

Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language

THIRD
EDITION



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Syllabus Design

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In "Syllabus Design," Nunan describes and evaluates a range of syllabus types including grammatical, notional-functional, content-based, task-based, and integrated. He also sets out and illustrates key procedures for developing syllabuses. These include needs analysis, goal and objective setting, and the development of competencies.

OVERVIEW

In order to define syllabus design, we need to start with the broader field of curriculum development. *Curriculum* is a large messy concept which can be looked at in a number of ways. A very broad definition is that it includes all of the planned learning experiences of an educational system. The field of curriculum development was first systematized by Tyler in 1949, who articulated four fundamental questions that must be answered by any curriculum developer:

1. What educational purposes should a school seek to attain?
2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain those purposes?
3. How can the educational experiences be effectively organized?
4. How can we determine whether these purposes have been attained?

In the context of language teaching, the first two questions have to do with syllabus design, the third with language teaching methodology, and the fourth with assessment and evaluation. Syllabus design, then, is the selection, sequencing, and justification of the content of the curriculum. In language teaching, content selection will include selecting linguistic features such as items of grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary as well as experiential content such as topics and themes. This selection process is guided by needs analyses of various kinds. Needs analysis provides the designer with a basis both for content specification and for the setting of goals and objectives.

In 1976, David Wilkins published an influential book called *Notional Syllabuses*, in which he argued that the point of departure for syllabus design should not be lists of linguistic items, but a specification of the concepts that learners wish to express (notions such as time and space), and the things that learners want to do with language (functions such as complimenting or apologizing). More recently, there have been calls for the adoption of a process approach, in which the point of departure is not lists of linguistic or notional-functional content, but a specification of communicative and learning processes. This has resulted in proposals for task-based syllabuses. Another significant trend, particularly in second as opposed to foreign language contexts, has been the emergence of content-based syllabuses. Most recently, an integrated approach has been called for. In such an approach, all or most of the elements and processes described above are incorporated into the syllabus.

In this chapter, I will elaborate on the concepts and processes described in the preceding paragraph. Where appropriate, the concepts will be illustrated with extracts from syllabuses of different kinds.

Grammatical Syllabuses

Traditionally, the point of departure for designing a language syllabus has been to select and sequence lists of grammatical items, and then integrate these with lists of vocabulary items. Lists of phonological items have sometimes been thrown in for good measure.

Grammatical syllabuses are still very popular today, although they were at their most popular through the 1960s, when virtually all syllabuses were crafted in grammatical terms. The assumption underlying these syllabuses is that language consists of a finite set of rules which can be combined in various ways to make meaning. The task for the language learner is to master each rule in the order presented by the syllabus before moving on to the next. The whole purpose of the grammatical syllabus was to control input to the learner so that only one item was presented at a time. This created a dilemma, which became more and more pressing with the advent of Communicative Language Teaching: How could one control input at the same time as one is providing learners with exposure to the kinds of language they would encounter outside the classroom?

This problem can be addressed in a number of ways. One solution is to abandon any attempt at structural grading. Another is to use the list of graded structures, not to determine the language to which learners are exposed, but to determine the items that will be the pedagogic focus in class. In other words, learners are exposed to naturalistic samples of text which are only roughly graded, and which provide a richer context, but they are only expected formally to master those items which have been isolated, graded, and set out in the syllabus (Nunan 1988a, p. 30).

During the 1970s, the grammatical syllabus came under attack on two fronts. In the first place, the linear sequencing entailed in grammatical syllabuses did not represent the complexity of language. Secondly, evidence from the field of second language acquisition showed that learners did not necessarily acquire language in the order specified by the grammatical syllabus. For example, Dulay and Burt (1973) and Bailey, Madden, and Krashen (1974) showed that certain grammatical items appeared to be acquired in a predetermined order, and that this order appeared to be impervious to formal instruction. This led Krashen (1981, 1982) to argue that we should abandon grammatically structured syllabuses completely in favor of a "natural approach" to language learning. In the natural approach, grammatical grading is eschewed,

replaced by communicative activities that promote subconscious acquisition following the "natural" order rather than conscious learning based on classroom instruction.

An alternative explanation for the lack of congruence between the input provided by grammatical syllabuses and the language actually used by learners at different stages of development has been provided by Pienemann and Johnston (1987). These researchers argue that the order in which learners acquire a particular item will be determined, not by the grammatical complexity of the item, but by its speech processing complexity. Their hypothesis predicts that the third person singular verb inflection (present tense) *s*, which is grammatically simple but complex in terms of speech processing, will be acquired relatively late in the language acquisition process, and this is indeed what we find. Third person *s* is one of the first grammatical morphemes to be taught, but for many learners it is one of the last items to be acquired. In fact, some learners never acquire it.

The speech processing theory predicts that the following items will be acquired in the order below, and that this is therefore the order in which they should be introduced in the syllabus:

What's the time?/What's your name?
How do you spell X?/Are you tired?
Where are you from?/Do you like X?

Pienemann and Johnston (1987) argued that the structural syllabus should be retained. However, the ordering of items in the syllabus should follow a very different sequence—that established by their research as being "learnable." Thus, *wh*-questions with *do* would not be taught until learners had mastered *wh*-questions with *be*.

The problem with this proposal, particularly in light of Communicative Language Teaching, is that many of the items that are required for communication are "late acquired"—for example, *wh*-questions with *do*. Teachers working with such a syllabus would be able to use few communicative tasks in the early stages of learning. Critics of the Pienemann and Johnston proposal have argued that "unlearnable" structures can be introduced, but they should be presented as

holistic formulae. In other words, learners would be taught question forms such as *What do you do?* and *Where does she live?* as single “chunks” for use in communicative tasks such as role plays, information gaps, and so on. They would not be expected to break these down into their constituent parts immediately; this would happen gradually over time. In fact, some second language acquisition researchers argue that this process of learning strings of language as unanalyzed chunks and then later breaking them down is a key psycholinguistic mechanism in the acquisition process (Ellis 1994).

THE “ORGANIC” APPROACH TO GRAMMAR

Underlying the traditional linear syllabus is the notion that learning is a process of mastering each item perfectly one at a time. In fact, when the structural syllabus was at its height of popularity, mastery learning was an important movement within educational psychology. In metaphorical terms, it was believed that a language develops in the same way as a building is constructed—one (linguistic) brick at a time.

However, the complexity of the acquisition process revealed by a growing body of second language acquisition (SLA) research led some syllabus designers to argue that language development is basically an organic process. According to this metaphor, a new language develops in a way that is more akin to plants growing in a garden rather than a building being constructed. Learners do not acquire each item perfectly, one at a time, but numerous items imperfectly, all at once.

NEEDS ANALYSIS

With the advent of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the 1970s, a very different approach to syllabus design was proposed by a number of linguists. This approach began, not with lists of grammatical, phonological, and lexical features, but with an analysis of the communicative needs of the learner. A set of techniques and procedures, known as needs analysis, was

developed to assist designers adopting such an approach. While needs analysis was a crucial tool for those working in the areas of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP), it was also widely used in General English syllabus design.

The appearance of needs analysis in language education (it had existed in other areas of educational planning for many years) was thus stimulated by the development of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Proponents of CLT argued that it was neither necessary nor possible to include every aspect of the target language in the syllabus. Rather, syllabus content should reflect the communicative purposes and needs of the learners. Language-for-tourism syllabuses will contain different content from syllabuses designed for teaching academic English. (See Johns and Price-Machado’s chapter in this volume).

Needs analysis includes a wide variety of techniques for collecting and analyzing information, both about learners and about language. The kinds of information that syllabus designers collect include biographical information such as age, first language background, reasons for learning the language, other languages spoken, time available for learning, and so on. The most sophisticated instrument for doing a needs analysis was developed by Munby (1978). Called the *communicative needs processor*, it involved specifying the following:

- participant (biographical data about the learner);
- purposive domain (the purposes for which the language is required);
- setting (the environments in which the language will be used);
- interaction (the people that the learner will be communicating with);
- instrumentality (the medium: spoken versus written; the mode: monologue or dialogue, face-to-face or indirect);
- dialect;
- target level (degree of mastery required);
- communicative event (productive and receptive skills needed);
- communicative key (interpersonal attitudes and tones required).

Brindley (1984, 1990) draws a distinction between “objective” needs and “subjective” needs:

Objective needs are those which can be diagnosed by teachers on the basis of the analysis of personal data about learners along with information about their language proficiency and patterns of language use . . . whereas the “subjective” needs (which are often “wants,” “desires,” “expectations” or other psychological manifestations) cannot be diagnosed as easily, or, in many cases, even stated by learners themselves (Brindley 1984, p. 31).

Objective needs analyses result in content derived from an analysis of the target communicative situations in which learners will engage, as well as an analysis of the kinds of spoken and written discourse they will need to comprehend and produce. Such analyses were fundamental to the development of an important and enduring movement within language teaching—that of language for specific purposes.

Needs-based course design, particularly when it results in tightly specified learning outcomes, has been heavily criticized. Widdowson (1983), for example, claims that such courses are exercises in training rather than in education because learners can only do those things for which they have been specifically prepared. He argues that learners should be able to do things for which they have not been specifically prepared. However, the extent to which learners are able to transfer learning from one context to another is basically a methodological issue rather than a syllabus design issue. Syllabus designers can facilitate learning transfer by building into the syllabus opportunities for recycling.

Another criticism of needs-based course design is that, while it might be relevant in second language contexts, it is often irrelevant in foreign language contexts, where learners have no immediate, or even foreseeable, need to communicate orally. In such contexts, subjective needs, relating to such things as learning strategy preferences, may be more relevant than objective needs.

Goal and Objective Setting

Needs analysis provides a basis for specifying goals and objectives for a learning program. Goals are broad, general purposes for learning a language. At the broadest level, Halliday (1985) argues that individuals use language

- to obtain goods and services,
- to socialize with others, and
- for entertainment and enjoyment.

These very broad goals can be elaborated and refined, as the following goal statements illustrate:

Instruction should enable learners to

1. participate in conversation related to the pursuit of common activities with others;
2. obtain goods and services through conversation or correspondence;
3. establish and maintain relationships through exchanging information, ideas, opinions, attitudes, feelings, experiences and plans;
4. make social arrangements, solve problems, and come to conclusions together;
5. discuss topics of interest;
6. search for specific information for a given purpose, process it, and use it in some way;
7. listen to or read information, process it, and use it in some way;
8. give information in spoken or written form on the basis of personal experience;
9. listen to or read, and/or view a story, poem, play, feature, etc., and respond to it personally in some way (Clark 1987, p. 186).

Having established the goals of a learning program, the syllabus designer articulates a set of objectives designed to realize the goals. Objectives are therefore much more specific than goals, and numerous objectives will be specified for any given goal. Formal performance objectives have three elements: a “task” or performance element, a standards element, and a conditions element. The task element specifies what the learner is to do, the standards element sets out how well the performer is to carry out the task, and the conditions element establishes the circumstances under which he or she is to perform.

The following examples illustrate just how specific performance objectives are:

1. In a classroom role play (condition), students will exchange personal information (performance). Three pieces of information will be exchanged (standard).
2. When listening to a taped weather forecast (condition), students will extract information on minimum and maximum temperatures and other relevant information such as the likelihood of rain (performance). All key information will be extracted (standard.)

In the field of general education, the objectives approach has been criticized over the years. One criticism that is relevant to language education is that truly valuable learning outcomes cannot be accurately specified in advance. (This belief is captured by the aphorism, "Education is what's left when everything that has been taught has been forgotten.") In language teaching, our aim is to help learners develop the ability to communicate meanings, attitudes, and feelings that can only be prespecified in a very general sense. Proficiency requires creativity, and proficient language users know multiple ways of achieving communicative ends through language. Identifying objectives a priori may therefore be problematic. Another criticism is that the prespecification of precise and detailed objectives prevents the teacher from taking advantage of instructional opportunities occurring unexpectedly in the classroom.

COMPETENCE-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING (CBLT)

According to Richards (in press), competency-based training developed as an alternative to the use of objectives in program planning, although there are many similarities between the two approaches. As with the objectives movement, CBLT focuses on what learners should be able to do at the end of a course of instruction. As with objectives, competencies are concerned with the attainment of specified standards rather than with an individual's achievement in relation to a group. They are therefore criterion- rather than

norm-referenced and this is the major difference between the two approaches.

Example of a competency statement:

The learner can negotiate complex/problematic spoken exchanges for personal business and community purposes. He or she

- Achieves purpose of exchange and provides all essential information accurately
- Uses appropriate staging, for example, opening and closing strategies
- Provides and requests information as required
- Explains circumstances, causes, consequences, and proposes solutions as required
- Sustains dialogue, for example, using feedback, turn taking
- Uses grammatical forms and vocabulary appropriate to topic and register; grammatical errors do not interfere with meaning
- Speaks with pronunciation/stress/intonation that does not impede intelligibility
- Is able to interpret gestures and other paralinguistic features (Adult Migrant Education Service 1993).

The competency-based approach has had a major influence on syllabuses in particular sectors of the educational systems in most English-speaking countries, including Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

CBLT first emerged in the United States in the 1970s and was widely adopted in vocationally oriented education and in adult ESL programs. By the end of the 1980s, CBLT had come to be accepted as the "state-of-the-art" approach to ESL by national policymakers and leaders in curriculum development (Auerbach 1986).

If we look at the sample competency statement provided above, we will see that it has several points of similarity with the objectives described in a previous section. It contains a "task" statement and a number of "how well" or standards statements ("achieves purpose of exchange," "provides all essential information accurately," "uses appropriate staging," "errors do not interfere with meaning," "pronunciation does not impede intelligibility").

THE STANDARDS MOVEMENT

The most recent manifestation of performance-based approaches to syllabus design, in the United States at least, is the standards movement. Throughout the 1990s, there was a concerted push for national education standards. This push was seen at all levels of government, and it resulted in legislation mandating the development and implementation of standards. For example, the Adult Education Act and the National Literacy Act of 1991 require adult basic education programs in all states to develop indicators of program quality and to attach performance standards to these quality indicators (see website at the end of chapter).

In many ways, just as the competency movement was a repackaging of concepts from the objectives movement, the same is true of the standards movement. "Objectives/competencies" are redefined as standards, which can also be used in work done in other areas such as math and language arts. For example, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE 1997) standards document for English language arts states, "By content standards, we mean statements that define what students should know and be able to do" (p.1-2).

In ESL, the TESOL organization has commissioned several sets of standards in areas such as pre-K-12, adult education, and workplace education. The most fully developed of these are the pre-K-12 standards (Short et al. 1997). These are framed around three goals and nine standards. The standards are fleshed out in terms of descriptors, progress indicators, and classroom vignettes. The nine content standards "indicate more specifically [than the goals] what students should know and be able to do as a result of instruction" (p.15). Descriptors are "broad categories of discrete, representative behavior" (p.15). Progress indicators "list assessable, observable activities that students may perform to show progress towards meeting designated standards. These progress indicators represent a variety of instructional techniques that may be used by teachers to determine how well students are doing" (p.16).

The following example from the *ESL Standards* illustrates the different components of the standard. It is written for grades pre-K-3.

Goal:

- To use English to communicate in social settings

Standard:

- Students will use English to participate in social interactions

Descriptors:

- Sharing and requesting information
- Expressing needs, feelings, and ideas
- Using nonverbal communication in social interactions
- Getting personal needs met
- Engaging in conversations
- Conducting transactions

Sample Progress Indicators:

- Engage listener's attention verbally or non-verbally
- Volunteer information and respond to requests about self and family
- Elicit information and ask clarification questions
- Clarify and restate information as needed
- Describe feelings and emotions after watching a movie
- Indicate interests, opinions, or preferences related to class projects
- Give and ask for permission
- Offer and respond to greetings, compliments, invitations, introductions, and farewells
- Negotiate solutions to problems, interpersonal misunderstandings, and disputes
- Read and write invitations and thank you letters
- Use the telephone

(Short et al. 1997, p. 31)

NOTIONAL-FUNCTIONAL SYLLABUSES

The broader view of language as communication that emerged during the 1970s was taken up by syllabus designers. As indicated earlier, an important figure here was Wilkins (1976), who argued for syllabuses based on notions and functions. Notions are general conceptual meanings such as time, cause, and duration, while functions are the communicative purposes that are achieved through language such as apologizing, advising, and expressing preferences.

Like most syllabus proposals, notional-functionalism was not impervious to criticism. Early versions of notional-functional syllabuses ended up not being so very different from the grammatical syllabuses that they replaced. Instead of units entitled “simple past,” we find units entitled “talking about the weekend.” Widdowson (1983) also pointed out that simply replacing lists of grammatical items with lists of notional-functional ones neither represented the nature of language as communication nor reflected the way languages were learned any more than grammatical syllabuses did.

When syllabus designers began turning away from grammatical criteria as the point of departure in designing their syllabuses, selection and grading became much more problematic. As soon as one looks beyond linguistic notions of simplicity and difficulty, the number of criteria begins to multiply. These criteria include situational, contextual, and extralinguistic factors. There are no objective means for deciding that one functional item is more complex than another. In addition, most functions can be expressed in many different ways and at many different levels of complexity. Apologizing, for example, can range from *Sorry* to *I really must apologize—I do hope you can forgive me*.

The relative arbitrariness of selecting and sequencing can be seen in the following list of functional components from a well-known EFL course:

1. Ask and give names; say hello; ask and tell where people are from
2. Say hello formally and informally; ask about and give personal information

3. Describe people; tell the time
4. Describe places; give compliments; express uncertainty; confirm/correct information
5. Describe houses and apartments; make and answer telephone calls
6. Express likes and dislikes; ask about and describe habits and routines
7. Ask and tell about quantity
8. Ask for and give directions; ask for and tell about physical and emotional states
9. Talk about frequency; express degrees of certainty
10. Describe people’s appearances; write simple letters; give compliments

(Swan and Walter 1984)

CONTENT-BASED SYLLABUSES

Content-based instruction (CBI) comes in many different guises (see Snow’s chapter in this volume). However, all variants share one characteristic—language is not presented directly, but is introduced via the content of other subjects. In school settings, this content is typically the regular subjects in the curriculum such as science, geography, and mathematics. Learners acquire the target language in the course of doing other things. The approach draws strongly on the experiential view of learning, that is, that active engagement in communicating in the language is the most effective means of acquiring it.

As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, the three core tasks for the syllabus designer are selecting, sequencing, and justifying content. In CBI, the justification comes from the content area itself. For example, if the content area is general science, the topic of photosynthesis would be introduced on the grounds that it is a core topic in the field.

A recent book on content-based instruction presents teaching suggestions in the following categories:

- *Information management:* Here learners sift data into different categories, or are given categories and are required to find examples to fit these categories.

- *Critical thinking:* Learners go beyond classifying to evaluate or analyze data, for example, by determining a point of view or arguing from a given stance.
- *Hands-on activities:* These involve manipulating data through games, experiments, and other experiential activities.
- *Data gathering:* These tasks involve learners in scanning for specific information and/or collecting and assembling facts, data, and references.
- *Analysis and construction:* This final category involves “(a) breaking a text into its component parts, elucidating its rhetorical pattern, and examining text flow (cohesion and coherence) or (b) applying knowledge of oral and written discourse conventions to create a specifically patterned text with the goal of increasing fluency, accuracy, or both” (Master and Brinton 1997, p. vi).

TASK-BASED SYLLABUSES

Task-based syllabuses represent a particular realization of Communicative Language Teaching (Nunan 1989, see also Crookes and Chaudron’s chapter in this volume). Instead of beginning the design process with lists of grammatical, functional-notional, and other items, the designer conducts a needs analysis, which yields a list of the communicative tasks that the learners for whom the syllabus is intended will need to carry out. In syllabus design, a basic distinction is drawn between target tasks and pedagogical tasks. A target task is something that the learner might conceivably do outside of the classroom. Examples of target tasks include

- Taking part in a job interview
- Completing a credit card application
- Finding one’s way from a hotel to a subway station
- Checking into a hotel

Pedagogical tasks are unlikely to be deployed outside the classroom. They are created in order to “push” learners into communicating with each other in the target language, on the assumption that this communicative interaction will fuel the acquisition process.

The following is a fairly common example of a pedagogical task:

In pairs, students complete an information gap task to get instructions on how to get from one’s hotel to the nearest subway station. Student A has a map of the town center with the hotel marked. Student B has the same map with the subway marked.

Having specified target and pedagogical tasks, the syllabus designer analyzes them in order to identify the knowledge and skills that the learner must have in order to carry out the tasks. The next step is to sequence and integrate the tasks with enabling exercises designed to develop the requisite knowledge and skills. One key distinction between an exercise and a task is that exercises will have purely language-related outcomes, while tasks will have nonlanguage-related outcomes, as well as language-related ones.

Examples of exercises:

- Read the following passage, from which all prepositions have been deleted, and reinstate the correct prepositions from the list provided.
- Listen to the dialogue and answer the following true/false questions.
- Rearrange these questions and answers to form a conversation, and practice the conversation.

Example of a task:

- Listen to the weather forecast and decide what to wear. (Such a target task might be carried out in the classroom by having students circle pictures of clothing and accessories such as jackets, shorts, umbrellas, and sunglasses.)

TYPES OF TASKS

Another way of distinguishing between tasks is to divide them into *reproductive* and *creative* tasks. A reproductive task is one in which the learner is reproducing language following a model provided by the teacher, textbook, tape, or other source. A task is reproductive if the language that the learner is to use is largely predetermined and

predictable. This does not mean that such tasks are necessarily noncommunicative. Many communicative tasks, such as the following, are of this type.

Class survey. Find someone who likes/ doesn't like the following:		
	likes	doesn't like
Eating chilis	_____	_____
Playing tennis	_____	_____
Watching sci-fi movies	_____	_____
Doing homework	_____	_____

This task is reproductive because we know that if the students are doing it right, they will be saying, "Do you like eating chilis?" "Do you like playing tennis?" etc. It is communicative in that the person asking the question does not know whether the classmate's answer will be *yes* or *no*.

Creative language tasks, on the other hand, are less predictable. Learners must assemble the words and structures they have acquired in new and unpredictable ways. Here is an example of a creative task.

<p>Pair work. Who is the best person for the job?</p> <p>Read the following résumés, and decide who the best person is for the following jobs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ School building supervisor ■ Receptionist ■ Librarian ■ Bookstore clerk

In this task, the language used by the students is much less predictable. If we were to eavesdrop on the task, we might predict that we would hear utterances such as:

"I think . . ."

"We should . . ."

"This person might . . ."

However, there is no way of predicting precisely the language that will be used.

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO SYLLABUS DESIGN

In this chapter, I have outlined the major trends and developments in syllabus design over the last twenty years. In my own work, I have tried to embrace an integrated approach to syllabus design in which all of the elements and options discussed above are brought together into a single design. The following example illustrates one way in which this might be done.

1. Identify the general contexts and situations in which the learners will communicate.
2. Specify the communicative events that the learners will engage in.
3. Make a list of the functional goals that the learners will need in order to take part in the communicative events.
4. List the key linguistic elements that learners will need in order to achieve the functional goals.
5. Sequence and integrate the various skill elements identified in steps 3 and 4.

In developing integrated syllabuses, I find that cross-reference planning grids are very useful, because they enable me to map out and coordinate the different elements in the syllabus. Here is a cross-reference grid integrating functions and structures for the first few units in a syllabus underpinning a textbook series for younger learners. Not only does the grid help guide me in selecting which items to teach when, it also shows me where and when recycling is necessary. I can also see if there are gaps in the syllabus.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have provided an introduction to the field of syllabus design. I suggest that syllabus design is that part of curriculum development which is concerned with selecting, grading, integrating, and justifying the content of the curriculum. Different types of syllabuses, from grammatical to task-based, are introduced, described, and critiqued. The key theoretical and empirical

Structures

Functions ↓	Simple present tense + be	What questions	Demonstratives: <i>this, that</i>	Where questions	Prepositions: <i>on, in, under</i>	Simple present tense + have
Introduce yourself	x	x				
Identify ownership		x	x			
Introduce people			x			
Talk about where things are				x	x	
Talk about likes and dislikes	x					x

(Source: Nunan 1999a)

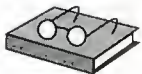
influences on the field are also introduced. In the last part of the chapter, I argue for an integrated syllabus which draws on and incorporates all of the key experiential and linguistic elements discussed in the body of this chapter.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you see as the role of the classroom teacher in syllabus design?
2. What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of an objectives-based syllabus?
3. What do you think that content-based and task-based syllabuses might have in common? How might they differ?
4. If you were asked to design a syllabus for a new ESL or EFL course, what are some of the first things you would do as preparation?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Look at the “Course Overview” in Appendix B of Jensen’s chapter on lesson planning in this volume. Is this a syllabus? Explain your answer.
2. Design a needs analysis questionnaire for a specified group of learners.
3. Compare the selection and sequencing of functional and grammatical components in several general ESL/EFL textbooks. What similarities and differences are there? Is there a “common core” of elements across the textbooks?
4. Identify a target group of learners and carry out the five planning tasks suggested in the section on the integrated syllabus on page 64. Develop a cross-reference grid similar to the one set out in the chapter.
5. Design four three-part performance objectives for the group of learners in Activity 4 above.



FURTHER READING

Dubin, F., and E. Olshtain. 1986. *Course Design*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This book is designed for teachers who have the planning and development of courses as part of their duties. It covers what the authors call the “fact-finding” stage—establishing realistic goals, surveying existing programs, realizing goals through instructional plans, selecting the shape of the syllabus—and the considerations involved in constructing communicative syllabuses.

Brown, J. D. 1995. *The Elements of Language Curriculum*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Although it is a book on curriculum, and therefore deals with issues that go beyond syllabus design, it also provides an accessible introduction to syllabus design issues.

Graves, K., ed. 1996. *Teachers as Course Developers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This book contains six interesting case studies of teachers as course developers and syllabus

designers. The narratives of these teachers, who work in very different contexts worldwide, illustrate the process of course development from the perspective of the teacher.

Nunan, D. 1988a. *Syllabus Design*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

This book explores the principles involved in selecting, grading, and integrating the various components of a language syllabus and demonstrates how teachers can go about analyzing the syllabuses in use in their own classrooms. It offers analytical tools and techniques for evaluating, modifying, and adapting syllabuses.



WEBSITES

Both the U.S. National Literacy Act of 1991 and the U.S. Adult Education Act of 1991, along with related policy resources, are available on-line at

www.nifl.gov/lincs/collections/policy/resource.html