

SYLLABUS DESIGN

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been a shift from teacher-centered classrooms to learner-centered ones. In traditional approaches, learners are passive listeners whereas in recent ones, they are active information receivers which give the teachers new roles and responsibilities. Durak Üğüten (2015, p. 470) states that "as teachers, our priority in learning procedure is to support our learners' learning". So, instead of being a direct information giver, we should integrate our learners to our teaching procedure which requires changing our course and syllabus according to the needs of the students. Whatever preparation the teacher has done before the course starts, the needs of any particular group cannot be understood in great detail until the students arrive and the course starts. So generally teachers have a B plan in their minds for emergency situations. Having a syllabus for a course will make teacher's job easier. The most important point is to decide on which type of syllabus is suitable for his/her course. This review provides the definition of the syllabus design, content and types of the syllabuses.

Keywords: learner-centeredness, syllabus, type.

MÜFREDAT DESENİ

Özet

Son yıllarda öğretmen merkezli eğitimden öğrenci merkezli eğitime doğru bir değişim görülmektedir. Geleneksel yaklaşımda öğrenciler pasif alıcı durumdayken, son dönemlerde aktif alıcı durumdadırlar. Bu da öğretmenlere yeni roller ve sorumluluklar yüklemektedir. Durak Üğüten'e (2015, p. 470) göre, "Öğretmenler olarak öğrenme sürecinde bizim önceliğimiz öğrencilerin öğrenmelerini destelemektir." Buradan yola çıkarak bilgiyi direkt veren değil de öğrenci ihtiyaçlarına göre değişiklikler gerektiren ders ve müfredata öğrencilerimizi entegre etmemiz gerektiği söylenebilir. Dersten önce öğretmen ne kadar hazırlık yaparsa yapsın, öğrenciler gelip ders başlayana kadar her grubun ihtiyaçları tam olarak anlaşılabilir. Bu yüzden öğretmenlerin her zaman acil durumlar için bir B planı olmalıdır. Bir müfredatın olması öğretmenin işini kolaylaştırır. Önemli olan öğretmenin hangi müfredatın derse uygun olduğuna karar vermesidir. Bu çalışmada müfredat deseninin tanımı yapılmış, içerik ve çeşitleri ile ilgili öğretmenlere faydalı bilgiler verilmiştir.

Anahtar Kavramlar: öğrenci-merkezlilik, müfredat, tip.

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Introduction

In recent years, there has been a shift from teacher-centered classrooms to learner-centered ones. In traditional approaches, learners are passive listeners whereas in recent ones, they are active information receivers which gives the teachers new roles and responsibilities. Durak Üğüten (2015, p. 470) stated that “as teachers, our priority in learning procedure is to support our learners’ learning”. So, instead of being a direct information giver, we should integrate our learners to our teaching procedure which requires changing our course and syllabus according to the needs of the students. Because they have gained more importance and caused the emergence of new approaches and new techniques. In teaching and learning process, there are two words that we always deal with: course and syllabus. So what are course and syllabus design?

According to Skelton & Willis (n.d):

"Course and Syllabus Design" is the name for this area of study because courses and syllabuses are generally perceived to be two different things, partly it must be admitted simply by customary collocation, given that the two terms are not always used indistinguishably. But a "course" might be taken to mean a real series of lessons (the particular course delivered last year to such and such a group of students and to be repeated again this year), while a "syllabus" can be taken to be something rather more abstract, with fewer details of the blow by blow conduct of individual lessons."

That is, a course can change from person to person with different materials based on the same syllabus, determiner and guide of a course. It is an agreement between teacher and students. They also added that a syllabus has a list of things about what we want our learners to learn in the English class. We should make the answer of the question “what do we want them to learn?” clear. They listed four problems:

- what we want them to learn could be extremely varied;
- some of the things we want them to learn are easy to articulate;
- others are not; the "what" and the "how" of learning are intimately, and perhaps inextricably, bound up;
- our formulation assumes that we do indeed want a pre-established list of things to be learned.

Nunan (n.d.) indicated that “syllabus design is seen as being concerned essentially that “ syllabus design is seen as a matter of specifying the content that needs to be taught and then organizing it into a teaching syllabus of appropriate learning units” . Breen and Prabhu (in Gürbüz 2013) stated that a syllabus can be seen as a plan of what we are going to do in the classroom in our teaching and learning process.

Content of a syllabus

So what should we put into our syllabus? What should a syllabus contain? The answers of these kind of questions will give a shape to the syllabus of the course to be taught. Gürbüz (2013,p. 37) indicated that “syllabus design involves a logical sequence of three main stages, that is, (1) needs analysis, (2) content specification, and (3) syllabus organization”.



Needs Analysis: The most important point is the needs of the learners as each learner is unique and has different types of learning styles. It is difficult for a teacher to know them without help. According to Gürbüz (2013), having needs analysis stage will make teachers to understand these differences easily. He pointed out (p. 38):

The concept of needs analysis enables us to discriminate between various learner types and to produce syllabus inventories specifically equipped with their needs. But this system only holds true as long as the learner groups dealt with have the same needs. A needs analysis is usually seen as being most beneficial for an English for Special Purposes (ESP) course. Though this is true, it can also be equally well considered for general language education

1. Content Specification

The second step is deciding on the content of the syllabus based on the needs of the learners. Syllabus design is not an easy task as it involves many skills and functions like the selection, sequencing and justification of the content of the curriculum. Reilly (1988) stated that:

a language teaching syllabus involves the integration of subject matter (what to talk about) and linguistic matter (how to talk about it); that is, the actual matter that makes up teaching. Choices of syllabi can range from the more or less purely linguistic, where the content of instruction is the grammatical and lexical forms of the language, to the purely semantic or informational, where the content of instruction is some skill or information and only incidentally the form of the language.

2. Syllabus Organization

The last stage is to decide on the way the content is going to be taught. According to Gürbüz (2013, p. 39) "The objective of organizing a syllabus should be to promote learning, and not just to provide a description of the language. Therefore, the content matter should be organized in such a way so as to facilitate teaching and learning. The unit of organization should also suit the particular purpose of learning".

To sum up, there is no specific syllabus for teaching settings. So it is the teachers to decide on the steps of preparing a syllabus. Reilley (1989) offered some guidelines for preparing practical language teaching syllabus:

1. Determine, to the extent possible, what outcomes are desired for the students in the instructional program. That is, as exactly and realistically as possible, defines hat the students should be able to do as a result of the instruction.
2. Rank the syllabus types presented here as to their likelihood of leading to the outcomes desired. Several rankings may be necessary if outcomes are complex.
3. Evaluate available resources in expertise (for teaching, needs analysis, materials choice and production, etc.), in materials, and in training for teachers.
4. Rank the syllabi relative to available resources. That is, determine what syllabus types would be the easiest to implement given available resources.



5. Compare the lists made under Nos. 2 and 4. Making as few adjustments to the earlier list as possible, produce a new ranking based on the resources' constraints.
6. Repeat the process, taking into account the constraints contributed by teacher and student factors described earlier.
7. Determine a final ranking, taking into account all the information produced by the earlier steps.
8. Designate one or two syllabus types as dominant and one or two as secondary.
9. Review the question of combination or integration of syllabus types and determine how combinations will be achieved and in what proportion.
10. Translate decisions into actual teaching units.

Types of a Syllabus

There are numerous types of a syllabus to be used in teaching and learning situation, each with different underlying methods. Reilly (1988) stated that:

the theory of language explicitly or implicitly underlying the language teaching method will play a major role in determining what syllabus is adopted. Theory of learning also plays an important part in determining the kind of syllabus used. For example, a syllabus based on the theory of learning espoused by cognitive code teaching would emphasize language forms and whatever explicit descriptive knowledge about those forms was presently available. A syllabus based on an acquisition theory of learning, however, would emphasize unanalyzed, though possibly carefully selected experiences of the new language in an appropriate variety of discourse types.

Here six main types are going to be mentioned which were given by Reilly (1988):

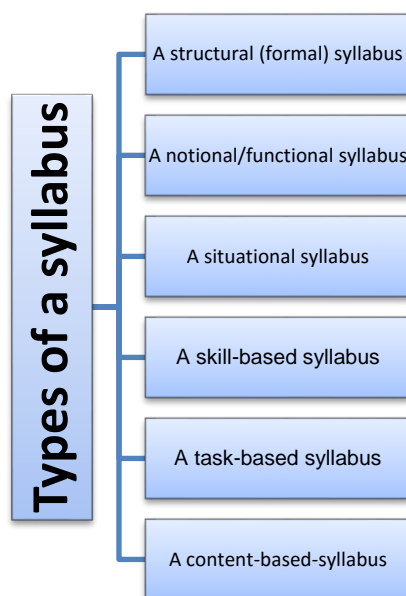


Figure 1: Types of a Syllabus



1. "A structural (formal) syllabus." The content of language teaching is a collection of the forms and structures, usually grammatical, of the language being taught. Examples include nouns, verbs, adjectives, statements, questions, subordinate clauses, and so on.
2. "A notional/functional syllabus." The content of the language teaching is a collection of the functions that are performed when language is used, or of the notions that language is used to express. Examples of functions include: informing, agreeing, apologizing, requesting; examples of notions include size, age, color, comparison, time, and so on.
3. "A situational syllabus." The content of language teaching is a collection of real or imaginary situations in which language occurs or is used. A situation usually involves several participants who are engaged in some activity in a specific setting. The language occurring in the situation involves a number of functions, combined into a plausible segment of discourse. The primary purpose of a situational language teaching syllabus is to teach the language that occurs in the situations. Examples of situations include: seeing the dentist, complaining to the landlord, buying a book at the book store, meeting a new student, and so on.
4. "A skill-based syllabus." The content of the language teaching is a collection of specific abilities that may play a part in using language. Skills are things that people must be able to do to be competent in a language, relatively independently of the situation or setting in which the language use can occur. While situational syllabi group functions together into specific settings of language use, skill-based syllabi group linguistic competencies (pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and discourse) together into generalized types of behavior, such as listening to spoken language for the main idea, writing well-formed paragraphs, giving effective oral presentations, and so on. The primary purpose of skill-based instruction is to learn the specific language skill. A possible secondary purpose is to develop more general competence in the language, learning only incidentally any information that may be available while applying the language skills.
5. "A task-based syllabus." The content of the teaching is a series of complex and purposeful tasks that the students want or need to perform with the language they are learning. The tasks are defined as activities with a purpose other than language learning, but, as in a content-based syllabus, the performance of the tasks is approached in a way that is intended to develop second language ability. Language learning is subordinate to task performance, and language teaching occurs only as the need arises during the performance of a given task. Tasks integrate language (and other) skills in specific settings of language use. Task-based teaching differs from situation-based teaching in that while situational teaching has the goal of teaching the specific language content that occurs in the situation (a predefined product), task-based teaching has the goal of teaching students to draw on resources to complete some piece of work (a process). The students draw on a variety of language forms, functions, and skills, often in an individual and unpredictable way, in completing the tasks. Tasks that can be used for language learning are, generally, tasks that the learners actually have to perform in



any case. Examples include: applying for a job, talking with a social worker, getting housing information over the telephone, and so on.

6. "A content-based-syllabus." The primary purpose of instruction is to teach some content or information using the language that the students are also learning. The students are simultaneously language students and students of whatever content is being taught. The subject matter is primary, and language learning occurs incidentally to the content learning. The content teaching is not organized around the language teaching, but vice-versa. Content-based language teaching is concerned with information, while task-based language teaching is concerned with communicative and cognitive processes. An example of content-based language teaching is a science class taught in the language the students need or want to learn, possibly with linguistic adjustment to make the science more comprehensible.

Conclusion

Whatever preparation the teacher has done before the course starts, the needs of any particular group cannot be understood in great detail until the students arrive and the course starts. So generally teachers have a B plan in their minds for an emergency situation. Having a syllabus for a course will make teacher's job easier. The most important point is to decide on which type of syllabus is suitable for his/her course.

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