

Final Project ~ EDU580
A Beginner's Program for Elementary School EFL Learners
([For the Online version, Ctrl and click here](#))

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The Target Population

The target population are Korean elementary school students, grades 4 ~ 6, in an EFL context. Class sizes are large (20 ~ 30 students) and take place at private academies. The students predominantly come from a middle-class background and have been exposed to English through the media (internet, television and through adverts) but have (almost) no contact with native speakers outside the classroom. They have no overt need for English acquisition; consequently, there is no intrinsic motivation to learn English in most cases. On the other hand, students with a higher level of aptitude tend to be motivated by their ability. Further, games and activities that students consider 'fun' generally engage the entire class and encourage participation. English classes with the native speaker teacher meet just one hour a week. Students study with a non-native speaker teacher four hours a week. The course is of an indeterminate length and is likely to proceed throughout the students' elementary school years.

Curriculum and Syllabi

The curriculum (at this point) is a collection of four online syllabi designed specifically for entry level young learners (primary/elementary school level and perhaps lower middle school in some cases) and consists of a beginning level with four distinct modules. It is oral and aural in nature but there are some activities that involve simple forms of creative writing. Of course, students must be able to read in order to participate effectively and can be trained to do so at the outset of the course using very visual and very basic lexical files ('Noun Wizard'). Because the lessons/files in each syllabi can be

accessed quickly, there is potential for moving from syllabus to syllabus and, also, for recycling on a regular basis. That is to say, there is the possibility of moving forward and back in the modules and between the integrated syllabi as needs are discerned (by teachers or students). As mentioned above, NNS teachers, in this particular target population, teach four of the five weekly lessons and generally focus on reading and writing. Thus, one aim of the curriculum is to bring a balance of the four skills to EFL contexts; that is, a general goal is to improve young learner speaking and listening skills:

Syllabus One is not easy to categorize, but can be said to have both structural and lexical elements—structural, in that there is a presentation of forms graded from easy to difficult (several course books were consulted and a subjective form of eclecticism was employed in the grading process) and lexical, in that there is a selection of vocabulary that can be found in natural language (e.g., home, places, people and frequently used verbs) but there is no formal relation in this curriculum to corpus linguistics: <http://eslenglishclassroom.com/> (Ctrl + click to follow link).

Syllabus Two is an audio version of Syllabus One and can be implemented in the classroom or can be used by students on their own time:

http://eslenglishclassroom.com/index_files/audiocourse.html (Ctrl + click to follow link).

Syllabus Three is an attempt to provide a more communicative approach with tasks and task-like activities. There is much work to be done on this approach to online learning. Also, this is the only syllabus that requires writing and includes activities that would be conducive to group and pair work, though not necessarily so.

http://eslenglishclassroom.com/index_files/Englishactivity.html (Ctrl + click to follow link).

Syllabus Four (work in progress) is a pronunciation syllabus. There is a variety of structured input (listen and select) but, in contrast to standard structured input designs, there is a chance for production immediately following each example. It is a paradigm of the oral/aural approach on which this curriculum tends to focus. Because this syllabus is currently 'under construction', most of the files are incomplete. http://eslenglishclassroom.com/index_files/pronunciation.html (Ctrl + click).

Learner Needs

The question of learner needs at the entry level for elementary school students in an EFL context is a difficult one. Obviously, there is a good chance that some of them will need to communicate in English as an international language when they enter the workforce, but others may not. Perhaps this is reason enough to implement programs in such environments.

I have been observing the classes (including video analysis) as well as discussing the program with students, NNS teachers and academy owners for the past five years and have revised the curriculum extensively (according to perceived content and process needs) thus the analysis is 'ongoing' versus 'initial' (Nunan 1999). In this manner, I've tuned into the selection and sequencing of content (grammar, lexicon and functions) and processes (exercises and tasks as activity) of the learning cycle in general. The approach to content needs is driven in terms of mapping form and meaning; this has been accomplished to some extent by using images to represent the meaning of various forms (most of level one) and is currently being attempted by implementing more 'communicative' lessons in the activity based syllabus, lessons which have been informed by the current literature (Brockley, 2008). The approach to process needs has been one of trial and error (informal feedback from students, teachers and owners and self-reports) and continues to be so.

It may be apparent to many teachers of young learners (and parents) that students at this age require visual, auditory, kinesthetic and other sense related forms of input in order to engage them beyond their limitations of attention. Further, game formats lock in their attention, lower the affective filter (Krashen 2003) and give a sense of purpose to the activities (winning the game—which is what they like to do).

Aims and Objectives:

The aim of this course must reflect the selection of materials and also must be the product of the successful completion of the objectives (as outlined in Roman numerals).

I. Curriculum Aim: Students will achieve a basic level of listening and speaking skills in English.

A) Syllabus One Aim: Students will comprehend and produce basic English lexical and grammatical forms.

- i. Students will have a reading vocabulary of over 300 common nouns and over 40 common verbs.
- ii. Students will understand and use present, past and future notions of time in a controlled manner.
- iii. Students will memorize and understand scripted dialogs pertaining to events common to their age.
- iv. Students will understand and produce most forms of prepositions, demonstrative pronouns, and count and non-count nouns.
- v. Students will answer random but appropriate questions based on the content and context of the previous four objectives.

B) Syllabus Two Aim: Students will build listening skills and pronunciation (as an audiolingual adjunct to aim one).

- i. Students will have a listening vocabulary of over 300 common nouns and over 40 common verbs.
- ii. Students will listen to and produce present, past and future notions of time in a controlled manner.
- iii. Students will listen to and produce scripted dialogs pertaining to events common to their age.
- iv. Students will listen to and produce most forms of prepositions, demonstrative pronouns, and count and non-count nouns.

C) Syllabus Three Aim: Students will employ creativity and critical thought (too 'process-like'?) using various tasks in English.

- i. Students will discover and discuss the grammatical rules for present, past and future notions of time in a series of consciousness raising activities.
- ii. Students will tell stories by interpreting a series of pictures and connecting these pictures in a logical manner.

iii. Students will interpret and discuss a role play and create and perform their own role play in an informal manner based on the model.

D) Syllabus Four Aim: Students will develop intelligibility in the comprehension and production of pronunciation on both the segmental and suprasegmental levels.

i. Students will distinguish between and produce similar consonant and vowel sounds in a minimal pairs activity.

ii. Students will distinguish between word final epenthesis and correct pronunciation of words and produce the proper forms in a controlled production exercise.

iii. Students will recognize and correctly choose the most common form of word stress (in a sentence context) among three examples in a listening activity.

iv. Students will recognize and correctly choose the most common form of intonation (in a sentence context) among three examples in a listening activity.

Classroom Organization:

With regards to syllabus one, students will predominantly be working together as a class. The class is divided into two teams and a game format is implemented throughout each lesson. In this way, the teacher is a coach (to each team), a facilitator (to enforce the rules and engage the students), a diplomat (to ease tension and conflict between teams and/or team members) and mediator/modelor (the careful employment of corrective feedback~ repetition, recasts, gestures and encouragement, etc.~ and the modeling of these techniques). Students, in turn, are encouraged to follow the examples of mediation set by the teacher and more able students. Syllabus two was designed for self-study but is useful to employ for small groups of beginners and very young learners. Syllabus three accommodates all forms of organization but is, perhaps, best implemented in pairs and groups. Syllabus four is also versatile and can be used as a self-study device.

I would like to suggest that success in realizing learner needs may well depend as much on how the teacher interacts with the learners as on the selection and sequencing of content and processes.

'Methodology' from this point of view is expanded to include corrective feedback and activity theory.

In brief, activity theory states that while motives may be different (e.g., the desire to acquire a second language versus winning a game in an English class) the outcomes may be the same (improvement in the use of target structures) (Lantolf 2000). These factors, along with the 'hot potato approach' to corrective feedback (don't hold up the flow too long lest you get burned) outline the framework for classroom interaction in this curriculum (Brockley, 2008).

List of Actual Tasks:

See Appendix One

Vocabulary, Linguistic Items and Functions/Concepts:

These items have been organized and presented in various forms on the web pages. It is important to note that the term 'notions' employed in syllabus three relates to time and the use of verb structures. I think this is a useful distinction: verb tense as form can be directly mapped onto its meaning or 'notion' as it is first realized in the mind/brain (as 'competence') and later in communication (as 'performance') This process has often been described as a movement from descriptive to procedural knowledge.

The 'functions and concepts' relating to the role play activity in syllabus three were derived from Van Ek and Trim (1998). See Appendix Two for a list of the lexicon, grammar and functions/concepts in Level One.

Indirect and Direct Student Assessments:

Formal indirect assessments can be seen beginning in module four. They are the yellow files named, 'Assessments'.

Regarding direct assessments: all files may be used as assessment instruments in a communicative fashion; that is, eliciting spoken discourse from the student(s). Apart from the minimal pairs exercise in the pronunciation syllabus, the assessments will engage an 'integrative testing' process (Bailey, 1998) since more than one of the following language elements will be assessed together: phonology, morphology, lexicon, syntax, discourse and/or one or more of the four skills (or other). In this curriculum, an assessment may be a lesson and vice versa. See the assessment instrument in Appendix Three.

Evaluation of the Program:

As this program never actually comes to a close (students gradually stop participating in the program as they enter middle school but in no form of graduation) the evaluation process is formative and ongoing. I agree with Nunan (2008a) 'You can have an illuminative dimension to both formative and summative evaluation... Illuminative insights can often be more useful for improving programs than numbers'. The checklist in Appendix Four will be a guide for a formative/illuminative evaluation.

Problems and Potential Remedies:

Traditional analyses of programs include statistical data. There is limited potential for this type of data in the present assessment framework (at least for level one). On the other hand, the assessment instrument is set up as such so that keen minds could frame the assessment along quantitative parameters.

The program is implemented just one hour a week at each academy. On the other hand, as many as 100 classrooms/individuals worldwide presently access the site on a *more* regular basis, so there is the possibility of feedback from these environments. The recent expansion of the curriculum (activity-based and pronunciation syllabi) also provides potential for greater frequency in implementation.

Other problems will come up as the evaluation process unfolds.

References:

- Bailey, K. (1998). Learning about language assessment. Heinle and Heinle.
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- Krashen, S. (2003). Explorations in language acquisition and use. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
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- Nunan, D. (1999). Second language teaching and learning. Heinle and Heinle.
- Nunan, D. (2008a) Week Seven Online Chat. Anaheim Online University, EDU580. Curriculum Development. Unit 7: Evaluation and the Curriculum.
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- Van Ek and Trim (1998). Threshold 1990. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
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Appendices: One ~ Four:

Appendix One: List of Actual Tasks:

Syllabus One: speaking, listening and reading:

<http://eslenglishclassroom.com/> (Ctrl + click to follow link). The activities are labeled and organized on the first four pages of the website. Also, overviews are provided midway down the home page.

Syllabus Two: speaking, listening and reading:

http://eslenglishclassroom.com/index_files/audiocourse.html (Ctrl + click to follow link).

As above... the files include audio.

Syllabus Three: speaking, listening, reading and writing: The activities are labeled and organized on the first four pages of the website. You must scroll down to 'Activity Based Syllabus' to see and access these files. You may also see the entire 'syllabus three files' via the following link:

http://eslenglishclassroom.com/index_files/Englishactivity.html (Ctrl + click to follow link).

Syllabus Four: speaking, listening and reading:

http://eslenglishclassroom.com/index_files/pronunciation.html (Ctrl + click to follow link).

This is a work in progress and is not complete.

Appendix Two: Lexicon, Grammar, Notions and Functions/Concepts in Level One:

Lexicon: modules one ~ three:

Parts of the body/ Shapes and colors/ Nouns of the home/ Nouns of places/ Nouns of places and transportation/ Nouns of people/

Grammar: modules one ~ four:

Singular and plural nouns with 'be' verbs in simple sentences/ Articles/ Prepositions of location/ Demonstrative pronouns/ Count and Non-count Nouns/ Simple present verbs (am/is/are/do/does/can).

Notions: modules one ~ four:

Present time (events that are happening right now)/ Habitual time (events that occur more than once and can be seen as habits)/ Past time (events that began and ended in the past)/ Future time (present progressive for near future and be + going to for plan and prediction).

Functions and Concepts: modules one ~ four:

Asking to join/ Asking to help/ Necessity and assistance/ Surprise and interest/ Asking, answering and inviting/ Expressing an opinion and changing the theme/ Enquiring, admonishing and apologizing/ Planning and clarifying/ Probability and intentions.

Appendix Three: Assessment instrument using lesson files: Fill in basic info and copy for groups

<p>Assessment instrument using the Language Works lesson files:</p> <p>Lesson file name (WA2-3): _____ Syllabus/Objective (S1/Oiv): _____</p> <p>Student name/ID: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____</p>
<p>Brief description of what elements are being assessed (phonology, morphology, lexicon, syntax, discourse and/or one or more of the four skills):</p>
<p>Brief description of how the assessment task will be carried out (e.g., all or part of the file, according to the given procedures or using other procedures):</p>
<p>Description of how the assessment task will be graded (what kind of scale and criteria will be used):</p>
<p>Actual assessment (items and notes regarding student performance):</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1)2)3)4)5)6)7)8)9)10)11)12)13)14)15)
<p>Results (Overall student performance and grade):</p>



Appendix Four ~ Evaluation Checklist (after Richards 2007):

Formative Process:

Focus Groups: discussions of strengths and weaknesses in content, processes and methodology (discussed in the paper above) assisted with the utilization of video recordings.

Observation: discussions of strengths and weaknesses of teachers' processes and methodology (discussed in the paper above). Peers will be advised to offer positive forms of criticism.

Test results and Analyses: Mostly qualitative but possibly quantitative data collection using the indirect and direct assessment instruments discussed in the paper.

Self-reports: discussions of strengths and weaknesses of the program as a whole (content, processes, methodology and other elements) by the teachers themselves.

Interviews: Informal but frank discussions with students, teachers and owners.

Illuminative Process:

Peer Observation Questions for Follow Up Interview :

- 1) Do the participant structures appear appropriate for each exercise or task? Explain.
- 2) Are some students left out of the mix? If so, what can be done to include them?
- 3) What forms of corrective feedback are employed and by whom (teachers or students)?
- 4) What type of student/teacher interaction patterns occur in classes? Which patterns appear to be most effective?
- 5) Do teachers follow the lesson plan? To what extent and How? What decisions do teachers employ in regards to the lesson plan(s).
- 6) What learner styles appear to be optimal in this learning environment? Explain.
- 7) Do learners use strategies (memory devices, assisting others, asking questions, using clarification requests, confirmation checks, paralanguage, gestures and expressions) during the lesson? Explain.

8) What's your overall opinion of the lesson?