

# Prerequisite EGP plus ESP Courses for Speaking Ability : Curriculum Development from Theory to Practice

Mika Yanase

## **1. Rationale**

The content of speaking classes varies widely under the broad term of “developing speaking ability”. In one class, the teacher’s primary emphasis might be on the planned speech, which encourages learners to take time and write about their thoughts and opinions. In another class, a teacher might use notional– functional topics to have learners produce the structured oral dialogues. The class hours may be used by a third teacher for unstructured free discussion. In other words, teachers including myself often end up treating the feature of speaking skills only partially, since the perception of what constitutes speaking ability is varied among teachers and so are our beliefs regarding factors which affect language learning. As a consequence, it is the students’ job to integrate the separately introduced skills and knowledge to develop their interlanguage, which often goes beyond their capacity.

Several factors such as neuro–linguistics, cognitive–psychology, intra– and inter–learner variability, and sociocultural factors are related to the language learning. Studies of these factors have hatched the theories of language learning shedding some light on the systematic and effective curriculum development. Outlining the curriculum for speaking ability after consulting the related theories is my focus in this paper, and the curriculum here is for the college students at the beginner’s level. At the outset, the usefulness of the ESP (English for specific purposes) and EGP (English for general purposes) classification will be demonstrated in contrast with the complexity of teaching speaking skills. My emphasis is that both ESP and EGP courses are indispensable for the beginners to build not partial but whole speaking ability. In chapter 3, the curriculum for EGP courses will be developed in the form of four prerequisite courses ; 1) task–based language learning for the message centered activities, 2) form–focused activities to develop learners’ rule–based system, 3) listening activities for more amount of input which provides more memory–based exemplars for the real–

time fluency, 4) study about pragmatic knowledge (speech acts) for the social-conventional norms. Since task-based language learning is theoretically well-proven, my primal focus is on the task-based course and it will be discussed in the first section of chapter 3. There are three subsections and in the first, theoretical and research-based background for language learning and the development of speaking ability will be briefly reviewed to show how task-based language learning has been supported by a variety of theories. In the second sub-section, task design and some methodologies will be discussed, which will be followed by the summary in the third sub-section. In addition to the task-based language learning, the significance of the rest of the courses is strongly emphasized in the second, third, and fourth section respectively, for they compliment the task-based language learning especially for the learners with low English proficiency. With the attempt of making the proposed theory-based curricula more practical and less abstract, apart from merely conceptual, some of the concrete activities and methodologies will also be introduced in each section.

## **2. The ESP and EGP courses**

In teaching speaking skills, a variety of classifications of the speaking ability are observed among teachers. Consequently, students randomly learn partial feature of the speaking skills. To make courses more systematic, a criterion is needed for the classification as to what to teach.

Although the function of speaking can be categorized as either interactional or transactional, this categorization is still difficult to practice. The primary purposes for the interactional communication are social, and the emphasis is on creating harmonious interactions between participants. When languages are used mainly for communicating information, transactional uses are employed. Some activities such as the interaction that naturally leads to a debating point can be somewhere half-way-between, and do not fit in this categorization. Other aspect of speaking ability, their discourse mode, can be described as either one of the monologue, dialogue, or multilogue, but these three would be preferable to be activated in turn to avoid the monotonous implementation of the activities in the classroom. Contrary to the multiple methodology choices by the teachers who attempt the optimal teaching, students should not be confused as to what they are learning. On the other hand, the choice of thematic content can set clear learning goals which will also establish the criteria for practical categorization.

The thematic choice of the content should depend on whether the pedagogic purpose of

each course is general proficiency or some specific use of English. In the case of a specific-purpose course design (ESP), an analysis of the target situation where students will need to perform in English would motivate the topic selection. The real-world activities such as working either as a bank teller, a shipping clerk in the trading company or an accountant, or even traveling with the use of English are some examples. In addition, some discourse modes under the specified situations include the discussion for the academic settings and the presentation for the business settings among others. The primal goal for ESP courses is to give students the opportunities to improve the ability for their specific use of English according to their needs.

ESP courses are essential for the development of their speaking ability. However, the problem that learners may not be able to integrate separately learned skills into their speaking ability as a whole still remains. Furthermore, learners at the beginner's level are not yet ready to be engaged in some activities such as debates and discussions. My suggestion here is that the general-purpose courses (EGP) be made prerequisite, which will complement ESP curriculum. In other words, EGP courses need to provide learners with fundamental activities for the use of English in preparation for the ESP courses. Moreover, it should cover the whole components of the speaking ability to supplement the specified ESP curriculum as well. Four dimensions mentioned in the rationale should form primal courses in EGP curriculum. Although the emphasis in this paper is on the task-based language learning, the rest are also indispensable in order to complement it. Due to the time constraint in the semester, my suggestion is to separately establish four individual prerequisite courses.

### **3. Four courses in EGP curriculum**

#### 3.1. Task-based language learning for the message centered activities

##### 3.1.1. Background theories

This first course is my focal point for the curriculum development, which enables learners to tackle the demanding facets of the speaking ability. In real life situation together with some academic settings, students are required to be engaged in various interactant relationships and choose the different speech types (monologue, dialogue, multilogue). They also need to manipulate different kind of discourse modes including descriptions, narratives, classifications, discussions, arguments, and instructions. They may or may not have time to plan on their utterance depending on the situations. Where the spontaneous conversation is required, they do not have the planning time. These factors affect their speaking ability over

all and need teachers' attention. Furthermore, their performance measured by the dimensions of accuracy, fluency, and complexity is another important facet of the speaking ability. In short, EGP courses need to include them all, while ESP courses should primarily focus on the aspects that their thematic content requires.

Task-based language learning enables teachers to manipulate all these features, which will be explained accordingly. Its theory is largely based on the cognitive psychology and the nativist's. The former views linguistic knowledge as a complex network of associations that allows for the parallel processing of the linguistic representation and learning mechanisms. The latter's view is that linguistic knowledge is treated as consisting of a universal set of symbols and rules for combining these symbols to construct sentences of a language. In addition, the 'property' should be distinguished from 'transition' where the 'property' means the symbols and rules that constitute a linguistic system, and 'transition' refers to the mechanisms responsible for making changes to the system. These two accounts are reconciled in such a way that certain associations become relatively permanent mini-networks as a result of constant activation, and then, associations can evolve into rules. Furthermore, both cognitive and generative accounts of language acknowledge the distinction between implicit and explicit knowledge. Implicit knowledge is intuitive and it refers to the language knowledge that a speaker manifests in performance but has no awareness of it. Explicit knowledge is available only when the processing is controlled. These two kinds of knowledge are regarded to affect the language acquisition/ output. Ellis (1994) cites Gass' model (1988), which attempts to analyze the system of language acquisition and the effects of implicit/ explicit knowledge. According to Gass' framework, the apperceived input is the first stage of acquisition. As a result of saliency of the features themselves, it is 'noticed', and not all noticed input is 'comprehended' and not all comprehended input becomes 'intake'. Intake does not become part of the learner's implicit knowledge system until it has been 'integrated'. Implicit knowledge leads to the output, while output can influence input through interaction. This framework also represents the learner's interlanguage system. When some input is processed and put into storage and if it is not yet possible to integrate it into the learner's interlanguage system, this storage takes the form of some kind of explicit representation of L2 or FL language items and rules. Explicit knowledge can contribute to output through monitoring, and also may aid the processes that contribute to intake.

There are different positions which respond to the question diversely ; whether or not explicit knowledge can convert into implicit knowledge. I would like to take "the weak-interface position" proposed by Ellis(1994). According to him, explicit knowledge facilitates the

development of the implicit knowledge rather than changes into it. This means learners' development of implicit knowledge can be indirectly facilitated if they work on their explicit knowledge. Task-based pedagogy can activate learners' implicit/explicit knowledge. It encourages learners to naturally produce English or interact with others while they attempt to complete the tasks, which leads them to activate their implicit knowledge. When learners are instructed to focus on form in the task-based learning, their explicit knowledge is activated.

Task-based language learning is also based on the interaction theory originally advanced by Long (1980). It states that learners acquire new linguistic forms as a result of attending to them in the process of negotiating for meaning in order to address a communication problem. In other words, learning results from an interaction between the learner's mental abilities and the linguistic input. With task-based pedagogy, learners are exposed to the message-centered interaction while they can also attend to form. Although students with lower proficiency need more opportunities for the form-focused activities in addition to this ideal task-based learning, tasks will make the effect of learners' interaction optimal.

Task-based approach also encompasses the Skehan's 'dual mode system' (2001). Linguistic and psycholinguistic arguments coincide here, and two systems, i.e., the analytic rule-based processing, and formulaic exemplar-based system, coexist. In other words, it is quite likely that speakers produce utterances either directly by drawing on their memory-based system to match the exemplar-based lexical phrases, or computationally by accessing their rule-based system to structure them. Instructional conditions which work for harmonious, balanced development of two systems may well be more effective as in Skehan's suggestion, and task-based language learning is capable of realizing it. Both rule-based and exemplar-based linguistic knowledge are the components of implicit knowledge. Tasks typically call for real-time production and therefore elicit learners' use of implicit knowledge via rule-based and exemplar-based systems.

In short, all these theories point out that task-based learning is very effective.

### 3.1.2. Some information for designing and sequencing tasks and their methodology

In designing tasks, I would like to review the study of Skehan (2001) to take up the aspect of learners' performance measured by his perspective, i.e., fluency, accuracy, and complexity. Some examples of the measurement criteria for fluency are the number of syllables per minute, the number of pauses of one/two second(s) or longer, the number of repetitions, the number of false starts, and the number of reformulations. In terms of accuracy, the number of self-corrections, percentage of error-free clauses, target-like use of verb tenses, tar-

get-like use of vocabulary, target-like use of negation, and target-like use of plurals are concerned. The number of turns per minute, anaphoric reference, lexical richness, the amount of subordination, frequency of use of conjunctions, and frequency of hypothesizing statements are among other examples for complexity. Skehan has found the constraint of learner's focus of attention : learners exhibit their trade-offs relating to where they pay attention to -- accuracy, complexity, or fluency. He summarizes the selective goal influences from task characteristics as follows.

Task characteristics

Accuracy effects – More structured tasks (especially when planned), clear time line, familiar tasks

Complexity effects – Requiring more complex decisions, tasks requiring transformation of elements, tasks requiring interpretation, divergent tasks

Fluency effects – Structured tasks (unplanned), familiar tasks

(Skehan, 2001 : 140)

While Skehan primarily draws on the cognitive load effects for the study above, Ellis (2003) attempts to develop and address the contextual factors as well and summarizes the task design features affecting learner production in Table1. I would like to cite it here, for it is very informative along with Skehan's study for designing tasks for the development of these performance features.

Design Variable	Fluency	Accuracy	Complexity
A. Input variables			
1. Contextual support	Tasks with contextual support	Tasks with no contextual support	Tasks with no contextual support
2. Number of elements	Tasks with few elements		Tasks with many elements
3. Topic	Tasks that generate conflict, tasks that are familiar		
B. Task conditions			
1. Shared vs. split information			Shared information tasks
2. Tasks demands	Tasks that pose a single demand		Tasks that pose multiple demands

C. Task outcomes			
1. Closed vs. open tasks	Closed tasks	Open tasks	Open tasks with divergent goals
2. Inherent structure of the outcome	A clear inherent structure	A clear inherent structure together with opportunity for planning	
3. Discourse mode			Narrative task > descriptive task Argument > discussion

**Table 1** : Task design features affecting learner production (Ellis 2003 : 126)

Regarding the methodology, Skehan and Ellis among others consider the ‘planning’ factor of the learners (speakers) and distinguish ‘online planning’ from ‘strategic planning’. The former examines how the planning during performance of a task influences production, and the latter examines how planning prior to performance affects production. The research results indicated that opportunities for online planning assisted both accuracy and complexity, but inhibited fluency. Ellis adds that the effects may only be evident when learners are drawing on their rule-based system, and not evident in structures that are more exemplar-based in nature. In terms of the effects of strategic planning, several studies indicated that it helped to enhance fluency. Foster and Skehan (2001) investigated the effects of guided planning, and compared the effects of ‘detailed’ and ‘undetailed’ planning. Learners were given metacognitive advice about how to attend syntax, lexis, content, and organization under the detailed planning. The results showed that for the narrative task, the guided planning enhanced their fluency, but it was not the case with the personal and decision-making tasks. They also suggested that individual learner planning on task performance proved most effective in comparison with teacher-led planning and group-based planning as far as fluency was concerned. Furthermore, planners produced more complex language than non-planners. Ellis draws a conclusion in terms of accuracy that strategic planning will improve grammatical accuracy in task performance at least sometimes, because the effect of accuracy depends on a variety of factors including learner’s level of proficiency and the type of task. These studies imply that when learners plan strategically they pay more attention to making a conceptual plan about the content rather than to formulating detailed linguistic plans that leads to more accuracy. In other words, when learners are engaged in planning, they are also forced to choose what aspect of production they focus on. Concentrating on accuracy at the expense of fluency and complexity or vice versa shows the trade-off effects of the learners’

focus of attention with the cognitive load. Skehan (2001) proposes that the balance between accuracy and complexity can be handled simply by manipulating the time available for planning and summarizes in the following : as for fluency, planning intervals of up to 10 minutes will have a progressively greater effect, but the increase in the effect tends to diminish as more planning time is allocated ; the impact of planning on accuracy seems to come in the very early part of the planning time ; for accuracy, periods as little as one minute leads to an effect, and this effect is not increased as more planning time is allocated ; as for complexity, planning time of 10 minutes seems optimal, and time periods shorter than this do not seem to exert a very strong effect (Skehan 2001). As he argues, we need to design and utilize tasks to develop all three features of speaking ability in turn.

Before moving on to the phase of task sequence, the study of Ellis' general task framework and a psycholinguistic typology of tasks need to be mentioned, since they provide a general feature and definitions regarding the task design. The former provides a general framework relating to the design feature and its key dimensions, and the latter clarifies the relationship among the task types, interactant relationship, interaction relationship, goal orientation, and outcome options.

Design feature	Key dimensions
Input, i.e., the nature of the input provided in the task	1. Medium a. pictorial b. oral c. written
	2. Organization a. tight structure b. loose structure
Conditions, i.e., the way in which the information is presented to the learners and the way in which it is to be used	1. Information configuration a. split b. shared
	2. Interactant relationship a. one-way b. two-way
	3. Interaction requirement a. required b. optional
	4. Orientation a. convergent b. divergent
Processes, i.e., the nature of the cognitive operations and the discourse the task requires	1. Cognitive a. exchanging information b. exchanging opinions c. explaining / reasoning
	2. Discourse mode a. monologic b. dialogic



Outcomes, i.e., the nature of the product that results from the task	1. Medium a. pictorial b. oral c. written
	2. Discourse domain / genre, e.g. Description, argument ; recipes, political speeches
	3. Scope a. closed b. open

**Table 2** : A general task framework (Ellis, 2003 : 217)

Task Type	Interactant relationship	Interaction relationship	Goal orientation	Outcome options
Jigsaw	two-way	required	convergent	closed
Information gap	one-way or two-way	required	convergent	closed
Problem solving	one-way or two-way	optional	convergent	closed
Decision making	one-way or two-way	optional	convergent	open
Opinion exchange	one-way or two-way	optional	divergent	open

**Table 3** : A psycholinguistic typology of tasks (based on Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun 1993 : 19) (Ellis 2003 : 215)

Based on this framework and typology, Ellis summarizes a guideline in Table 4. regarding how tasks can be sequenced. Since the task difficulty should determine the task sequence, Ellis' '(c) criteria for grading tasks' are reviewed here. I have attempted to add further information to his guideline in order to summarize the issue of task sequence.

Criterion	Easy	Difficult
A. Input		
1. Medium	pictorial → written	→ oral
2. Code complexity	high frequency vocabulary ; short and simple sentences	low frequency vocabulary ; complex sentence structure
3. Cognitive complexity		
a. information type	static → dynamic	→ abstract
b. amount of information	few elements relationships	many elements relationships

c. degree of structure	well-defined structure	little structure (1)
d. context dependency	here-and-now orientation	there-and-then orientation
4. Familiarity of information	familiar	unfamiliar (2)
B. Conditions		
1. Interactant relationship (negotiation of meaning)	two-way	one-way
2. Task demands	single task	dual-task
3. Discourse mode required to perform the task	dialogic (3)	monologic
C. Processes		
1. Cognitive operations :		
a. type		
b. reasoning need	exchanging information reasoning (4)	→ exchanging opinions
	few steps involved	many steps involved (5)
D. Outcomes		
1. Medium (6)	pictorial	→ written → oral
2. Scope	closed? (e.g. information gap)	open? (e.g. opinion gap)
3. Discourse mode of task outcome (7)	lists, descriptions, → narratives, classifications	→ instructions, arguments

**Table 4 :** Criteria for grading tasks (Ellis, 2003 : 228)

In the case of (1) in the above table, little task structure appears to be cognitively more difficult, for learners cannot call on newly made schemata to help them organize their productions. When learners are unfamiliar with the task information as in (2), it also means they inherently suffer from communicative stress. According to Skehan (2001), tasks are easier when the discourse mode is dialogic, and they can promote greater accuracy and complexity, since they offer participants to scaffold each others' performance (3). On the other hand, monologic tasks can promote greater fluency. Information gap tasks put the easiest cognitive load among reasoning gap and opinion gap tasks, while the latter does the hardest (4). When many steps are involved in the cognitive reasoning, such as when the deduction, inference, or calculation are called for, tasks also get more difficult(5). As for the "medium" under the "outcomes" heading, Ellis proposes that simple comprehension tasks with the beginner learners seem sensible, for they cannot speak or write in the target language until they have developed their L2 competence(6). Lastly, task outcome will depend on the level of detail re-

quired in the product. For example, outcomes that involve high level of precision also require greater lexical and syntactical accuracy, making the task more complex(7). When we design and linearize our tasks, these criteria should provide us some insight.

Together with the task design, appropriate methodology enables task-based learning more effective. There is now clear evidence that the accuracy can be influenced by form-focused instruction with which learners use targeted features, even in unplanned language use (Ellis 2003). As Long also argues, task-based teaching needs to attend to form. With tasks, learners primarily focus on meaning but they should also pay incidental attention to form while planning utterances. Ellis proposes his modular approach based on this notion (2003). It does not attempt to integrate content and form, but its syllabus consists of two separate modules—a communicative module which consists of linguistically unfocused tasks, and a code-based module that is based on the checklist of linguistic features that are potentially difficult to learn. He suggests that the beginning stages of the course be entirely communicative for the opportunities to develop fluency, accuracy, and complexity with message-centered activities. When learners have acquired some communicative ability and when they run the risk of fossilizing, they should start focusing on form and let the code-based module serve for remedial purposes. While his proposal appears to be efficient for upper-beginners or higher, it seems even better if the students at the beginner's level (who have little basic linguistic knowledge) are engaged in the two completely separate courses of communicative tasks, and code-based activities. Two courses of this sort complement each other, and as a result, even learners who are not accustomed to the communicative activities can make the most of communicative tasks per se. However, learners may need to focus on form to activate their explicit knowledge even in the communicative task course once in a while.

Although pre-task and post-task phases are optional, I propose learners be well informed of their learning goals in the pre-task phase. They need to know that tasks are not just for fun. In this stage, we might decide whether we allow learners the strategic planning or not. We might also need to set a time limit if we want to encourage accuracy, fluency, or complexity. We might either ask them to perform a similar task or simply provide a model. As Ellis says, we can also activate learners' content schemata to reduce the cognitive or linguistic demands placed on them without preparing for the tasks. In the case of during-task phase, online planning which assists both accuracy and complexity while inhibiting fluency, does not have to be manipulated at the beginning stages. Only after learners get fully accustomed to the communicative activities, can we encourage them to use some of the implicit and explicit techniques for focusing form during a task. It is most important for us to note

that learners' use of these techniques must not detract from the primary focus on message. In terms of the implicit technique, learners can use the interactional device such as request for clarification and recast, i.e., a task participant rephrases part of the whole of another participant's utterance. Learners can also use the explicit techniques, for example, explicit correction, metalingual comment/question, query, and advice. In the post-task phase, learners should reflect on the task by making reports on how they did the task and what they discovered as Willis (1996) recommends. We might also ask them to work on the written report as an assignment. Although Ellis suggests the activity that learners can repeat performance on the tasks in this phase, I would prefer their task repeated some other day in order to see if the task effect persists for a while. In addition, if students focus on form in the post-task phase when needed, and not in the during-task phase, the effect of communicative tasks is still kept intact.

Participatory structure of tasks can manipulate various discourse modes ; monologue, dialogue, and multilogue. Individual speech task which produces monologue can be intrinsically motivating. It can also help foster independence and autonomy, whilst its disadvantage is that learners will not have collaborative work on tasks, which fails to enhance their strategic competence. Working on tasks in pairs and groups which produce dialogue/ multilogue also has potential advantages. Ellis (2003) states that learners can perform a wide range of roles so that the variety of speech acts will increase as well. They learn how to work together with others, and social integration increases and so do their motivation and enjoyment. When learners are willing to take risks and can scaffold each other's efforts, learning is enhanced by group work. On the other hand, Japanese learners may tend to favor traditional, teacher-centered practice where teacher does most of the speaking over communicative, learner-centered activities. Moreover, many of them are familiar with the activities in a whole-class context. In order to overcome this disadvantage, learners need to be convinced that the task is worthwhile, and that each student needs to be made accountable for his/her own contribution to their completion of the task. Teachers might need to provide training in the strategies needed for them to be engaged in effective collaboration. Ellis mentions group permanence and cohesion as well ; if groups are constantly changing, students will not have the opportunity to develop the positive interdependence.

### 3.1.3. Summary

In short, task-based learning can manipulate various facets of the students' speaking ability. It is important to design tasks based on students' learning goals and sequence them

by consulting the task difficulty. With the choice of suitable methodology, task-based learning will be practiced efficiently. I venture to insist that tasks be activated mainly communicatively with little attention to form especially in the during-task phase. Japanese students need much more opportunities to get involved in the communicative activities that often prompt their spontaneous speech instead of the conventional carefully-planned-speech.

### 3.2. Form-focused activities for the development of rule-based system

While task-based learning provides learners with the communicative environment, they also need many form-focused activities in parallel with communicative tasks. This notion is based on the research findings that content-based courses, such as the immersion program, which are premised on the assumption that learners will best learn language while they are engaged in learning subject content, do not result in learners' achieving high levels of grammatical and socio-linguistic accuracy. In addition, form-focused activities are also supported by Ellis' notion of code-based module mentioned in the previous section. Moreover, our beginner's level students need to obtain some linguistic knowledge to work communicatively to begin with.

Grammar components can not possibly be sequenced, for learners appear not to acquire them until they are ready. Therefore, a list of linguistic components without acquisitional sequence avails the syllabus. Grading the difficulties of target grammatical structures based on certain criteria can aid our linear syllabus to be more systematic. Ellis (2003) summarizes such criteria with some concrete examples :

Criteria	Definition	Example
1. Formal complexity	The extent to which the structure involves just a single or many elements	Plural-s is formally simple ; relative pronouns are complex
2. Functional complexity	The extent to which meanings realized by a feature that are transparent or opaque	Plural-s is transparent ; articles are opaque
3. Reliability	The extent to which the rule has exceptions	Third person-s is very reliable ; the rule for periphrastic genitives have many exceptions.
4. Scope	The extent to which the rule has a broad or narrow coverage.	The present simple tense has broad scope ; the future perfect tense has narrow scope

5. Metalanguage	The extent to which the rule can be explained simply with minimum metalanguage	Plural-s is simple ; reflexive pronouns are more difficult to explain ; Subject-verb inversion is very difficult
-----------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**Table 5** : Criteria for determining the difficulty of grammatical structures as explicit knowledge (from Ellis 2002) (Ellis 2003 : 234)

The last criterion regarding L1/L2 contrast is omitted here, for Japanese and English share little similarities. While he recommends threading consciousness-raising tasks into the communicative tasks, I suggest that learners be engaged both in the form-focused traditional activities and form-focused tasks in this course. The most influential traditional approach is so called the PPP : presentation, practice, and production. Even when this approach is based on the communicative competence and functional grammar as observed in the case of the notional/functional approach, it is still essentially a linguistic syllabus, which still involves specifying the linguistic content to be taught. These linguistic syllabi are also external to the learner, for their grammatical sequences are different from learner's built-in syllabus for the language acquisition. These traditional approaches are still appealing for us because they lend themselves very neatly to accountability, since they generate tangible goals, precise syllabi, and a comfortably itemizable basis for the evaluation of effectiveness (Skehan 2001). On the other hand, many authors have collected and designed form-focused activities including information-gap, reasoning-gap, and opinion-gap tasks in addition to the activities with the traditional presentation-based approach. With these task variations in mind, form-focused course can play the transitional role in which learners are exposed to both traditional and task-based approaches.

Ellis' guidelines regarding the difficulty of grammatical structures as well as his general task framework and criteria for grading tasks cited previously can enable teachers to create a list for form-focused tasks and activities. For example, a picture description task with the use of "There is/ are ..." form might be one of the first activities. Picture description is fairly easy to process in terms of the input as well as conditional, procedural, and outcome load ; it is pictorial, has well-defined structure and here-and-now orientation, its information type is static, and its discourse mode is descriptions. Furthermore, the form of "There is/are..." is also functionally transparent. It has relatively narrow scope and requires simple metalanguage. Its form is simple and its rule is reliable. On the contrary, modals might be introduced at the latter stage, with the use of "desert island equipment" task. Learners are supposed to

use “can, could, may, might” to express possibilities. They are told to be stranded on a desert island. In turn, each student picks up a picture from the pile of items, and explains how he or she can/may/might/could use whatever it depicts. These modal auxiliaries are functionally complex and their rules have many exceptions. They require difficult metalanguage and their scope is broad. Furthermore, it is the reasoning-gap activity whose cognitive complexity is very demanding ; its information type is abstract, its degree of structure is little, and it is there-and-then orientation. Thus, it is highly recommendatory to make a list of these grammatical items with the suitable activities including consciousness-raising activity and tasks graded by their difficulty.

Consciousness-raising tasks proposed by Ellis are designed to cater primarily to explicit learning, i.e., they are intended to develop awareness at the level of understanding rather than awareness at the level of noticing (1994). The desired outcome of a consciousness-raising task is awareness of how linguistic feature works. With this grammar-focused course that intends to provide the opportunities for the students to exploit the form-meaning relationships, their rule-based system will be enhanced as well.

In addition, when we define ourselves as global educators rather than mere English teachers, form-focused learning should be incorporated into the global education. Its lesson plan would have both language learning goal and global education goal. The example lesson plan of Cates (2004) is something as follows. Practicing the present perfect, “Have you ever ...?”, is the language learning goal whereas raising awareness of environmental problems is the global education goal. We might show the class pictures of environmental problems and ask a present perfect question, for example, “Have you ever seen a dead tree?”. Then we might put the class into groups and have them do a group survey concerning environmental action by asking each other using a present perfect question such as “Have you ever used something that was recycled?” Thus, not only communicative tasks but also form-focused teaching can be invented to meet the varied teachers’ philosophies as well as learners’ needs with consulting their proficiency level of English.

In short, learners can hypothetically test their rule-based system which has presumably developed through the form-focused activities in the previously proposed communicative task course. Besides working supplementary for this task course, the course of form-focused activities can be processed with both traditional and task-based approaches, and be also devised to match the varied teachers’ philosophies.

### 3.3. Listening activities for more input and exemplar-based knowledge

Skehan (2001) proposes what learners say, i.e., their representations function by means of a dual-mode system consisting of rules and exemplars. In the case of rule-based systems, the assumption is that what is learned consists of underlying rules which have been induced from the stimulus material, ultimately becoming the basis for generalization and transfer. With the latter system of exemplars, or accumulations of large numbers of formulaic items, learning is interpreted as the accumulation of chunks. To illustrate this latter view, he cites Bolinger's approach (1975) to language and performance which suggests that much of language use be repetitive, and not particularly creative. Thus, it is being proposed that much of language production is based on a redundantly organized memory system, and the speakers frequently avoid having to engage in the rule-based processing, through the use of memorized chunks of language. Moreover, how these two systems exist, or rather coexist, depends on a range of factors including context of learning, nature of instruction, and individual differences such as language aptitude. Skehan attempted to update the concept of aptitude having three components; phonemic coding ability, language analytic ability, and memory. They are based on stages of information processing that consists of input, central processing, and memory/output. The aptitude evidence shows that the nature of a talent for learning second (foreign) languages can be analyzed into these three components of information processing. According to his investigation, central processing seems to share the most with the processing of general learning, while input and memory/output appear to be qualitatively different from those of general learning ability. In other words, input as well as memory/output are language specific and need treating as such in the classroom. In addition, exceptionally successful foreign language learners as well as very weak foreign language learners provided implicitly positive evidence for the significance of developing memories and input skills. The former learners seem to possess unusual memory abilities, particularly for the retention of verbal material, and this is also testified in the field of neuro-science and neuro-linguistics (Pinker 1995). This observation concerns not only the way how new information is stored redundantly or formulaically, but also the retrieval of these memories. It should be also noted that there has been argument that language itself is more memory-based than was previously appreciated, which is confirmed by more recent studies of corpus linguistics. Furthermore, it is argued that language performance is also heavily memory and accessibility dependant with pressures of real time communication (Skehan 2001). Rule-based coding is creative and flexible (therefore, the proposed form-focused course should serve the development of the learners' coding skill), but slower because of the overhead processing. On the other hand, the memory-based coding which relies on chunks is less flexible, but fast and



convenient due to its basis on easy-to-assemble units of native-like selection with native-like fluency. The claims can be interpreted to the effect that learners need to be exposed to a lot of redundant input where they can perceive and practice these useful chunks in order to improve their memory-based coding resulting from the redundant storage. So far, our emphasis has been primarily on activating learners' rule-based coding in Japan. My third proposition is to establish the listening course with the preparation for the memory-based coding and for more input, and its methodologies will be discussed shortly.

Skehan (2001) quoted the research evidence that up to 30 percent of unsuccessful learners have inferior auditory abilities, which prevented them from exploiting their cognitive and aptitudinal potential. Phonemic coding ability is important in processing input, handling the segmentation problem, and coping with auditory material in real-time. He asserts that this is important at the outset of language learning, because such learners should not fail to convert acoustic input into processable input. In this way, they need to keep their comprehensible input for their subsequent stages of information processing. Furthermore, "the more phonemic coding abilities succeed with the acoustic stimulus that the learner is presented with, the richer the corpus of material that will be available for subsequent analysis" (Skehan 2001).

The listening course for the speaking ability has to focus two aspects; prosody and English structure (syntax with semantics and pragmatics). Japanese word order is quite different from that of English, and the significance of prosody is not sufficiently introduced to Japanese students. We have to let them realize that the application of certain rules of prosody to the listening activities facilitates their phonemic coding. Moreover, they need to have the phonemic coding ability which enables them to constitute sound-symbol associations in such a way that they could be retained for more than a few seconds. Thus, listening course is necessary for those of beginner's level to develop phonemic coding ability and this should also help learners to consolidate sound-symbol associations. Furthermore, this course is of great advantage even for the advanced-level students, since memory-based coding stimulated by lots of input will encourage them to use native-like selection and acquire native-like fluency. The production course with communicative tasks alone is not sufficient to provide redundant input for the development of memory-based coding.

One of the possible methodologies for listening course is to start with the application practice of prosodic knowledge, followed by read-interpret-memorize practice proposed by Uzawa (2003), along with the possible use of Shadowing. While Uzawa uses the short graded stories and their tapes as the sources of her learners' visual/audio texts, some authentic T.V.

programs or movies with their written transcripts appear to be preferable for the college students at the latter stage. Their intrinsic motivation will be boosted if they are convinced that they are learning English exactly for the practical use in the real-world, and not for the sake of classroom learning per se. Unfortunately, many college students stop studying English when they roughly grasp the basic knowledge of English at the time of their graduation, and before they are assured they are capable of using English in real-life situation. In order to fill the gap between the knowledge and the use of English, my proposal is to use some authentic English which interests learners and serves their needs so that they can perceive and learn how English is used outside of the classroom. Needless to say, it is feasible for us to start with some easier, well structured written texts with their accessible rate of audio texts until learners get the idea of basic phonemic coding strategies such as the use of the prosody rules and learning strategies including Shadowing and the fore-mentioned Uzawa method. However, authentic materials such as transcriptions of the movies and the media English provide learners with the abundant of the chunk phrases. With Shadowing and Uzawa method, learners should take in more exemplar-based chunks. Then they should be strongly encouraged to test their learned chunks in the task-based and form-focused production courses.

As Shadowing, Uzawa method has also succeeded in facilitating learners' acquisition of English structure. In her methodology, students are supposed to listen to the audio text at home before the class. In the classroom, they read aloud with the audio text with the help of the written text. Teachers help and monitor them. The next stage overlaps with part of my Shadowing process : learners are forced to translate the text in the English word order. To illustrate, the phrase "They knew what had been in the big box he had given them." (Uzawa 2003) should be interpreted based on the English structure so that the cumulative interpretation such as "They knew" at the first stage, and "They knew what" at the second stage, and "They knew what had been (in)" at the third stage are required until the whole sentence is processed. What counts most here is not to translate English into Japanese but to understand the English structure with the help of Japanese. The next stage is the 3-3-1 memorization (Uzawa 2003). This is composed of three sub-stages. First, students read the text aloud for three times with the intention of capturing the structure and their meaning intensively. Second, they repeat after a teacher with the help of the written Japanese interpretation that is in the English word order without English text for three times. Third, they are allowed to look at the English text while they read it aloud one more time. Next, they are encouraged to memorize its English sentence while only attending to written Japanese inter-

pretation. Her advice is not to force adult students to memorize completely, for their old habit of using Japanese translation would bounce back instead of activating the knowledge of English structure. This is exactly what happened to a few students of mine who were not yet familiar with English structure at the last stage of the shadowing. This tells us that we might follow 3-3-1 strategies by letting them develop their understanding of English structure without coercing perfect memorization. It should not be until they are used to the English structure that they set out to attempting for the perfect memorization. At the last stage, learners might play roles of certain characters of the texts (or participants of the conversational texts). Thus, they have the opportunities to produce what they have memorized by way of activating their knowledge of English structure.

In addition, Japanese translations of memory-based exemplars covered in the lesson might be written on the flash cards. I would quickly show them to the students one by one and have them produce their English representation which should correspond to each card on the spur of the moment.

With these methodologies, learners are exposed to more of the memory-based exemplars, which will facilitate the development of their speaking ability. They will make the most of the listening course of this sort, which will eventually boost the effect of task-based and form-focused courses as well.

#### 3.4. Speech acts course

In order to develop speaking ability, learners also need to have some degree of communicative competence, the ability to create coherent text that is appropriate for a given situation within a social setting. Discourse analysis is a description of many subsystems that promote coherence and of the social constraints operating on those subsystems (Hatch 1994). Discourse analysis as well as research on cross-cultural communication derives from the study of system and ritual constraints; the former is the components required for all communication systems, while the latter are the social constraints that smooth social interaction. Both can be observed in the form of channel open/close signals, back channel signals, turn-over signals, bracket signals, and non-participant constraints among others. In other words, learners need to know all this information so that they can be competent interactants without face-threatening acts, since many learners fail to appreciate the nuances of understated expressives such as their pragmatic meaning in English language groups.

Speech act analysis with the study of speech events provides some of this important knowledge. Compliments, thanks, requests, refusals, apologies, and complaints are among the

well studied speech acts. Learners might use consciousness-raising activity to notice these rules with the form-function knowledge of these speech acts. Some visual texts including the scenes of the authentic interaction on T.V. programs might also be utilized. Learners might follow Uzawa's 3-3-1 method after the consciousness-raising activities. In addition, they may need to recognize the difference between written and spoken English so that they can have better understanding as to what the appropriate speaking ability is. For instance, where they project appropriate demeanor and deference, disfluencies are preferable in oral conversation while it is unacceptable in written discourse.

In summary, speech acts course should provide opportunities for the learners to attempt to become socially functional interactants.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The aim of this paper is to find out what constitutes speaking ability by examining various theories and primarily to propose four courses. Learners need to take the courses for both specific and general purposes, and the suggested four courses are the major components for the EGP curriculum. Task-based learning course is based on a variety of theories that facilitate the development of speaking ability, which is my main argument in this paper. The three other courses are also prerequisites, since they magnify the effect of task-based course. Form-focused course is extremely helpful for the beginner's level students who need to build their rule-based knowledge. Listening course is grounded on the theory that learners need to work on the phonemic coding and memory-based exemplars. Speech acts course is intended to provide some pragmatic knowledge with their representatives to aid learners to become socially functional interactants.

While many instructors are sometimes compelled to focus on the partial component of speaking skills due to the time constraint in part, learners need to have the opportunities to work on all facets of them. Although some of my suggested methodologies are primarily theory-based without ample research evidence, I would venture to conclude that four courses in the EGP with ESP curriculum will implement the teaching of speaking ability as a whole. Some activities for the use of English as opposed to those for the knowledge about English have been introduced in the attempt of putting theories into practice, and they are quite likely to be beneficial for the learners to develop their speaking ability.

## References

- Barduhn, S. (2004). Developing cross-cultural awareness in the monolingual classroom. *The Language Teacher*. 28, 13–15.
- Bolinger, D. (1975). Meaning and memory. *Forum Linguisticum*. 1, 2–14.
- Cates, K. (2004). Becoming a global teacher : Ten steps to an international classroom. *The Language Teacher*. 28, 31–35.
- Cohen, A.O., Ishihara, N., and Rottinghaus, A. (2003). *Speech Act Bibliography*. (Online). [URL [www.carla.umn.edu/speechacts/bibliography/index.html](http://www.carla.umn.edu/speechacts/bibliography/index.html)].
- Cooker, L. and Torpey, M.(2004).From the classroom to the self-access center : A chronicle of learner centered curriculum development. *The Language Teacher*. 28, 11–16.
- Cutting, M. (2004). Making the transition to effective self-access listening. *The Language Teacher*. 28, 21–24.
- Decker, M. A. (2004). Incorporating guided self-study listening into the language curriculum. *The Language Teacher*. 28, 5–9.
- Dellar, H. (2004). Grammar is dead! Long live grammar! *The Language Teacher*. 28, 29–31.
- Ellis, R. (1994). *The study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford : Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based Language Learning and Teaching*. Oxford : Oxford University Press.
- Falout, J. and Maruyama, M. (2004). A comparative study of proficiency and learner motivation. *The Language Teacher*. 28, 3–9.
- Gass, S. (1988). Integrating research areas : a framework for second language studies. *Applied Linguistics*. 9, 198–217.
- Hadfield, J. (1995). *Intermediate Communication Games*. London : An International Thomson Publishing Company.
- Harmer, J. (2004). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Malaysia : Longman.
- Hatch, E. (1994). *Discourse and Language Education*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.
- Krashen, S. (2004). Why support a delayed-gratification approach to language education? *The Language Teacher*. 28, 3–7.
- McCarthy, M. (2004). Lessons from the analysis of chunks. *The Language Teacher*. 28, 9–12.
- Nunan, D. (2004). *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.
- Pinker, S. (1995). *The Language Instinct*. London : Penguin.
- Richards, J.C. (1992). *The Language Teaching Matrix*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.
- Sakai, K. (2002). *Gengo no nokagaku*. Tokyo : Chuokoron-shinsho.
- Schmidt, R. (2004). Multiple intelligences and lifelong language learning. *The Language Teacher*. 28, 19–23.
- Skehan, P. (2001). *A Cognitive Approach to Language Learning*. Oxford : Oxford University Press.
- Tui, A. B. M. (1995). *English Conversation*. Oxford : Oxford University Press.
- Ur, P. (2003). *Grammar Practice Activities*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.

Prerequisite EGP plus ESP Courses for Speaking Ability

Uzawa, T. (2003). *Hutsuno kodomo ga hutsu ni yatte Bilingual ni naru sekaihatsu no eigo shutoku ho*. Tokyo : Asuka Shuppan-sha.

Viney, P. (2004). It all depends... Directness and being fuzzy. *The Language Teacher*. 28, 31–35.

Weisler, S. E. and Milekic, S. (2000). *Theory of Language*. Massachusetts : The MIT Press.