Incorporating Learning Style and Personality Preferences into an Oral Communication Course Syllabus

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Abstract

Individual difference factors of personality typology and learning style preference and their effect on second language acquisition have been the focus of several prominent SLA theorists over the past twenty-five years. However, few articles have demonstrated how individual learner difference research can be applied within a classroom by second language instructors. In this paper, I have attempted to combine variables related to personality and learning style preference with a notional / functional instructional syllabus in order to illustrate how these variables can be applied within a language teaching framework. The context for this research is quite specific as are the learners for whom the syllabus was created - Japanese high school learners who have returned to Japan after living in English speaking countries that want to expand their discourse fluency. However, by illustrating how these individual learner variables can be applied to a specific language teaching syllabus, it is hoped other instructional designers will consider factors such as personality and learning style as they design their instructional content.

Overview

This research has been undertaken to determine how personality and learning style factors can be incorporated into a syllabus to help Japanese students returning from English-speaking countries retain spoken fluency and accuracy in Japan. The syllabus has two purposes: First, to help students enhance their English comprehension and communication ability after returning to Japan following immersion in an English speaking public school abroad. Second, to prepare them for entrance into an elite universities abroad or in Japan upon graduation.

This paper will focus on acquisition variables related to learning style and personality that influence how the learners perceive and acquire learning content. The paper will illustrate how learner acquisition theory supports the syllabus content and helps the learners achieve their linguistic goals. It will also provide an outline of the goals and objectives, assessment criteria, and syllabus content that adhere to the learning style and personality preferences outlined in the previous section. It will also explain how a functional syllabus will be applied in the program to expand the learners' oral communication skills and put their knowledge into practice.

Learning Style and Personality Preferences in the Returnee Syllabus

The syllabus has been developed to accommodate a number of language acquisition variables that influence how the content is perceived and acquired by the learners. This paper will examine learner variables related to learning style and personality and will look at how these variables will be applied to the course syllabus. The paper will focus on two learning style measurements, Reid's Perceptual Learning Style Questionnaire (Reid 1987) and Oxford's Style Analysis Survey (Oxford 1993), and link these learning style preferences to activities in the syllabus. It will then examine personality typology using the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and explain how activities in the syllabus will be adapted to accommodate learner preferences for the eight personality dichotomies that the MBTI measures.

Learning Style Preferences and the Returnee Syllabus

Because people acquire languages through a range of learning style preferences, it is essential that the syllabus employ a variety of instructional activities and approaches to accommodate these preferences. For this group of learners, some of the learning style preferences that will be applied to this syllabus include; auditory, visual and kinesthetic tasks, group and individual activities, intuitive and concrete tasks, open and closed-ended activities, and assignments that support generation and dissemination of ideas. These preferences are taken from SLA learning style measurement instruments in the Perceptual Learning Style Questionnaire (Reid 1987) and Oxford's Style Analysis Survey (Oxford 1993). Next, the paper will outline how these learning style preferences will be implemented into the syllabus so that the course materials can be more effective and "provide more variety and choice to accommodate the stylistic differences of (the) students.' (Nel 2001 p. 55)

Auditory, Visual and Kinesthetic Tasks in the Syllabus

To facilitate a range of student learning styles, a variety of task types have been incorporated into the syllabus to accommodate learner preferences and allow them to individually acquire language forms, structures and vocabulary more easily. The syllabus employs instruments proposed in both Reid and Oxford's learning style surveys. In the likely event learners cannot complete a survey prior to implementing the syllabus, a variety of activities have been included to facilitate multiple learner preferences. Examples of learning style factors from Reid's Perceptual Learning Style Questionnaire, which include visual, auditory and kinesthetic/tactile activities, will be incorporated into class lessons. The visual-oriented learning activities involve video and picture-based tasks. These include picture-based tasks, where students use images to describe food, objects, and body parts, short video segments on culture and a movie/television opinion discussion. To support auditory learning preferences, listening activities based on topics from thematic units from the course will be used. Kinesthetic/tactile-oriented activities include having learners create picture word cards for vocabulary practice using Nation's key word techniques (Moir & Nation 2002). These activities are used in units related to describing the appearance of people and objects in the syllabus. Through a variety of activities that cater to these preferences, lesson content should be more easily acquired by the target group of learners.

One point that should be noted is Reid's finding that, "Japanese speakers did not, as a group, identify a single major learning style" that they preferred (Reid 1987 p. 99). However, Reid also indicated that after "ESL students adapt to a U.S. academic environment, some modifications and extensions of learning styles may occur" (Reid 1987 p. 100). Because these learners will have spent several years in a native English speaking environment, it can be assumed that they are likely to have developed preferences for one or more of the learning styles presented in Reid's study.

Dealing with Tasks, People, Possibilities and Ideas in the Syllabus

Rebecca Oxford's Style Analysis Survey (Oxford 1993) forms the basis for a second set of preference components in the returnee learner syllabus. Oxford offers an expanded inventory of preference types comprised of five elements; "dealing with other people, handling possibilities, approaching tasks and dealing with ideas" (Nel 2001 p. 52). The fifth component, how learners relate to their physical environment, is closely related to Reid's preference set of visual, auditory, kinesthetic learning types and will not be covered again.

The first preference type, which relates to how learners relate with others when carrying out tasks, refers to introverted and extraverted character types. Learners have a preference for either performing tasks independently or with others in a group or in pairs. To accommodate both types of learning preferences, students will be given opportunities to learn on their own, for example in the creation and production of a topic-based presentation, and with their peers during in-class group work and pair work activities.

The second preference type concerns how learners handle possibilities, for example "an intuitive-random… learner can identify the main ideas of a text and likes abstract thinking and speculations. The concrete-sequential counterpart… prefers a clearly structured and planned step-by-step instruction." (Cohen 1998 p. 16) To accommodate these types of preferences, learners will be given instructions for some in-class and take-home tasks that allow them to speculate on how best to complete the task – thus allowing them to work out their approach independently and in groups. For other activities, clear, methodical instructions will be given to allow concrete-sequential learners to more easily comprehend and complete activities.

The task approach component deals with preferences for tasks that are open-ended or end with some form of closure. To facilitate these preference types, the syllabus includes open-ended discussions for the purpose of applying vocabulary in question-and-answer sessions and opinion-oriented debates in which no right or wrong answer exists. For closure-oriented types, learners will engage in activities with clear goals and defined conclusions, for example simulated telephone conversations in which learners make reservations or plan a trip with a partner.

Lastly, with respect to how learners handle ideas, activities will be oriented to facilitate both global and analytical preferences. Global preference tasks include fluency-based discussions in which learners communicate in small groups on a variety of topics and contribute their idea on how to solve a functional problem. Analytical tasks include more structured presentations in which learners build their understanding of the task step by step, based on patterns and vocabulary that have been learned in class or for homework. By incorporating these task preference types into the syllabus, it is hoped that learners will acquire an expanded range of sentence structures and vocabulary, improve their communicative competence, and develop greater fluency as they progress through the course.

Personality Types and the Returnee Syllabus

Personality typology and its affect on L2 acquisition is a relatively new study area within SLA research, however this new body of research is helping linguists and instructors develop ways to improve learners' acquisition of second languages. Ortega describes personality as "stable traits or qualities in a person, as more dynamic moods that are related to the cognitive processing of emotions, or even as predispositions that

have been learned through social experience." (Ortega 2009 p. 193) The study of the relationship between personality factors and second language acquisition is grounded in Jungian psychology and his theory of psychological type, which involves personality and how it relates to cognition. Jung's theories formed the foundation for psychological typology and how personality influences one's perception of the world around them and how they interact within that world. One of the most widely used assessments of psychological type is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), developed by Katharine Cook Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers (Briggs Myers & McCaulley 1983). This assessment was originally developed as a way to help individuals analyze their preferences and enable them to make decisions about what type of career, lifestyle and relationship suits their personality. Based on their selections on a set of dichotomous preferences, individuals are categorized into one of sixteen personality types. These sixteen types are segmented along four dimensions; introversion-extraversion, sensing-intuitive, thinking-feeling, judging-perceiving, with each one measuring how a person gathers, interprets, organizes and thinks about information they encounter. The types then give test-takers an idea of what kind of career or lifestyle might suit their personality preferences.

Previously, the MBTI has been used to determine how personality type relates to language learning preferences. An example of how personality type relates to learning preference is an analysis on cognitive aptitude, learning strategies, styles, motivation, personality and their relationship to type testing instruments undertaken by Madeline Ehrman and Rebecca Oxford. These researchers concluded that, "personality variables may well shape the response of students to the learning situation, its opportunities and frustrations" (Ehrman & Oxford 1995). Their research determined that personality traits such as intuition may positively influence a learner's deep mental processing, which in turn enhances their learning aptitude. Within the returnee syllabus, an understanding of personality preferences and how they affect learner acquisition will help instructors tailor materials and activities to improve comprehension and communicative competence among the learners. In the following section, we will identify the sixteen MBTI types and determine how preferences among these types are applied to learning strategies and styles in the syllabus.

Adapting the Returnee Syllabus to Various Personality Types

Leaver, Ehrman, and Schekhtman used MBTI typology to analyze personality preferences for each of the sixteen types and constructed a set of learning style preferences for each type. Below is an adaptation of their findings in a graph detailing how each MBTI character type relates to learning style preferences. Under the graph, I will outline how activities in the syllabus will be adapted to complement the learning preferences of all eight dimensions in the four dichotomies that underlie the MBTI types.

ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ
linear learner with a strong desire for order; prefers hands-on, direct experience; audio-visuals; lectures with clear goals; enjoys working alone; prefers practical tasks.	linear learner has strong need for order; likes listening to lectures, audio-visuals, & practical assignments; enjoys working alone.	global or linear; wants to study theory first, then applications; enjoys working alone; prefers open-ended instruction; likes harmony in class.	global or linear; wants to study theory first, then applications; enjoys working alone; prefers open-ended instruction; good at pen-&-paper tests
ISTP linear learner; needs help getting organized; likes hands-on, direct experience, lectures & audio-visuals; enjoys working alone.	**ISFP** linear learner; needs help getting organized; likes direct hands-on experience, audio-visuals, & practical assignments; needs clear goals & class harmony; enjoys working alone.	**INFP** global learner; needs sensitive instructor, likes reading listening, & autonomy; wants to study theory first, then application; prefers harmony, likes open -ended instruction & working alone	**INTP** global learner; needs sensitive instructor; likes reading, listening & autonomy; theory first, then application; good at pen-&-paper tests; likes open-ended instruction & working alone.
ESTP linear learner; needs help getting organized; likes to know 'why' before doing assignment; likes group projects, discussions, teamwork, hands-on experience, & audio-visuals.	**ESFP** linear learner; needs help getting organized; likes hands-on experience, audio-visuals, practical assignments & class reports; needs to know 'why' before doing assignment; likes orderly, well-defined goals.	**ENFP** global learner; needs sensitive instructor; likes seminars & readings; likes harmony in class, group projects, team assignments, class reports & autonomy	**ENTP** global learner; needs sensitive instructor; likes autonomy, seminars, reading & listening; wants to study theory first, then applications; good at pen-&-paper tests; prefers open-ended instruction.

ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ
linear learner; strong need for structure; likes to know "why" before doing assignment; likes hands-on, experience, group projects, class reports, team projects, practical tests & audio-visuals.	linear learner; strong need for structure; needs well-defined goals & wants to know 'why'; wants harmony in group work, team projects & class reports; likes audio-visuals & practical assignments.	global or linear learner; likes seminars, reading, listening, harmony in class, & pen-&-paper tests; prefers open- ended instruction.	global or linear learner; likes seminars, reading, group projects, listening, class reports, team assignments & pen-&-paper tests; prefers open-ended instruction.

Adapted from: Leaver, B.L., Ehrman, M.E., Schekhtman, B., 2005 p. 117 - 8

The learning style preferences above will be incorporated into the returnee syllabus using a range of instructional approaches, tasks and assignments to facilitate a variety of MBTI learner types. It may be a challenge for the instructor to alter their teaching style, however by modifying the tasks and assignments and providing detailed lesson plans, it is hoped that the learners will have enough variance in their lessons to accommodate most of their language learning preferences. Below are the ways in which activities, class work and homework will be adapted to suit the preferences for each point of the four dichotomous MBTI pairs; introverted-extraverted, sensing-intuitive, thinking-feeling and judging-perceiving.

Introverted and Extroverted Dichotomous Pairs

Introverted-type learners prefer learning on their own and preparing before engaging with others to perform a task. Activities that suit introverted learners include independent assignments in which learners develop materials to help them memorize lexical items before vocabulary-based exercises, for example developing word cards using the key-word technique (Moir & Nation 2002) to prepare them for in-class small-group listening activity discussions. Other tasks include metacognitive language learning activities to facilitate a preference for "planning for an upcoming language task and carefully organizing their learning, and the cognitive strategy of using formal, structured materials" (Ehrman & Oxford 1990 p. 318). In these ways, introvert-type learners can prepare themselves before engaging in communicative speaking tasks with their peers.

Extraverts acquire language through social interaction and thus prefer activities in which they can ask questions about learning materials or interact with peers to gain a better understanding of ideas and concepts that are presented in class. As Ehrman and Oxford state in their study, these learners prefer, "using specific social strategies, such as asking their teacher for clarification, cooperating with peers, or cooperating with proficient users of the target language" (Ehrman & Oxford 1990 p. 318) in order to better understand language learning tasks. To facilitate their preferences, a variety of pair work and group work discussions and in-class activities promoting negotiation and clarification of meaning will be employed in the syllabus.

Sensing and Intuitive Dichotomous Pairs

The sensing / intuitive dimension within MBTI typology relates to how people learn and accept information. Intuitive learners prefer to explore theoretical background information before applying their learning in a practice activity. For example, inquiry-based analysis, as applied in discovery learning theory (Bruner 1967) in which the learner draws on personal experience and existing knowledge to discover facts and relationships about new information would be preferred by intuitive types. These learners "rely heavily on guessing from context, do not need complete comprehension, and are comfortable with linguistic risks and experimentation." (Ehrman & Oxford 1990 p. 320). Therefore, they might prefer engaging in consciousness-raising grammar activities, in which they work out the rule behind a grammar form or structure, rather than having the rule explicitly provided to them. In the syllabus, activities that promote self-discovery for the meaning behind a grammar structure or vocabulary construct (for example, separating the prefix and suffix of a lexical unit to determine the root word), will be used to accommodate these types of learners.

Conversely, sensing learners have a preference for rules and facts, and want the learning task instructions clearly and explicitly stated. "Sensing learners prefer facts over abstractions; tend not to focus on underlying principles; and prefer concrete, sequential learning." (Ehrman & Oxford 1995 p. 70) To accommodate both sensing and intuitive learner dichotomies, mixed learner groups will work together in various syllabus activities to uncover the meaning and apply their learning in communicative activities. For example, intuitive students help sensing students discover the rule or meaning behind a learning form or structure; then the sensing student helps identify the facts after which they apply their learning in an integrated communicative exercise. In this way, both dichotomies use their learning strengths and assist each other in completing the activity.

Thinking and Feeling Dichotomous Pairs

The third dichotomous pair, thinking and feeling, relates to how learners make decisions and judgments when evaluating a learning task. Learners with feeling personality characteristics are sensitive to social, interpersonal and group dynamics when engaged in class work. Like extraverts, feelers prefer to work in groups. However, the emphasis for feeling-type learners is on harmony and consensus when executing peer work tasks. In order to accommodate the preferences of this personality dimension, some activities allow learners to form their own small harmonious groups in which they can ally themselves with peers that share the same values and approaches to task completion.

At the opposite end of this personality dichotomy are thinkers, who rely on logic and reasoning to complete task work. Thinkers employ "cognitive strategies related to analysis and reasoning in reference to words, expressions, structures, textual passages, and the general language system." (Ehrman & Oxford 1990 p. 320) For these learner types, most in-class activities and exercises in the syllabus will be presented with clear, precise, action-oriented objectives and instructions. In this way, thinking learners will able to apply their critical thinking and analytical approaches to activities and tasks that are assigned in class.

Thinking and Feeling Dichotomous Pairs

The final dichotomy in the set of MBTI typology dimensions involves judging and perceiving. These dichotomies relate to the manner in which learners approach tasks and what information they require in order to successfully commence and complete task work. For learners with an inclination towards perceiving, their perceptions and views tend to be more abstract and open, and they have a tendency to be more adaptable and spontaneous in their task approach. "Perceivers are open to the ambiguities of the language learning process and experiment with the language using a variety of compensation strategies, such as guessing or improvising." (Ehrman & Oxford 1990 p. 322) These learners tend to start several tasks at once and need to know everything about each task, but often have difficulty completing them. For these learners, dividing the main presentation project into smaller sub-assignments would help these learners complete their projects on time. Learners can also record their presentation sub-components and submit them to the teacher for feedback, thus providing them enough background information to complete the sub-tasks and final presentation.

Judging-type learners focus on task completion, require only the essential information, and quickly turn their plan into action. "Judgers need structure and closure and are deadline-conscious, product-oriented learners." (Ehrman & Oxford 1995 p. 70) However, these learners tend to start their learning assignments quickly, sometimes missing necessary points as they hurry to complete their assignment. To facilitate learners with these traits, activities have been adapted to permit peer evaluation and critiques of course work, in order that they double-check and re-evaluate their work before presenting it. Another task approach that will be applied is speed writing during small group presentations, so learners can prepare questions based on presentation content.

Through the combination of personalized tasks and assignments that match learner personality and learning style preferences, the risk of cognitive overload amongst learners when executing tasks and activities should diminish. By applying activities that suit individual learning strengths and preferences, learners should find it easier to accomplish assigned tasks and achieve the goals set out in the program. In the following sections, I will provide details about the teaching context, goals and objectives, evaluation techniques and syllabus outline in the returnee program. I will also clarify how a functional syllabus structure corresponds with the learning style and personality preferences of the learners in the course.

The Goals and Objectives of the Course

The instructional goals and objectives in this section are designed to help learners succeed with oral interviews for foreign university admission. Learners should also achieve a competent discourse level in order to successfully participate in future university classes. The goals and objectives outlined in this course adhere to H.D. Brown's language curriculum principles and guidelines (Brown 1996), which are separated into general curriculum goals and more specific instructional objectives. The goals and objectives are one way to measure instructional content acquired in class.

Course Goals

By the end of the course, students will be able to (SWBAT):

- Understand and apply new vocabulary words that are presented in the course in conversation

Enhancing *v*ocabulary is a key component of the course, as students are immersed in a Japanese high school and thus lack exposure to English language and vocabulary. To increase exposure, vocabulary from the textbook and lexis will be applied in the course using Nation's learning strategies such as word part analysis, using key word techniques and dictionary use (Nation 2001). Learners will be taught these vocabulary strategies to increase comprehension during the course and to apply these strategies again in the future.

- Clarify and elaborate on statements and questions from the teacher and students on themes and topics presented in the course.

This goal relates to Canale's communicative competence and the characteristic that "the primary function of language is to allow interaction and communication" (Canale, M. 1983). Students who can clarify statements and questions will achieve higher levels of comprehensive interaction and clear communication during discussions. Therefore, by clarifying statements or questions and negotiating meaning, a higher degree of communicative competence can be reached.

- Give a class presentation, using an introduction, main points, and conclusion, on an assigned topic.

Presentation skills are another key component of academic competence. By presenting their ideas and opinions, students develop a skill that allows them to comprehensibly interact with an English-speaking audience and improves acquisition in question and answer periods following presentations. According to Richards and Rogers, acquisition improves when "language learning comes about through using language communicatively, rather than through practicing language skills." (Richards & Rogers 2001 p.163) Furthermore, it provides a way to assess and evaluate learner acquisition levels during the course.

Instructional Objectives

By the end of the course, SWBAT understand and be able to use in conversation new vocabulary words presented in the course.
- SWBAT identify and explain the meaning of 50 lexical words or phrases and provide a synonym and/or antonym for the word or phrase with 70% accuracy
- SWBAT recite 50 new lexical words or phrases and put them in a proper context in a complete sentence during oral interviews with 70% accuracy;

By the end of the course, SWBAT clarify and elaborate on teacher and student statements and questions on themes and topics presented in the course
- SWBAT construct 50 complex sentences using one or more of the new lexical words or phrases with 80% accuracy
- SWBAT paraphrase 50 simple statements and check comprehension during oral interviews with 80% accuracy

By the end of the course, SWBAT give a two-minute presentation, using an introduction, main points, and conclusion, on an assigned topic
- SWBAT memorize and present a five minute presentation to the class using the introduction, main points, conclusion format with 100% success
- SWBAT write three WH-questions based on a topic in a presentation and articulate their questions clearly to the presenter with 67% success

The goals and objectives for the communication course were developed with the purpose of preparing the students for oral communicative competence in an English language university. Thus, these goals will help students develop their lexical competence, ensure they can clarify the input they receive and present and explain their opinions and ideas in a presentation to a group of peers. The objectives above will measure the learners' ability to achieve the stated goals of the syllabus and allow for a comprehensible evaluation of their acquisition.

Evaluation Criteria and Procedures

The oral communication course assessments will be based on the following components: 10 percent for in class participation, 20 percent for the mid-term oral examination, 20 percent for an oral presentation, 20 percent for attendance and 30 percent for the final oral examination. The following part of the paper will focus on the evaluation criteria and procedures prepared by the class teacher for the oral examinations, presentation and in-class assessments.

Evaluation Criteria

The students' oral communicative competence will be evaluated on the following criteria; in-class discussion and interaction, two interview examinations, and one oral presentation. Students will be evaluated on their effort and ability to use topics and functions during pair work and group work activities in class. They will also be assessed on their efforts at self-correction following correction of semantic and lexical errors by the teacher. As Spada and Lightbown point out, "In the context of communicative interaction, learners seem to be able to benefit more from instruction and error feedback which focus on semantic or lexical errors than from…

syntactic errors" (Spada and Lightbown 2002 p. 128). Therefore, the instructor is responsible for correcting lexical and semantic errors. After recasts are given for incorrect sentences, learners should attempt to self-correct and they will be positively evaluated for their effort. The participation score for this evaluation component amounts to 25 percent of the total grade.

The oral interview exams evaluate the students' ability to retain and apply the language and lexis learned in the classes. Students are asked comprehension questions that require them to respond using vocabulary and functions from the textbook. It will require them to respond using complex sentence structures in order to determine whether oral communicative competence is improving. In the interview, the teacher asks the student questions based on five different question categories. All of the categories relate to the themes of the units and test their interactive comprehension and acquisition skills. A sample oral communication exam from the first semester is provided in Appendix B.

The final evaluation component is the oral presentation and discussion. Each student will present one five-minute speech to the class during the year. The students in the audience will clarify the presenters' statements and ask questions about their speech. Learners will clarify and negotiate the meaning of presentation content so that the presentation is comprehensible. According to Peter Skehan, when a learner engages in "negotiation of meaning (through) the use of … clarification requests, confirmation and comprehension checks… (he/she) is more likely, as a result, to develop productively." (Skehan 1998 p. 17) Thus, by confirming and clarifying, students will be better able to negotiate meaning and ensure that discussions are comprehensible.

Evaluation Procedures

Next, I will explain the evaluation procedures for the interactive communication component, oral interviews, and class presentation and peer interaction. In-class discussions will be evaluated based on student participation in class activities. Grading is based on contributions to question-answer sessions, pair work participation, use of English in class, and homework completion. Students will also be given quizzes to check vocabulary comprehension and sentence structure patterns learned in class.

The oral interview tests are a ten minute, five section test, with the proctor choosing one question per section. The interviewer grades students based on comprehension, relevance of answer, use of functional question patterns and conversational fluency. Students must answer questions and give descriptions in complete sentences. Each question is worth five points based on five question types.

The final component is a class presentation given in class at the end of one of the three semesters. Each student presents once during the year and must base their presentation on a topic from the course. Topics reflect the students' opinion and must include reasons for their opinion. Presenters then answer questions from peers at the end of their presentation. The students asking questions will be presenting in the following semester. A cumulative score equaling five percent of the total course grade will be awarded for the presentations.

The Course Syllabus

The learners in the course are expected to be quite fluent young returnees who require an extended vocabulary and increased accuracy in oral communication (for example, their speaking ability needs to be expanded from short, simple sentence responses to longer, complex sentences). Program graduates are expected to pass oral entrance interviews at top-ranked U.S. and U.K. universities after completing the program. Therefore, their vocabulary, fluency and spoken comprehension will be expanded using an oral communication functional syllabus with progress assessed on a regular basis, through oral comprehension tests and presentations.

For the oral communication class, the aim is to incorporate activities that suit a variety of learning style and personality preferences so that students can carry out communicative fluency-building tasks, vocabulary activities, and independent assignments. A variety of learning styles has been integrated into the syllabus for two reasons. First, the style variation will match most of the student's style preferences so that activities do not overload learner cognitive processes. Second, it will allow learners to expand their learning strategies by working outside of their comfort zone so they can "enhance (their) learning and working power by being aware of and developing the style areas that (they) do not normally use" (Cohen Oxford & Chi 2001 p. 16).

To accommodate the variety of personalities that exist in a classroom, learning activities and tasks have been designed to correspond with MBTI preference types. The syllabus will be paired with a teacher's manual outlining instructions for activities to be used in class and in preparation for upcoming coursework. Because there may not be an opportunity to assess the variety of personality types and learning style preferences prior to the start of classes, the syllabus was developed to suit a wide range of learner types. This will benefit all learners, regardless of their learning preferences, because the ability to expand one's range of learning styles and preferences not only improves language acquisition, but also enhances their depth and pace of learning. "Effective learning appears to depend on mobilization both of the strategies associated with one's native

learning-style preferences (indicated by the four MBTI letters) and of the strategies associated with less preferred functions that are the opposites of the four letters of a person's type." (Ehrman & Oxford 1990 p. 323). Thus, by obliging learners to expand their learning strategies and engage in a wide variety of learning task types, learners will develop a more flexible range of learning abilities and will also improve their language acquisition and aptitude.

Examples of task diversity in the syllabus are homework activities and independent research tasks to help introverted learners prepare, while pair and group discussion activities that follow suit extraverted learner types. Other syllabus design elements include homework assignments that provide intuitive learners with theoretical background knowledge, and fact-based, sequential tasks to suit sensing-type learners. Feeling-type learners will be permitted to form congruous groups for in-class discussions, while thinking-types will be given assignments with clear, straightforward instructions to help them manage task work. Finally, perceiving-type learners will be given help with organizing larger projects and will have feedback from the teacher in order to answer any task questions, while judging types will receive well-structured assignments with clear deadlines, as well as opportunities for peer review so they do not miss any key task components. It is hoped that any conflict between the instructor's teaching style and students' learning styles and personality type preferences will be resolved through the variety of task types and approaches that have been integrated into the syllabus.

The multidimensional syllabus has been developed using a pragmatic functional/situational textbook and materials, and vocabulary from the General Service List (GSL) and Academic Word List (AWL), to support the oral communication course goals and help the learners expand their linguistic capabilities. As Tajeddin states, by using a functional approach, "learners at more advanced levels can build up a larger repertoire of speech acts and have a higher capacity to benefit from pragmatic instruction." (Tajeddin 2008) In particular in Japan, where most school administrators are not accustomed to a learner-centric, task-based approach to learning, a functional /theme-based approach is an approach that can increase student lexical and grammatical speaking, writing, listening and reading skills.

The textbook that has been selected to support the syllabus, *Let's Talk About It*, is a situational instruction text focusing on spoken fluency and vocabulary-building activities and tasks, with 20 units based around an extensive lexis that support a functional syllabus structure. The text book has been adapted for the course, which is comprised of 24 teaching periods, divided into three semesters, with each of the twelve functional units taught over two 50-minute periods. The course textbook is supplemented by two other books; one is a text entitled *World Link 3*, and the other is a supplementary activity book that is also centered on function/situation-based units, entitled *Talk A Lot*. The oral communication text and GSL/AWL based vocabulary provide the key lexical components for the oral communication course. The course focuses on materials that support the components mentioned in the syllabus above and all three textbooks provide the situational, functional and lexical support to achieve the goals of the course. The focus, goals and activities for each of the twelve units are outlined in the table below.

Unit	Focus	Goal	Activities
1	· Greetings, introductions & WH Questions · Introduce food topic	· Introduce self & respond to questions · Generate food vocabulary	· Polite questions role play · Guess the food using adjective order (ex. long, sweet, yellow fruit)
2	· Food categories · Ordering & polite requests	· Describe food (descriptive adjectives) · Order fast food	· Describe favorite food (color, texture, flavor, etc.) · Fast food restaurant role play
3	· Culture differences · Japan versus U.S.	· Comparatives: discuss similarities & differences · Clarify cultural statements	· Compare & contrast (using more or "-er") · Clarifications activity
4	· Nationalities · World languages & cultures	· Identify nationalities & countries · Locate countries on a map & identify languages	· How do you say (word) in (language)? activity · Country / language gap fill activity
5	· Shopping for products · Addition & subtraction in U.S. dollars	· Describe products & features · Count prices & add/subtract numbers	· Shopping role play · Shopping activity: How much is it at (store)?
6	· Body parts · Health & sickness	· Describe body parts · Describe illness & give advice using modals	· Body parts pair work activity · I have a headache activity & modals: should/ had better
7	· Music & hobbies · State preferences with reasons	· Describe routine: frequency adverbs · Give reason/ clarify response	· Survey: How often do you? · Preferences for hobby/music - clarify reason: pairs & groups
8	· Movies & television	· Express opinions: agree & disagree	· Cats versus dogs: which is better as

	· Entertainment categories & descriptions	· Debate: give an opinion with reasons	a pet? · TV listings: pairs decide which programs to watch
9	· Transportation & getting around · Local travel	· Describe travel route & choose a mode of travel · Getting around: using a map to find locations	· Choose best route to get to a location – pair-work gap fill · Ask questions for getting around a city: group activity
10	· Making travel plans · Presentation prep	· Plan a vacation with partner · Decide presentation topic	· Travel guide for destinations · Prepare presentation outline
11	· Family members · Describing people · Presentation Part II	· Discuss & describe family members · Presentation introductions	· Family members vocabulary & relationship · Small group presentation practice
12	· Class final presentation & Q&A's	· Individual presentations on topics · Students ask & answer questions about topics	· Presentations on topics · Students explain with reasons & clarify answers

Table 1.1 OCC Focus, Goals and Activities

The situations and functions described in the teaching units have been arranged so that new vocabulary can be introduced and used in interactive discourse, and to allow for a progression toward student-led discussion in class in later units. The topics in the first four units are oriented around themes the students are familiar with, and thus make it easier for new vocabulary to be introduced into the dialogs and activities. The units will progress toward debate and opinion-oriented topics and themes that will allow students to incorporate new language and forms learned in previous units and build interactive communication skills. The activities in each unit incorporate newly acquired functional language themes and vocabulary and are designed to accommodate all potential learning style and personality preferences that learners possess.

As mentioned previously, the course will be evaluated through oral tests administered the English teacher at the midpoint and end of the year. A functional approach will allow for easier assessment of course material acquisition. Thus, learner competency can be gauged more clearly by assessing comprehension of patterns and functions on an oral test. This is one reason why a functional approach was selected as a sound option for the oral communication course. The functional structure is also familiar to learners and will be easier to apply in class than a content-based or task-based syllabus. In future, the syllabus will move to a content-based interactional format. However, the current syllabus structure will support the development of communicative competency and expand the learners' range of learning styles while helping them work towards a goal of entering and transitioning into an English-speaking university system. "If notional/functional syllabi are based on accurate and adequate analyses of the types of discourse the learners will need to engage in, and if the learners continue according to their plan, then (they) have a higher probability of developing (into) effective users of the new language." (Krahnke 1987 p. 33)

Conclusion

One of the key points of the oral communication course syllabus is that it was developed for learners who have a high English fluency level, and is therefore meant to introduce new vocabulary and linguistic structures to build their competence beyond their present level. By increasing their communicative competence, the syllabus will prepare them to enter top-tier universities in Japan and the US upon graduation. Thus, learners are expected to increase their spoken vocabulary and enhance communicative competence in line with the overall goal of successful university admission. The syllabus approach follows a functional content format with the eventual curriculum goal being a transition to a more interactional task-based / content-based format, which will better prepare students for university classes in the future.

The course integrates acquisition variables related to learning style and personality within a functional syllabus to build grammatical competence, vocabulary and academic and non-academic oral communication skills. These include lexical development and discourse skills such as clarifying and stating opinions that are integrated with a speaking and writing output course from the program. Using this syllabus approach as a foundation, the functional / situational textbook is expected to build student interactive discourse skills. The textbook, *Let's Talk About It*, is combined with a vocabulary-oriented textbook, *World Link 3,* and another topical activity book, *Talk A Lot*. Students will discuss and debate topics from the books in class and their progress will be evaluated through class interactive communication, oral interview tests and a speech presentation.

It is hoped that through student interaction within the class, students' oral communication will continue to improve and prepare them for admission into a university of their choice. Finally, it is hoped that

through the interactive communication format built into the syllabus, students will be able to enhance their discourse accuracy and retain their fluency, while simultaneously improving their vocabulary and communicative competence skills.

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Appendix A

Sample Syllabus

Unit & Week	Focus	Goal	Activities
Unit 1 Week 1 & 2	Greetings & Introduction to food	Introducing yourself Word order for adjectives	Greetings role play Adjective order activity
Unit 2 Week 3 & 4	Food categories Ordering a meal	Describing food Polite requests	Food description activity Restaurant role play
Mid-Term Examination Semester I			
Unit 3 Week 6 & 7	Culture differences Japan & the USA	Comparing differences Clarifying meaning	Comparison: -er & more Culture clarifications
Unit 4 Week 8 & 9	Nationalities World languages	Identify nationalities Locate countries & languages spoken	Word/ language pair work Country / language gap fill activity
Final Examination Semester I			
Unit 5 Week 11 & 12	Shopping Addition & subtraction	Describe products Count, add, subtract	Product description Shopping activity
Unit 6 Week 13 & 14	Body parts Health & sickness	Body parts & idioms Describe illness & advice	Body parts pair activity Headache advice activity
Mid-Term Examination Semester II			
Unit 7 Week 16 & 17	Music & hobbies Preferences & reasons	Adverbs of frequency State preference & clarify reason	Questionnaire: how often? Music/ hobby preference pair-work
Unit 8 Week 18 & 19	Movies & television Entertainment	Express an opinion Agree & disagree	Which is better? activity TV listings pair work
Final Examination Semester II			
Unit 9 Week 21 & 22	Transportation Local travel	Describe travel route Get around using a map	travel route activity City map gap fill
Unit 10 Week 23 & 24	Making travel plans Presentation prep	Plan a vacation Choose presentation topic	Travel guide planning Prep presentation outline
Mid-Term Examination Semester III			
Unit 11 Week 26 & 27	Family members Presentation part II	Describe family members Presentation introductions	Family vocabulary activity Small group presentation practice
Unit 12 Week 28 & 29	Final presentations Class Q&A	Individual topic presentation Q&A from class	Presentation on individual topics Answer class questions
Final Examination Semester III			

Appendix B

Sample Oral Interview Evaluation Questions

Final Test Questions Semester I

Part 1: Open ended question

Which do you prefer, living in Japan or living abroad? Why?

What is your favorite non-Japanese food? Why? **/5**

What is country you would like to visit? Why?

Part 2: Limited choice question

Explain the steps to making a sandwich

Tell me 5 countries you know and their nationalities **/5**

What are 5 things you don't like and 5 things you like to put on a pizza?

Part 3: Long answer question

Talk for 2 minutes about the city you lived in when you were abroad

Talk for 2 minutes about a food or restaurant you like **/5**

Talk for 2 minutes about a place you would like to visit

Part 4: Description questions

Describe a food you like (taste, color, texture, etc…)

Compare 3 differences between Japan and (your previous country) **/5**

Describe four things that you like, dislike, love, hate about school

Part 5: Picture Descriptions

Look at the picture of the restaurant; describe what the people are doing

Look at the picture of the tourists; describe what the travelers are doing **/5**

Look at the picture of the store in the US and Japan; describe the differences

/25