Designing and Implementing a Freshman English Program for Present-day Needs

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This paper describes the design and implementation of a university Freshman English program that was commissioned to go beyond ‘conversation English’ and meet the academic and professional needs of students in terms of speaking and writing English. At the design stage, the aims of the 6th and 7th National Curricula and the NEAT were incorporated into two in-house textbooks through the use of a task-based, student-centered, integrated approach, promoting autonomy, responsibility for learning, and collaboration. Self/peer-assessments, peer editing of written assignments, portfolios, and end-of-semester projects were employed in order to develop language awareness in the Zone of Proximal Development and promote language learning strategies, with the aim of developing lifelong learning skills as well as the spoken and written English necessary in a global economy. Change management and teacher-involvement at the implementation stage built on administrative support and candid feedback and input from instructors, in order to establish and maintain new standards. Formative evaluation of the program at this pilot stage was assisted by instructor- and student-feedback, student evaluations, and class observations. In conclusion, it is hoped that the program might provide a model for others that aim to cater for their students’ rapidly changing academic and career-oriented language needs. (200 words)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Changing needs

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Freshman English programs in Korean universities were introduced in response to the 6th National Curriculum (1992) (Kroeker, 2009, p. 5), which focused on the development of communicative competence in Korean students. The 7th National Curriculum (1997) added a student-centered approach, tasks, logical and creative thinking, and English for globalization (Bok-Myung Chang & Jaekeun Lee, 2005, p. 48). Further reform has produced the National English Ability Test (NEAT) (Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE), 2011), with its equal attention to the four macro-language skills. In addition to its use in high schools (NEAT Parts 2 and 3), the expectation that Part 1 (adults) will replace the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) promises to have an impact on Freshman English programs. This paper therefore describes the design and implementation of a Freshman English program that recognizes these new trends and attempts to address them.

Academic English needs are changing in Korea, with an influx of foreign universities, mostly using English as a teaching medium, and with Korean universities experiencing significant growth in the number of international students, English-medium classes, students applying for overseas internships, and double-degree programs. In this situation, the competent use of academic and technical English is a necessity rather than an advantage (Graddol, 2007) and needs to be integrated into a new type of Freshman English program, applicable to university study as well as to future careers. In the light of these considerations, it is suggested that the policies and processes leading up to the implementation and evaluation of the program described in this paper might serve as models for meeting such 21st century language needs in tertiary institutions in Korea.

Educational reform is under way in a number of countries in East Asia (Mok, 2006), and the 5th APEC Education Ministerial Meeting (AEMM) in Gyeongju, Korea (2012) identified “how changes to the natures of work, instruction, and program implementation are driving regional economies toward future skills, ICT use and teacher quality, and global partnerships” (APEC, 2012). This resulted in a call for innovation in teaching that mirrors earlier calls for urgent educational reform: “We are facing growing needs to learn other languages and unprecedented reasons for doing so as we move into the new millennium” (Tucker, 1998, cited in Genessee, 2008, p. 22). A working knowledge of English is now vital for most university students in Korea, given that many white-collar jobs are being outsourced and automated, technical journals are available in English on the Internet, English is becoming a global language, and international student mobility is making English the international language of study.

In this situation, Freshman English in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting can no longer be justified solely in terms of ‘conversation’ (Kroeker, 2009) or being able to speak to foreigners. Globalization, international corporations, Free Trade Agreements and a booming tourist industry have upgraded English to a Lingua Franca (Jenkins, 2012), while
the economic status of the Asian Tigers (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan), along with China, India, and Japan, has given birth to a sizable community of business people who negotiate and communicate in a common second language. The fact that this L2 takes the form of Konglish, Japlish, Singlish, Chinglish, etc. is indicative of the recent growth of regional and world Englishes (Melchers & Shaw, 2011) and highlights an important change in the language teaching paradigm (Kirkpatrick, 2007). EFL learners now need English for use in their domestic situations in addition to potential international uses, and consequently they need formal and academic English as well as the informal language that has featured in many course textbooks to date. In view of these developments, the Freshman English program under discussion aims to provide an infrastructure of appropriate learning opportunities for college and university students, helping them to develop the language skills and the higher-order thinking skills that they need in their chosen specializations.

This paper first shows how the program built upon previous research findings in its educational philosophy and its extension of language teaching theory and how these ideas contributed to the authoring of the two in-house books that provided the infrastructure for teaching and learning (Finch, 2012b, 2012c). This philosophical and theoretical underpinning meant that the program was pedagogically sound as well as practically effective. Next, a description of the program’s implementation in its pilot year describes the student-centered attention to self/peer-assessment, peer editing, portfolios, group work, process writing, presentation skills, and projects. The program is then evaluated using data from student evaluations of the first semester (Book 1) and the summer vacation intensive course (in which both Books were used), along with student questionnaires and classroom observations. Management considerations, including the necessity for university backing and support, change management, instructor involvement (joint ownership of the program), professional development, and student approval and understanding will be dealt with in subsequent papers that will look at the long-term management of the program. Finally, conclusions and recommendations for future Freshman English programs in Korea are offered.

2. The Situation

In addition to the utilitarian goals of preparing students for their academic and professional language needs in and after tertiary education, the program in question also aimed to address humanistic needs, since *Hongik Ingan* has been a core principle of education in Korea since the Declaration of Fundamental Educational Principles in 1949 (UNESCO, 2011). This humanitarian ideal requires that education shall “assist all people in perfecting their individual character, to develop the ability to achieve an independent life
and acquire the qualifications of democratic citizens, and to be able to participate in the
building of a democratic state and promoting the prosperity of all humankind” (UNESCO,
2011). However, such goals can be difficult to include in the secondary English classroom
in Korea, where test-preparation for the high-stakes College Scholastic Ability Test
(CSAT) and the forthcoming NEAT has become the ‘be-all-and-end-all’ for secondary
teachers, principals, students, and their parents.

While this research is not directly concerned with the case against standardized testing
(Kohn, 2000; Sacks, 1999), it is impossible to ignore the influence of the CSAT on English
teaching in high schools, on the textbooks used, and on the students who arrive in
university Freshman English programs. Recognizing this situation, this paper suggests that
the goals of the National Curriculum might be achieved through a fusion of traditional
Korean educational concepts with a more recent framework for learning – Task-Based
Language Teaching (TBLT). Building on earlier research (Finch, 2006, 2010, 2012a; Finch
& Taeduck Hyun, 1998), the program under investigation provides practical evidence that
a fusion of traditional and recent educational ideas can be adopted, with benefits for
teachers and students. This finding suggests that teaching to the goals of the National
Curriculum, in terms of producing responsible members of a democratic society through
the promotion of higher-order thinking skills, is not only an effective means of test-
preparation (Moore & Stanley, 2009, p. 17), but is also a means of producing the sort of
informed, capable citizens needed by Korea to maintain its status as a competitive world
economy. This research therefore concludes that the current test-driven system can
metamorphose into one in which Hongik-Ingan becomes the guiding principle and in
which the true goals of education in Korea are allowed to produce effective learning, in a
globally aware learning environment.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Once the executive decision to initiate an in-house language program has been made, it
is necessary to formulate a sound plan of action. In the case of the program under
consideration, a formative plan was chosen, adapting Skilbeck’s (1984, p. 231) situational
model (Table 1). This plan includes development, implementation, evaluation and ongoing
reform, allowing the program to continue to grow and meet future changes and demands
after the initial setting-up period is over. The steps of the plan are presented in Table 1 as a
linear sequence, but an essential feature of the formative process is that all the steps
continue to interact during the whole life of the program, in a mutually influencing,
complex, dynamic relationship that cannot be depicted in a two-dimensional
representation. Steps 1 to 7 are referred to in the Methods section of this paper, but steps 2,
4, and 6 are also considered in this literature review in order to set the background through exploring research on EFL curriculum design, syllabus design, the task-based approach, student assessment, and program evaluation.

### TABLE 1

**An extension of Skilbeck’s (1984) situational model for school-based curriculum development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Analyze the situation.</td>
<td>“What do we know?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Establish principles and goals.</td>
<td>“What is the guiding philosophy?”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“What do we want to achieve through it?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Needs analysis</td>
<td>“Who are the students?” “What do they need?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Establish the methods.</td>
<td>“How do we achieve the goals?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Implement the program.</td>
<td>Put the philosophy and methodology into practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Evaluate the program.</td>
<td>“What was successful?” “What was unsuccessful?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Reform the program.</td>
<td>“What do we need to change?” “How do we change it?”</td>
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1. **Curriculum**

When designing a speaking/writing curriculum, it is necessary to acknowledge that just as there is no “teacher-proof” methodology (Parlett & Hamilton 1975, p.153), there is also no “participant-proof” curriculum, and that whatever design is adapted, “No teaching/learning method however innovative or systematic can succeed without a proper consideration of the two main participants, the student and the teacher” (Hills 1976, p. 28). It is therefore necessary to involve teachers and students in the process of curriculum design and to allow for individual differences in learners (Breen & Candlin, 1980, p. 94), along with changes in self-perceptions of these differences as the courses progress. This raises questions about “person-centred” EFL curriculum design, as posed by Legutke & Thomas (1991):

1. Is it possible to turn L2 classrooms into whole-person events, where body and soul, intellect and feeling, head, hand and heart converge in action?
2. What do we need to do to exploit the psychosocial reality of the L2 classroom and its immediate significance for both teacher and learner?
3. What needs to be done to create situations and scenarios where communication in the target language could be more meaningful? What are the roles of teacher, learners, topic and input in such scenarios?

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2 In this paper, text within quotation marks keeps to the original spelling.
4. How can [learners] become co-managers of their learning and participate in their own teaching? (Adapted from Legutke & Thomas 1991, pp. 7-10)

The problem for the curriculum designer is how to answer these questions with a curriculum which serves the students’ affective needs and learning preferences, provides ample learning content, is amenable to co-operative negotiation, and encourages development of the whole person. Nunan offers a definition of the task-based curriculum as “an integrated set of processes involving, among other things, the specification of both what and how” (1989, p. 1), and Williams and Burden (1997), describing a “constructivist” perspective, outline a number of relevant criteria:

1. We must start from a theory of learning that is robust and to which as researchers and teachers we subscribe.

2. Such a theory should enable us to focus upon the uniqueness of individuals as well as helping us to see what they have in common.

3. It should be a theory of how people change rather than how they stay the same.

4. This should give rise to implications for action and intervention.

5. It should also enable us to support individuals in taking personal control of their own learning.

6. In doing so it must be connected to individuals’ views of themselves as learners. (Adapted from Williams & Burden 1997, p. 95)

These criteria were addressed in this study by adapting a model of Van Lier (1996) in which the language curriculum is “a process of assisting learning” (1996, p. 4), with basic educational ideals and beliefs as “the central determining factors” (1996, p. 188). Van Lier’s “AAA” version of this model is based on the principles of awareness, autonomy, and authenticity, which “allow language education to unfold in a regulated yet creative manner” and which represent “a fair consensus of our current intellectual knowledge and moral aspirations as language educators” (1996, p. 4). This model adopts the developmental psychology of Vygotsky (1986), in which learning occurs most effectively in the individual’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and is driven by social interaction with more capable, equal, or less capable peers, as well as with the teacher. This concept is similar to Bruner’s (1966) process of scaffolding, Piaget’s (1976) “grasp of consciousness,” work on intrinsic motivation by Deci and Ryan (1985), and on autotelic
learning as described by Csikszentmihalyi (1990).

Van Lier’s model was adapted by substituting the principles of confidence, motivation, independence, and flexibility (CMIF) for Van Lier’s “AAA” triad (Figure 1). In this way, pedagogic and human values could be built into a curriculum that proceeded from principles to strategies, and on to pedagogical action, allowing for a consistent and methodical way of describing teaching. This adaptation addressed Legutke & Thomas’ (1991) “person-centred” curriculum design questions and the criteria of Williams & Burden (1997) by: i) following a process approach to learning; ii) being based upon a humanistic view of language learning as education; iii) emphasizing interaction; and iv) being founded in theory as well as practice.

FIGURE 1

The focus on CMI was supported by extensive research into affect (Arnold, 1999; Dörnyei, 1994; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2010; Oxford, 1996) and autonomy (Benson, 2011; Dickinson, 1987, 1992; Holec, 1981; Illés, 2012; Palfreyman & Smith, 2005), which had been found to be applicable and effective in EFL in Korea (Finch, 2010). The principle of ‘flexibility’ in teaching and learning was added to this CMI primary triad in order to facilitate the establishment of student-centered, multi-level classrooms and also enable positive attitude change. As Mantle-Bromley points out, students do not develop positive attitudes simply by being in the language class (1995, p. 378) and Holec (1981, p. 27) states that a “deconditioning” process is necessary for students to modify ineffective and harmful ideas about language learning. Bassano (1986, p. 15) offers six steps towards
dealing with student beliefs, which emphasize a flexible approach: i) become aware of students’ past classroom experiences and their assumptions about language learning; ii) build students’ confidence; iii) begin where the students are and move slowly; iv) show them achievement; v) allow for free choice as much as possible; and vi) become aware of the students’ interests and concerns, their goals and objectives. Such sensitivity and flexibility allows the teacher to adapt the syllabus to the individual needs of the students, facilitating appropriate learning experiences and opportunities.

In addition to his primary “AAA” triad, Van Lier (1996) also proposed a subsidiary “AAA” triad: achievement, assessment, accountability (knowledge of success, demonstration of success, and justification of pedagogical action). Where the primary triad acts on the “global level” of basic program principles, this subsidiary triad is concerned with the “local” learning environment and with short-term learning issues. This “subsidiary” concept was also employed in the program under discussion, and a corresponding triad consisting of consciousness, meaning, and interaction (CMI) was employed (Finch, 2010). Thus, the curriculum devised for this program was not a sequenced and pre-selected collection of linguistic goals, but a process (White, 1988, p. 34), in which the CMI infrastructure gave teachers and students freedom to negotiate the syllabus.

2. The syllabus

A focus on “language-learning as education”, with attention to cognition, affect, and socio-cultural aspects of learning, presented in a problem-solving, task-based framework, was the guiding principle behind the program curriculum. In terms of the syllabus, “a framework within which activities can be carried out: a teaching device to facilitate learning” (Nunan, 1988, p. 6), Willis’ (1996) five principles for the implementation of a task-based approach were followed:

1. There should be exposure to worthwhile and authentic language.
2. There should be use of language.
3. Tasks should motivate learners to engage in language use.
4. There should be a focus on language at some points in a task cycle.
5. The focus on language should be more and less prominent at different times.
   (Adapted from Willis, 1996)

Skehan (1998) also proposes five principles for task-based instruction, paying greater attention to affect, but still largely ignoring socio-cultural aspects:
1. Choose a range of target structures (learners do not simply learn what teachers teach. It is ineffective to choose a particular structure to be learned).
2. Choose tasks which meet the utility criterion (the teacher can only create appropriate conditions and hope the learners will avail themselves of the possibilities).
3. Select and sequence tasks to achieve balanced development.
4. Maximise the chances of a focus on form through attentional manipulation.
5. At initial stages of task use, conditions need to be established to maximise the chances of noticing. (Adapted from Skehan, 1998, pp. 129-32)

When designing the speaking/writing syllabi in this study, these principles provided a benchmark for the design of the task-based, interactive learning materials (Finch, 2012b, 2012c). Desired learning outcomes were not specifically knowledge-based, but centered on the primary and subsidiary affective/psycho-social/strategic sets of principles, which were addressed through the textbooks, themselves embodiments of the syllabi. There were notional, functional and grammatical signposts in the tables of contents of these books, which provided direction for the users, but these were a means to an affective/humanistic/communicatively-competent end, rather than being an attempt to re-cover in scant classroom time linguistic content that had been studied in middle and high school.

3. The Task-based approach

TBLT grew out of a need to address goals such as those of the 7th National Curriculum and aims to involve the learners at every stage of the educational process: comprehension, decision-making, implementation, preparation, rehearsal, performance and reflection. If carried out in the target language, these stages have the advantage of promoting authenticity and meaning, as students use the language to learn the language. However, even when students use the mother tongue, TBLT can be beneficial in encouraging them to examine their learning needs, assess themselves, and become self-directed. Through fostering CMI, TBLT offers a suitable format for the promotion of life-long learning skills.

Focusing as it does on the ‘means’ rather than the ‘product,’ TBLT has become an important building block within the curriculum (Nunan, 1993, p. 66), and “a central pedagogical tool for the language teacher as well as a basic unit for language syllabus design and research” (Williams & Burden 1997, p. 168). Long and Crookes (1993) adopted the ‘task’ as the unit of syllabus analysis in order to provide an “integrated, internally coherent approach to all six phases of programme design” (1993, p. 9): i) needs identification; ii) syllabus design; iii) methodology design; iv) materials writing; v) testing; and vi) program evaluation. Other commentaries on the use of the task in the syllabus and
curriculum can be found in Candlin and Murphey (1987), Ellis (2003), Legutke and Thomas (1991), Nunan (1989, 1993), Prabhu (1987), and Willis D. and Willis J. (1996). Batstone (2012) also draws attention to the importance of context for the effectiveness of tasks, a socio-cultural emphasis that is significant for this study.

Nunan (1989) defines a communicative task as “a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form.” Ellis (2003) also points out that tasks satisfy the goals of the notional-functional approach, though “the real purpose of the task is not that learners should arrive at a successful outcome but that they should use language in ways that will promote language learning” (2003, p. 8). In terms of task-design, Nunan describes six conditions: Goals, Input, Activities, Teacher roles, Learner roles, and Settings (1989, p. 11), while Ellis has: Goal, Input, Conditions, Procedure, and Predicted Outcomes (product/process). Both agree that the design of the task affects the kind of interactions that occur in terms of negotiation of meaning, communication strategies, and communicative outcomes (Ellis, 2003, p. 78). Ellis also suggests that tasks are an effective method of addressing Canale’s (1983) four types of competence needed for the language classroom (linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence).

TBLT has proved successful in the foreign language learning setting, having been employed to teach Dutch as a Foreign Language in 1200 state primary and secondary schools throughout the Flemish-speaking region of Belgium (Van den Branden, 2006). The successful results of this project are highly significant for EFL education in Korea.

4. Assessment

The issues involved in language assessment in general and performance assessment in particular are various and complex and the reader is referred to Skehan’s “state of the art article” (1988) for a detailed survey of the factors concerned, along with Wan-Key Lee’s (1991) review of the situation in Korea.

Dudley and Swaffield (2008) cite the Assessment Reform Group’s definition of assessment as: “The process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go next, and how best to get there” (2008, p. 105). This view of ‘assessment for learning’ was integral to the curriculum of the program under consideration, but it was also acknowledged that assessment should be closely linked to the goals, principles and methods of the program. This process of “deciding what to give value to” (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 62) called for assessment of cognitive, affective, social, and linguistic growth in addition to the promotion of identity, self-esteem, and values, since “children who are valued do
valuable learning” (Drummond, 2008, p. 16). This led to the use of self-assessment, peer- assessment, peer editing, learning portfolios, presentations, and group projects, in addition to teacher-based assessment (James, 2008, p. 31). Swaffield (2008) also points out that ‘assessment for learning’ has a number of benefits for the holistic language program, since it: i) is part of effective planning; ii) focuses on how pupils learn; iii) is central to classroom practice; iv) is a key professional skill; v) is sensitive and constructive; vi) fosters motivation; vii) promotes understanding of goals and criteria; viii) helps learners know how to improve; ix) develops the capacity for self (and peer) assessment; and x) recognizes all educational achievement (2008, p. 58). Earl and Katz (2008) emphasize that such classroom-based assessment (Finch & Dongil Shin, 2005) “is something best – and necessarily – accomplished by the learner herself since it is she who holds privileged access to the relevant beliefs” (Earl & Katz, 2008, p. 93). Reflective assessment is thus vital for a student-centered curriculum, particularly since the 21st century has been notable for rapid advances in technology that have resulted in automation, outsourcing, and the consequent need for people to reskill. In this situation, knowledge is of limited use compared with the ability to consciously, continuously, and quickly take on new ways of knowing and new skills. Students must therefore acquire the capacity for ‘reflective judgment’: “the ability to make judgements and interpretations, less on the basis of ‘right answers’ than on the basis of ‘good reasons’” (King & Kitchener, 1994, cited in Earl and Katz, 2008, p. 90). As Rogers pointed out some decades ago, “The only person who is educated is the one who has learned how to learn and how to change” (1969, p. 120).

Any attempt to educate students in the postmodern era must take these considerations into account by helping students to acquire learning strategies and to practice metacognition, including self-monitoring, self-assessment and self-regulation. These skills take time and practice to acquire and also involve attitude change, since the learners need to shift their attributions of success “away from uncontrollable explanations (like ability) to controllable ones (like effort)” (Earl & Katz, 2008, p. 95). It follows that teachers need to foster the necessary skills through providing an environment “where is it safe to take chances and where feedback and support are readily available and challenging” (Earl & Katz, 2008, p. 95). Hodgen and Webb (2008) also draw attention to feedback as “crucial to successful learning” and state that “there is considerable evidence to indicate that providing feedback to students is the most effective form of educational intervention” (2008, p. 73).

1) Authentic assessment

In view of these affective, social, cognitive, and metacognitive requirements for assessment, Kohonen’s (1999) “Authentic assessment” provides a suitable model, being a
process-oriented means of evaluating communicative competence, cognitive abilities and affective learning (1999, p. 284), using reflective forms of assessment in instructionally-relevant classroom activities (communicative performance assessment, language portfolios and self-assessment), and focusing on curriculum goals, enhancement of individual competence and integration of instruction and assessment. In this two-way process, “the essentially interactive nature of learning is extended to the process of assessment” (Williams & Burden 1997, p. 42), examining what learners can do with their language, through real-life language use tasks. For the learner this means learning “how to manage (...) learning, rather than just managing to learn” (Kohonen, 1999, p. 291).

Authentic assessment in a task-based, process setting implies a focus on language mastery (criterion-referenced performance) rather than relative performance (norm-referenced performance), a focus which Ames and Archer (1988) found to be highly motivating in the classroom, fostering long-term use of learning strategies and helping students form realistic but challenging goals. As Darling-Hammond (1997, p. 10) points out, assessment needs to support authentic forms of teaching and learning, and task-based process assessment, with its criterion-referenced orientation, provides direct information “about what the learner can actually do with the target language” (McClean, 1995, p. 137).

2) Validity and reliability

Language testing has traditionally relied on considerations of validity (whether tests actually measure what they are supposed to measure [Thrasher, 1984]), reliability (whether they produce similar results on more than one occasion), and efficiency (logistics of test administration) (Weir, 1998, p. 1). Validity is seen by Spolsky (1975) as the major problem in foreign language testing, and Nakamura (1995) argues that predictive validity, educational validity, construct validity, concurrent validity, face validity and content validity should be analyzed in tests of speaking ability. Kohonen (1999, p. 291) also stresses validity in communicative evaluation. However, Williams (2008) points out that validity is not a property of an test, but “is a property of inferences that we draw on the basis of assessment outcomes” (2008, p. 127) and these inferences “will be affected, sometimes radically, by the social setting in which tests are used” (2008, p. 136). Thus, Williams & Burden (1997) argue that the energy spent by test constructors on strengthening the reliability and validity of their tests assumes that the test is measuring a relatively fixed characteristic, rather than a hypothetical construct (the researcher’s best attempt to define what is involved). In fact, individual- and affect-related traits are variable, and often context specific, so that “a test should be expected to produce different results on different occasions” (Williams & Burden 1997, p. 90). Weir (1998, p. 7) also points out that the validity of “communicative” tests is dependent on the test-constructors’s
understanding and definition of the term, and Van Lier (1996) questions the accountability of tests which can only measure that which is measurable:

> It is quite possible that the deepest, most satisfying aspects of achievement, and the most profound effects of education, both in positive and negative terms, are entirely unmeasurable (...). What if we held educators accountable for the quality of the memories they gave to their students, rather than for averages on national tests? (Van Lier, 1996, p. 120)

3) Assessment: Conclusion

The personal growth of the learner is becoming increasingly important in the assessment of language learning, so that it is no longer defensible to use discrete-item testing of dubious constructs if the goal is to provide information on learning. Instead, the need to understand performance itself and the processing (and affective) factors that influence it, suggest a task-based process approach and an integration of assessment and instruction. Based on these findings, and recognizing that learner perceptions and beliefs are important factors in determining what students learn and how they learn it (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 205), assessment procedures in the present study began with criterion-referenced task-based oral and written tests of recently-studied learning content, and (following teacher-led feedback and discussion) concluded with self/peer/teacher-assessed projects, building on the affective, cognitive, social, and linguistic learning content of each semester. A process of ongoing self-assessment and peer-assessment continued throughout the semesters and assignments were stored in the portfolio at the back of the textbook. Assessment thus took on principles of authentic testing (Kohonen, 1999), being designed to promote learning as well as providing feedback on that learning.

5. Evaluation

Just as there has recently been a move in the social sciences to viewing the researcher as an integral part of the project, “observing effects in context” (Cronbach, 1975), a similar move has taken place in program evaluation. In this ‘naturalistic’ paradigm, the emphasis is on observing, describing, interpreting and understanding the continuously changing process of the program being evaluated, using techniques such as in-depth interviews, participant observation and journals. Rea-Dickins & Germaine (1998) state that evaluation is “about innovation” (1998, p. 15), “the worth of something” (1998, p. 17), accountability, curriculum development, awareness-raising and managing, forming a judgment and providing evidence, and “stimulating learning and understanding” (1998, p. 11), in addition
to the more traditional view of evaluation as a tool for assessing program impact and value for money.

This approach stems from a non-objective definition of reality, in which “phenomena can be understood only within the context in which they are studied” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 45). However, there are ethical issues which are relevant to all evaluations and these are discussed by White (1988), who lists five factors which the evaluator must take into account: i) impartiality; ii) confidentiality and control over the data participants; iii) negotiation among all parties involved; iv) collaboration by all concerned; and v) accountability by all levels in the organizational hierarchy (White, 1988, p. 149). Parlett & Hamilton (1975) also stress that any evaluation must take into account the “social-psychological and material environment in which students and teachers work together.” These cultural, social, institutional and psychological variables interact in complex ways in the classroom, producing:

… a unique pattern of circumstances, pressure, customs, and work styles which suffuse the teaching and learning. … The introduction of an innovation sets off a chain of repercussions throughout the learning milieu. In turn these unintended consequences are likely to affect the innovation itself, changing its form and moderating its impact. (Parlett & Hamilton, 1975, p. 145)

Evaluation, in a formative and illuminative context, can thus be a valuable tool of program design, contributing to the growth of the evaluated program in an ongoing way. From this perspective, the emphasis is on “observing, describing, interpreting and understanding how events take place in the real world” (Lynch, 1996, p. 14), and on “stimulating learning and understanding” (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1998, p. 11). In this approach there is no meaningful separation of facts from values (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 45), and the educational program is seen as a process that is continuously changing, shaped by “the nature of the project itself” (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 22), and evaluated through interviews, participant observation, journals, etc. (Lynch, 1996). This type of evaluation is “participative … principled, systematic and an integral part of curriculum planning and implementation” (Rea-Dickins, 1994, p. 72). The various stages of a formative evaluation are cyclic and overlapping, and the program is “always in a state of being established, implemented, evaluated and reformed, each stage interacting with and influencing the others,” the evaluator producing an “interpretation of a highly complex system” (Parlett, 1981), rather than making predictive generalizations (Cronbach, 1975), and using the information to modify the program as it is being implemented.
III. METHOD AND PRINCIPLES

As mentioned at the beginning of the Literature Review, this section describes how the seven steps of Skilbeck’s (1984) situational model were adapted and followed in the setting up of the program under consideration.

1. Step 1: Analyze the situation.

After 20 years of conversation-English classes that had relied on imported ESL books, a decision was made by top policy makers in the Faculty of Liberal Education in the university to set up an in-house EFL program that would provide all Freshman students with the speaking and writing skills that they would need in their academic studies and their future careers. In view of these requirements, which called for a multi-level, unified language program based on sound pedagogic principles, and which further stipulated a 60/40% attention to writing/speaking in the first semester, and an 80% emphasis on writing in the second semester, the author’s initial analysis and review of the literature led to a number of premises upon which the program would be based:

1. Korean students have consistently scored at or near the top of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD, 2009).
2. Korean parents in general spend large amounts of money on private English lessons for their children, with disappointing results. Shin-Woo Kang (2009) reports that despite this investment, Korean students were ranked 136th out of 161 nations in speaking skills on the TOEFL of 2008, and 81st overall.
3. The current test-preparation approach to teaching English has failed to satisfy the goals of educators, students, parents, and employers: “The consumers of education in Korea are not only dissatisfied with school education; they have lost all trust toward the schools as a whole” (Wan-Gee Choi, 2006, p. 11).
4. Traditional Korean educational concepts of jonyang, gungni, and Hongik Ingan are relevant to Korea in the 21st century, as is the concept of cultivating ‘worthy men’ (Wan-Gee Choi, 2006, pp. 13, 15).
5. TBLT, particularly in its Form-Focused Interaction (FFI) form (Finch, 2006), has proved successful in promoting fluency and accuracy in various EFL contexts (Van den Branden, 2006; Finch, 2010).
6. Countries in which a fusion of humanistic principles with a new educational infrastructure has been attempted, have become leading high-tech economies, in addition to scoring highly on the PISA (Finch, 2009).
These premises indicated that: i) Korean students had achieved success in an international context, but this success had not been mirrored in learning English; ii) students and their parents were highly motivated in terms of learning English; iii) there was general dissatisfaction with the state of education; iv) the values inherent in *Hongik* Ingan were not being acquired in the test-driven classroom; and v) a task-based, humanistic approach to language teaching and learning had been successful in EFL situations, including Korea, and offered a suitable model for the program.

2. Step 2: Establish principles and goals.

Based on the findings in the Literature Review and the analysis of the situation, the author chose a co-constructivist (Williams & Burden, 1997), socio-cultural, task-based philosophy, based on the premise that “learning comes about through interacting with others in meaningful contexts” (Swaffield, 2008, p. 60). This was implemented through a student-centered approach that had been found to be effective with Korean students from middle school to university level (Finch, 2012a; Littlewood, 2000). This philosophy and the principles that emerge from it are described in depth in a mission statement that provides benchmarks and criteria for every aspect of the program and is permanently accessible at www.finchpark.com/courses/mission.html. A summary of the core principles is offered below:

1. Language learning seems to develop independently of instruction;
2. Learners acquire language according to their own inbuilt internal syllabus, regardless of the order in which they are exposed to particular structures;
3. Teaching does not and cannot determine the way that the learner’s language will develop (Skehan, 1996);
4. Learners do not necessarily learn what teachers teach (Allwright, 1984);
5. Learners do not acquire language as a structural system and then learn how to use it in communication, but actually discover the system in the process of learning how to communicate. (Ellis, 2003, p. 14);
6. Motivation is one of the key issues in language learning and skills to motivate learners are crucial for language teachers. (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 1);
7. Collaboration is more effective than competition as a means of promoting effective learning (Kohn, 1992);
8. Learners learn more in groups than individually, since cooperative social interaction “produces new, elaborate, advanced psychological processes that are unavailable to the organism working in isolation” (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 61). “Learning is by definition
a social and collaborative activity in which people build knowledge and develop their thinking together” (James, 2008, p. 30);

9. Student beliefs and perceptions determine what is learnt in the language classroom;

10. Students need to be fully involved in what happens in the classroom, so that beliefs and perceptions can be positively modified by experience.

In combination, these principles constitute an approach to TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign language) that mirrors the humanistic goals of education in Korea. These include affective learning (emotional management), social learning (collaboration, interpersonal responsibility) and cognitive learning (problem-solving, critical thinking, etc.), and focus on education as a means of developing and improving society, through promotion of responsibility, creativity, reasoning, informed knowledge, positive contributions, management of the emotions, and ethical awareness.

3. Step 3: Needs analysis

Due to lack of time, it was not possible to perform a needs analysis of the students before the program began its pilot year. However, discussion with the teachers, along with the initial analysis and the author’s previous experience in writing for university Language Centers, enabled two textbooks (Finch, 2012b, 2012c) to be produced that embodied the principles of the program. These served as needs analyses in themselves, since they contained opportunities for student feedback that were referred to, along with teacher feedback, in the rewriting and reshaping of the program.

4. Step 4: Establish the methods.

As already mentioned, the recommended teaching methods for the program were constructivist and socio-cultural, set in a student-centered infrastructure, which was facilitated by the textbooks. These were designed according to humanistic, interactive, and psychosocial principles and attempted to satisfy the needs of the students in terms of the English speaking and writing skills that they would need in their university studies and in their careers. Both books consisted of 11 theme-based Units, each of which contained structured opportunities for speaking and writing, though the integrated nature of the activities meant that the four language skills were constantly in use during the process of exploring, finding out, understanding, applying, analyzing, performing, evaluating, and concluding. This basic structure functioned as a scaffolding for various types of activities, based on Pattison’s seven activity types: questions and answers, dialogues and role plays, matching activities, communication strategies, pictures and picture stories, puzzles and
problems, discussions and decisions (Pattison, 1987, cited in Ellis, 2003, p. 68). In addition to these types, there were also surveys, board games, linguistic and structural input (grammar, vocabulary and paragraph types), process writing activities, and reflective assessment (portfolio, self/peer-assessment, and peer-editing). In Book 1 (Finch, 2012b), the focus of attention was on development of communicative competence and basic writing skills (writing an e-mail and various types of paragraph). Mid-term oral and written tests focused on cognitive and linguistic growth, but were only part of the overall assessment process, in which self/peer-assessment, teacher assessment, and group presentations provided an overall picture of the students’ skills.

Semester 2 (Book 2, Finch, 2012c) built upon the foundation of Book 1 and introduced students to job-related language skills, including bios, resumes, cover letters, interview skills, personal statements, and project work. By the end of the pilot year, therefore, it was expected that all Freshman students in the university would have a basic knowledge of academic spoken and written English in addition to a portfolio of job-related documents which they could update during their university years and use in their job applications. A website was also set up (www.finchpark.com/KNUFLE) on which links to pre-learning, follow-up and review activities and resources for each Unit were provided. These links (reference, reading, writing, listening, viewing, games and puzzles, and teacher resources) provided students and teachers with a wealth of supplementary materials.

Rather than the linear ‘Present-Practice-Perform’ model of language acquisition, the ‘Engage-Study-Activate’ model (Harmer, 1998) was suggested for the first semester, facilitating a task-based, autonomous approach to learning. This model gives flexibility to the teacher, since the stages are interchangeable. Instead of presenting materials which many students might already know, the teacher can ask students to perform first and observe how they manage the discovery-learning task. This approach can enhance the acquisition of learning strategies as well as helping students to internalize information and develop their skills in a ‘learning by doing’ mode.

This approach was extended in semester 2 by incorporating principles of Inquiry-based Learning (Audet & Jordan, 2005), with its ‘5 Es’ (Engage, Explore, Explain, Extend, Evaluate) (Fosnot, 2005), and the Teachers’ Guide for Book 2 encouraged teachers to investigate this constructivist approach, since it is highly suitable for task-based, discovery learning. Students need a suitable learning environment in which to develop social, cognitive, affective, and linguistic skills, and Inquiry-based Learning satisfies this need by treating learners as intelligent, self-directed individuals with unique learning paths. During this time of technological and social change, smart technology is changing the way languages are used and learned and social trends are changing the way in which people perceive education. Not only do students need English for jobs that have not been invented yet, but it is probable that they will also experience significant social changes. It is vital,
therefore, that educators offer opportunities to develop learning strategies in a non-threatening micro-society of cooperative, problem solving, critically thinking, mutually respecting individuals. In this way, they can prepare their students for the future.

5. Step 5: Implement the program.

In view of the particular needs and requirements of the program and the humanistic nature of the approach being taken, it was important to involve the teachers at the earliest opportunity. Teacher-training workshops were therefore conducted at the beginning of each semester, explaining the guiding principles and methods of the program. In semester 2, weekly seminars were also given (often by the teachers themselves), focusing on the particular teaching/learning/assessment content for the coming weeks. It was expected that a constructivist approach would enable teachers to present the syllabus in a meaningful, authentic, and communicative manner and Teacher’s Guides explaining this approach were supplied. Teachers were encouraged to take a flexible approach by monitoring individual students, assessing their learning needs, and guiding them to suitable tasks. Rather than ‘factory-learning,’ in which every student is expected to perform the same tasks at the same level and at the same time, the two Teacher’s Guides gave suggestions on how multi-level, self-directed learning might be promoted, fostering discovery learning, teamwork, and reflection in the students. Given that these skills are vital in the workplace but are rarely emphasized in academic environments, it was hoped that these future business people, medics, lawyers, engineers, politicians, academics, and public servants would look back on their Freshman English experience and see it as the time when they learned how to learn rather than what to learn.

In terms of the day-to-day running of the program in its pilot year, all Freshman students attended classes in the university Language Center, given by 25 teachers on the main campus, and 6 teachers in the sister campus in another city. Classes lasted for 50 minutes and were given twice each week, for a total of 15 weeks per semester. The problems of varying levels of proficiency and motivation that are inevitable in such a wide-ranging program were addressed by the fourth core principle of the program: flexibility. Teachers were asked to use the textbooks as resources rather than as hard-and-fast learning content and to match the activities and learning opportunities (plus those on the website) to the students. This was aided in semester 1 by having three reading passages in each Unit, each passage providing a different level of language input. Assessment was closely tied to the syllabus and included mid-term and final performance exams, as well as self/peer-assessment and portfolios. Management of the program relied on strong support from executive administration officers, so that change-management could be effective. This involved promotion of professional development for the teachers and sensitive facilitation
of the change process. Teachers needed to know that the program was pedagogically sound, effective, and (most of all) sufficiently supported by policy makers, so that they could feel secure in contributing their time and energy to program improvement.

6. Step 6: Evaluate the program.

The pilot year of the program was by nature a form of evaluation, since every aspect was potentially subject to change. Teacher feedback was encouraged and end-of-semester student evaluations (administered by the university for every credit course) were investigated for significant trends. Student feedback had been built into the textbooks, and informal class observations took place in semester 2.

1) Teacher feedback

Teacher feedback on the program was collected during semester 1 and representative teachers reported their findings and recommendations at the end of the semester. The recommendations were recorded and discussed, and formed the basis of the revision of the textbook (Finch, 2012b) which took place immediately. These recommendations included more explicit grammar and vocabulary input, a more gradual approach to peer editing, more space for writing, and other structural revisions.

2) Student evaluations

Students in national universities are required to evaluate courses online before they are allowed to see their grades. In this university, the evaluation consisted of 15 questions, evaluating the syllabus, the teacher, the learning environment, the assignments, and the assessments. The possible score on each item was from 0 to 5. Student evaluations for the 25 teachers in the Daegu campus for the first semester of the program ranged from 3.12 to 4.55. Sixteen teachers were rated above 4.00 and 23 teachers scored at or above 3.89. The overall average (4.12) compared favorably with the 4.07 of the previous year (4.36 highest score), but was not significantly different. However, the figures for the intensive summer course, on which 12 teachers taught and both parts of the program were available (Books 1 and 2), showed a startling improvement. Student evaluations of the teachers ranged from 4.12 to 4.91, giving an average of 4.45, though there were no figures available for the intensive courses in previous years. Significantly, the students on this intensive program consisted largely of non-freshmen – students who had returned from military service and others who needed to take one of the Freshman English courses in order to graduate. Many of these students had taken part 1 when imported textbooks provided the syllabi, and were
therefore in a position to compare the new program with those earlier years. The high grades are perhaps indicative of this comparison.

Online comments made by the students were mostly positive for the first semester, including “He tried really hard for this class,” “Best teacher I’ve ever met,” “She was really kind to us,” “I learned a lot in this class,” “It was the best class in my life,” and “It helped me improve my writing skills.” It was notable that many of these comments were about the learning environment and the caring attitude of the teacher – factors that reappeared in the course evaluations in the textbooks. However, student comments for semester 1 also included negative comments, which were seen as very significant in terms of the future of the program. Such comments included “It was boring,” “He didn’t communicate with students,” “He didn’t listen at all,” “Unfair grades,” and “I was disappointed on his passion of class and attitude of class.” It became evident at this point that the introduction of the new program called for more teacher training and professional development than had been possible up to that time. Once more, the summer intensive course showed a radical improvement, with hardly any negative comments at all. Rather, there was a wealth of extremely satisfied comments, such as: “I became more confident after this class,” “Perfect class,” “He was passionate in class,” “Well, professor was a professional,” “It was really helpful for me to prepare resume,” and “It was one of the best classes ever taken. I was deeply impressed by student-oriented teaching style and professor’s effort.”

3) Student feedback

Both books contained regular self- and peer-evaluation instruments, with the aim of helping students to acquire self-assessment skills and strategies. They also contained course evaluations at the end of the final Units. These evaluations were completed by all freshman students and consisted of questions about the course, the textbook, the teacher, other students, groupwork, assignments, self-assessment, presentations, projects, improvements, and future needs. There is no space in this paper to analyze all 4500 responses in depth, though it is hoped to perform a word distribution cluster analysis later, and this will take up a whole paper in itself. However, a qualitative perusal of these course evaluations does reveal a number of trends. In brief, there was a general satisfaction with the learning content of the first semester, with “a little better,” “better,” and “much better,” being the most frequent comments in all the categories. Many students saw only “A little” improvement in their English skills and a significant proportion wrote “same,” still

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3 The representative student comments in this section are translated from the original Korean. They are anonymous when they appear on the University web system.
identifying a need to improve in speaking andwriting skills. Interestingly, the majority of responses to “What was the most impressive thing in the course” mentioned the final test or “play,” referring to role-plays that occurred during the semester, and the final group presentation. The possibility of making new friends during group work was also seen as a benefit.

The general impression that arises from a perusal of the feedback on Book 1 is that students expected to experience a conversation-English program (see Kroeker 2009, for an exposition of the ambiguities of this approach) as in previous years and were to some extent confused at the emphasis on academic speaking and writing skills. The new curriculum had been described in detail (in Korean) in the online syllabus (available to students when registering for courses), but this would have been the first time these students had encountered online registering, and it is possible that many of them did not read it. As a consequence, some of the learning content (self/peer-assessment, peer editing, discussion, and paragraph writing) was seen as difficult by students expecting to “speak in English with a foreigner,” though aspects such as role-plays and the acquisition of presentation skills were perceived as exciting and challenging. It must be remembered that students were coming fresh from high school into the pilot year of a Freshman English program that was as yet unfamiliar to the teachers. It was therefore inevitable that there would be ‘teething troubles’ as the teachers negotiated the new curriculum, syllabus, and textbook. Students could also be expected to have difficulties coming from a listening-reading, test-driven learning environment to one in which speaking and writing were emphasized, in an integrated, student-centered, self-directed approach.

This impression changes noticeably in the feedback for Book 2. It appears that the focus on job-related English skills and academic English was seen as meaningful by the students, who appreciated the learning content despite its extra emphasis on writing. Thus, comments for the textbook were explicitly favorable (“I think this book was helpful to students”). As with Book 1, teachers were evaluated largely by their character and professionalism (“He is kind, well-prepared and tried to help us”) and classmates were seen as diligent, good, and friendly. Frequent comments about speaking skills and writing skills include “better than before,” “improved,” and “upgraded,” while doing one’s best was the main factor in comments about the assignments. Whereas students occasionally complained about too many assignments in Book 1, the relevance of the content in Book 2 seemed to override these opinions, since students had an opportunity to make their own professional portfolios during the course. Groupwork was described in positive terms as “Awesome!” and “It is a wonderful experience,” and project work was generally “interesting.” Students mentioned being satisfied, making new friends, and being

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4 The student feedback reported in this section is representative and anonymous.
impressed by the presentation project (final exam). It is interesting to note the comments about friendship here, since they confirm earlier (unpublished) research conducted by the author when working at another university in Korea. When a Conversation-English circle he helped to initiate became popular, the author was curious to know why this was. Results of a questionnaire showed that “making new friends” was the chief reason for joining the circle. It would appear, therefore, that social motivation and interaction is an important factor to be taken into account when designing foreign language programs.

4) Class observations

During the second semester of the pilot year of the program, the author asked for permission to observe and make videos of various classes and was pleased to see that students in general seemed to have no trouble in applying the writing skills they had acquired in the semester 1 to the job-related tasks of semester 2. It was evident that the focus on basic skills was being fruitful and also that learning strategies acquired in semester 1 were being transferred and utilized in semester 2. Class observation was identified as an important tool of professional development early on in the first semester, and a video camera was made available to the teachers, so that they could observe their own (or each others’) classes.

7. Step 7: Reform the program.

As mentioned in the previous section, a meeting with representative teachers at the end of the first semester enabled significant revisions to be made to the textbook for the basic level course, including restructuring, more explicit grammar and vocabulary input, and a graduated approach to peer editing. Another aspect of program reform that took place in the second semester was to initiate regular teacher seminars. These focused on the upcoming content of the Units and gave teachers an opportunity to share ideas about the concepts and teaching points involved. It was noticeable at this time that there was an element of bonding and trust growing among the teachers, and that this had not been evident during the pre-program period, when there had been no pedagogic or professional direction provided by the previous administration.

An original aim of the program was that reform would be a continuous, ongoing process that would eventually be taken over by the teachers. The seminars are a step in this direction and it is hoped that teachers will see the program as reasonably secure and will contribute to it over time. Coming to the end of the pilot year, it is evident that they are reacting positively to the sound goals and methods of the program and that they are amenable to working on assessment guidelines and other aspects such as an activity bank,
and online blogs. In this way, the essentially formative nature of the program can take it into the future, enabling it to be sensitive to the changing needs of the students.

IV. CONCLUSION

The fusion of ‘old & new’ approaches to education that has been described in this paper provides practical evidence that a merging of traditional and recent ideas about language acquisition can be adopted to fit learners of every level, benefiting both teachers and students. The implications of such findings are that teaching to the goals of the National Curriculum, in the context of Hongik Ingan and Canale’s (1983) four competencies (linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse-related, and strategic), is an effective means of serving the learning needs of students and future professionals in the 21st century.

This research also has implications for pre-service teacher training and for in-service teachers. If it can be shown that traditional Korean educational concepts can be brought into the university language classroom and matched with a focus on academic speaking and writing skills, and if it can be shown that these concepts work well in a task-based infrastructure, resulting in the development of higher-order thinking skills and competence in language performance, then educators and policy makers will be able to provide Freshman English programs that cater for the personal, academic, and career-related needs of their students. English will then be seen by students as a valuable tool of communication and information sharing, rather than a test requirement. Indeed, this research suggests an alternative to the current test-driven system, offering an approach to language learning in which Hongik-Ingan becomes the guiding principle, and in which the true goals of education in Korea are encouraged to produce effective learning in a globally-aware ‘worthy’ learning environment.

The seonbis of Joseon were aware of how they should live and of their societal obligations. Modern educators should take due notice of this. The present period calls for an education that can direct the students and inspire them to become worthy human beings. (Wan-Gee Choi, 2006, p. 15)

Finally, this paper welcomes the educational reform that began with the executive decisions made by top policymakers in the university and hopes that the program will be able to successfully implement that reform and meet the challenges and requirements that have been set. This process will be continuously monitored and changes made in a formative manner so that the program can continue to grow and to meet changing demands and requirements. This growth and the feedback from teachers, students, and management,
will be reported in further papers.

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Applicable levels: Tertiary; adult learning

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