EFL Coursebook Adaptation Using Focused Tasks

Grant Agawa
Nagoya University of Commerce and Business

Kevin Watson
Nagoya University of Commerce and Business

Reference Data

Listening and reading strategy practice is widely accepted and applied in EFL coursebooks for the instruction and assessment of learner comprehension. However, Agawa (2011) points out that coursebook sessions of strategy practice are often sequentially clustered, leading to extended periods of input. When the content is lengthy, as in higher-level materials, there is the possibility of learner attention issues and lack of synthesis opportunities between input passes. Therefore, in this article, we suggest focused tasks that separate and complement reading and listening strategy practice sequences. In support of this concept, this paper introduces three learning theories: Learning styles, brain-based learning, and multiple intelligences. These learning theories are important considerations for instructors who endeavor to adapt clustered input-strategy-practice. Following the pedagogical explanation of these concepts, this article also includes practical examples of clustered input-strategy-practice adaptation from two selected EFL coursebooks.

　学習者理解の教育と評価のためリスニングとリーディング方略練習はＥＦＬ教科書に幅広く受入れられ、適用されている。しかしながらAgawa(2011)は、これらの学習項目はしばしば結果的に集中し、入力期間の長期化につながると指摘している。上級者用の教材において内容が長期にわたる場合、学習者の注意力の問題と入力速度による融合機会の欠如が見られる。その結果により、独立したリスニングとリーディング方略練習に集中した練習課題を補助的に別配列することを提案する。この発想の支持として、本論文では三つの学習理論である学習法、脳の構造に基づいた学習、多重知性を提示する。これら３つの理論は集中入力方略練習の導入を試みる指導者にとって重要な考察である。また本論文は選別されたＥＡＰ教科書における集中入力方略練習の導入事例を含む。

ESTABLISHED INSTRUCTIONAL practice of both ESL/EFL reading and listening within coursebooks often focuses on skills. Examples of listening skills include listening for the gist, specific details, and inference. In a similar way, reading skills include skimming, scanning, and reading for vocabulary identification, among others. VanPatten (1990) supports the separation of these skills into independent passes because learners can focus on different skills individually. His study confirms that using strategies concomitantly (i.e., listening for specific details and listening for inference) negatively affects students' cognitive abilities. However, a significant issue regarding these instructional practices is that they are often clustered within coursebook units (Agawa, 2011). Specifically, listening selections and reading passages are commonly repeated through consecutive exercises. In other words, students may consecu-

tively listen to a selection once for the main idea, listen to it again for specific details, and then listen to the same material a third time, practicing another listening skill. These clustered and sequential passes result in students listening or reading content for extended periods. We term this as *clustered input-strategy-practice*.

Between these clustered passes of input, there is little opportunity for student-to-student interaction for synthesis of content or meaningful Target Language (TL) production. In this article, we define this opportunity for deeper synthesis as an Interval for Cognitive Processing Variation (ICPV). In other words, learners are provided a pause in input. Specifically, during this pause, students receive a respite for certain cognitive processes via well-constructed language tasks. This may not be a serious issue for shorter listening selections and reading passages. Nor may it be problematic for material that is at or below the level of students. However, in this article, we discuss how extended periods of difficult material can affect learner attention by referring to related literature. The purpose of this article is to illustrate how teacher adaptation of language tasks between input passes provides opportunities for ICPV. Effective use of ICPV can lead to more meaningful and communicative TL production in class. This is not always easy to accomplish.

In this article, we first clarify the type of tasks that we envision. Second, we explain how that relates to learning as an experience-based process. Third, we identify three learning theories that support the approach of language tasks between sessions of clustered input-strategy-practice for coursebook adaptation: Brain-based learning, Learning Styles (LS), and Multiple Intelligences (MI). Last, we illustrate how to adapt a listening segment from *Business Venture 1* (Barnard & Cady, 2003) and a reading segment from *Hot Topics 1* (Pavlik, 2006) with language tasks. These adaptations support language tasks between clustered input-strategy-practice.

Language Tasks Between Clustered Input-Strategy-Practice

Clustered input-strategy-practice sessions create a need for effective and meaningful TL production. In between long periods of input, tasks give periods of processing time in terms of pacing effects. Relating this to the output hypothesis (Swain, 1985), learners will be provided with target language production via language tasks. The output hypothesis purports that learners need an opportunity to notice the gap between what they are able to produce and what they want to produce (Swain, 1985). For instance, noticing the gap may focus their attention to input in subsequent listening or reading input sessions. However, coursebooks which apply clustered input-strategy-practice do not take into account the need for students to notice such gaps. Therefore, the responsibility is on teachers to make appropriate pedagogical decisions. This leads to teachers providing effective tasks between clustered input-strategy-practice. Thus, in our context, the use of ICPV allows more possibilities for output during extended periods of input sessions. For example, these sessions may contain vocabulary or target grammar forms that learners wish to more accurately utilize. This could be to have students listen to a text (input) and then perform an interactive TL production task. This type of task allows greater processing of information. Students can then read the text (another round of the same input in a differentiated form). Subsequently, this reading can be followed by another language task. In turn, another session of reading or listening can be incorporated into the lesson procedure. This cyclic process of input and TL production tasks is one way to deal with clustered input-strategy-practice in certain general EFL coursebooks.

The Use of Focused Tasks

Researchers differentiate tasks in task-based-learning into subcategories (i.e., open tasks and closed tasks among others). This

article focuses particularly on Ellis's (2003) *focused tasks* amid the aforementioned multiple reading or listening input passes. Ellis (2003) specifies focused tasks using three main criteria: (a) including an interval for synthesis (processing variation), (b) requiring learners to focus predominantly on meaning and to make use of their interlanguage, and (c) having clearly established outcomes, which are discrete from the simple production (output) of the target language focus. Ellis (2003) explains that focused tasks trigger and encourage communicative L2 usage while concurrently concentrating on a target linguistic feature(s). Further, focused tasks allot time for individual or group synthesis, leading to deeper content internalization potential. In support of this, Kumar's (1991) meta-analysis of multiple studies shows a high association between student synthesis and concentration with tasks. Therefore, the appropriate placement of focused tasks spaces out input sessions with meaningful TL production opportunities for language learners. This allows students to experience the TL.

Experience-Based Learning

Viewing learning as an experience-based process is not a new concept, but is certainly relevant to our rationale of focused tasks as ICPV between multiple passes of the same input. According to Gregory (2006), "Experiential learning is a complex process involving theory and practice, action and reflection" (p. 118). Thus, well-planned tasks are a meaningful component of the experiential learning method. Focused tasks are one example of experience based-learning. This is because they involve interactive use of TL and utilize the target grammar form. According to Tosey (2006), "all kinds of tasks… can engage learners in hear-and-now experience that provides rich material for reflection" (p. 135). Following or between TL input, focused tasks provide concrete experiences and language internalization opportunities for students. For example, students are able to use both information and the target language form to complete tasks. This is particularly evident during pairwork text reconstruction (i.e., jigsaw), which stimulates greater synthesis for learners. This is significant during learner attempts to organize and structure knowledge gained through input. According to Dewey (1938), "we shape all knowledge by the way we know it" (p. 20), and this relates directly to how we experience learning opportunities such as focused tasks.

In the classroom, these opportunities are created, framed and implemented by the teacher. Jarvis, Holford, and Griffin (2003) consider learning to be distinctly unique to each individual, via Jarvis' experiential learning theory, which is an extension of Kolb's (1984) theory. In this theory, learners have opportunities to reflect, experiment and practice within daily learning episodes in the classroom. Focused tasks are only one example of experiential based learning opportunities that are available to the teacher. Specifically, they offer opportunities for reflection on content, allowing deeper levels of synthesis for learners between input-strategy-practice. Conceptualizing learning in this way leads us to identify three specific learner-centered theories, which are applicable to English language learning. They cooperatively support focused tasks between clustered input-strategy-practice.

These learning theories are the aforementioned brain-based-learning, Learning Styles, and Multiple Intelligences. Haley states that, "MI theory, learning styles and brain-based education promote diversity and inclusiveness" (p. 8). All three are embedded in our inquiry toward teacher adaptation of coursebooks. They are particularly relevant because individuals learn and respond to content and method in differentiated ways. These three theories share a great deal of overlap. According to Guild (1997), they all have "particular theoretical constructs, research bases and applications" (p. 30). Often the lines between the three concepts are blurred, and in this article we demarcate

and relate these models to coursebook adaptation for clarity. With relation to EFL and the problem with extended clustered input-strategy-practice, considering learning experiences with these theories in mind can positively impact lesson design.

Learning Theory 1: Brain-Based Learning

The theory of brain-based learning can have a considerable impact on EFL learners. Haley (2010) states that "with just a cursory understanding of how the brain functions we can better assist ELLs" (p. 8). This supports teachers' understanding of brain-based learning in EFL. Brain-based learning offers several prospective benefits of differentiated input exposures and output opportunities during a lesson. For example, Willis (2006) describes how different parts of the brain are activated by various types of input. She proposes "duplication" of input (the same input) in various forms, leading to greater opportunities for later learner access (p. 4). Duplication in various forms means activation, storage and connections between different parts of the brain. For instance, reading activates the occipital lobe, and listening activates the temporal lobe.

Based upon the current brain-based research, it is clear that students need ICPV, and long periods of input need to be broken up during learning experiences. From a brain-based learning perspective, an overload of input can be detrimental to student learning in terms of both difficult content (i.e., vocabulary and grammar) as well as lengthy reading or listening material. According to Willis (2006), if direct instruction includes complicated content, learners often enter "a state of depletion of neurotransmitters in their synapses" (p. 27). This state can cause students to become "fidgety, distracted, and unfocused" (p. 27). This makes a strong case for ICPV through the use of focused tasks. Much research supports a connection between brain-based learning and focused tasks. For example, Willis (2006) suggests rest periods, which corroborates focused tasks between

clustered input-strategy-practice. The need for cognitive rest periods during lengthy lessons is validated by Jensen (2005). He cites Mednick et al. (2002) who show that the human brain is not designed for long periods of constant input. Jensen also argues for brevity of input, as "the human brain is poor at nonstop attention. It needs time for processing and rest after learning" (p. 37). Concomitantly, Jensen (2005) argues that direct learning is short, even for the average adult. His research suggests "15 – 18 minutes of direct instruction or input" (p. 37) for adult learners. His guidelines back our suggestion of breaking up clustered input-strategy-practice with focused tasks.

Learning Theory 2: Learning Styles

Finally, with respect to focused tasks separating and balancing clustered input-strategy-practice, the teacher needs to consider several approaches that allow students to take advantage of their individual LS. LS can also have a strong impact on both the EFL professional and English Language Learners (ELLs). According to Haley (2010), LS are "simply different approaches or ways to learn" (p. 11) that can basically be categorized into three general styles: visual, auditory and kinesthetic. Prashnig (2005) defines LS as "the way human beings prefer to concentrate on, store and remember new and/or difficult information" (p. 8). Further, she also identifies that LS "can be seen as explaining information INPUT capabilities of human beings" and can "give insight into students' reflective or impulsive thinking styles, sequential or simultaneous brain processing and overall tendencies for either analytic or holistic brain dominance" (p. 9). Considering LS in this way can strongly influence how effectively students cope with teacher-instructed tasks and significantly affects how teachers plan to support students. Denig (2004) points out that "each learner has a primary learning style, and can be taught how to study and concentrate capitalizing on that style" (p. 103). In addition, most learners, but not all "have

a secondary style, which can be used to reinforce initial learning effectively" (p. 103). Thus, as Haley (2010) states, "the more we understand 'how' students learn best, the better equipped we are to provide instruction and assessment that maximize learning outcomes" (p. 11). Overall, the more EFL teachers provide a differentiated array of focused tasks following input-strategy-practice, the more effective they can be in varying their teaching style to accommodate student LS.

Learning Theory 3: Multiple Intelligences

A third learning theory of relevance in the planning and adaptation of EFL coursebooks for improved learner attention and overall learning is Multiple Intelligences (MI). Prashnig (2005) states, "Multiple intelligences is a theoretical frame work for defining/understanding/assessing/ developing people's different intelligence factors" (p. 8). While much discussion and debate surrounds Gardner's (1983) theory of MI (verbal/linguistic; musical/rhythmic; logical/mathematical; visual/special; bodily/kinesthetic; naturalist; interpersonal/social), it is widely researched and applied to practice in many fields including education and English language instruction. Gardner has since expanded his theory to include an eighth intelligence (intrapersonal/introspective). According to Gardner (1999), humans are comprised of a general collection of intelligences, and each learner has individual strengths and weaknesses within MI. These intelligences are considered to be innately determined at birth, and while individuals have dominant intelligences, each works interdependently and they infrequently work independently.

Teachers should consider MI when creating focused tasks that break up clustered sessions of input-strategy-practice. Awareness and understanding of MI is a valuable resource for teachers to utilize when selecting focused tasks during the planning of classroom learning experiences. From this perspective, MI gives teachers the ability to consider several intelligences when creating focused tasks between sessions of input. This ICPV and an array of differentiated tasks can account for an individual's utilizing of different forms of intelligence. Further, Gardner believes that considering MI is especially constructive when teachers plan to place learners within new and challenging learning experiences. In fact, focused tasks often present students with new and challenging experiences. In support of this, Haley (2010) states that the challenge "in education is for teachers to create learning environments that foster the development of all eight intelligences" (p. 9). Because the intelligences are all interdependent, she points out that "balanced instructional presentations that encourage addressing the multiple intelligences benefit all learners" (p. 9). Applied to EFL situations that require teacher adaptation of coursebook materials, knowledge and awareness of MI assists teachers in providing focused tasks to break up extended input. Specifically, the use of multiple focused tasks strengthens different forms of intelligence and supports differentiation.

Two Coursebook Adaptations

Table 1 below displays instructions and procedures for the entry-level coursebook *Business Venture 1* (Barnard & Cady, 2003). While the unit analyzed in table 1 does not use particularly long listening selections, it does represent clustered input-strategy-practice (see procedures 1, 2, and 3). This type of clustered input-strategy-practice can become an issue with longer listening selections or higher-level input, which are commonly found in English for Academic Purpose (EAP) coursebooks. It is not our intention to negatively highlight textbook weaknesses. Rather, it we aim to show the potential of teacher adaptation to coursebook materials.

Table 1. Procedure for *Business Venture 1* (Barnard & Cady, 2003, pp. 16-17)

	Procedure	Strategy practice	Input or Output
1	"A visitor arrives at Nabisco. Listen and check correct answers."	Listen for specific details	Input
2	"Listen again. Number these statements in the order you hear them."	Listen for specific details	Input
3	"Listen and complete the dialogue."	Listen for specific details	Input
4	"Practice the dialogue with a partner."	Controlled speaking practice.	Output
5	"Write four appointments in your diary. Practice the dialogue again with different partners."	Controlled speaking practice	Output

Table 1 shows three sequential sessions of listening to the same material (procedures 1-3), or clustered input-strategy-practice. This is followed by procedure 4, which is controlled speaking practice, which is not considered to be meaningful or communicative TL production. This is a beginner-level text, and the listening selection is short. However, it does represent the aforementioned clustering of input-strategy-practice for the same listening selection. If the listening selection were much longer (i.e., 4-5 minutes), it could lead to concerns of negative effects on student concentration for input. It is clear from table 1 that clustered input-strategy-practice often omits the very important ICPV between the input sessions. Therefore, role of the teacher in adapting coursebook materials to include focused tasks becomes key. In support of this, table 2 demonstrates a possible adaptation of the coursebook procedure from table 1 with focused tasks.

Table 2. Adaptation of Clustered Input-Strategy-Practice with Focused Tasks

	Procedure	Purpose	Learning Theory	Input or Output
1	"A visitor arrives at Nabisco. Listen and check correct answers."	Input-strategy-practice	Students rely on their dominant Learning Style	Input
2	Pairwork brainstorming: graphic organizer. "Talk with your partner. Together, decide on 5 companies in your town that you want to visit. Make a list. Use today's grammar point in your conversation and list."	Develop student background knowledge on the topic Focused task: target grammar form practice with communicative outcome	Brain-based: Interval for processing instruction Multiple Intelligences: opportunity for differentiated TL use Learning Styles: Activity caters to various student strengths (visual, kinesthetic, etc.)	Output
3	"Listen again. Number these statements in the order you hear them."	Input-strategy-practice	Students rely on their dominant Learning Style	Input
4	Student-to-student survey "Interview 6 people. Use this list of questions. Write your partner's answer down. Use today's grammar point in your answer."	Discover classmates opinions on the unit topic. Focused task: Target grammar form practice with communicative outcome	Brain-based: Interval for processing variation Multiple Intelligences: Opportunity for differentiated TL use Learning Styles: Activity caters to various student strengths (visual, kinesthetic, etc.)	Output

	Procedure	Purpose	Learning Theory	Input or Output
5	"Listen and complete the dialogue."	Input-strategy-practice	Students rely on their dominant Learning Style	Input
6	Role-play scenario with a problem "Student A, imagine you are a visiting a company for the first time. Introduce yourself. Say why you want a tour." "Student B, imagine you are a manager at the company. You can give a tour, but for only twenty minutes." "Use today's grammatical point."	Focused task: Target grammar form practice with communicative outcome	Brain-based: Interval for processing variation Multiple Intelligences: Opportunity for differentiated TL use Learning Styles: Activity caters to various student strengths (visual, kinesthetic, etc.)	Output

In table 2, after the first listening pass (procedure 1), students work in small groups (using the TL) to make lists of actual companies in their town that they would like to visit (procedure 2). This develops meaning for students, as it relates the lesson to their lives outside the classroom. In regard to brain-based learning, it offers students ICPV from cognitive input demands by allowing students to build connections with the listening content. As for LS, visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners can take different roles that naturally suit them during the focused task. Concerning MI, students are given the opportunity to use the TL in various ways. The second listening (procedure 3) is then followed with a student-to-student survey (procedure 4), which makes use of the lesson's grammar point. Brain-based learning, MI, and LS are once again catered to via this focused task. The third listening (procedure 5) is succeeded by a role-play scenario

(procedure 6), which further reinforces the lesson's target grammar form, making it a focused task. This is clearly an example of how to effectively infuse focused tasks into a coursebook example of clustered input-strategy-practice.

Our second coursebook example is the reading coursebook *Hot Topics 1* (Pavlik, 2006). Table 3 displays instructions and procedures for reading a single unit. Clustered input-strategy-practice is visible in procedures 1, 2, and 3 of table 3. This is directly related to the issue of student concentration declining with extended periods of input.

Table 3. Procedure for *Hot Topics 1* (Pavlik, 2006)

	Procedure	Strategy practice	Input or Output
1	"Quickly skim the two articles. Circle the answers."	Read for comprehension and skim for details	Input
2	"Read the articles. Look for the answers to your questions "Listen again. Number these statements in the order you hear them."	Read for specific details	Input
3	"Look back at questions 1-4 in the predict section."	Read for comprehension and specific details	Input
4	"Read the statements and write true (T) or false (F). Go back to reading 1 and look for the answers you are unsure of."	Read for specific details	Input
5	"Read the statements and write true (T) or false (F). Go back to reading 2 and look for the answers you are unsure of."	Read for specific details	Input

Table 3 displays fives clustered sessions of reading input-strategy-practice. We consider procedures 4 and 5 as input because writing "true" or "false" in response to questions about a reading passage is not meaningful or communicative TL production. Therefore, this is a clear example of clustered input-strategy-practice. Another concern is that this lesson contains two concurrent readings of completely different topics. The coursebook instructs learners to simultaneously consider the different stories because they are clustered together with no interval for processing variation. In response to this clustered input-strategy-practice, we will again offer a potential adaptation through the use of focused tasks. Table 4 demonstrates a possible adaptation of the coursebook procedure with focused tasks.

Table 4. Adaptation of Clustered Input-Strategy-Practice with Focused Tasks

	Procedure	Purpose	Learning Theory	Input or Output
1	"Skim the first passage for the general idea and important vocabulary."	Input-strategy-practice	Students rely on their dominant learning style	Input
2	Pairwork brainstorming: Graphic organizer "Discuss the reading together in pairs and write down the main idea in a complete sentence." "Together, think about unusual and interesting traditions, leisure activities or sports from your own hometown. Make a list. Use today's grammar point in your conversation and list."	Develop student background knowledge. Focused task: Target grammar form practice with communicative outcome	Brain-based: ICPV Multiple Intelligences: Opportunity for differentiated TL use Learning style: Activity caters to various student strengths (visual, kinesthetic, etc.)	Output
3	"Read the passage again with your partner and scan for comprehension." "Number the statements in order and then use the statements to assist you to answer questions."	Input-strategy-practice	Students rely on their dominant learning style	Input
4	Group-focussed guided discussions. Student-to-student discussion and comparison of numbered statements and comprehension answers. "In groups discuss your answers and check them. Use today's target grammar form in your answer."	Focused task: Target grammar form practice with communicative outcome	Brain-based: ICPV Multiple Intelligences: Opportunity for differentiated TL use Learning style: Activity caters to various student strengths (visual, kinesthetic, etc.)	Output
5	"Read the passage a third time scanning for specific phrases"	Input-strategy-practice		Input
6	Pairwork: In pairs students will close their books and use their previously completed communication tasks to perform a jigsaw activity. Create a summary "With your partner, once you have the phrases in order, write an original 3 sentence summary. Use today's grammar point."	Focused task: target grammar form practice with communicative outcome	Brain-based: ICPV Multiple Intelligences: Opportunity for differentiated TL use Learning style: Activity caters to various student strengths (visual, kinesthetic, etc.)	Output

Table 4 shows our specific focused tasks (procedures 2, 4, and 6) integrated between sessions of input. The first reading session (procedure 1) is followed by a focused task (procedure 2). This allows students to bring together different LS and also creates meaning for students. These focused tasks offer an interval for processing variation as suggested by brain-based learning. Further, focused tasks take advantage of students' variation in MI. The second session of reading (procedure 3) is supported by group focused guided discussion (procedure 4). Once again, students are able to take advantage of individual strengths in LS because students receive information in different ways. With respect to brain-based learning, an ICPV is provided and MI variations are taken into account. After the third reading (procedure 5), a jigsaw activity (procedure 6) specifically caters to MI. In particular, jigsaw activities tend to account for visual/spatial and logical/mathematical learners. For example, a jigsaw activity requires the students to logically organize information or visually show how the material fits together. The final focused task fosters students to be creative, feel a sense of relatedness with the content, and work towards their brain-based, LS, and MI strengths. It is important to reiterate that this is simply one example of breaking up clustered input-strategy- practice with focused tasks, and we hope this serves as a model. Teachers of all experience levels should feel comfortable making adaptations that best fit their own teaching contexts. In addition, teachers will need to recognize extended sessions of input and when to intervene. Overall, our examples in tables 2 and 4 model the adaptation of effective sequencing of focused tasks that facilitates greater learning experiences for students.

Conclusion

Not all coursebooks are designed with clustered input-strategy-practice. However, those that do can benefit from teacher adaptation through insertion of focused tasks in between sessions of reading or listening content. When reading or listening content is lengthy and above the level of students, this is an especially relevant concern. For example, listening to multiple sessions of lengthy listening or rereading long academic texts with high-level vocabulary and grammar can negatively affect EFL learners. Therefore, the need to provide ICPV through the use of focused tasks is a critical consideration. This can be accomplished by teachers inserting focused tasks at strategically chosen moments during sessions of input. Further, the coursebook adaptation of clustered input-strategy-practice by integrating focused tasks, as modeled above, provides opportunities for teachers to consider brain-based learning (cognitive processing), LS (differentiating instructional strategies), and MI (modifying student outcomes). The incorporation of these concepts into EFL courses can encourage teachers to consider adding focused tasks between clustered input-strategy-practice. This can be particularly applicable in Japanese university EFL courses where classes are upwards of 90 minutes in length. These considerations can strengthen future materials design and impacthow those materials are utilized in the class.

Bio Data

Grant Agawa is working towards a doctorate in Aston University's Applied Linguistics program. He holds an MA in TESL and has taught in various American EAP programs. He also has a range of experience in Japanese EFL educational institutions and is currently teaching at the tertiary level. His interests are in course design, materials development, and teacher training. <agawa@nucba.ac.jp>

Kevin Watson is a doctoral student at the University of Leicester. He holds an MSc in Educational Science with a specialization in Lifelong Learning from the University of Surrey in the UK. He holds teaching qualifications in ESL, English, and Physical Education from the University of British Columbia

in Canada. He has taught at the elementary, secondary, and tertiary levels in a wide variety of areas. His areas of interest are teaching methods, student motivation, and instructional material design. <watson@nucba.ac.jp>

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