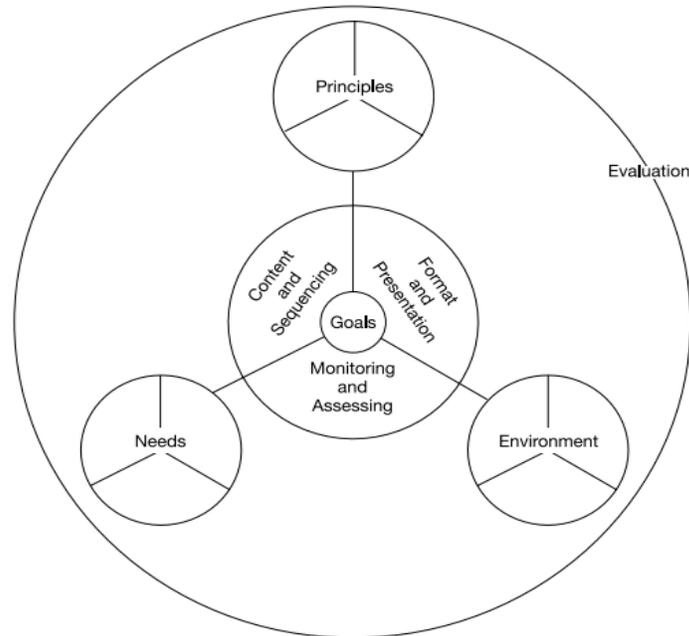


LANGUAGE CURRICULUM DESIGN

1. STAGES IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Nation and Macalister (2010)



1.0. Curriculum Policy

Establish the broad principles and purposes of the curriculum and express them in a curriculum design document

State the views of learning, learners, and subject matter

e.g.,

- learners learn language when they are involved in meaningful and purposeful activities
- learning is not a linear process
- learning is enhanced by the development of learning strategies
- learning of English is not an isolated event

1.1. Needs Analysis

Examines what the learners know already and what they need to know → establish priorities among them

Purposes:

- providing a mechanism for obtaining a wider range of input
- identifying general or specific language needs
- providing data that can serve as the basis for evaluating an existing program

Brindley (1989):

- a **narrow, product-oriented** view
 - a. focuses on the language necessary for particular future purposes
 - b. carried out by the experts by observing learners use of language, proficiency level, etc. → external to the learner → **objective needs** (René Richterich, 1972) or **perceived needs** (Berwick, 1989)
 - c. e.g., *be able to follow instructions accurately*
- a **broad, process-oriented** view
 - a. focuses on the needs of the learner
 - b. takes into account affective and cognitive factors which affect attitude, motivation, expectations, etc. → **subjective needs** (René Richterich, 1972) or **felt needs** (Berwick, 1989).
 - c. e.g., *feel confident*

One aimed at collecting factual information for the purposes of setting goals related to language content

One aimed at gathering information about learners which can be used to guide the learning process

Hutchinson and Waters (1987):

- **learning needs** → what the learner needs to do in order to learn
- **target needs** → what the learner needs to do in the target situation
 - **necessities** → what is necessary in the learners' use of language, or to the demands of the target tasks, e.g., listen to lectures
 - **lacks** → what the learners know ; where learners are at present, e.g., finding how good the learners at writing assignments are
 - **wants** → what the learners wish to learn ; what they think is useful for them. Information about this is useful in working out whether the learners' views and the needs analyst's views are the same or not.

Similarly, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998):

- **Target Situation Analysis (TSA)** → objective, perceived, and product-oriented needs → tasks and activities learners will be using English for in target situation:
 - Why does the learner need the language for?* → for study; for work; for training
 - How will the language be used?* → medium (speaking, writing, etc.); channel (telephone, face-to-face, etc.)
- **Learning Situation Analysis (LSA)** → subjective, felt, and process-oriented needs → effective ways of learning the skills and language
- **Present Situation Analysis (PSA)** → seeks to ascertain what the students are akin to at the start of their language course, looking into their strengths and weaknesses:
 - Why are the learners taking the course?* → compulsory or optional; their attitudes towards the course
 - What resources are available?* → number and professional competence of teachers

Ongoing needs analysis during the course can make use of the **pyramid procedure** (Jordan, 1990).

There are several issues in needs analysis that have been the focus of continuing debate:

- Common core and specialized language
- Narrow focus – wide focus
- Critical needs analysis (Benesch, 1996)

1.2. Environment Analysis

Looking at the social, economic, political, and institutional factors that will have a strong effect on decisions about the goals of the course, what to include in the course, and how to teach and assess it

A constraint can be positive

Some of these constraints can be approached in two ways – working within the constraint, and overcoming the constraint.

1.3. Principles

1.3.1. Content and sequencing

deals with what goes into a language course and the order in which language items appear

- (1) **Frequency:** provide the best possible coverage of language in use through the inclusion of items that occur frequently in the language → learners get the best return
- (2) **Strategies and autonomy:** train learners in how to learn a language and how to monitor and be aware of their learning → learners become effective and independent language learners
- (3) **Spaced retrieval:** provide increasingly spaced, repeated opportunities to retrieve and give attention to wanted items in a variety of contexts
- (4) **Language system:** focus on the generalizable features of the language
- (5) **Keep moving forward:** cover useful language items, skills and strategies ; the course should have explicit language teaching goals → learning tasks have a goal fitting with the plan for the course
- (6) **Teachability:** take account of the most favorable sequencing of items and take account of when the learners are most ready to learn them
- (7) **Learning burden:** help learners make the most effective use of previous knowledge
- (8) **Interference:** sequence items so that those which are learned together have a positive effect on each other for learning and so that interference effects are avoided

1.3.2. Format and presentation

concerned with what actually happens in the classroom and during the learning, i.e. activities

- (1) **Motivation:** learners should be interested and excited about learning the language and they should come to value this learning
- (2) **Four strands:** include a roughly even balance of *meaning-focused input, language-focused learning, meaning-focused output, and fluency activities*
- (3) **Comprehensible input:** include substantial quantities of interesting comprehensible receptive activity in both listening and reading.
- (4) **Deliberate learning:** focus learners' attention on some part of the language system. Effects:
 - speed up learning
 - help learners overcome barriers to their language development
 - have a positive effect on meaning-focused learning
- (5) **Output:** push learners to produce the language in both speaking and writing over a range of discourse types
- (6) **Fluency:** increase fluency both receptively and productively
An example is the 4/3/2 technique

Features of fluency task are

Features
Quantity (processing a large amount of language)
Limited demands
Preparation, planning, seeking feedback
Repetition by the learner
High rate of processing

periodically give large blocks of time to fluency activities → Brumfit's (1985) syllabus with holes

- (7) **Time on task:** as much as possible, spend time using and focusing on appropriate learning activities
- (8) **Depth of processing:** levels of processing hypothesis (Craik & Lockhart, 1972) → emphasizes the quality of mental activity in the mind of the learners at the moment that learning takes place
- (9) **Learning style:** learners should work with the learning material in ways that most suit their individual learning style
- (10) **Integrative motivation:** Dörnyei (2001) addresses the question of how teachers can motivate learners and suggests that motivational teaching practice has four principal aspects:



1.3.3. Monitoring and assessment

(1) **Ongoing needs and environment analysis:** selection, presentation, and assessment of the material should be based on a continuing consideration of the learners and their needs, the teaching conditions, and the time and resources available

(2) **Feedback:** learners should receive feedback which will improve the quality of language use.

Sources:

- (a) monitoring themselves
- (b) in their communication with each other
- (c) an observer of the communication process

1.4. Goals

Goal and *aim* → general statements of the intended outcomes of a language program based on the environmental constraints and needs analysis

Purposes of aim statements (e.g., *Students will learn how to write effective business letters for use in the hotel and tourism industries*):

- provide a clear definition of the purposes of a program
- provide guidelines for teachers, learners, and materials writers
- provide a focus for instruction
- describe realizable changes in learning

Objective → specific descriptions of the intended outcomes/purposes of the program.

Characteristics:

- describe what the aim seeks to achieve in terms of smaller units of learning
- provide a basis for the organization of teaching activities
- describe learning in terms of observable behavior

The advantages of describing the aims of a course in terms of objectives:

- facilitate planning
- provide measurable outcomes
- are prescriptive

Example in a travel and tourism course:

Aim: To prepare students to communicate in English at a basic level for purposes of travel and tourism

Objectives: The students can understand simple written notices, signs, and menus.
The students have a reading vocabulary of 300 common words.
The students can understand simple questions, greetings, and directions.
etc.

Characteristics of statements of objectives:

- describe a learning outcome
- be consistent with the curriculum aim
- be precise
- be feasible

1.4.1. Behavioral objectives

The most familiar way ; Mager (1962) specified three essential characteristics:

- performance
- conditions
- criterion

Example:

Given oral directions for a 4-step physical action [condition], the learner will follow the directions [action that defines behavior] with 100% accuracy [level of performance].

Criticism:

- ⊗ turn teaching into a technology

- ⊗ are product-oriented
- ⊗ are unsuited to many aspects of language use

1.4.2. Skills-based objectives

Specify micro-skills or processes that account for fluency in macro-skill areas → components account for functional ability in a given skill but are independent of specific settings

Example:

After completing the reading course, the student will:

Use skimming when appropriate to ensure that he reads only what is relevant to help subsequent comprehension.

Make use of non-text information to supplement the text and increase understanding.

Not worry if he does not understand every word, concept when complete accuracy is important.

etc.

Criticism:

- ⊗ potential ambiguity and subjectivity of skills taxonomies

1.4.3. Competency-based objectives

Observable behaviors that are necessary for the successful completion of real-world activities ; linked to the field of *work* and *social survival* in a new environment

Example: The Council of Europe's Threshold Level English: "House and Home:

Learners should be able to discuss where and under what conditions they live, specifically:

types of accommodation (can describe the type of house or flat in which they live),

rooms (can describe the rooms and seek similar information from others),

furniture (can mention and inquire about the availability of the most essential pieces of furniture), and

rent (can state rent and purchase price of their accommodation).

Criticism:

- ⊗ definition of competencies
- ⊗ hidden values underlying competency specifications

1.4.4. Proficiency scales

Specify a level of proficiency

Example: ACTFL guidelines for novice-level speakers:

can communicate short messages on highly predictable, everyday topics that affect them directly. They do so primarily through the use of isolated words and phrases that have been encountered, memorized, and recalled. Novice-level speakers may be difficult to understand even by the most sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to non-native speech.

1.4.5. Process-based objectives

Outcomes apart from language-related objectives ; describe learning experiences/processes rather than learning outcomes = describe how you are going to get yourself to the end goal

In general education → Bruner (1966) and Stenhouse (1975), e.g. activities that engage learners in investigation, decision making, reflection, interpretation, making choices, cooperation with others, etc.

Learning how to learn ; learning strategies:

The course should develop students' awareness of the learning process and their role as learners by developing the following knowledge and skills:

- *ways of organizing learning and dividing learning tasks into smaller sub-tasks*
- *familiarity with how to use reference words designed to assist them in independent learning (e.g., dictionaries, reference grammars, study guides)*
- *awareness of their own learning styles and strengths and weaknesses*

Task-based, project work, and fully communicative syllabi

1.4.6. Non-language outcomes

Outcomes apart from language-related objectives

Outcomes related to the personal, social, cultural, and political needs and rights of the learners → issues of access and equity for non-English-speaking background learners and workers

Example:

to assist students to identify major local providers of services for:

- *the unemployed*
- *employment*
- *education and training*

*to assist students to identify the main functions of the above
to provide task-oriented activities, including community visits*