A Case Study of the Development and Evaluation of a Curriculum for Reading Strategy Instruction for College Freshmen

Hitomi MASUHARA

1. Introduction

The Japanese Ministry of Education stated that the Revised Standards for University and Colleges would go into effect in July, 1991. Included in the major changes were self-evaluation done by the universities themselves in order to fulfill their responsibility to the society as the highest educational institution by making sure of the high quality of the education and research they offer. One of the major items to be self-evaluated is the curriculum. One aim of this revision seems to be to enhance the validity and accountability of the university curriculum, which has been left to the initiative of each institution. As a consequence, the awareness has become even more acute as to the reappraisal of the present teaching and learning situation in many universities. However, some confusion is also emerging as to what is involved in the whole process of curriculum reappraisal and how the curriculum studies are applied in the context of each educational environment. This confusion is caused by the fact that the curriculum development, though fundamentally indispensable, is a complex undertaking that involves a great deal of decision-making from the national level to the actual classroom level through planning, implementation and evaluation stages. Furthermore, even in the field of education the formal development of Curriculum Studies have only been established in the 1970’s.

This paper introduces a case study where the researcher intended to follow the series of steps necessary for systematic curriculum development in order to execute a one year program for teaching reading strategies. The attempt to develop a curriculum is obviously a very ambitious undertaking, for each stage requires extensive research and consideration by specialists concerned. However, the purpose of this study is to clarify the stages necessary in designing and carrying out a valid integrated course and also to recognize the areas for further studies by simulating the whole process, i.e. curriculum planning, implementation, and its evaluation. This trial seems reasonable when we consider the fact, which is signified in the Monbusho’s Revised Standards, that second language teaching is not a mere teaching act done by a teacher with a material, as was often narrowly misinterpreted. Instead, it is a cooperative enterprise in which educational goals and objectives are determined, and in which principles and procedures for the planning, delivery, management, and assessment of teaching and learning are carefully coordinated. When such curriculum-based view is introduced, redefinition of the teachers’ role becomes necessary. They can no longer simply be a presenter of materials or an implementer of a method. For teachers should be able to understand the basic principles and processes of how the curriculum is made in order to coordinate their teaching. In a small project in an institute, a teacher might even have to serve as a needs analyst, syllabus designer, negotiator of both syllabus and methodology with the
learners, material developer, and investigator as to find out the effect of the teaching and learning. If the Ministry of Education expects the Revised Standards to be effectively employed, some supportive actions might be called for. For example, the methodology for the systematic curriculum study should be made available in teacher education and also the agents who specialize in the field should be established for consultation for teachers and those concerned in the educational enterprise. Meanwhile, many efforts will be necessary in each institution to clarify what kind of curriculum reappraisal is necessary and how it can be achieved. It is hoped that this case study offers a tentative model for discussing such controversial matters in this college.

2. Background

2.1. Current developments in second language reading

Recently more and more researchers in second language reading have begun to focus, among other things, on readers’ strategies (i.e., procedures or actions that learners or readers select and control to achieve the desired goal). Since the 1970s, L2 learning theorists in psychology and education have advocated teaching students to use a variety of reading strategies in order to read better. (Hosenfeld 1977, Garner 1987) These strategies include traditionally recognized reading skills of skimming and scanning, guessing the meaning of unknown words from available sources in the text, making inferences, and recognizing how a discourse is structured. The new series of studies into learners’ strategies were inspired by the findings in the field of educational psychology and in the studies of successful and unsuccessful readers. In exploratory, descriptive investigations of small numbers of individual learners using think-aloud techniques, Hosenfeld (1977) and Block (1986) identified apparent relations between successful or unsuccessful L2 reading and certain types of reading strategies. Empirical investigations have also recognized the effect of the learners’ awareness of and their effective use of the appropriate reading strategies. (Knight, Padron & Waxman 1985; Padron & Waxman 1988). Some researchers have attempted a longitudinal training experiment and report the effect of the strategy training in improving the learners reading comprehension (Barnett 1988; Kern 1989; Carrell, Pharis, & Liberto, 1989).

In the case of Japanese Students, Tsuido (1991) investigated the Japanese EFL learners’ strategy use and found that those who score highly in the English reading comprehension test use larger numbers of various strategies in a flexible manner than the poor scorers. Matsubara (1991) also found the tendency of poor readers not to be able to use strategies effectively. Mishima (1991) used 124 university students and concluded that Japanese readers tend to be less competent in the use of top-down strategies, and that those who are at the development stage where their basic reading strategies are not automatized cannot execute the top-down strategies effectively.

Grave (1991) states:

The potential for reading comprehension improvement from comprehension strategy training is enormous. Second language researchers are just beginning to explore the issues in this area, and many research studies claiming success in L1 contexts need to be replicated in L2 contexts to see if such claims can be generalized to second language students. Given the enormous range of research studies that will be needed, this field should remain a major locus.
of second language reading research for the next decade.

2. Curriculum studies in second language teaching

Despite the fact that arguments about what should be taught have been a feature even from Greek time, the formal study of the curriculum has a short history. The first text known to address major curriculum questions was written by Franklin Bobbitt entitled ‘The Curriculum’ published in the U. S. A. in 1918. Forty-four years later Tada (1962) lamented,

The very complexity and multitude of decisions and the fact that they are arrived at by different segments in the educational organization make it all the more important that there be an adequate theory of curriculum development. Yet, clear-cut methodology of thinking and planning seems to be lacking in curriculum making today. Recent writers on curriculum making point out almost unanimously that confusion is the main characteristic of curriculum theory. (7)

Since then, remarkable progress has been made in the field of education supported by the various national projects especially in the United States, whose progress was gradually introduced in the field of second language research.

Richards (1990) recognizes curriculum development to be comprised of 5 stages: needs analysis, goal setting, syllabus design, methodology, and testing and evaluation. The characteristic of each stage is briefly introduced below because the experiment for this study follows basically those stages.

To begin with, information gathering plays an important role as well as making reference to appropriate theories in education, the nature of effective teaching and learning, and methodology for curriculum development. In curriculum studies, techniques and procedures for collecting information to be used are often referred to as needs analysis. Richards (1990) explains the purpose of needs analysis as follows:

1. Providing a mechanism for obtaining a wider range of input into the content, design, and implementation of a language program through involving such people as learners, teachers, administrators, and employers in the planning process
2. Identifying general or specific language needs that can be addressed in developing goals, objectives and content for a language program
3. Providing data that can serve as the basis for reviewing and evaluating an existing program

(1-2)

Needs analysis includes situation analysis which involves gathering information about the learners, teachers, and administrative context and constraints. As for the needs of the learners the goals and expectations for the program, previous language training they had, their preference of learning styles and many other items could be included depending on the analyst’s objectives. From the teachers’ point of view, teachers’ qualifications, their proficiency in the target language will be two examples of the possible items to be asked. Administrative constraints would be, for instance, time, budget, resources present in the institute and the administrative context would be educational policies and societal expectation to the institute. Extensive needs analysis produces a considerable amount of data both in quantitative and qualitative manner. The needs analyst has to
decide what should be analyzed, the methods of collecting data, and the meaning and significance of the data collected. Methods employed in gathering data are usually participant observation, interviews, questionnaires, etc.

The second stage is setting the curriculum goals and objectives. Richards (1990) explains them as follows:

Curriculum goals are general statements of the intended outcomes of a language program, and represent what the curriculum planners believe to be desirable and attainable program aims based on the constraints revealed in needs analysis. Goals can be used as a basis for developing more specific descriptions of the intended outcomes of the program (the program objectives). (3)

The third stage is Syllabus Design. There are conflicting views as to the definition of curriculum development and syllabus design. There is also some disagreements about the scope of curriculum and syllabus respectively. Brumfit (1984) depicts this situation by quoting the experts definitions and shows the range and diversity of opinion of syllabus design. Nunan (1988) makes a clear distinction between the curriculum development and the syllabus design, which the author follows:

...traditionally syllabus design has been seen as a subsidiary component of curriculum design, ‘Curriculum’ is concerned with the planning, implementation, evaluation, management, and administration of education programs. ‘Syllabus’ on the other hand, focuses more narrowly on the selection and grading of content. (8)

Richards (1990) provides a comprehensive overview of the syllabuses commonly found in current English courses and materials:

1. Structural (organized primarily around grammar and sentence patterns)
2. Functional (organized around communicative functions, such as identifying, reporting, correcting, describing)
3. Notional (organized around conceptual categories, such as duration, quantity, location)
4. Topical (organized around themes or topics, such as health, food, clothing)
5. Situational (organized around speech setting and the transactions associated with them, such as shopping, at the bank, at the supermarket)
6. Skills (organized around skills, such as listening for gist, listening for specific information, listening for inferences)
7. Task or activity-based (organized around activities, such as drawing maps, following directions, following instructions) (9)

As can be seen from the list, the designer’s view of language and of language learning directly influences the conceptions of the nature of syllabus.

The format of a syllabus is arranged according to the intended users. For example, even for the same goals and objectives, the specifications in the syllabus for the material developers would take a different form from those for classroom teachers.

The fourth stage is the methodology, which is concisely defined by Richards (1990).

Methodology can be characterized as the activities, tasks, and learning experiences selected by the teacher in order to achieve learning, and how these are used within the
teaching / learning process. These activities are justified according to the objectives the teacher has set out to accomplish and the content he or she has set out to teach. They also relate to the philosophy of the program, to the view of language and language learning that the program embodies, and to the roles of teachers, learners, and instructional materials in the program. (11)

In this stage, teachers have to select or develop suitable material as a means. The instructional material should be based on theoretically sound learning principles, should be appropriate to the learners' needs and background, and arouse and maintain the learners' interests and attention by providing meaningful activities for learners so that the learners can experience real communication.

The evaluation, the last stage, occupies a crucial role in curriculum design. It aims to examine the dynamics, effectiveness, acceptability, and efficiency of a program to facilitate decision making, as Worthen and Sanders (1973) put it:

Evaluation is the determination of the worth of a thing. It includes obtaining information for use in judging the worth of a program, product, procedure or objective, or the potential utility of alternative approaches designed to attain specified objectives. (19)

The evaluation needs an extensive discussion, most of which is dealt in Masuhara and Kimura (1992) in this volume.

Therefore the present paper focuses more on planning and implementation stages.

3. Experiment

Research Hypothesis:

The ability of reading comprehension of EFL learners will improve when the learners are given a systematic training of strategy use and of raising the awareness of reading process involving the strategies.

Subjects: 46 college female students majoring in English

Treatment: Period April 17, 1991 - January 10, 1992
one class (90 minutes) per week for 25 weeks

Material see appendix I for the syllabus Inventory
appendix II for the syllabus
appendix III for the class schedule

Tests: Pretest TOEFL Level 2 form 3 MPET2
Posttest TOEFL Level 2 form 3 MPETI

Experimental Procedure:
1. Curriculum Design phase
   a. Gathering information
      1) Questionnaire in order to find out the learners' needs
      Questions asked on the students' previous training in English, their expectation and purpose, the availability of English input in their family environment (see appendix V).
      2) The coordination among English reading classes in the English Department course program
3) The investigation of theoretical references concerning current reading instruction, methodology, and learning theory.

b. Setting the goals and objectives

The data above were considered and the following goals were selected:

1) to produce optimal readers who can flexibly employ appropriate reading strategies in accordance to the purpose of the situation and to the kinds of text
2) to raise learners’ motivation and awareness so they can cultivate autonomy to become optimal readers

In order to achieve the stated goals, the specific objectives for the academic year in the present study were set as follows:

1) To help the learners raise awareness concerning the effective reading process and the use of strategies involved in them by employing a discovery approach
2) To have the learners become able to use strategies effectively according to the purpose and to the kinds of texts by doing graded activities designed for the use of strategies
3) To let the learners acquire real life communicative ability in English by providing them with the experience in reading authentic materials
4) To help learners to be motivated to read on their own

c. Designing a syllabus

Syllabus inventory was compiled in terms of the expected communicative needs of the learners. The text type and likely strategies were gathered so that teachers could flexibly extract strategy to focus on in the teaching plans. The orders were considered in reference to the learners’ previous training and the difficulty of the tasks and activities.

d. Deciding the methodology

The following principles were kept to in producing instructional material and in deciding how the learners are taught on the basis of learners’ need analysis, learning theory, and current strategy training research.

1) communicative approach in the sense that the reading is done to achieve communicative purposes rather than to learn the language
2) focus on fluent reading rather than accurate reading
3) focus on language awareness as to the text, situation, and learner’s reading ability and reading behavior
4) emphasis on integrated use of strategies
5) many of the activities are designed to help the students develop reading strategies which they have not yet fully developed in their L1 which do not seem to automatically transfer in L1
6) learning by doing is encouraged
7) the use of authentic materials which are not modified for teaching the language

e. Designing evaluation

Both quantitative and qualitative evaluation was planned. The proficiency test was selected according to criteria. (増原・木村 1993). Questionnaire was prepared (see
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appendix IV).

2. Administration phase
   a. Carrying out the pretest
   b. Giving the training of strategies based on the syllabus and using the methodology
   c. Administering the posttest
   d. Monitoring questionnaire

Results and discussion

The following Figures and Tables are made to explain the result.

Figure 1: The graphic display of distribution of pretest and posttest scores
Figure 2: The graphic display of the difference of the two test scores of the individual subjects categorized in the groups of high, middle, and low scorers
Figure 3-5: The results of the questionnaire concerning the effects
Table 1: The statistical analysis of the effect of the training represented in the pre- and posttest

![Graph of distribution of pretest and posttest scores]

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Table 1: The statistical analysis of the effect of the training represented in the pre- and posttest

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<th>相関係数の検定</th>
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<td>対立仮説 (HI)</td>
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| 共分散   | 7.2948960 |
| 相関係数  | 0.5876905 |

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<tr>
<th>相関係数の検定（信頼区間）</th>
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<td>(95%) 0.3545663 ～ 0.7500292</td>
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<td>(90%) 0.2741267 ～ 0.7883000</td>
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【検定結果】

自由度：45
t値：4.81815
仮説 (HO) は、有意水準5%で、棄却されます。
( -2.015 ～ 2.015 )
仮説 (HI) は、有意水準1%で、棄却されます。
( -2.692 ～ 2.692 )
図2 上位者、中位者、下位者の各個体の伸びの一覧

図3 ストラテジー訓練についての成果

図4 ストラテジー訓練についての成果

図5 ストラテジー訓練についての成果

より多くの英文を読むようになった
As figure 1, figure 2, and Table 1 show, the result was negative. Table 1 shows the result of matched t-test comparing the mean of the two tests, there was a significant decline, P < 0.05. Figure 2 shows how high scorers and middle scorers declined whereas the low scorers improved their scores. Therefore quantitative analyses of the results of the two tests seem to signify the strategy training was effective for the low scorers but not for the high and middle level scorers.

On the other hand, qualitative analysis of the questionnaire concerning the subjects' felt-effect turned out to be more positive. Figure 3-5 shows how they felt about the 25 weeks of training. Figure 3 shows 23 subjects out of 40 (57.5%) felt that their ability improved a little. Figure 4 shows 22 subjects out of 41 (53.7%) became a little more interested, confident and less intimidated when faced with texts written entirely in English. However, as for the autonomy of reading, 23 out of 40 (57.5%) answered that there was no change in their amount of L2 reading after the strategy training. The consolation may be that there are 14 out of 40 subjects (35%) who became a little more motivated to try to read more than they used to.

To draw any definite conclusion out of the above result should be refrained, on account that there are basic defaults in the experimental design. Firstly, in order to prove the effect of the treatment, a comparable control group is indispensable. However, it was not possible due to the economic constraints. Alternatively, it is possible to prove the effect without the control group if only the tests were administered 4 times, which was not possible also because of the financial limitations. Secondly, evaluation plan should have included questionnaire questions about the English input they had other than the strategies training during the treatment period. Thirdly, class schedule (see appendix III) shows that the strategy treatment had begun (six class periods) when the pretest was administered, so the pretest is not exactly a test measuring the subjects' ability before the treatment. Again practical constraints caused this fundamental contamination of the data. Lastly, the posttest took place right after the winter vacation, which means the training effect might have been lost because of the time lapse. It is extremely difficult to carry out the experiments in actual classroom because of the constraints in many forms, which research in the form of finance and/or having the proficiency exams scheduled periodically within the curriculum.

Having the cautions in mind in interpreting the result, there is an interesting conflict or discrepancy between the decrease of TOEFL test scores and the subjects' perceived improvements in their reading ability. Two interpretations may be possible: logically any training should bring some degrees of positive effect, therefore it may be that the training has prevented the decline of reading ability. As shown in the questionnaire (figure 5) the subjects seem to be reluctant in actively taking time to read themselves. The second interpretation is what Carrell et al. (1989) questions: the sensitivity of multiple choice questions. In their study, they employed three kinds of tests, and the multiple choice test was the least sensitive. If the first interpretation proves to be valid, then the students do not need to secure time for reading. If the students do not take time to read themselves, then it may be necessary to provide classes which are called, for example, "Reading Laboratory" in which the time, place and reading material are provided and the record of the amount and pace of reading is kept for further guidance. If the second interpretation was right which means the assessment tool was inadequate, the appropriateness of using TOEFL as evaluative measure of educational effect should be questioned and examined.
4. Conclusion

In the curriculum-based view, effective language teaching programs are dependent upon systematic data gathering, planning, and development within a context that is shaped and influenced by learners, teachers, school, and societal factors. Moreover, evaluation should be given considerable importance. In this case-study, an attempt was made to follow the steps of curriculum planning, its implementation and evaluation in order to explore ways of applying curriculum study theories to the context of language teaching in our college. In doing so, it was acutely felt that cooperative perspective is crucial in sustaining a systematic curriculum design, for it requires decision making which needs to be coordinated at every level including administration section, for introduction of innovation would require support in the political and financial sides. The self-evaluation suggested in the Revised Standards seems to mean such integrated one done by the representatives as a result of cooperative enterprise. In the introduction, the emerging confusion was mentioned concerning the reappraisal of university curriculum. If successful design and implementation process were to be anticipated without confusion, participants at the different levels of educational decision-making must have a more global view of the process of curriculum planning and of the various principles involved.

Works Cited

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APPENDIX I.

SYLLABUS INVENTORY

For Reading Strategy Training

I. Major Elements
   A. Situational Variables
      1. Purpose of Reading
      2. Conditions
   B. Text Variables
      1. Type
      2. Difficulty
      3. Purpose of writing
   C. Readers Variables
      1. Developmental Stage
      2. Interests
      3. Previous Reading Training
      4. Motivation

II. Text Types and their purpose
   A. in order to get information
      1. newspaper
      2. magazine
      3. advertisement
      4. information source
         a. map
         b. table
         c. notes and excerpts
         d. floor directory
         e. business correspondence
   *Usual conditions: short time limit
   Efficiency of extracting the needed information matters.
   B. For enjoyment/enlightenment
      1. letters
      2. narrative stories
         a. fiction
         b. non-fiction
         c. essays
         d. editorials
      3. poetry
      4. comics
   C. For academic purposes
      1. reference books
      2. books of instructions
      3. books explaining things
         *Usual conditions: Accuracy and efficiency matters.
         Analytical approach needed.
         Knowledge of paragraph development and cohesive device required.
III. Useful strategies according to the purpose of reading
   A. In order to get information
      1. Efficient use of
         a. Contents
         b. Index
         c. Keys
         d. Grid map
      2. Quick grasp of how things are organized and presented
      3. Scanning
      4. Skimming
      5. Cross-checking
      6. Activating the background knowledge
      7. Activating the format, discourse schema
      8. Guessing the word meaning from the context
      9. Summarizing the salient point

   B. For Enjoyment/Enlightenment
      1. Activating the schema (content/format/discourse)
      2. Use of the knowledge of the world
      3. Visualization
      4. Prediction
      5. Inference
      6. Guessing the word meaning from the context
      7. Finding the patterns of organization
      8. Grasping the intention of the writer

   C. For Academic Purpose
      1. Knowledge of paragraph development
      2. Grasping the gist of the passage
      3. Cross-referencing
      4. Knowledge of cohesive device
      5. Differentiating opinions from facts
      6. Following the argument

APPENDIX II.

英文読解力養成講座のシラバス

I. 指导目的
   a. 学習者が、読解過程におけるメタ認知の重要性を理解させよう。
   b. 学習者が、読解の目的や状況、自らの特性やテキストに合わせ、適切で有効なストラテジーを使用できるように訓練を行う。
   c. 学習者が、英文における生のテキストに読解応答に対応することで、内容の理解とともに、読解力の向上を計る。

II. 指導内容
   別紙「平成3年度英語講義II授業計画表」参照

III. 指導の手順と指導方法
   指導内容ごとの別紙による。

IV. 教材
   指導内容ごとの別紙による。

APPENDIX III.
APPENDIX VI 語学教育Ⅱアンケート（結果報告を含む）

講義の意義では、一年を通して、英語を英語のまま、目的に合わせて読むことを繰り返してきました。一年間のプログラムを終えた今、効果や内容を見直してみることは、これからの進路のために、皆さんにとっても担当教員にとっても不可欠です。

まず、皆さんが学んだことを振り返ってみて、皆さん自身どう感じたか、どう感じたか答えて下さい。来年の講義の内容改善のために詳しく正直に書いて下さい。

学んだ内容

前期：
Textbook – form, description
Textbook – map, directory
Textbook – scanning
“読み”の過程の概観
Outlining
paragraph patterns

後期：
story – background knowledge
visualization
prediction
vocabulary
summary

Q.1. 学んだことにに対する評価や感情は？

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Q.2. 4月の期末試験を受験するかと思いますか？

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Q.3. 真夜中における「読む」や「話す」という状態はなくなったか？

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Q.4. 4月の期末試験を受験するかと思いますか？

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APPENDIX V

NEEDS ANALYSIS (Extract)

1. Do you regularly watch an English-teaching program? YES NO
   If you answered YES, for how long have you been watching the program?

2. Do you regularly listen to an English-teaching program on the radio? YES NO
   If you answered YES, for how long have you been listening to the program?

3. Do you have a bilingual or Satellite T.V.? YES NO
   If you answered YES, what program do you regularly watch in English?
   News program
   Movies
   Popular series such as Miami Vice
   Special music programs by Western entertainers