class, which was already available in the DELL program. Teachers also expressed concerns on the excessive demands created for students and teachers in order to prepare for such presentations. Time spent in class preparing for presentations meant less time for discussing issues or conducting other activities. In addition, the idea of asking students to perform in front of others in English raised alarms as to the possible negative associations that might develop between English and public speaking as well as the possibility of raising what Krashen (1981) referred to in his Monitor Model as the 'Affective Filters' of students. Furthermore, a request was made to clarify what a poster session entailed.

The concerns expressed by the teachers were taken into consideration and a request for suggestions for other types of assessment was made. It was finally determined that many of the concerns regarding the poster sessions could be addressed, and that this particular type of task could prove to be a motivational and rewarding learning experience for the students. The poster session would be similar to those conducted at the annual Japan Association of Language Teachers national conference. Ideas on possible methods for reducing the affective filter and alternative assessment techniques will be discussed later in the paper.

Designing the Poster Session

Various logistics come into play when coordinating a poster session. Some of the factors to be considered include: location (taking into consideration the number of presentations and audience members), time, duration, evaluation, preparation and execution.

Location

After scouting out a number of possible locations, Yamate Hall, a formal conference room located on the second floor of the center building of the Yagoto campus, looked the most promising. It was determined that given its size, the flooring (carpeting that would absorb some sound), and layout it would be possible to have twelve presentations take place at the same time allowing for six to ten audience members per presentation if needed (Figure 1). Conducting the presentations in the same room would hopefully alleviate possible confusion and time spent searching for particular presentations. It would also provide more opportunities for students and teachers to relate to what others in the course were doing.

Time

A significant adaptation made regarding time was a decision to conduct the poster sessions during the last regularly scheduled classes instead of during Chukyo University's official exam period. This meant that the presentation could be held for 90 minutes instead of the 60 minutes usually allotted during exam week. It also allowed teachers the chance to conduct feedback sessions and exams on their individual class content during the official exam week. The time allotted for this event is crucial to allowing significant durations for each individual presentation.

Duration

The next step was to determine how to divide the presentations up within the 90-minute period. Assuming that the presentations would be conducted in pairs, the 48 students participating in the course would be conducting a total of 24 separate presentations. As

Figure 1

(Entrance)		(Window Side)
Wringer/Station 11 A. Hokkaido 1. 2. B. Friends and Lovers 1. 2.	Wringer/Station 12 A. Ishikawa Prefecture 1. 2. B. 1. 2.	Bowden/Station 1 A. Why Learn English? 1. 2. B. Why Get Married? 1. 2.
Wringer/Station 10 A. Family Values 1. 2. B. Experience Abroad 1. 2.		Bowden/Station 2 A. Should We Eat Meat? 1. 2. B. Save the Earth 1. 2.
White/Station 9 A. Arranged Marriages 1. 2. B. Starvation in Africa 1. 2.		Bowden/Station 3 A. Money = Happiness? 1. 2. B. Abortion 1. 2.
White/Station 8 A. Smoking 1. 2. B. Dieting 1. 2.		Jones/Station 4 A. The Right to Die 1. 2. B. 1. 2.
White/Station 7 A. Cellular Phones 1. 2. B. Hemp 1. 2.	Jones/Station 6 A. Traffic 1. 2. B. Take the Money 1. 2.	Jones/Station 5 A. Forever Single 1. 2. B. Should We Eat Meat? 1. 2.

measures to assure the number of students in each class had been distributed as evenly as possible at the beginning of the semester, each teacher had approximately twelve students, and therefore six presentations being conducted by students, in pairs, from their class. As teachers wished to observe all of their own students' presentations, one obvious solution was to break the duration of the presentations down in units of time allowing for six different time slots. Presentations were divided into either A or B time periods. The A time period presenters would conduct presentations during the first half of the poster session and repeat their presentations three times. This allowed the teachers to sit in on each one of the

presentations by their students. The B time period presenters would conduct presentations during the second half, once again, being required to repeat their presentations three times.

Allowing fifteen minutes for set up at the beginning of the period and ten minutes for putting the room back in order afterwards, the time left for actual presentations was reduced to 65 minutes. Therefore, the solution was to break the time slots down into six different ten minute periods with a 5-minute period for transition from the presenters in the first time period, conducted in the first thirty minutes, to the presenters in the second time period. The students were asked to make presentations of approximately 5 minutes in length so they could repeat their presentations three consecutive times. The purpose of this was three-fold. First, it allowed students to improve on their presentations as they repeated them and became more confident with their material. Second, it allowed for a greater number of the students' peers to observe and participate in each other's presentations. Third, it theoretically allowed OC5 teachers the chance to sit in on each of their own students' presentations.

Evaluation

The question of evaluating the students on their presentations was discussed extensively. As addressed earlier, OC5 teachers raised concerns over the likelihood of invalid assessment in regard to evaluating students on items not necessarily covered in class. In order to overcome potential discrepancies and to fulfill the goal of uniformity in this assessment process, the teachers worked together to determine a list of assessment items and design an evaluation sheet that would be consistent with the aims of the course and content of the classes (Figure 2). The assessment criteria consisted of the following items: clarity of statement/-opinion, awareness of various sides to the issue, reasons/evidence in support of opinion, logical development of ideas/order, eye contact (referring to not continuously reading notes), ability to respond to questions, use of visual aids and effort. A separate feedback sheet for students to complete was also designed to encourage students to listen to others, be more involved in the activity and provide the teachers with some idea of their comprehension and appreciation of the presentations they observed (Figure 3). As suggested by the OC5 teachers, the student feedback sheets were streamlined to keep the focus on the message of the presentations themselves and to avoid placing unnecessary stress on the students presenting.

Preparation

A considerable amount of time went into preparation in order to facilitate the execution of the poster session. Richard Morrison, a full-time teacher and OC coordinator, assisted in the logistics and was the source of many of the ideas carried out in order to ensure a smooth and successful operation. Topics of presentations were collected and a sign up sheet

Figure 2

OC5 Presentation Evaluation Sheet	
Presentation on _____ at Station _____	
Circle a number (1 = poor, 5 = excellent)	
1. Clear statement of opinion	1 2 3 4 5
2. Awareness of various sides of the issue	1 2 3 4 5
3. Reasons and evidence in support of opinion	1 2 3 4 5
4. Logical development of ideas/order	1 2 3 4 5
5. Eye contact (not continuously reading notes)	1 2 3 4 5
6. Ability to respond to questions/clarify (including use of "I don't know")	1 2 3 4 5
7. Use of visual aids	1 2 3 4 5
8. Effort	1 2 3 4 5

Figure 3

OC 5 Student Presentation Evaluation Sheet	
Your name (romaji) _____	Your student number _____
Presentation #1 was on _____ at Station _____	
Circle a number: (1= poor, 2 = needs improvement, 3 = OK, 4 = good 5 = super)	
Interesting	1 2 3 4 5
Easy to understand	1 2 3 4 5
What did you learn? _____	

Did you change your mind about the topic? Yes/No How? _____	

designating times and locations of topics were left at the Audio Video Center (with the gracious cooperation of the AV Center staff) so that students could select which presentations they would attend. Students presenting in the A time periods were allowed to fill in their names on three slots for presentations given during the B time periods and vice versa (Figure 1). Having students pre-determine which presentations they would attend would make audience transitions from presentations more efficient and hopefully ensure that all presentations would have an audience during each time slot.

Room preparation took a considerable amount of time. Various departments graciously lent their whiteboards as stands for the presentations, and these needed to be collected and positioned. The tables and chairs in Yamate Hall also had to be arranged and in some cases removed. Pre-cut pieces of tape and magnets and copies of student feedback sheets were also needed to expedite the set up process. In addition copies of the sign up sheets were prepared

so teachers could direct students to their stations.

Execution

Students were told in advance that set up for presentations in both A and B time slots would be done during the first 15 minutes of the period. Posters to be used in the latter period were placed on the backsides of the whiteboards or covered so as not to distract from the presentations in progress. Teachers assisted in the distribution of the tape and magnets, the passing out of student feedback sheets and guiding students to their presentation stations (Figure 1). Bill Jones, one of the OC5 teachers, oversaw the flow of the poster session by announcing times for presentation switches. Richard Morrison, Jim D' Angelo, Gary French and Brian Herschler were also kind enough to assist in preparations and the execution of the poster session, including participating as audience members for presentations. Takai-san and Yamada-san, two members working in the AV Center, also graciously participated as audience members.

Results

Stern (1992) asserts that a conscientious teacher will review the success of the entire program upon its conclusion. Initial reactions by the teachers to the poster session were positive. However, a few complications did arise. First, the noise level in the room rose to the extent that some presentations were difficult to hear. This was especially true toward the end of the presentations as various audiences responded with applause and somewhat distracted the presentations still in progress. Second, some presentations were in danger of having no audience members during certain time slots as audience members came late or could not find or remember which presentations they had signed up for. Any future coordinators may wish to provide each student with a copy of the sign up sheet or be sure students have made a list of the presentations they signed up for to alleviate this particular issue. Luckily, the presence of the aforementioned individuals employed at Chukyo who volunteered their time provided a flexible audience willing to move to different presentations in order to alleviate that situation. Third, time constraints left little opportunity for in-depth discussions as follow up to the presentations. However, this might serve as a catalyst for discussions on the various topics to take place over the following lunch period.

During feedback sessions conducted during the scheduled exam period, students reported either in writing or verbally to their teachers an overwhelmingly positive response to the presentations. In my class, responses to the questions, "How did you feel about the presentation? In your opinion, should there be a presentation next semester?" resulted in 10 responses in the affirmative, one response in the negative and one omitted a reply. Other teachers reported a significant majority of positive responses.

Conclusions at the end of the First Semester

At the end of the first semester, it was concluded that the poster session aspect of the course might be improved in several ways. First, avenues for reducing the number of presentations given at once or the location might improve complications related to audibility. However, a different location for presentations could prove difficult as space is at a premium at Chukyo's Yagoto campus. Suggestions from the OC5 teachers have included breaking the session into two smaller sessions or having poster sessions among the individual classes. Yet, a couple of the OC5 teachers actually bring in music to their classes to simulate real world listening challenges. Therefore, the same theory might be applied to the real world listening challenge provided by a presentation room filled with the sounds of multiple presentations. Second, as mentioned earlier, providing students with copies of the sign up sheets or some other method might be employed to ensure that each presentation has an audience. Third, avenues for extending the times allowed for each presentation and including time for follow up discussion must be explored. One likely possibility is to let the Poster Presentation continue for a half hour past the regularly scheduled time, which would only cut into the lunch period for this single occasion each semester. As for students uncomfortable with the presentations in front of a live audience, a possible solution might be to allow students to submit their presentations on video.

Other possibilities, such as debates or a number of other options are still be considered. As the course was based on the idea of having students discuss these issues, and the class is Oral Communication, debates and presentations seem to be the best candidates for future end of year and final examinations. However, other suggestions are more than welcome.

The Final Exam

Having already experienced the midterm presentations, both teachers and students had a much better idea of what was to be expected and how to prepare for the presentations for the final exam. The location and time aspects of the presentations remained the same. Keeping these main factors the same allowed students the opportunity to reflect on their previous experiences when considering the length and design of their presentations.

Minor adjustments were made in regards to more efficient use of the room's layout in order to reduce the noise level at any particular station. Therefore, areas with pillars were exploited for their capabilities to insulate individual presentations from the overall noise level in the room.

The sign up sheet for the presentations was improved by including the actual times of the presentations. (Figure 4) This reduced (but did not eliminate) the number of students that signed up to watch two different presentations at the same time. Copies of the sign up sheet

were distributed to students on the day of the presentation to remind them when and where they should be during the different presentation times. At each station, announcements of what presentations were taking place were also posted to make locating the various presentations easier.

End of Year Student Feedback

At the last meeting of OC5 classes, students were asked to fill out feedback sheets to give them some voice in the curriculum development. The feedback sheets consisted of six main questions and a section for additional comments:

1. What did you like/dislike about this class?
2. What changes would you like to make to this class?
3. Were there any activities that you thought were especially useful? Were there any you thought were not useful?
4. Was there anything you wish the class had spent more time on?
5. How did you feel about first semester and end of year presentations? Should there be presentations in future OC5 classes? Why or why not?
6. Some teachers switched classes at the end of the first semester. Did your teacher (s) switch? Do you think it is better to have a different teacher each semester or one teacher for the whole year?
7. Please write any additional comments here:

I collected the feedback sheets from all classes and distributed a list of all the replies to the OC5 teachers. I will provide a few insights gleaned from the responses, although a great deal more could be learned through a more detailed analysis.

Responses to Question 1 helped in allowing OC5 teachers to have a greater understanding of what was taking place in the classes of their colleagues and suggest items they may want to include in the future. For instance, a considerable number of students articulated that they enjoyed work on pronunciation. While this was partially addressed in my class during listening exercises, it was obvious students in at least one other class were grateful to be spending a considerable amount of time on pronunciation.

Many of the responses to Question 2 indicated students were satisfied with the overall content of the classes. Some students did indicate a desire to be more involved in selecting topics and addressing more current or local issues. This suggests departing more from the text, which teachers can accommodate due to the nature of the text and structure of the OC 5 syllabus previously mentioned.

Responses to Question 3 were also helpful in providing teachers with a better

Figure 4

(Entrance Side)

(Window Side)

<p>Wringer/Station 11</p> <p>A. Corporal Punishment</p> <p>10:55 _____</p> <p>11:05 _____</p> <p>11:15 _____</p> <p>B. Dyslexia</p> <p>11:30 _____</p> <p>11:40 _____</p> <p>11:50 _____</p>	<p>Wringer/Station 12</p> <p>A. Public/Private Education</p> <p>10:55 _____</p> <p>11:05 _____</p> <p>11:15 _____</p> <p>B. Sign Language</p> <p>11:30 _____</p> <p>11:40 _____</p> <p>11:50 _____</p>	<p>Bowden/Station 1</p> <p>A. Okay to Lie</p> <p>10:55 _____</p> <p>11:05 _____</p> <p>11:15 _____</p> <p>B. International Marriage</p> <p>11:30 _____</p> <p>11:40 _____</p> <p>11:50 _____</p>
<p>Wringer/Station 10</p> <p>A. Usefulness of Hemp</p> <p>10:55 _____</p> <p>11:05 _____</p> <p>11:15 _____</p> <p>B. Hooliganism</p> <p>11:30 _____</p> <p>11:40 _____</p> <p>11:50 _____</p>		<p>Bowden/Station 2</p> <p>A. Care of the Elderly</p> <p>10:55 _____</p> <p>11:05 _____</p> <p>11:15 _____</p> <p>B. Should People Keep Pets?</p> <p>11:30 _____</p> <p>11:40 _____</p> <p>11:50 _____</p>
<p>White/Station 9</p> <p>A. Unemployment</p> <p>10:55 _____</p> <p>11:05 _____</p> <p>11:15 _____</p> <p>B. Keitais and Manners</p> <p>11:30 _____</p> <p>11:40 _____</p> <p>11:50 _____</p>		<p>Bowden/Station 3</p> <p>A. A Woman's Place</p> <p>10:55 _____</p> <p>11:05 _____</p> <p>11:15 _____</p> <p>B. Gay Rights</p> <p>11:30 _____</p> <p>11:40 _____</p> <p>11:50 _____</p>
<p>White/Station 8</p> <p>A. Mad Cow Disease</p> <p>10:55 _____</p> <p>11:05 _____</p> <p>11:15 _____</p> <p>B. Stalking</p> <p>11:30 _____</p> <p>11:40 _____</p> <p>11:50 _____</p>		<p>Jones/Station 4</p> <p>A. International Relationships</p> <p>10:55 _____</p> <p>11:05 _____</p> <p>11:15 _____</p> <p>B. What's for Dinner</p> <p>11:30 _____</p> <p>11:40 _____</p> <p>11:50 _____</p>
<p>White/Station 7</p> <p>A. Obesity</p> <p>10:55 _____</p> <p>11:05 _____</p> <p>11:15 _____</p> <p>B. Drug Abuse</p> <p>11:30 _____</p> <p>11:40 _____</p> <p>11:50 _____</p>	<p>Jones/Station 6</p> <p>A. Taking Care of Mother</p> <p>10:55 _____</p> <p>11:05 _____</p> <p>11:15 _____</p> <p>B.</p> <p>11:30 _____</p> <p>11:40 _____</p> <p>11:50 _____</p>	<p>Jones/Station 5</p> <p>A. Traffic</p> <p>10:55 _____</p> <p>11:05 _____</p> <p>11:15 _____</p> <p>B. Abortion</p> <p>11:30 _____</p> <p>11:40 _____</p> <p>11:50 _____</p>

understanding of what types of activities were taking place in other classes. The large disparity of activities mentioned suggests that teachers have maintained control of what goes on in their classes, and that a variety of activities ranging from writing, dictation, discussion, debate, pronunciation, translation and role plays are being implemented.

Many responses to Question 4 indicated students wanted to spend more time discussing issues, and doing listening and pronunciation activities. The first step in improving the content of the course is raising awareness of what piques the students' interests. Armed with these responses, teachers may be more easily persuaded to devote a greater portion of time to addressing these concerns.

Responses to Question 5 were of considerable significance, as the teachers and curriculum designers are still trying to determine whether or not to continue the presentations. Out of the 39 responses to the question of whether or not to continue presentations in OC5, 33 students supported continuing presentations. Only six students were against the idea of continuing presentations in OC5. Students in my class also suggested that videotaping (as an alternative to live) presentations would not be an improvement as they placed the importance of eye contact and negotiating meaning with their audience as highly beneficial parts of the program. Hopefully, the voices of the students will continue to be taken into consideration when making future decisions in the curriculum.

Question 6 addressed another issue that arose during the year. OC5 teachers were asked to switch classes at the end of the first semester. It was suggested that students should be exposed to different teaching styles, accents and personalities. While teachers were willing to comply with the request, they questioned the benefits mentioned being outweighed by the costs. For one, the rapport and familiarity built up between teachers and students in the first semester would be lost. As students from one class formally petitioned to keep their instructor, Bill Jones, from the first semester, only two of the four teachers elected to switch classes.

The feedback from students at the end of the year was inconclusive. Those students whose teachers switched after the first semester responded positively to the switch. Those whose teachers remained the same for the entire year were also happy with the policy taken.

Changes to the OC5 Curriculum in 2002

In 2002, a number of additional improvements to the OC5 curriculum were made:

1. Class Orientation and Division- All OC 5 students and teachers gathered in Multimedia Room 3, on the first day of classes. Each teacher's individual class syllabus could be viewed via the computers, and students could print out hard copies of the syllabus they would like to attend.
2. Not all of the teachers participated in the poster presentation- Three out of the four

OC5 teachers chose to participate in the poster presentations. One teacher opted to conduct a final focusing more directly on the materials in his own class syllabus.

3. The venue of the poster presentation was changed- In 2002, the venue was changed (due to scheduling conflicts) to the Daikaigishitsu, a room with attributes similar to Yamate Hall, but which required less time for preparation and clean up. This room will most likely be used again (by choice) for the end of year presentations.
4. No formal peer evaluations of presentations- Students were not asked to complete feedback forms on the presentations they watched. It was believed that the forms were more of an impediment than an aid to the audience. The previous year proved an insufficient amount of time was left for completing the forms. Eliminating the forms allowed the audience to focus on understanding the meaning of the presentation.
5. The opening of the presentations to all students- Thanks greatly to the efforts of Richard Morrison, freshman, sophomore and senior students were also invited to attend the OC5 poster presentations. This helped assure all presenters had an audience. It also gave prospective OC5 students a chance to see what the poster presentations were like.

Suggestions for Further Improvement

Individuals who attended first semester presentations in 2002 made some valuable (and deeply appreciated) suggestions for possible improvements. Jim D'Angelo suggested the presentations could be conducted using Powerpoint software. This would provide the students with firsthand experience making presentations similar to what will most likely be demanded of them once they begin their professional careers. It would also eliminate the need for locating and gathering available whiteboards, a rather cumbersome and time consuming endeavor. However, OC5 teachers would need to be assured Powerpoint applications were being taught in computer skills classes. In another observation, Fukuyoshi-sensei commented that students needed to be reminded to introduce themselves at the beginning of their presentations, to explain why they chose their topics, and to make sure to ask if they have any additional questions at the end of the presentation. These items can be addressed in the future in the form of an orientation sheet or included on the evaluation sheets for teachers to complete (Figure 2) once explained to students in advance.

Implications

The majority of students consider the poster presentations a valuable learning experience through which they can exchange opinions and ideas. Teachers note that students seem to take pride in their work, and that becoming experts to some extent on particular issues and

teaching their peers is a way of building confidence. Not all OC5 teachers support the use of the presentations, and alternative suggestions are welcome and will be considered.

Teachers may find it helpful to draw on the feedback provided by students from their classes and classes of other OC5 teachers when determining various activities for use in the classroom. The sharing of feedback from students from all classes among teachers in the program can help us relate to what is happening beyond our own classroom doors, particularly since other efforts of exchanging class materials have not been very effective. For now, it might be best to keep in mind that curriculum design is organic, and that we must do our best to make the most of the positive nature and living aspect of the course. My appreciation goes out to the OC5 teachers and students, to Richard Morrison for his assistance throughout the development of the project, and to all those individuals who contributed to making the experience a positive one.

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