New Challenges:
Speaking and Listening (S&L) Course Development for Stream 4 Students

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This report will summarise the steps that were taken to develop the S&L course for Stream 4 students in the Spring Semester at International Christian University (ICU) in order to meet their perceived needs as members of the English for Liberal Arts (ELA) program. These needs were established by the coordinators of the course, based on feedback from other teachers in the program and, in order to discover more about whether or not the teachers' perception matched the students, a student survey was conducted at the end of the semester. The results of this survey showed a positive reaction to the new curriculum yet with some feedback that the materials were too easy and that the regular format of classes was not stimulating for the students. The implications of this are that, although the newly developed course was a positive first step, more work needs to be done to challenge the students more and provide them with the necessary speaking and listening skills needed in the ELA program.

At the start of the academic year in 2012 a new course titled Speaking and Listening (S&L) was created by integrating two courses, Academic Speaking (ASP) and Listening Skills and Strategies (LSS). The newly developed S&L, which organically integrated speaking and listening skills using authentic materials was popular among students and had been given positive feedback. Yet, given the lower English proficiency of Stream 4 students, needs for a more customized S&L curriculum for Stream 4 students rose and in Spring 2015 Stream 4 students started to be separated from those from Stream 3.

This paper examines the implications of this curriculum change by first, reporting its context and theoretical background, next examining the new curriculum and the students' reaction to it, and finally concludes by looking how this data analysis can be used to develop the course in the future.

Literature Review on Authenticity

There is a general pedagogical consensus that the use of authentic materials in the classroom is beneficial for the learners. However, this issue of authenticity is problematic as there is a wide spectrum between those who argue for the use of authentic input at all times and those who maintain that authentic materials are too difficult for the students (Rost, 2011, p.166). This is complicated by the range of meanings associated with authenticity as Gilmore (2007, p.98) points

out that 'authenticity can be situated in either the text itself, in the participants, in the social or cultural situation and purposes of the communicative act, or some combination of these.' Therefore, while it seems that the theory supports the use of authentic materials, in practice, as a syllabus designer, it is difficult to know how to proceed.

One solution, which has been suggested by Nunan (2004, p.53-54), is a compromise between the use of authentic materials and task design. He argues that 'those procedures that attempt to replicate and rehearse in the classroom the kinds of things that learners need to do outside of the classroom have procedural authenticity.' In this case, the authenticity is provided not necessarily by the input but by the learners mirroring the sorts of communicative activities they would be expected to perform outside of class. This also has the potential to provide internal motivation for the students as the learning activities in which they are involved are useful in their everyday lives.

Motivation is often discussed in the literature concerned with authenticity and as Kilickaya (2004) points out the use of authentic materials is a way of increasing motivation as the students can feel they are learning 'real' language. This motivation is a significant factor as Dornyei (1998, p.117) has argued that 'motivation provides the primary impetus to initiate learning the L2 and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process'. However, whilst acknowledging the importance of authentic materials to motivate learners, we are also aware of the debate as to when this is appropriate. Indeed, it could be as Guariento & Morley (2001, p.348) state that 'at lower levels…the use of authentic texts may not only prevent learners from responding in meaningful ways but also lead them to feel frustrated, confused, and, more importantly, demotivated.' There is clearly a pedagogical issue concerned with introducing authentic materials while not decreasing the learners' motivation. This problem could be solved for students with lower proficiency by using materials which although are not authentic (i.e. produced specifically for language learners), have task authenticity, in that they reflect the task that they are faced with in the real world. This would help the learners' motivation as they could engage with a task that is relevant to their L2 environment. In particular, in S&L, the use of a textbook which provides level-specific listening practice in listening to lectures, mirrors the real world activity they face in other parts of the curriculum where they are expected to listen to lectures in English and take notes. Thus, we concluded that listening materials for language learners instead of authentic materials may best suit Stream 4 students in Spring Semester.

Context

Missions of ICU and ELA

ICU's missions include promoting a liberal arts education that emphasizes spiritual freedom and cultivation, stressing the significance of taking knowledge gained in the classroom beyond the goal of knowledge for knowledge's sake and putting it to use to address real problems in society, and an emphasis on a bilingual environment where both Japanese and English are fully used. In order to help the students fulfil these objectives, the English for Liberal Arts Program (ELA) aims to help students acquire English proficiency, whilst promoting the acquisition of critical thinking and study skills. ELA classes are taught solely in English in small-size classes of approximately 20 students and customized instruction is provided to meet each student's needs

and proficiency (International Christian University). As described above, upon entry, students are placed in one of four streams (Streams 1 to 4, 1 being the highest proficiency and 4 the lowest) based on placement test results, individual language background (e.g. living overseas), and, if necessary, an oral interview.

Perceived Needs of Stream 4 Students

Figure 1 represents the Streams and the different courses they take in the ELA in their first year. As can be seen, in Stream 4, the students have 10 periods of Academic Skills classes and this research was carried out in one of these classes, Speaking and Listening (S&L) which meets twice a week for two, 70 minute classes, in Spring term. The main goal of this class was to create a firm foundation for the academic English speaking and listening skills which the students would need to actively participate in ELA and ICU classes.

	1st year		
	Spring Term	Autumn Term	Winter Term
Stream 1 TOEFL (ITP) 600 or above	5 periods /week ■ ARW	4 periods /week ■ Research Writing	
Stream2 TOEFL (ITP) 550 – 600	6 periods /week ■ARW ■ AS	6 periods /week	4 periods /week ■ Research Writing
Stream3 TOEFL (ITP) 450 – 550	10 periods /week ■ ARW ■ RCA ■ AS	10 periods /week	9periods /week
Stream4 TOEFL (ITP) 350 – 450	12 periods /week ■ ARW ■ RCA ■ AS	10 periods /week	10 periods /week

■ARW= Academic Reading and Writing
■RCA = Reading and Content Analysis
■AS = Academic Skills

Figure 1: Table representing the first year of classes in the ELA for the different streams

Since the ELA reform started in 2012, Speaking and Listening, which is compulsory for both Stream 3 and 4 freshmen in the Spring Term, had been conducted using the same curriculum with a possible minor modification at each teacher's discretion. However, due to the difference in the proficiency level of S3 and S4 students, it had been discussed that a different and more

customized curriculum should be run to better meet the needs of the students in each stream. Since we coordinators were given advice in this regard in Spring 2014, we have been monitoring the Stream 4 students' performance by communicating with their teachers and by conducting a term-end survey. The survey results showed that Stream 4 students were very positive about the course itself, and they felt that their listening and speaking skills improved over the semester. One student wrote, "I learned a lot, especially how to express my opinion well, in S&L class. Additionally, I could learn how to listen carefully in this class." The feedback in an open-ended question from the teachers was also positive overall with constructive suggestions. For example, one teacher wrote about the discussion skills lessons:

> Thank you very much for your wonderful work! I have thoroughly enjoyed teaching the course, and I'm sure students did, too. The lessons carefully guided the students to develop necessary discussion skills for academic speaking, provided useful phrases and strategies, and gave students ample opportunities to discuss issues related to students themselves and social issues.

Another teacher gave feedback on the listening skills lessons:

> Things went very well for the listening component, too. Introducing both top-down and bottom-up skills gradually was a good idea, and students had ample practice in getting used to them. I think assigning students listening journals was useful in getting students motivated to listen to English outside classrooms, and they seem to enjoy doing this. . . . Overall, things went very well, and it has been a great pleasure to teach the course.

However, we also noticed that some of the teachers implied that the materials, especially listening, might have been too challenging, especially for Stream 4 students. One teacher who taught both Stream 3 and 4 students in the academic year 2014 wrote: Many of my students in various classes mentioned that the listening materials for smuggling and swearing were very difficult.

Textbook Selection

Based on the feedback from S&L teachers, we examined a variety of EAP listening textbooks and chose one textbook, *Contemporary Topics: Academic Listening and Note-Taking Skills Level 1* (Longman, 2009) to be piloted during the Winter Term 2014 with Stream 4 students taking S&L. Two chapters related to the theme of the Winter Term were selected and piloted in class. It was believed that students would be able to improve their listening as well as note-taking skills with level-appropriate listening materials and that this would enable the students to listen to longer lectures which would simulate the actual listening situations in the ELA and at ICU. In addition, by using level-appropriate materials, more focus on note-taking skills would be made, which might help them to take notes in LLAs and English-medium courses.

Also, we hypothesized that the teachers would be able to use the class time more effectively. Instead of using time to explain the meaning of the listening text to enhance the students' comprehension, teachers would be able to use time to replay the difficult part, to focus

the students' attention on lecture language and note-taking skills, and to have students discuss the topics of the text. In this way, it was hoped that more meaningful and integrated lessons would take place.

Finally, on a macro level, it was hoped by providing different listening materials for each stream, Speaking and Listening would contribute to the entire ELA program and help to provide lessons and education more catered to the students' individual needs.

The Syllabus

Syllabus Design

In order to achieve these goals, a syllabus was designed which utilized the textbook as a means to improve the students' listening skills. Textbooks are typically seen as being a "one-size-fits-all" teaching material, but we also supplemented it with structured exercises, not from the textbook, which focused on developing the students' discussion skills. It was believed that these exercises would provide more scaffolding to enable the students to actively participate in class discussions, an important part of the curriculum at ICU. (See Appendix A for syllabus). Thus, materials and activities that met the students' level were provided, which enabled student-centered lessons.

In the spring semester the S&L classes met twice a week for nine weeks. The syllabus was structured so that in the first class the students focused on a unit from the book but not all exercises and units were covered. This was both due to the duration of the course and the classes: each class is 70 minutes long. Eight of the 12 units were selected and this was simply based on the topics of the units as it was believed that some fit in more closely with themes and issues that were discussed in the wider ELA program. Apart from the first class, which was an orientation to the course, and the last class, which was a reflection and rounding off lesson, the structure of the classes was as shown in Figure 2.

First Lesson
      1. **Connect to the topic**- 10 minutes
      2. **Focus your attention**- 10 minutes
      3. **Listen to the lecture (Listen for main ideas)** -30 minutes
      4. **Talk about the topic**- 15 minutes
      5. Explain homework and conclude- 5 minutes

      Homework- **Listen for details**

Second Lesson
      1. Review homework **Listen for details**- students grade a partner's work- 10m
      2. **Review your notes**- 15m
      3. Discussion skills- 20-30m (This is not based on the textbook)
      4. Discussion- based on the questions in **Talk about the topic (c)** or if you wish have the students think of their own discussion questions 15-20m.

Figure 2: Plan for the teaching of S&L to Stream 4 students in Spring semester

In Figure 2 the items in bold type relate to the same section from the book and they were chosen as they focus on the objective of enhancing the students' lecture listening skills. However, the time constraint of the 70-minute class was also a factor as we simply did not have enough time to cover all of the exercises. It was hoped that the second class would give the teachers the flexibility to review or complete tasks from the first lesson and also allow time for further discussion of the theme of the unit. We had previously received feedback from Stream 4 teachers that the students did not have the vocabulary to discuss these issues and this affected their confidence. Therefore, discussion skills were taught that provided useful vocabulary for the students to use but also tried to increase the students' confidence by having them first practice using the language on more simple topics before they discussed the more academic themes from the textbook. Figure 3 highlights this approach:

In-class Activities

As Figure 3 shows, the students were first introduced to language they can use to give an opinion on a topic, which they then practiced in pairs using some example topics. Then, the language was introduced to politely disagree with an opinion and further practice topics were given where the students, again in pairs, took it in turns to give an opinion, and then their partner would politely disagree with them. It was hoped that this pair-work activity would provide the students with useful vocabulary they could use in class discussions and also increase their confidence by having a controlled practice in pairs before they discussed in larger groups in the final production stage.

Introducing your opinion:
How can you show that the ideas you say are your opinions? In discussion, we use different expressions to introduce and share our ideas about what is important or what should happen.

I think (that).... English language study is a complete waste of time
I believe (that)....
In my opinion.....
It seems to me that.....

Giving your Opinion- Example Topics

1.Should University students be required to attend classes?
2.Should every University student be required to study history?
3. Should cheating be grounds for dismissal from college?
4. Should both parents have equal responsibility in child rearing?
5. Should University seniors have to pass an examination in their major to graduate?
6. Should smoking in public places be illegal?
7. If you were to lose the use of one of your five senses (sight, touch, smell, taste, and hearing)
8. Do you think that sports help develop good character?

Disagreeing: Offering a different opinion:
The basic formula for politely offering a different opinion is to 'concede' the validity of the other person's opinion, (and show that you understood) before offering your own, usually shown by 'but' or 'however'. Remember, conceding the validity of the other person's ideas might be as simple as saying 'yes' 'I see' 'That's right'. However, it is important to maintain this level of acceptance – this prevents the discussion from becoming an argument.

Yes, I understand your point but...
OK, but another way of looking at this (that) is...
I see your point, but ...
That's a good point, but ...
That's a good point, but on the other hand ...
I see, have you thought about...?
OK, ... well I'm not sure that I agree with you (because)...

Disagreeing- Mini discussions--Topics for the discussions:

Which is better:
1. Pizza or McDonalds?
2. Visiting America or Australia?
3. Comedy films or dramas?
4. Spring or Autumn
5. Everyone should learn English
6. Job hunting should wait until after university finishes

Figure 3: Extract from Lesson 7 of the Spring syllabus for Stream 4 S&L students

Methods

Data Collection

In order to assess how Stream 4 students perceived S&L classes under the revised curriculum in Spring 2015, an online anonymous end-term survey was conducted using Google Forms. The survey questions were administered by the two course coordinators. In addition to the nine questions that can be answered by choosing the option that is closest to how students feel, there was one open-ended question asking students to write comments or suggestions about S&L. In order to minimize any influence on the survey results, one of the coordinators who did not teach Stream 4 students in Spring Semester 2015 sent an email asking them to participate in the survey.

Conducting an anonymous survey at the end of each term is a common procedure taken in the ELA program as a means to obtain students' feedback and constructive suggestions on various aspects of the course, such as materials, lesson contents, teaching, and the curriculum. In addition to the above-mentioned educational purposes, in order to enable the authors to analyze and publish these results in academic papers, A Research Ethics Investigation Form had been submitted to the Research Ethics Committee in ICU in advance, and was later approved.

Participants

Out of the 121 Stream 4 students who took S&L in Spring Semester 2015, 63 students, or 52%, responded to the survey. Since four students disagreed that their responses be used for research purposes, the remaining 59 responses were analyzed and discussed in this paper. In addition to the responses, 29 students wrote comments either in English or Japanese, which will be used for analysis as a way to supplement and support the quantitative data.

Data Analysis

The nature of multiple-choice questions in the student survey can be grouped into four major categories: a) overall feedback on the course; b) feedback on the difficulty level and the workload of the course; c) students' self-perceived improvement of the individual skills covered in S&L, d) feedback on the textbook used. In the following section, student responses will be shown and analyzed by category; description and the analysis of quantitative results will be followed by relevant comments, if anything, written by students.

Results

Overall Feedback on the Course

Regarding the overall helpfulness and usefulness of the course, the students' responses were quite positive overall. As many as 85% of the participants answered that the course helped them to improve their academic speaking and listening skills, and 83% responded that the speaking and listening skills they learned were useful in other classes such as Academic Reading

and Writing (ARW), Reading and Content Analysis (RCA), and Lecture for Liberal Arts(LLA). The detailed responses are shown in Figure 4 below.

Students' comments seem to endorse the positive results. One student wrote, "It was helpful for me to improve my academic English skill." Another student commented, "All of the lecture in S&L class were very interesting for me and I could enjoy improving my skills." Further, another student wrote a longer note on how he/she felt after completing S&L in Spring: "I have experienced something for the first time. One is taking note with listening. First this was difficult, but finally it helps me to take note more simple and clear. Listening skill also seemed to improve. Second is discussion. Though I have a trouble to say what I think clearly, sometimes discussion livened up. It gives me pleasure of communicating in English. This class certainly developed my abilities."

1. S&L helped me improve my academic speaking and listening skills.				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
31%	54%	12%	3%	0%
2. Were the speaking and listening skills you learned in S&L useful in other classes (ARW, RCA, LLA)?				
Very Useful	Useful	Neutral	Not Useful	Not Useful at All
27%	56%	15%	0%	2%

Figure 4: Students' overall feedback on the course

Feedback on the Difficulty Level and the Workload of the Course

In terms of the level of difficulty of the course, 44% thought that the level was just right for them while the same percentage (44%) of students thought the level of the course was easy. As for the amount of student work outside of class, 42% thought that the amount of homework was just right while 36% thought there was not enough homework. The details are shown in Figure 5 below.

3. How was the level of difficulty of this class for you?				
Too Difficult	Difficult	Just Right	Easy	Too Easy
0%	5%	44%	44%	7%
4. How was the amount of homework for you?				
Too Much	Much	Just Right	Little	Too Little
2%	5%	42%	36%	15%

Figure 5: Students' feedback on the difficulty level and the workload of the course
Students' Self-perceived Improvement of the Individual Skills Covered in S&L

In terms of the self-perception of their improvement of each skill covered in S&L, it seems that students generally perceived that they made improvements, with slight differences among each skill. The students' self-perceived improvement was slightly higher in discussion skills (83%) than listening (71%), which again is slightly higher than note-taking (63%) skills. See Figure 6 for details.

Students' comments seem to reflect the survey results. As for the discussion skills, 6 students commented that the useful phrases and expressions for discussions were helpful in other ELA classes and that the S&L class motivated them to speak. Two students wrote that they wanted more time for discussion, especially of academic issues. One student wrote that the class was a mere extension of a high-school conversation class, and thus was not interesting.

Regarding the listening skills, a student wrote that he/she had never listened to a long lecture in English, got used to it gradually, and felt the improvement in listening. As for note-taking skills, one student wrote that practicing note-taking was very effective in other classes; another student wrote that he/she wanted to do more on note-taking skills.

5. During the semester, my discussion skills improved.				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
25%	58%	14%	2%	2%
6. During the semester, my lecture listening skills improved.				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
22%	49%	27%	2%	0%
7. During the semester, my note-taking skills improved.				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
17%	46%	31%	7%	0%

Figure 6: Students' self-perceived improvement on the individual skills

Feedback on the Textbook Used

There were two specific questions about the textbook used, the first being how interesting the topics in the textbook were and the second being its level-appropriateness--whether the listening materials are difficult, easy, or just right. As for the topic interest, 73% of students responded that they were either very interesting or interesting. As for the difficulty of the

listening materials, 59% students answered that the level of materials were just right while the remaining 41% were split between difficult (22%) and easy (19%). Figure 7 shows the details.

Two students commented that a more difficult textbook could be used. Another student commented that the textbook level was either too easy or too difficult depending on the topic. Another student wrote that the topics were boring and the textbook should be changed.

8. How do you feel about the topics used this semester?				
Very interesting	Interesting	Neutral	Not interesting	Boring
34%	39%	22%	5%	0%
9. The lecture listening materials you listened to this semester were:				
Very Difficult	Difficult	Just right	Easy	Very Easy
0%	22%	59%	19%	0%

Figure 7: Students' feedback on the textbook

Discussion

Based on the survey results, it seems that this revised S&L curriculum, syllabus, and lessons were generally perceived positively by the students. Yet, different approval rates on different questions, together with students' constructive comments and suggestions, may be a sign that there is room for further improvement of S&L.

One issue that seems to arise is how to balance two rather conflicting needs: challenging students with higher proficiency and at the same time not demotivating those with lower proficiency. The idea of separating the S&L curriculum for Stream 4 students from that of Stream 3 students originated from the belief that providing level-appropriate materials for each Stream would best meet the students' language needs and would serve to motivate them to learn. Thus, whereas authentic listening materials, or those for native-speakers, are mostly used as listening materials for Stream 3 students, those for language learners were used for Stream 4 students. Although we believe that this decision of using materials for language learners was valid and supported by the literature, some changes in in-class activities and tasks as well as homework can be made to challenge the students a little more since as many as 44% responded that the level of the class was easy and more than half responded that the amount of homework was not enough.

Students' positive self-perception, together with mostly affirmative comments on the discussion skills, seems to support that in-house materials used in discussion skills lessons were interesting, useful, and engaging. In fact, the flow and the activities used in discussion skills classes were basically the same as those used for Stream 3 students, the only difference being the topics for discussion; while Stream 3 students discussed current and controversial issues, Stream 4 students discussed the topics related to the listening materials in the textbook. The students may have found the effectiveness of the step-by-step approach in discussion skills lessons, as well as the ample opportunities to use typical phrases in discussions, and realized the improvement in

and the usefulness of their discussion skills. Still, it should be stressed that, a few students' comments seem to suggest that they wanted to have longer, deeper, and/or academic discussions.

What seems to emerge from the students' comments on listening and note-taking skills is that it was a new experience for many of them to listen to academic lectures of certain length, and to take notes while listening. Taking this into account, exposing them to simulated academic lectures for language learners was a valid way to prepare them for English-medium lectures in ICU. There may be multiple reasons for their slightly lower self-perceived improvement in listening and note-taking skills compared to discussion skills; for example, factors such as vocabulary size, knowledge of pronunciation of words, recognition of suprasegmental features such as liaison and elision, recognizing lecture language, the degree of background knowledge of the topic, effective use of symbols and abbreviations, the idea of note-making, and the lack of opportunities to realize their improvement may have played a role. Although this may need further investigation and analysis, this would be out of the scope for this paper.

The implementation of the textbook was greeted with a positive response in general. More than 70% felt that the topics were interesting and nearly 60% perceived that the level of the textbook was just right. However, the use of a textbook has both advantages and disadvantages; as one student precisely put (originally in Japanese), "It was easy for me to review the class and do the homework since the pattern was fixed. However, this fixed pattern made the class a little boring. But overall, we learned speaking and listening skills in a balanced manner and each unit was informative and fun. Thank you." Perhaps, measures such as adding topics or tasks that are relevant to students' lives and/or studies can be taken, in order to engage the students and avoid the lessons from becoming monotonous and boring. Moreover, taking into account that nearly 60% responded that the level of the textbook was just right while more than half responded that the class was easy, making some tasks more challenging in this way could be a solution. Keeping in mind the issue of task authenticity which has been discussed earlier in this paper, how to supplement the textbook content and activities with our in-house materials and activities may be the key to keeping the high motivation of our students.

Another issue that is worth discussing is the competing requests from students: some requested more time for discussion while some wanted to do more on note-taking. These conflicting needs may be a natural consequence given the nature of S&L, as its predecessors were two different classes, covering academic speaking skills and listening skills. Finding the optimal balance between speaking and listening skills may be a question with no perfect answer due to the different needs of individual students. Still, assessing and selecting the essential tasks that need to be done in class and assigning students to do vocabulary work and listening/note-taking tasks may yield more time for in-depth and meaningful discussions and practice in class, given the restricted length for each class.

Conclusion

Examining Stream 4 students' survey responses and comments enabled the authors to uncover what freshman Stream 4 students experienced in, thought of, and felt about S&L over the course of the Spring Term. It seems that most students found the course useful in that they could improve speaking and listening skills and apply what they learned and practiced in S&L in other English classes. Yet, analysis of survey results and students' comments led us to the

conclusion that although it was an important first step, there are issues and concerns that need to be examined.

The most evident issue revealed in the survey was that students could be challenged more. In-class activities could be made more challenging, goals set higher, and homework made a little more demanding for the efficient and effective use of class time whilst keeping in mind that S&L is a support class for the core courses in the ELA. Therefore, it may be an option to pilot the more advanced Level 2 version of the current textbook, *Contemporary Topics Level 1,* as a way to expose students to slightly more difficult materials. This may stimulate their learning, engage them more, and help them to realize their improvement, embedded with a sense of achievement or accomplishment. Since the ultimate goal for Stream 4 students is to be as proficient users of English as the students initially placed in other Streams, setting reasonable yet higher goals may facilitate the process of achieving this goal.

In course or curriculum development, it is important to meet the needs of the students as well as the requirements of the educational institution. By detailing the process of curriculum change in this paper, we hope that any future change can be facilitated in order to meet the changing demands of the students and the university.

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Acknowledgements

Appendix A

Speaking/Listening Spring 2015: Stream 4 (Syllabus 18 lessons model)

Welcome! This course is designed to help you create a firm foundation for the <u>academic</u> English speaking and listening skills you will need to actively participate in ELA and ICU classes. Speaking and listening will be developed in an integrated way to improve your skills such as taking an active part in a group discussion, and making a short organized presentation. You will also learn how to take lecture notes efficiently and how to avoid misunderstandings in conversations by listening actively and asking questions to clarify the meaning. You will do a variety of tasks such as role-plays, discussions, summaries and presentations, and some of your tasks may be recorded on audio or video so that you can analyze your own speaking and set improvement goals.
 *This course will use the textbook, *Contemporary Topics 1* (Pearson)

Schedule (Note: This is tentative and may change.)

Lesson	Main Skills & Activities
1.	Orientation, getting to know each other exercises, and roleplay
2.	Unit 1: Psychology: Happiness (lecture listening and exercises)
3.	Review and discussion
4.	Unit 2: Linguistics: A Time to Learn (lecture listening and exercises)
5.	Review and discussion
6.	Unit 3: Public Health: Sleep (lecture listening and exercises)
7.	Review and discussion
8.	Unit 4: Business: Negotiating for Success (lecture listening and exercises)
9.	Review and discussion
10.	Unit 6: Technology: Robots (lecture listening and exercises)
11.	Review and discussion
12.	Unit 7: Media Studies: Video Games (lecture listening and exercises)
13.	Review and discussion
14.	Unit 8: Biology: Genetically Modified Food (lecture listening and exercises)
15.	Review and discussion
16.	Unit 11: Philosophy: Ethics (lecture listening and exercises)
17.	Review and discussion
18.	Summary, reflection, ideas for future practice

Assessment System: Attendance and Punctuality (20%), Active Participation (30%), Listening Tasks (40%), Reflection (10%).
 Assessment System:
 An "Excellent" (A) student must attend all or almost all classes punctually, always participate enthusiastically, and perform well on the listening and speaking tasks. Most importantly, your instructor will be observing your engagement in the class, which means how much effort you put into your learning in the classroom and on the assignments. Even if your speaking or listening skills are not so strong right now, and even if some classmates seem to have higher skills, you can be an "Excellent" student by engaging in the class and making strong efforts to practice and improve.

 Basically, A=100-91, B=90-81, C=80-71, D=70-61, E=60 or less. However, the numbers are just for reference, and the instructor will decide the final grade (A: Excellent, B: Good, C: Satisfactory, D: Unsatisfactory, or E: Need to Repeat) based on a holistic evaluation of your performance in the following areas. More information about each task, test etc. will be given step by step, so please stay updated in class.

Area	%	Criteria and Policies
Attendance & Punctuality	20%	If you attend all classes on time, you will get 20%. You will be penalized each time you are absent, and each time you are late, unless excused for a valid reason. Please arrive before the starting time of the class and be ready to go! Also, if you are absent or late, make sure you contact your instructor and explain your reason. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out the homework and prepare for the next class.
Participation	30%	Teacher's observation (30%) "Excellent" participation (26~30 pts) means you always participate actively and enthusiastically in class activities. That means you do your best, keep speaking in English, support your classmates, cooperate with your teacher, and often volunteer. "Good" (21~25pts) means you almost always participate actively. "Satisfactory" 16~20pts) means you are participating, but rarely actively. "Unsatisfactory" (15 pts or less) means your participation is problematic. Problems may include not being prepared for class, refusing to participate, speaking in Japanese, or disrupting the learning of your classmates. Obviously, serious violations of classroom respect can result in failing the course entirely as well.
Listening Tasks	40%	Lecture Listening Homework Activities (5% x 8 entries =40%).
Reflection	10%	Final reflection of discussion/listening/note-taking skills