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Looking Back and Looking Ahead: A Forecast for the Early 21st Century

比較的歴史の浅い学会であるがゆえに、TEFLの専門家たちは自ずと最新の成果や研究動向に目が向かいがちである。しかし、その反面、多くの英語教師は同領域に関するこれまで蓄積されてきた研究成果に対して十分な検討を加えているとはいえない。本論は、前世紀におけるTEFLの発展の歴史について概観する。そして、そこで蓄積された経験が二つの教育的パラダイムの間をくりかえし揺れ動いてきたこと、そしてそれがあらゆる言語シラバスの基礎を形成していることを明らかにする。これら周期的な変化を分析することによって、筆者は、21世紀初頭の展望を提示し、さらに、日本における英語教師の行方についても議論を展開する。

After much fanfare and celebration, the ELT community has settled down and quietly started to make its way into the new century. However, for many forward-looking language teachers, the developments of the past century are already starting to fade from our shared memory. Alan Maley (2001, p. 5) remarked recently how language teachers often "...live in a capsule of the present moment, with no time for a backward glance. This collective professional amnesia seems curiously at odds with the current fashion for reflection." Maley's comments echo those of Chris

Brumfit, who noted over twenty years ago the ELT community's lack of historical perspective:

We're constantly looking for what's *new* for a whole variety of reasons, but we very rarely look *back*, and there's far too much rediscovering of the wheel (Brumfit et al., 1981, p. 35).

Now seems to be the right moment for language teachers to reflect upon some of the significant developments in TEFL during the past century. This paper studies the cyclical nature of change in second language syllabi, offers a forecast of trends that may arise in the next few years, and discusses ramifications for classroom teachers—especially on the secondary and tertiary level.

Defining Syllabus

Any discussion on syllabus development needs first to establish what is meant by *syllabus*. This

has been the subject of considerable interest in the literature, because of the multiplicity of different definitions for the term (cf. Long and Crookes, 1993, Nunan, 1993, Widdowson, 1990). This paper adopts my earlier definition of syllabus (Hadley, 1998), which states that *syllabus* is an endorsement of a specific set of sociolinguistic and philosophical beliefs regarding power, education, and cognition. As such, this definition of syllabus differs significantly from the popular understanding of the term as it is used in Japanese schools and universities (*shirabasu*). A syllabus is not something written on a sheet of paper for students at the beginning of a semester; rather, it is the adherence to values and assumptions that guide a teacher to structure his or her class in a particular way.

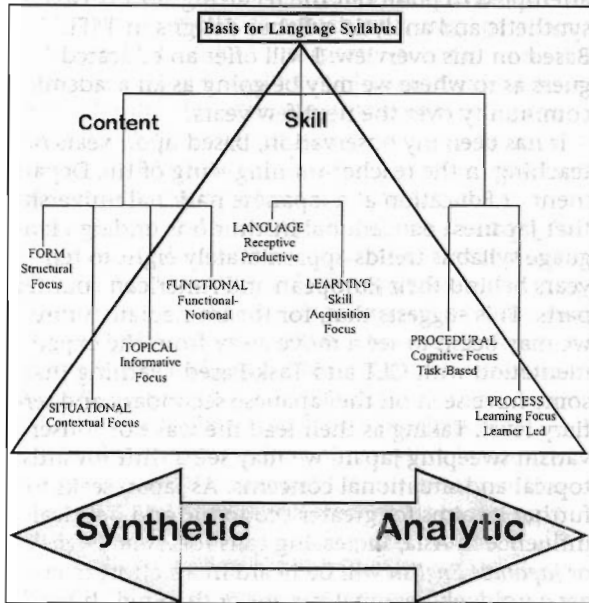
For over thirty years, syllabi have been divided into two paradigms. Wilkins (1976 pp. 2-13) calls these *synthetic* and *analytic* syllabi, which also roughly correspond to White's (1988, pp. 44-47)

Type A and Type B syllabi. Synthetic (Type A) syllabi are concerned with structure and *what* should be taught to learners, whereas analytic (Type B) syllabi focus on language acquisition and *how* to facilitate language learning. These two viewpoints move in opposite directions, although one should not be seen as inherently better than the other.

As Figure 1 shows, approaches emanating from these syllabus designs are proportional as to how far they apply the analytic or synthetic position.

Figure 1. A framework for understanding second language syllabus design

Synthetic approaches focusing on content range



from the most extreme types, which teach the structure of the language (grammatical, lexical, or discoursal aspects), to approaches that identify and teach language for situations in a specific context (ESP, EAP). Other synthetic approaches further down the cline teach topical issues in the target language (Gender Studies, Environmentalism, Global Issues) or concentrate on the functions of the language as they relate to interpersonal communication (Functional-Notional, English for Tourists).

Skill-based approaches attempt to strike a balance between the synthetic and analytic stances, but typically fall on either one side or the other. Synthetic skill-based approaches focus on listening to and emulating the language produced by model native speakers (Language), while analytic approaches attempt to teach the skills necessary for learners to acquire the language on their own (Learning).

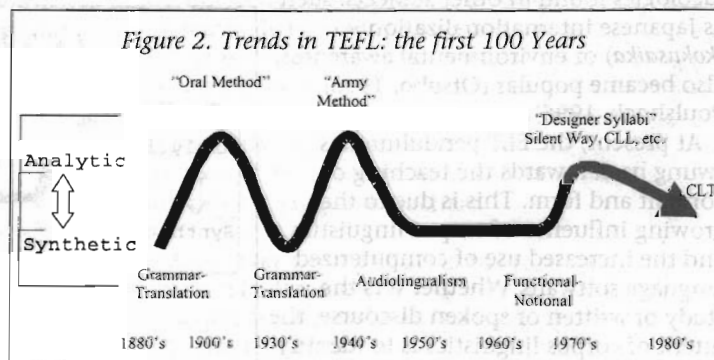
Further down the analytic continuum are approaches that search for ideal procedures and methods that will help each learner acquire the language according to his or her personal learning style (Procedural). The most radical form of an analytical approach is one where a teacher abdicates his or her traditional authority so that learners can develop a language course that addresses their immediate needs and concerns (Process).

The Long and Winding Road

Over the past 100 years, the ELT community has periodically swayed back and forth between the synthetic and analytic perspective. However, it is not within the scope of this paper to cover the social and political factors contributing to the shift from one approach to another. For this, readers should consult Kelly's *25 Centuries of Language Teaching* (1969) or Howatt's *A History of Language Teaching* (1984). What is provided here is a very general sketch of language teaching since the beginning of the Industrial Age. As Figure 2 demonstrates (in a somewhat exaggerated fashion), the primary way to study languages in schools during the late 1800's was through the *Grammar-Translation Method*. It took as its lead the traditions employed in the study of the classical Western languages of Greek and Latin.

By the turn of the twentieth century, however, mainly through the efforts of classroom practitioners such as Palmer, Berlitz, and Firth, the analytic *Oral Method* made a break from the synthetic underpinnings of *Grammar-Translation*. The *Oral Method* favored techniques that emulated the way children naturally acquired language and emphasized acquisition based on the speaker's personal needs. By the 1930s, however, due in part to the influence of structuralist grammarians in the United States who emphasized reading skills (Coleman, 1929, cited in Stern, 1994), most language teaching had gravitated back towards variations of *Grammar-Translation*.

The need for large numbers of people to effectively communicate in a second language increased during the Second World War. The instruction of the *American Army Specialized Training Program* (ASTP), often called the *Army Method*, adopted some



of the ideas found in the *Oral Method*, and employed techniques the designers felt would help learners to become fluent in the target language in a relatively short time. It proved so successful (due in part to the fact that students often needed to acquire the language or risk death) that, after the war, aspects of the *Army Method* were introduced in the *Audiolingual* approach, especially use of the tape recorder and the idea of immersion classes. However, repetitive drilling, the selection of discreet items by the teacher and the focus on form placed both *Audiolingualism* and the later *Functional-Notional* method firmly in the realm of synthetic syllabi.

A shift back towards analytical syllabi began in the turbulent 1970s, when myriad *Designer Syllabi* such as Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning, and the Silent Way appeared as attempts to discover psychological techniques to help learners better acquire the target language. Most quickly fell into disrepair or coalesced into what was eventually called *Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)*. CLT reached its peak in the mid 1980s, at a time when international travel, the expansion of the Internet, and the development of the global market skyrocketed. However, because of CLT's eclectic nature, both synthetic and analytical approaches can be called *communicative*, and this contributed to the collapse of the movement by 1990 (Shortall, 1996).

The limit of the ELT community's pendulum swing towards analytic syllabi was with its experimentation with *Task-Based Learning (TBL)* and *Process* approaches. These had started as far back as the late 1980s, but were already cresting by the early 1990s. For TBL, the reasons were similar to that of CLT: a difficulty to define *task* and rampant eclecticism. Process approaches were unable to overcome the difficulty many students and teachers had with discarding their traditional roles (Kumaravadivelu, 1993, Griffiee, 1995, Hadley 1998).

From the mid-1990s, writers in the ELT academic community again started to advocate synthetic syllabi (see Figure 3). First came lexical approaches, followed by increased interest in the teaching other academic subjects in English (*Content-based Learning*). Attempts to teach the social ethics and political ideologies found in other subjects, such as Japanese internationalization (*kokusaika*) or environmental awareness, also became popular (Otsubo, 1995, Poulshock, 1996).

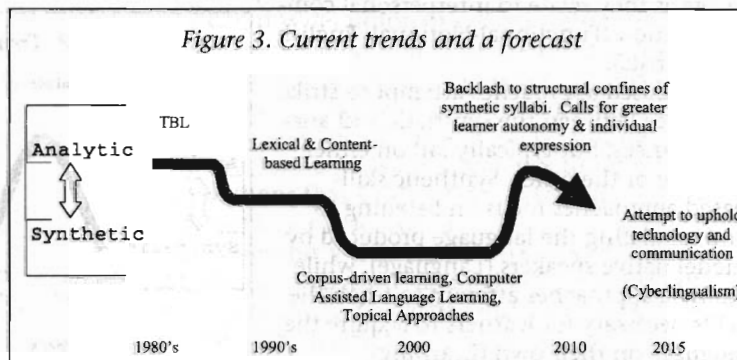
At present, the ELT pendulum has swung back towards the teaching of content and form. This is due to the growing influence of corpus linguistics and the increased use of computerized language software. Whether it is the study of written or spoken discourse, the intent of corpus linguistics is to identify

regularly occurring patterns in the language, which teachers can then teach as discreet items to learners. Computer multimedia packages and web pages for language learning are limited by the present nature of software architecture. The ordered structure of most programs favors the sort of techniques and exercises found in *Audiolingualism*, *Grammar-Translation*, and other content-based synthetic syllabi.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Again, there is nothing inherently wrong with the present situation. If motivated, a learner can and should acquire the language under a variety of teaching conditions. This paper so far has simply attempted to point out the recurring shift between synthetic and analytic syllabus designs in TEFL. Based on this overview, I will offer an educated guess as to where we may be going as an academic community over the next few years.

It has been my observation, based upon years of teaching in the teacher-training wing of the Department of Education at a Japanese national university, that Japanese educational institutions undergo language syllabus trends approximately eight to ten years behind their European and American counterparts. This suggests that, for the immediate future, we may begin to see a move away from the experimentation with CLT and Task-Based Learning that some have seen on the Japanese secondary and tertiary level. Taking as their lead the wave of conservatism sweeping Japan, we may see a shift towards topical and situational concerns. As Japan seeks to further its aims for greater economic and political influence in Asia, increasing calls for *Asian English* or *Japanese English* will be heard in an effort to create a uniquely regional variant of the English language. The shift from topical concerns may then continue towards greater structuralist concerns as computers and the Internet make even greater inroads into most Japanese schools. Multimedia programs may help most students gain basic listening and reading skills without direct teacher supervision. *Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)* may eventually provide most of the instruction that a majority of Japanese students will need to meet



the level of functional literacy espoused by influential Japanese educators (Torikai, 2000).

For the European and American TEFL community, within the next five, but possibly no longer than ten years, growing dissatisfaction with the current structuralist trends in TEFL will foster a climate of dissent in professional journals. An increasing number of presentations and papers given at teachers conferences may call into question the aims of corpus-based or CALL-driven approaches. Quite likely, some of the reasons for the growing discontent might stem from claims of the difficulty of applying corpus data to classroom practice, as well as to an overemphasis on form and receptive skills. Other reasons might center on the solitary nature of computer-driven methods, which encourage passivity and a lack of student interpersonal communication skills. Still others might note how individual needs and learning strategies are subjugated under the tyranny of the program, and how the provision of vast amounts of data may not constitute either an interactive or a learning experience.

As an answer to these problems, some might call for a "return to authentic discourse" or for students to "unplug and connect" with speakers of the target language in face-to-face encounters. Humanist and affective concerns may then return to the forefront of language teaching. How long such a return to learner autonomy would last depends partly upon establishment players such as publishers (who could quash the movement by not investing in the creation of adequate teaching materials) and institutions that award teaching credentials to the next generation of professional language teachers.

Eventually, however, with further developments in artificial intelligence, and greater speed of a wireless Internet, seamless video interaction will become a reality. Also, due perhaps to the desire of moderating forces in TEFL to embrace what is helpful from the many voices within its community, eventually the computer is expected to become inextricably linked to the language learning process (a trend that I would call *cyberlingualism*). The current fascination with the computer will probably fade in the years to come, much in the same way the over the cassette recorder in the 1950's and video during the late 1970's subsided as it found a regular place in the language classroom. The computer will simply become a dependable, portable, and indispensable tool for language learning, replacing the print textbook and remaining constantly connected to the global network. Although some form of cyberlingualism may replace some of what the classroom teacher presently does in class, it is unlikely that future technology and trends will replace the age-old interaction between teachers and students, nor will the TEFL community become immune to regular seasons of change.

Ramifications for Language Teachers in Japan

As stated above, these trends will probably be manifested in some degree approximately eight years after they have come (and gone) in Europe and America. As Brumfit and Maley (1981) suggested, many language teachers are caught in the trap of living in the present or the immediate future. Such teachers may find themselves at a disadvantage later if they have not reflected on past and current trends, and if they have not prepared for the coming changes in their profession. The following is a list of things career language teachers can do now to stay ahead of the game in the future:

1. *Be Aware:* Language teachers need to pay greater attention to current political and educational developments in Japan, think about the possible ramifications to their careers, and plan on how to deal with potential situations before changes come down the pipe. An example occurred several years ago in Japan, when reports circulated that colleges and universities would shift to searching only for applicants to fill foreign language teaching posts who held an MA in TEFL, three to five major publications, and were fluent in spoken Japanese.

Some chose to ignore those distant rumblings. Others took them seriously. In most cases, it is the second group who are still gainfully employed on the tertiary level. Today an MA in TEFL is fast becoming a requirement for employment even at private language institutes. Similarly, the trend in Japan towards language curricula aimed at furthering Asian regionalization may have repercussions for language teachers speaking American or British English. These teachers may need to seek ways to complement their teaching with a focus on communicating Japanese culture in English and highlighting Asian modes of communication, in addition to seeking other vocational training and credentials.

2. *Get Training and Credentials:* The time is soon coming when most language teachers in Japan will need more than just basic computer literacy skills. Language teachers unable or unequipped to operate multimedia software, create web pages, or design on-line activities might find their future prospects increasingly limited. Those with computer skills and specialist knowledge in addition to their TEFL MA are already a hot commodity in Japan and abroad. A certificate in multimedia design or other specialist credentials, such as some form of Asian Studies, may become as necessary as an MA in TEFL for tomorrow's language teachers.

3. *Hold the Center:* Educational institutions in Japan will be far more willing to keep and nurture language teachers who cooperate with their agenda, but language teachers need to seek balance in their

classroom instruction. I would suggest that classroom instruction that centers on language or learning-based approaches (see Figure 1) may be helpful. Like the bamboo that bends with the prevailing sociopolitical winds in ELT, those who hold this skills-based center will be able to add elements from synthetic or analytic approaches to their teaching and avoid extreme shifts in their teaching regimen.

If, for example, a school wishes to focus on Asian English as opposed to American or British English, teachers can begin collecting written, video, and audio samples of Asian speakers of English, which would serve as role models for learners, and lean more towards a Language-based approach. Should the curriculum designers at another school seek to prepare students to communicate with other Asians to tell others about Japanese culture, an approach teaching skills for communicating with other Asians (Learning) might be effective. Either way, the language teacher is not pulled too far one way or the other along the synthetic or analytic cline, and is able to maintain stability in the steady teaching.

Conclusion

Often by looking to the past, we may discover important clues as to where we as an academic community may be headed. Periodic swings between the synthetic and analytic perspective will continue to take place in TEFL, unless a truly unique paradigm shift takes place. Approaches and innovations will continue to come and go; cultural and social developments will affect both how, why, and in what manner people study a foreign language.

Rather than embarking on a frenetic search for the latest teaching technique or the most recent discovery, a key strategy for language teachers, as we look forward to the next century, is to stay aware of the cyclic trends taking place, make preparations by getting training and better qualifications, and by holding one's center in the midst of the ideological storm. Even if some may question the contention of this paper that language teachers may find pedagogic stability by staying in the skills-based approaches of language learning, those teachers will still need to reflect upon their own beliefs as language educators, and stay true to their beliefs about language, education, and cognition. More importantly, however, by reflecting upon past and current developments in TEFL, language teachers will continue to thrive professionally as they seek for fresh and innovative ways to educate their learners.

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