

大学EFL学生を対象としたタスクベースの学生指向教科書の設計*

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Designing a Task-based Student-oriented Textbook for University EFL Students

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1. Introduction

The author seeking to find a textbook with material that Nagasaki Wesleyan University students can relate to, designed the textbook *English Conversation: English Conversation Textbook for Nagasaki Wesleyan University EFL Students*. This textbook, published through CS Press® offers a student-oriented task-based approach to English language instruction that enables students to visualize English language usages through local-based dialogs. Open-ended conversation questions at the end of each unit bridges the ability gap between students of various English language proficiency by allowing students to respond based on their ability and to challenge their language skills for personal improvement. Reflective questions also promote higher-level comprehension skills as formulating responses also challenges one's creativity and expression.

In order to make the content affordable for students, the author has opted to make prints of the lesson units as well as designed a workbook to help with confirming student learning and to provide a source for assessments. This textbook was written specifically for university EFL students. The term EFL refers to English-as-a-foreign-language, which is the study of the English language in a non-English speaking environment to aid or supplement communication. The purpose and use of English as a target language is inherently different between ESL and EFL education since the criteria and

purpose is environmentally determined. ESL education implies bilingual and English-as-a-second-language education. ESL specifically refers to English language education in an English speaking environment, where the speaker uses English for daily communication while maintaining the speaker's mother language. ESL contrasts EFL education in both purpose and instruction.

In the United States, the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) was founded in 1976 to advocate ESL or bilingual education. NABE supports *multiculturalism*, which is the preservation of cultures or cultural identities within a unified society and *bilingual education* defined as a two-way or dual language education designed to help native and non-native English speakers become bilingual and biliterate (NABE, 2018). The author followed many of the standards supported by NABE in his design of *English Conversation: English Conversation Textbook for Nagasaki Wesleyan University EFL Students*. Specifically, the lack of Japanese translations for dialogs and tasks is representative of this philosophy as students are required to think in English to respond to the tasks. Understanding the meaning of questions is a deliberate part of the task. Students must search the meaning to words and expressions instead of relying on translations. Learn-English-in-English or 英語で英語を勉強する approach further enables the student to visualize the practical application of the language.

2. Textbook Content Overview

The textbook *English Conversation: English Conversation Textbook for Nagasaki Wesleyan*

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University EFL Students was written specifically for the English courses at Nagasaki Wesleyan University. This textbook is an intermediate conversational English text designed for EFL students. This text represents a practical approach to English language conversation study. The thirty lesson units contained in this text cover around 70-90 hours of teaching and learning activities. The text is designed to be used in a year-long course divided into two semesters. However, facilitators

may also opt to use either of the two fifteen lesson units for a single semester course. The author selected topics that are easily discussed by the students such as sports, family, hobbies, and shopping. Unit topics were also selected for their practicality including units on public transportation, telephone dialogs, and employment. Titles of the thirty lesson units as contained in the table of contents of the textbook are in the following table for reference.

Table 1. Lesson Units for *English Conversation: English Conversation Textbook for Nagasaki Wesleyan University EFL Students* as taken from the Table of Contents

<u>ENGLISH CONVERSATION (Part 1)</u>	<u>ENGLISH CONVERSATION (Part 2)</u>
Unit 1: Getting to Know You	Unit 1: Introductions
Unit 2: University Life	Unit 2: Meeting People
Unit 3: Family	Unit 3: Attending a Party
Unit 4: Hobbies and Pastimes	Unit 4: Eating at Home
Unit 5: Habits	Unit 5: Friends
Unit 6: Childhood Memories	Unit 6: Special Occasions
Unit 7: Food and Dining Out	Unit 7: Time
Unit 8: TV and Film	Unit 8: Sports
Unit 9: Shopping	Unit 9: Health
Unit 10: Home and Neighborhood	Unit 10: Clothing and Fashion
Unit 11: Music	Unit 11: Travel
Unit 12: Directions	Unit 12: Taking the Train
Unit 13: Telephone	Unit 13: Language Study
Unit 14: Money	Unit 14: Animals
Unit 15: The World of Work	Unit 15: Nature

[Source: author]

Each unit of this textbook is organized into four sections: Dialogue, Drill, Conversation Questions, and Writing. This division makes the textbook comprehensive for both the facilitator as well as the students. The dialogue for each unit is followed by a box denoting key expressions and vocabulary. This was intended by the author to provide the student a focal point of study and the facilitator material to base his or her course assessment. The Dialogue units begin with a conversation between two or more people that is related to the theme of each unit. The purpose of this section is to introduce the theme, give students the opportunity to practice their listening

comprehension skills, and build students' vocabulary. Key expressions are explained in the vocabulary box found with each dialog.

Drills follow the dialogue sections. Students will listen to and repeat useful phrases related to the unit's theme. The substitution drills are a helpful way to improve the student's pronunciation and promote vocabulary retention. *English Conversation: English Conversation Textbook for Nagasaki Wesleyan University EFL Students* fosters the development of English language skills through the established components of Tasked-Based Language Learning (TBLL) (Willis, 1996). Moreover, the characteristics of the learning tasks presented

in this textbook appropriately match task criteria defined by Ellis (2003). The dialogs are based on practical conversations. This gives learners a *feel* for English by exposing them to the language as it is actually spoken. The dialogs are based on actual English conversations between English speakers and contain colloquial conversational English expressions as well as vocal crutches and other elements found in casual conversation. The English in the dialogs is also natural-sounding in that it is laced with occasional humor and sarcasm.

According to Ellis (2003), tasks are defined as activities that learners carry out in order to draw together and further develop their knowledge and skills. Tasks are characterized by an emphasis on participation and communication among participants through a variety of modes and media. The task-based approach to language study promoted by this textbook is a student-oriented approach for language learning, which is defined as a process of study rather than a strict focus on an anticipated result. Creativity and individual thought are nurtured through the task-based approach presented by the author.

The structure of each chapter provides a clear plan of how lessons are to be conducted. This textbook acts as a specific reference point for the individual learning process and works well as a tool to track the individual development of students' language skills. The text does not require lengthy preparation or effort in learning the material presented in each unit making it user-friendly for instructors to easily adapt to.

To encourage communicative competence, students using *English Conversation: English Conversation Textbook for Nagasaki Wesleyan University EFL Students* are exposed to different linguistic situations and tasks to which they must respond creatively. The text begins with an explanation of the units and tactful advice on language study throughout. The goal-oriented tasks integrated into each unit helps the students visualize the purpose of their study. The final portion of the text is composed

of supplemental units to provide students with further study.

Conversation questions are a key component of this text. Twenty-five questions per unit are provided for discussion. This usually translates into twenty to forty minutes of discussion time per class, depending on students' English proficiency. Open-ended conversation questions at the end of each unit were written to bridge the ability gap between students of various English language ability by allow students to respond based on their ability. Students are encouraged to challenge their language skills for personal improvement. Moreover, reflective questions also promote higher-level comprehension skills as the response also challenges one's creativity and expression.

The writing sections gives students time to improve their composition skills as well as provides the instructor a source for making assessments of the students' academic performance and comprehension. Students are familiar with the streetcar system in Nagasaki and giving directions for transferring and describing 乗り継ぎ券 *noritsugiken* in English as a "transfer ticket" is practical and relatable for the students. Moreover, the situation of a stranger asking for directions to "Glover Garden" is something that students may encounter which further enforces the practical purpose for learning English. Dialogs are based on authentic English conversations including vocal crutches such as *uh, oh, so, well*, etc. and colloquial expressions as found in conversations between native speakers of English. Moreover, the relaxed expressions *yeah, yup, uh-huh* are used instead of "yes" and *nah, hope, uh-uh* are used for "no" as most native speakers would use these expressions in casual conversations. The following sample dialog taken from Unit 12 on "Public Transportation" from the textbook illustrates the author's use of regional examples and natural English conversation dialogues:

Table 2. [English Conversation: English Conversation Textbook for Nagasaki Wesleyan University EFL Students, page 59.]

Unit 12: Public Transportation

Dialogue 1: A tourist asks a stranger for directions.

John : How can I get to Glover Garden from here?

Stranger: Take the number 1 street car and change at Tsukimachi to the number 5 street car and get off at Oura Tenshudo Shita.

John : How many stations is it from here?

Stranger: Uh, I'm not sure, but you will know when you are at Tsukimachi. Listen carefully for the announcement.

John : How much does it cost to take the street car?

Stranger: Adults cost 120 yen.

John : So, it will be about 240 yen in total.

Stranger: Oh, you don't have to pay to take the train from Tsukimachi—just ask the driver for a “noritsugi-ken” when you get off the train.

John : What is a “noritsugi-ken”?

Stranger: It is a ticket you can use to continue riding the street car after making a transfer.

John : Thank you for your help.

Stranger: Not at all. Have a good time at Glover Garden.

John : Thank you.

Vocabulary / Expressions: *Not at all*=You are welcome./Don't mention it.

Drill: *Read and practice the following:*

Q: How can I get to ____ from here?

A: Take the number ____ (train/bus/street car) at ____ and change to the ____ line at ____ . It's the ____ station from here.

Writing: *Refer to the dialog and answer the following questions with complete sentences.*

- ① What street car does John have to take first?
- ② Where does John want to go?
- ③ At what station does John have to change street cars?
- ④ How would you describe “noritsugi-ken” in English?
- ⑤ How much will it cost John to take the street car?

[Source: author]

Conversation questions in the textbook were designed to provide reflection and introspection for the students. The author utilized local examples of geographic locations as well as topics about the university life at Nagasaki Wesleyan University for the students to relate

to the content of the dialogs and to visualize the practical applications of the English language. The following conversation questions were taken from the second unit of the textbook discussing university life:

Table 3. [English Conversation: English Conversation Textbook for Nagasaki Wesleyan University EFL Students, page 8.]

Unit 2: University Life

Conversation Questions: *In pairs or groups ask and answer the following questions.*

1. Why did you choose to attend Nagasaki Wesleyan University?
2. Do you think getting your degree will help you get a job?
3. Do you think you will go to graduate school? Why or why not?
4. Do you prefer art subjects or science subjects? Why?
5. If you could attend any university in the world, which university would you choose?
6. Do you think you study enough? How many hours do you study every day?
7. What kind of homework assignments do you really dislike?
8. Do you belong to any clubs?
9. Would you ever consider a part-time or summer job to help pay for your tuition?
10. Do your parents pay for all of your tuition?
11. Do you have a student loan to pay for tuition?
12. How do you travel to Nagasaki Wesleyan University?
13. How far away do you live?
14. Do you think students drink too much these days?
15. Do you think many students cheat on exams? Have you ever cheated on a test or exam?
16. What kinds of professors do you like or dislike?
17. What do you think of the cafeteria food at your university?
18. Where do you usually go for lunch?
19. Do you think tuition is expensive these days?
20. Do you spend much time in the library?
21. Do you think your grades will be good this year?
22. What do you think of the university entrance exam system?
23. Are you satisfied with the facilities and classes at Nagasaki Wesleyan University?
24. What is the best part of your university life?
25. Where is your favorite place to hang out on campus?

[Source: author]

Supplemental material at the end of the textbook includes additional questions for study. Such conversation questions provide students an opportunity to expand on their language and expression skills. Students are encouraged to get into groups of two or more and practice asking and answering questions in turn. Students should try to use complete sentences and challenge themselves to speak as much as possible. For example, when students answer “Do you like~?” questions, they should be descriptive in the answers by explaining

their opinions “yes, because...” or “no, because...” Facilitators of this textbook should instruct the conversation with their modeled answers while helping the students have confidence to speak.

Students are also challenged with reverse thinking by creating questions to match given responses in the supplemental question units. Higher-level cognitive reasoning and expression is supported in the supplemental units on advantages and disadvantages as well as student debate on the topic “agree or disagree”.

Students are also tasked with responding to *wh-* questions (*what, when, where, why, which, and how*), with extra patterns on “how” questions since the vocabulary after the word “how” is what determines the question as in *how far, how many, how much, how old, how long*, etc. Students

are challenged to create both responses to and reverse-thinking questions for set responses as demonstrated in the following example from Where question portion of the supplementary part of the textbook:

Table 4. [English Conversation: English Conversation Textbook for Nagasaki Wesleyan University EFL Students, page 93.]

“Where” Questions

Answer the following “Where” questions:

1. Where do you live now?
2. Where were you born? Describe what your hometown is like.
3. Where do you usually go on Sunday?
4. Where do you want to go on your honeymoon? Why?
5. Where did you go on your last vacation?
6. Where are you planning to go for your next summer vacation?
7. Where do you want to live after you retire? Why?
8. Where are you going after this class?
9. Where do you hope to work?
10. Where are your parents from?

For each of the following answers, make a question starting with “Where”:

1. I’m from Saga.
2. I am going to go to the Fukuoka this summer.
3. I was in Osaka yesterday.
4. You can buy clothes cheaply at Tosu Outlet Store.
5. We can meet in some downtown coffee shop.
6. My parents live on Goto Island.
7. My father was born in Chicago, but he grew up in Moscow.
8. I left my purse on the bus.
9. I would like to live in Okinawa after retiring.
10. I study at Nagasaki Wesleyan University.

[Source: author]

Pronunciation drills are also included for extra study. English sounds that are often difficult for Japanese EFL learners to pronounce include: *L, R, F, V, Th, Wh, S* and *Sh*. As the facilitator models these sounds of similar sounding words provided in the textbook, students should listen carefully to

learn the correct pronunciation. The following excerpt from the textbook references the “L” and “R” pronunciation tasks—note the placement of the similar sounding consonants at the beginning, middle, and end of vocabulary in the samples help provides perspective and practice for the students:

Table 5. [English Conversation: English Conversation Textbook for Nagasaki Wesleyan University EFL Students, page 98.]

<u>l</u> and <u>r</u>		<u>l</u> and <u>r</u> (combined consonants)		<u>l</u> and <u>r</u> (together)
<u>l</u> ed	<u>r</u> ed	<u>g</u> low	<u>g</u> row	<u>g</u> irl
<u>l</u> ack	<u>r</u> ack	<u>p</u> lay	<u>p</u> ray	<u>t</u> wirl
<u>l</u> ight	<u>r</u> ight	<u>f</u> ly	<u>f</u> ry	<u>p</u> earl
<u>l</u> ow	<u>r</u> ow	<u>b</u> lush	<u>b</u> rush	<u>w</u> orld
<u>l</u> iver	<u>r</u> iver	<u>g</u> lass	<u>g</u> lass	
<u>c</u> ollect	<u>c</u> orrect			
<u>c</u> all	<u>c</u> ar			
<u>b</u> all	<u>b</u> ar			

[Source: author]

3. Textbook Development Philosophy

This text was written for several reasons. The primary reason is to have lesson material accessible to the students and to save both students and the university by providing an economically feasible source of material for study. The local examples provided in this textbook are easy for students to relate with and foster greater interest in study since the students can relate to the dialogs and conversation questions presented. The auxiliary reason for this text is that most intermediate and advanced EFL texts emphasize grammar at the expense of communication and expression skills. Japanese students need to focus on applying the English language learned throughout their education in order to have the necessary oral language communication skills to converse and express themselves. There are multiple learning theories used in classroom instruction; however, this text supports a student-oriented task-based learning strategy of having the students apply and utilize the language they have studied over learning new concepts.

Task-based language learning has its origins in communicative language teaching, and is a subcategory of it (Leaver & Willis, 2004). Educators adopted task-based language

learning for a variety of reasons. Some moved to task-based syllabus in an attempt to make language in the classroom truly communicative, rather than the pseudo-communication that results from classroom activities with no direct connection to real-life situations. According to Jon Larsson (2001), one of the main virtues of task-based instruction is that it displays a significant advantage over traditional methods in how the communicative skills of the students are improved. The general ability of social interaction is also positively affected. These are, most will agree, two central factors in language learning. By building a language course around assignments that require students to act, interact and communicate it is hopefully possible to mimic some of the aspects of learning a language “on site” in a country where it is actually spoken. Seeing how learning a language in such an environment is generally much more effective than teaching the language exclusively as a foreign language, this is something that would hopefully be beneficial (Larsson, 2001).

The needs of Japanese speakers differ drastically from other EFL students. Unlike the case with many European languages, Japanese pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary are completely unrelated to English.

Therefore, the language learning problems Japanese speakers have are quite unique compared to speakers of other languages. Moreover, the average English teacher will find it difficult to get Japanese students to speak at length on discussion topics. Part of the problem is that the national characteristic of the Japanese people of being perfectionists—speak perfectly or not at all. This attitude toward language study creates an innate nervousness about making mistakes. With this in mind, Japanese students need to have their confidence fostered while provided language study material they find stimulating and relevant and which can sustain discussion over a reasonable period of time. Japanese students' greatest need of all is increased confidence. Although many Japanese have a firm foundation in English, they often underestimate their abilities and feel they are unable to improve their English fluency. However, with the right teaching materials and teaching methods such students can gain newfound confidence and reach new heights in English proficiency.

4. Conclusion:

English Conversation: English Conversation Textbook for Nagasaki Wesleyan University EFL Students has many unique features that will benefit both the teacher and the student. This text contains thirty units, all of which are thematically based. Rather than random topics or exercises that offer no relevant direction, students can systematically learn vocabulary and expressions associated with particular topics. Each unit is straightforward with no excessively complex exercises. The focus is on improving expression and communication skills. Conversation tasks contain no grammar exercises. Rather, students learn grammar intuitively by imbibing common sentence patterns from dialogs and conversation questions. Proper grammar is also learned indirectly through students speaking and writing original sentences and teachers checking for common errors and problems.

The purpose of this text as well as the

purpose of the English conversation classes at Nagasaki Wesleyan University is to promote English language oral communication skills. Rather than complete mastery of English pronunciation, grammar or vocabulary, the ultimate goal for students is communicative competence, or the ability to use English effectively and appropriately in a variety of situations. To encourage communicative competence as such, students using this text will be exposed to numerous linguistic situations and tasks that they must respond to creatively.

The role of the teacher of this text is that of a facilitator. Rather than simply lecturing students on grammar rules or writing sentences on the board for students to copy, the teacher must aim to stimulate interaction between class participants. This can involve question and answer exchanges between the instructor and students or pair work and group work. As Japanese students are particularly comfortable with pair and group work, it is recommended that the instructor devote adequate time for these types of activities. The instructor should act as a monitor and model dialogs as appropriate while answering questions from the students.

The students of this text are expected to be proactive in their EFL study. This is not always easy in a classroom setting, giving that Japanese are often passive learners accustomed to heavy doses of rote learning. Students should be informed clearly that being proactive involves commitment to attendance. Proactive learning requires that students ask instructors to explain the meaning of words or expressions, actively participate in class discussions, complete assignments, prepare for quizzes and examinations, attend all classes, keep motivated and maintain self-discipline. Although a skilled instructor can work wonders with an apathetic class, it is ultimately up to students themselves to take charge of their studies and improve their English. The author hopes this text provides both the student and the educator a positive and memorable learning

experience.

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