

Issues in Syllabus Design

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PREFACE

The diverse assortment of syllabuses and the host of related issues in the field of second language teaching and course development make it evident that syllabus design is one of the most controversial areas of second language pedagogy. The implementation of syllabuses for use in specific language teaching programs inter alia may include issues related to the structuring of the units, the methodology used to convey the content, and the format, presentation and assessment of the content. The differences in content and theoretical grounding of various types of syllabi do signify a common concern: Teachers should be familiar with different types of syllabuses and be able to critically analyse them. Thus, this book addresses the major types of syllabuses in language course development.

The chapters in this book are brought together to provide BA and MA university students a comprehensive overview of the old and new approaches to syllabus design. In Chapter 1, Murphy provided an introduction to the concept of syllabus design and briefly covered five major syllabus types from a historical perspective and pedagogical significance: the Grammatical Syllabus, the Notional-Functional Syllabus, the Lexical Syllabus, the Task-Based Syllabus, and the Content-based Syllabus. In the second chapter, Maftoon and Safdari took a comprehensive look at the history of educational philosophies which were touched chronologically and included Idealism, Realism, Perennialism, Essentialism, Existentialism, Pragmatism, Progressivism, Experimentalism, Reconstructionism, and postmodernism. Through grasping such a sketch of philosophical ideas, they attempted to answer the question which idea should be taken as an appropriate foundation of a language teaching curriculum. They came up with Kurniadinivelu's idea of principled pragmatism which holds that postmethod pedagogy is based on three dimensions of particularity, practicality, and possibility. Therefore, Maftoon and Safdari recommended practitioners and theorists a localized view instead of a global view. Rather than focusing on a one-fits-all approach, a localized view promotes tailoring global approaches and philosophies to fit the specific situation, learners, and teachers.

Wette, in Chapter 3, focused on the famous dichotomy of product/process-based types of curriculum. After elaborating on the distinctions between these syllabuses, she continued with the critiques of both. Wette believed that mostly the syllabuses focus on the final product of any teaching and learning; however, process-based syllabuses can be mingled to the whole curriculum to help teachers and learners to focus on enhancing skills through a step by step process.

Faravani and Zeraatpishe, in Chapter 4, provided an introduction to the grammatical syllabus along with its major critiques. As an alternative to grammatical syllabus, Birjandi and Nacini introduced situational syllabus in Chapter 5. Having discussed the philosophical, psychological, and linguistic foundations of this type

of syllabus, they argued the merits of it over grammatical type. Situational syllabus focuses on teaching the practical command of four basic skills through introducing grammatical rules in the context of situation.

Jafarpour Mamaghani and Zolghadri in the next chapter discussed skills-based syllabus which divides language into different modules for listening, speaking, reading and writing, and sub-skills of these larger skills. They started with the definition and features of skills-based syllabus and continued with theoretical underpinnings, merits and demerits, and applications. They finalized the chapter by illustrating the skills-based syllabus with a number of examples.

Lexical syllabus was the next type focused on by Dat Bao in Chapter 7. He mentioned that the lexical syllabus sees vocabulary as the most important component of syllabus design, and argued the necessity for optimal selection of words to be taught and learned. Such goal can be achieved through focusing on a range of factors including frequency of use, range of appearance in various text types or genres, availability, meaning coverage, learnability and teachability.

In the next chapter, Goodith White introduced genre-based syllabus including the genres which a particular group of students need to produce or understand in their life outside the classroom. She discussed how might a teacher draw up a genre based syllabus for his/her class.

David Little debated about functional syllabus in the following chapter. He elaborated on the historical development of such kind of syllabus which was initiated by the development of *The Threshold Level*, by the Council of Europe.

Chapter 10 co-authored by Fitzsimmons-Doolan and Stoller focused on content-based syllabus. They argued A continuum of CBI models including topical, thematic, sustained-content, linked, sheltered, partial-immersion, and immersion models. Then, they came up with tips for teachers who want to incorporate aspects of content-based instruction into their teaching procedure.

In the following chapter, Anne Ma elaborated on task-based syllabus. She argued a continuum showing different understanding of tasks and then proposed a framework for organizing tasks. Azarnoosh and Kargozari, in Chapter 12, dealt with the negotiated syllabus and its origins, types, frameworks, advantages and disadvantages. Finally, the last chapter of the book authored by Michael Handford discussed discourse syllabus in Chapter 13. He debated how discourse approach benefits learners.