



Paper Type: Original Article



Approaches to Syllabus Design and the Role of Teachers as Course Developers

Massoud Rahimpour*

Tabriz University, Tabriz, Iran; Queensland University, Queensland, Australia; rahimpour2011@gmail.com;

Received: 10 February, 2023

Revised: 22 May, 2023

Accepted: 24 July, 2023

Abstract

The issue of syllabus design is of great importance in language education and has attracted the attention of many material developers and language instructors over the last decade. The main purpose of this paper is, thus, to provide theoretical rationale, concepts, and practical approaches for those English teachers and material developers who want to develop their own courses. The paper also seeks to familiarize the ESL/EFL instructors and material developers with the tools and techniques of developing a course in TESOL, acquaint them with fundamental issues and practices in language curriculum development and provide them with necessary information to deepen their understanding of course development. Key elements and essential components in a course development process including different types of approaches to foreign language syllabus design, the current schools of syllabus design, the role of teachers in syllabus design, goals and objectives, material development, grading, sequencing of contents, textbook selection, syllabus and evaluation will be explained in detail. Potential practical guidelines to teaching English language, syllabus design and material development will be presented in order to provide language teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills for planning, implementing and evaluating in a given course.

Keywords: Curriculum, Evaluation, Syllabus design, Task-based syllabus, Textbook selection.

I | INTRODUCTION

The design of syllabi for second language teaching is a crucial concern that has garnered significant attention from language teachers. They play a central role in course design and material development, as the syllabus serves as the core of L2 instruction programs. Scholars such as Robinson (1995, 1998, 2009, 2013), Nunan (1987, 1993), Rodgers (1996), Long & Crookes (1992), Stern (1984), Rahimpour (1997, 1999, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2021), and White (1988) have all contributed to this field. Syllabus design methods have undergone revolutionary changes over time, leading to the emergence of various types of syllabi. The past decade has witnessed significant developments in this area. According to Kazimi et al. (2019), teachers express the need for proper training in syllabus development. Therefore, it is important to provide classroom teachers with appropriate training to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge for effective and successful course development.



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Corresponding Author: rahimpour2011@gmail.com



10.22034/jsllt.2023.19456.1006



This paper is divided into six sections. Section 1 explores the role of classroom teachers as course developers and provides a discussion on the distinction between syllabus and curriculum. Section 2 examines current trends in syllabus/curriculum and analyzes three schools of syllabus design. Section 3 focuses on task-based teaching syllabi. Section 4 briefly introduces different types of approaches to foreign language syllabus design. Section 5 outlines key practical elements, essential components, and potential guidelines for teaching English language and syllabus design, as well as material development. Finally, Section 6 presents the conclusion and pedagogical implications.

1. The Role of The Classroom Teachers as Course Developers in Syllabus Design

The initial stage of syllabus design involves clarifying the role of classroom teachers in designing an English class syllabus. The key question then arises: What is the teacher's role in syllabus design? Breen (1984) suggests that teachers either create their own syllabi or adopt pre-established ones mandated by the institution or state. Nunan (1993) refers to Bell (1983), who argues that teachers serve as consumers of syllabi developed by applied linguists, government agencies, and others. Bell further notes that some teachers have more freedom in designing their teaching programs' syllabi. According to Nunan (1993, p.80), only a few teachers have the opportunity to develop their own syllabi. Similarly, Nunan (1987) mentions that some teachers believe syllabus development should be undertaken by individuals with specific expertise. Therefore, it is essential to provide classroom teachers with appropriate training so they can acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to design their own syllabi, leading to effective and successful teaching. To be an effective teacher and facilitate successful learning, course developers should possess the ability to develop and adapt materials, plan and evaluate courses, cater to students' needs, and operate within an institutional framework. Hence, teaching and learning programs must be tailored to learners' requirements to ensure effectiveness.

2. Syllabus vs Curriculum: Terminological Comments

Before delving further into the discussion, it is important to address the terminological confusion surrounding the definitions of “**syllabus**” and “**curriculum**” as they can vary among scholars (Nunan, 1993; Rahimpour, 2008, 2010; Johnson, 1989). To differentiate between the two, Nunan (1993) highlights a broad and narrow approach to syllabus design. According to Candlin (1984, p.31), curriculum encompasses general statements concerning language learning, learning objectives, experiences, evaluation, and the roles and relationships of teachers and learners. On the other hand, syllabuses are more localized, focusing on the actual implementation of the curriculum in the classroom context (narrower definition). Nunan (1993, p.8) concurs with Candlin, stating that “curriculum” involves planning, implementation, evaluation, management, and administration of educational programs. “Syllabus”, in contrast, narrows its scope to content selection and sequencing.

Rodgers (1996) reports that in recent times, educational authorities have predominantly considered the syllabus as the educational program, receiving significant attention in design and implementation. Syllabus reform has been perceived as central to educational reform, particularly when new goals are pursued or existing goals are deemed inadequately achieved (Rodgers, 1996, p.25).

As Nunan (1993, p.4) suggests, the “curriculum” of an educational institution can be examined from different perspectives. Firstly, **curriculum planning** involves decision-making processes such as identifying learners' needs and objectives, establishing goals, selecting and organizing content, arranging appropriate learning environments and student groupings, and choosing or developing suitable materials, tasks, assessments, and evaluation tools.

Secondly, the curriculum can be observed “**in action**” within the classroom. This perspective focuses on the teaching and learning process, studying how the intended curriculum developed during the planning phase is implemented.



The third perspective centers around **assessment and evaluation**. It entails examining students' achievements, successes, and shortcomings, comparing what they have learned to what was planned for them.

Lastly, the **management of the institution** is another perspective to consider, examining the available resources and their utilization, as well as the impact of resource constraints and administrative decisions on classroom practices.

Regarding the distinctions between syllabus and curriculum, [Robinson \(1996\)](#) argues that **syllabus design** is a practical matter that involves specifying what has been or will be done. Syllabuses serve various purposes for different groups. Institutions and authorities often require syllabuses to ensure accountability and facilitate coordination between teachers and learners. For language programs, syllabuses define, guide, or document the actions taken by teachers and learners. From the viewpoint of the language program, the primary purpose of the syllabus is managerial, with options available on how to accomplish this management. However, from inside the classroom, the ultimate aim of the syllabus is to facilitate learning ([Robinson, 1996, 1](#)).

II. CURRENT TRENDS AND SCHOOLS OF SYLLABUS DESIGN ON SYLLABUS/CURRICULUM

There are three important trends in the scope of syllabus design and foreign language instruction.

1. Lancaster School

[Stern \(1984\)](#) identifies the first trend in syllabus design as the '**Lancaster School**', represented by Candlin and Breen. According to Stern:

This school of thought strongly opposes the concept of a rigid syllabus that is predetermined, planned, and imposed on teachers and students. They do not view it as a choice between structural and functional syllabuses. The idea of a fixed inventory of language items, such as the Council of Europe syllabuses, is unacceptable to them. They perceive the syllabus as flexible and open to negotiation. They envision the curriculum being collaboratively determined by the teacher and a specific group of learners ([Stern, 1984, p. 7](#)).

[Candlin \(1987\)](#) rejects the notion of a syllabus that requires learners to passively acquire knowledge. [Candlin \(1987\)](#) also dismisses the idea of a predetermined plan that imposes objectives, content, and teaching methodology on the teacher, who in turn imposes this syllabus on the students.

2. London School

The '**London School**', as described by [Widdowson \(1987\)](#) and [Brumfit \(1984\)](#), represents the second trend in syllabus design. This school of thought challenges and reacts against the extreme and unrealistic Lancaster view, instead proposing an alternative and more realistic approach ([Stern, 1984, p.8](#)).

According to [Widdowson \(1987\)](#), a syllabus is necessary, practical, and serves an economical purpose. Similar to [Candlin and Breen \(1984\)](#), he values the idea of teacher freedom. Widdowson distinguishes between the syllabus and teaching methodology, suggesting that the syllabus should have a structural focus, while the methodology can be communicative. [Brumfit \(1984\)](#) shares a similar perspective to Widdowson. He emphasizes that a curriculum is a public statement that serves practical purposes. Unlike the Lancaster



group's predominant concern with freedom and constraints, Brumfit's focus lies in developing a syllabus based on concepts of language, language learning, and language use.

3. Toronto School

Yalden's perspective serves as a link between the viewpoints of the London School and the Toronto School. Similar to [Brumfit & Widdowson \(1984\)](#), Yalden (1983) acknowledges the practical necessity of having a syllabus in language teaching. Just like [Brumfit \(1984\)](#), [Yalden \(1983\)](#) also recognizes the theoretical basis of the syllabus content. [Yalden \(1983\)](#) suggests that learners can contribute to the curriculum, although she does not overly focus on their role in syllabus development. According to her, the syllabus primarily represents the teacher's statement regarding objectives and content.

[Yalden \(1983\)](#) argues that a syllabus is necessary to achieve two forms of efficiency. The first is pragmatic efficiency, which involves saving time and money. She also asserts that not all learners should receive the same treatment, leading to variations in syllabuses based on practical constraints in different situations. According to [Yalden \(1984, p.14\)](#), the second form of efficiency is pedagogical, focusing on effective management of the learning process. Institutional instruction is assumed to be a more efficient approach compared to unstructured learning environments.

In the context of the **Toronto School**, represented by [Allen \(1984\)](#), the learner's role in syllabus development is not a significant concern. Allen accepts the need for a syllabus without questioning it. His main focus lies in constructing a curriculum that is both theoretically sound and practically useful.

III. TASK-BASED TEACHING SYLLABUSES

In the past, task-based approaches to language teaching emerged during the 1970s and continued to develop throughout that decade. Various proposals for task-based teaching syllabuses exist today, including the **procedural syllabus** ([Prabhu, 1987](#)), the **process syllabus** ([Breen, 1984, 1987](#); [Breen & Candling, 1980](#)), and **task-based language teaching** ([Long, 1985](#); [Long & Crookes, 1992](#); [Robinson, 1995, 2009, 2013](#); [Rahimpour, 1997, 1999, 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2021](#)). Although these approaches differ in significant ways, they all move away from analyzing linguistic elements such as words, structures, notions, functions, and situations, and instead focus on tasks as the central unit of analysis. Advocates argue that these approaches create more favorable conditions for developing second language skills compared to approaches solely focused on explicit teaching of language rules. However, research on the validity of this assumption is still in its early stages. As proposed by [Long \(2016\)](#), task-based language teaching is a relatively recent innovation that demands expertise from course designers and classroom teachers, as well as a substantial investment of time and effort for successful implementation ([Robinson, 1995, 1989](#); [Long, 2016](#); [Rahimpour, 1997, 1999, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2021](#)).

1. The Procedural Syllabus

The **procedural syllabus**, associated with Prabhu and the Bangalore Communicative Teaching Project (CTP) in India from 1974-1984, is characterized as "learning-centered" and emphasizes the significance of meaning in language learning, rather than solely focusing on the learner. According to [Prabhu \(1987, p. 147\)](#), the construction of grammar by the learner is an unconscious process facilitated by directing their attention towards meaning, expression, and action.

The CTP syllabus does not include specific linguistic specifications; instead, it comprises problem-solving activities in the form of tasks. These tasks are centered around meaning and can be categorized



into three types: opinion-gap activities, information-gap activities, and reasoning-gap activities (Prabhu, 1987).

At the core of the procedural syllabus is the belief that knowledge of linguistic structure develops primarily unconsciously, relying on an internal system of abstract rules and principles acquired through extensive exposure to the target language (Long & Crookes, 1992). This linguistic knowledge is best acquired when the focus is on meaning, which is effectively achieved through task completion. As a result, the procedural syllabus disregards lexical or syntactic structures as the basis for each lesson and instead prioritizes the task itself (Prabhu, 1984).

Critiques of the CTP and procedural analysis have been raised in various studies (Brumfit, 1984; White, 1988; Long & Crookes, 1992). Issues highlighted include the lack of an evaluative component and the absence of specificity regarding the notion of a task. Task selection and grading are also significant considerations in the discussion of task-based syllabus design.

2. The Process Syllabus

Another approach to course design that falls under the task-based framework is known as the process syllabus, which has been discussed by Breen (1984, 1987), Breen & Candlin (1980), Candlin (1984, 1987), and Candlin & Murphy (1987). Unlike the procedural syllabus, the process syllabus was initially driven by educational and philosophical considerations rather than primarily psycholinguistic ones. It places emphasis on the entire learning process and aims to address questions such as who is involved, what subject matter is being covered, which resources are utilized, when and how the learning occurs, and what the learning purposes are (Breen, 1984).

The process syllabus views the syllabus as a means of specifying and planning the ways in which knowledge is acquired, interpreted, and applied (Candlin, 1984). It focuses on interactive and problem-solving processes in language learning rather than narrowly predefined knowledge outcomes.

In the process syllabus, learners are actively engaged in determining the tasks, objectives, content, and methodology to be employed. This differs from the procedural syllabus, where tasks are carefully controlled and learners have limited choices in terms of task selection and approaches (White & Robinson, 1995).

Criticism has been directed towards the **process syllabus** for lacking an evaluative component to assess the claims made by its proponents. Concerns have also been raised regarding the high level of learner autonomy required in negotiating task content. This expectation places significant demands on learners' linguistic competence and on teachers' ability to facilitate such negotiation (White, 1988). Furthermore, cultural barriers may exist in implementing this syllabus, as teacher-learner negotiation might challenge traditional role dynamics in language classrooms within certain cultural contexts (Long & Crookes, 1993).

2. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Recently, there has been growing interest among language researchers and syllabus designers in task-based approaches to second language teaching. These approaches prioritize the ability to perform tasks or activities rather than focusing solely on teaching grammatical rules. Scholars such as Prabhu (1987), Robinson (1995, 2001), Skehan (2003), Ellis (2003), and Rahimpour (1997, 1999, 2002) have contributed to the development of this approach, which is believed to create more favorable conditions for second language development.

One specific approach within task-based language teaching is known as task-based language teaching (TBLT), as discussed by Crookes (1986), Crookes & Long (1987), Long (1985, 1989), and Long & Crookes (1987). TBLT advocates for an analytic syllabus, particularly Type B. The task itself is considered central



to all aspects of instructional design, ranging from identifying learner needs to measuring student achievement. The syllabus is constructed by differentiating between target tasks, which represent real-life activities, and pedagogic tasks, which are derived from target tasks and form the basis of the task-based syllabus. It is these pedagogic tasks that are carried out by teachers and students in the classroom (Long, 1989).

Pedagogic tasks are organized and sequenced based on their level of difficulty, not according to traditional linguistic criteria. Task complexity is determined by various task-related factors, such as the number of steps, possible solutions, involved parties, salient features, temporal and spatial aspects, language requirements, competing sources of attention, and other linguistic, cognitive, or social factors (Long & Crookes, 1992, 1993).

TBLT differs from other analytic syllabuses in several ways. It distinguishes itself from the procedural syllabus by emphasizing the importance of conducting a needs analysis prior to instruction. Identifying potential sources of task complexity is crucial for making informed decisions about task grading and sequencing, which presents a significant challenge for task-based syllabus designers. Additionally, TBLT aligns with the procedural and process syllabuses in the belief that language learning is best achieved through communication.

According to Long & Crookes (1992), syllabuses can be classified based on the unit of analysis employed in their design. Traditional approaches have focused on discrete units such as words, grammatical structures, notions, and functions, leading to synthetic syllabuses. In contrast, analytic syllabuses present the target language in meaningful chunks, providing learners with various forms that express specific content or meaning. Learners are then responsible for analyzing the relationships between structures and corresponding communicative content (Pienmann, 1985).

White (1988) categorizes syllabuses into Type A, which emphasizes what is to be learned, and Type B, which focuses on how the language is learned. Type A syllabuses align with synthetic approaches, while Type B syllabuses resemble the analytic approach (White & Robinson, 1988; Rahimpour, 1997). The choice of syllabus design should consider the desired learning outcomes and instructional goals.

It is important to note that no syllabus is inherently better than others; their effectiveness depends on whether they serve their intended purpose for teaching and learning (Sabbah, 2018). Creating favorable conditions for second language acquisition and providing opportunities for learning are essential considerations in syllabus design (Macalister & Nation, 2020; Rahimpour, 1997).

IV. DIFFERENT TYPES OF APPROACHES TO FOREIGN LANGUAGE SYLLABUS DESIGN

The choice of a syllabus is a major decision in language teaching. Several distinct types of language teaching syllabuses that are of particular relevance for the ESL/EFL and course development have been proposed (Rahimpour, 2008, 2010; Richards, 2001; Krahnke, 1987).

- **The structural (or grammatical) syllabus**

focuses on teaching linguistic forms and structures, such as verbs, nouns, and past tense, placing emphasis on explicit instruction and learning of grammatical rules.

- **The functional syllabus**



is organized around communicative functions, such as making requests, expressing complaints, giving suggestions, and agreeing. It emphasizes the practical use of language in real-life situations (Richards, 2001, p. 154).

- **The notional syllabus**

focuses on teaching language by presenting various notions or concepts, such as age, time, size, and color. It aims to develop learners' ability to express these notions through language use (Wilkins, 1976).

- **The situational syllabus**

is based on teaching language through real or imaginary situations in which language is used, such as visiting the dentist, asking for directions in a new town, or buying a book in a bookstore.

- **The skill-based syllabus**

focuses on specific language abilities required for reading, writing, listening, or speaking. It targets the development of these skills in language learning (Krahnke, 1987).

- **The lexical syllabus**

identifies a specific vocabulary to be taught, typically arranged according to levels, such as the first 500, 1000, or 2000 words (Richards, 2001, p.154).

- **The task-based language teaching syllabus**

places emphasis on learners' ability to perform tasks or activities without explicit instruction in grammatical structures. This approach aims to create favorable conditions for second language development. There are three types of task-based teaching syllabuses: procedural syllabus, process syllabus, and task-based language teaching. While they differ in important ways, all three reject linguistic elements as the unit of analysis and instead focus on tasks as the central unit of instruction (Robinson, 1995; Rahimpour, 2010).

- **A content-based syllabus**

is organized around specific topics, themes, or units of content. In content-based language teaching, the main goal is to teach subject matter or information using the language being learned. Language learning occurs incidentally as students engage with the content. An example of content-based language teaching is teaching science in the target language (Richards, 2001; Krahnke, 1987).

V. KEY PRACTICAL ELEMENTS, ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS AND POTENTIAL PRACTICAL GUIDELINES TO TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND SYLLABUS DESIGN AND MATERIAL DEVELOPMENT

In the process of developing a syllabus, several important practical elements and essential components need to be considered. These include needs analysis, setting goals and objectives, creating materials, organizing content, selecting textbooks, choosing teaching methods, and evaluating the effectiveness of the syllabus. Yassi & Kaharuddin (2015) also emphasize that syllabus design involves systematic steps in curriculum development for language teaching. They propose that language teachers should engage in curriculum development as it involves a deliberate effort to enhance the quality of language instruction



through various stages of systematic planning, including needs analysis, defining learning objectives, syllabus and teaching material development, implementing teaching materials, and evaluating the curriculum's effectiveness by assessing the attainment of learning goals within a language program.

1. Needs Analysis

The techniques and procedures employed to gather data and information from language learners for syllabus design are referred to as needs analysis. Needs analysis is a fundamental principle in course development as it plays a central role in collecting learner information to establish initial course goals and objectives during the curriculum decision-making stage. The learners' diverse purposes, wants, and priorities necessitate the use of needs analysis (Nunan, 1988; Brindley, 1984, 1996). Conducting a needs analysis allows course developers to determine the present and long-term needs of students and how those needs will be addressed to meet their requirements.

Data collection is suggested across three time frames: *pre-course*, *initial*, and *ongoing*. Pre-course needs assessment occurs before the course begins and informs decisions regarding content, goals and objectives, activities, and material selection. Initial needs assessment takes place at the outset of the course, while ongoing needs assessment occurs throughout the course, enabling learners to reflect on their learning progress and identify their ongoing needs. This establishes a process of negotiation between learners and teachers (Graves, 2000, p.110). Ongoing needs assessment also enables teachers to take timely actions to adjust, modify, or change content, materials, objectives, teaching methods, and evaluation as the course progresses. It serves as a means to determine the effectiveness of teaching and identify the causes of any shortcomings or failures, allowing for problem resolution.

When conducting a needs analysis, course developers need to determine what data should be collected, when and how it should be collected, who should collect it, the means of collection, and the purposes for which it will be used. Two types of information can be gathered from learners: *objective* information, which includes proficiency level, age, nationality, marital status, educational background, previous learning experiences, target culture, and occupation; and *subjective* information, which pertains to preferences such as course length, intensity, learning arrangements, goals, preferred methodology, learning style preferences, and attitudes towards the target language and culture. Subjective information is often collected once the course has commenced. The information collected before learners are assigned to a class can be used for initial class placement and grouping purposes (Graves, 2000; Nunan, 1988).

2. Course Rationale

Any given course should have a rationale and a course has to be based upon this rationale. According to Richards (2001, p. 145), the course rationale is a brief written description of reasons for the course it seeks to answer.

- Who is the course for?
- What is the course about?
- What kind of teaching and learning will take place in the course?

Present and long-term goals and objectives that underline the course indeed provide a rationale for a course.



3. Goals and Objectives

Learning *goals* represent broad descriptions of the overall, long-term aims of the course, serving as a justification for its existence, and can be derived from various sources, particularly from the data gathered through a needs analysis.

Goals, in fact, encapsulate the primary intentions and desired outcomes of the course. Developers should take into account what learners must accomplish or acquire in order to fulfil these goals.

Objectives, on the other hand, outline the specific steps and actions required to attain the goals. Objectives break down a goal into manageable and teachable units, and by successfully meeting the objectives, the overall goal is achieved. It should be noted that goals are more general and relatively long-term while objectives are specific and are relatively short-term. Objectives usually focus on what students will learn (Graves, 2000).

4. Grouping Students

Initial data gathered by needs analysis can be employed for grouping purposes. Practical experiences have proved that effective language learning can take place in classes where learners are homogeneous in terms of their proficiency levels. Placement tests can also be administered to place the students at the appropriate level.

5. Methodology

Syllabus design and methodology are two distinct aspects in language education. Syllabus design focuses on the choice and organization of content, while methodology revolves around the selection of learning tasks and activities. According to Nunan (1988, p. 6), syllabus design addresses the "what" of a language program, while methodology addresses the "how" of language learning. There are differing opinions among language experts regarding whether syllabus and methodology should be kept separate or integrated.

6. Content Selection

Content selection is an important element of course design. The main questions here are: Where does the content come from? What will the course developer include in the syllabus, and who are the learners?

Scholars, in the field of education, have highlighted the significance of determining the appropriate content for syllabus design at all educational levels (Kazimi et al., 2019) .

The selection, organization, and sequencing of materials and learning activities should be guided by specific criteria, such as progressing from simple to complex or from easy to more challenging. According to Graves (1996, p.29), sequencing occurs not only at the overall course level but also within individual weeks, units, or lessons.

Richards (2001, p.150) suggests the following criteria for sequencing the learning materials and activities:

- a) Simple to complex,
- b) Chronology,
- c) Need,
- d) Prerequisite learning,
- e) Whole to part or part to whole,
- f) Spiral sequencing.



The level of difficulty depends on the proficiency level of the learners. Learning contexts such as EFL/ESL situations, cultural issues, and learners' age should also be considered while selecting the content for the course. Meanwhile, the load of content depends on the duration of the course whether it is designed for the short or the long term program.

7. Level of Difficulty

Once the content prepared, it should be graded and sequenced according to their difficulty level. Traditionally, the difficulty has been defined in linguistic forms.

Syllabus designers and teachers prepared lists of grammatical, phonological, and vocabulary items and then graded them according to their difficulty and usefulness and learners were required to gain mastery over these items (Nunan, 1988).

Long (2016) offers a critique of traditional structural-based language teaching, emphasizing that teachers cannot simply teach at their own discretion if their goal is language learning. Long argues against the idea of skipping stages in a sequence by presenting learners with complete, target-like grammar structures and repetitive drilling until they become automatic. Instead, Long aligns with Pienemann's concept of processability, which determines learnability, and learnability, which determines teachability (Pienemann, 1984).

In addition, Long (2016) suggests that course designers and material writers should have reliable criteria to assess task complexity, which serves as the foundation for sequencing pedagogical tasks in a task syllabus.

In the communicative language teaching method, the focus shifted from mastering linguistic elements to understanding what learners want or need to accomplish with the target language. The content of instruction was not limited to grammar but included functional skills necessary for successful communication.

Another approach involves managing the difficulty level of tasks assigned to learners. According to Long (1985, p.93), task grading is determined by the level of difficulty inherent in the tasks themselves, as well as factors like variety, pace, and duration. Long's concept of difficulty does not solely consider the linguistic demands of a complete version of a specific task. Instead, it encompasses aspects such as the number of steps involved, the parties involved, assumptions about prior knowledge, intellectual challenges, temporal and spatial context (Long, 1990; Rahimpour, 1997).

8. The Materials in Use

Materials are an essential element within the curriculum and, at the classroom level, seem to be more important than any other element.

Materials are in different shapes and formats. Generally, there are two types of materials: local material produced by the teachers for their classes and referred to as teachers-generated resources and commercially-produced materials produced by the publishers or material developer canters. In most cases, especially in the ESL Situation, teachers prefer their own materials produced by themselves, though some teachers, especially in the EFL situation use commercially-produced materials.

Commercial material may be printed books, workbooks, teachers' books, students' books, or in the form of nonpoint material such as cassette or audio material, filmstrips videos, CD or computer-based material, or material on the Internet. Nowadays, materials also come in software formats like computer packages and discs.



When using existing material or developing new material, it should be noted by whom and where the materials are developed, and whether they are compatible with the syllabus, which language skills the material cover, and how authentic the materials are.

9. Textbook Selection

Textbooks still play an important role in language classrooms. That is why despite the development of new educational technologies, demand for textbooks continues to grow and publishers present new series, and textbooks every year. Using textbooks provides a syllabus for the course, includes supporting material and visual activities and saves the teachers' time in finding or developing appropriate materials, and provides security and a sense of improvement and achievement for the students. [Cunningsworth \(1995\)](#) also argues that textbooks are important resources for self-directed learning, an effective resource for presenting materials by the teacher, a source of ideas and activities, a reference source for students, a syllabus that reflects pre-determined learning objectives, and support for less experienced teachers who have yet to gain confidence.

Selecting an appropriate textbook is a challenging task and is of significant importance in language teaching, especially if it is the ESL/EFL teachers' responsibility to select the textbook to use in the class ([Rahimpour & Hashemi, 2011](#)).

There are many different criteria, procedures, and checklists that can be employed for textbook evaluation in different circumstances depending on aims, objectives, needs, and priorities, which will help teachers, administrators, and course designers to make sound judgments about the efficiency of the textbooks and materials they use in teaching. [Cunningsworth \(1995, pp. 3-4\)](#) has proposed a quick-reference checklist for evaluation and selection purposes, which includes criteria such as aims and approaches, design and organization, language content skills, topic, methodology, teachers' book, and practical considerations.

Textbooks may also have some disadvantages such as irrelevant or inappropriate content, inappropriate level of difficulty, culturally irrelevant materials in the EFL context, old and boring materials and an inappropriate load of material to be completed in the timeframe. These criteria should be considered in the textbook selection process.

It should also be noted that coursebook production is a complex, expensive and time-consuming business ([Sheldon, 1988](#)). [The British Council \(2013\)](#) reported that by 2020, two billion people will be using (English) - or learning to use it. A market of over a billion people (and rising) is not something at which many publishers are reluctant to aim. Accordingly, the focus should be on producing materials with the widest possible appeal to the broadest market they can access worldwide (https://www.eltcourse.com/training/in-service/background.syllabus_design.htm retrieved on 19/12/2022).

10. Teaching Methods

Regarding the teaching method, many teaching methods including: Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, Structural Method, Reading Method, Audiolingual Method, Situational Method, Communicative Approach, and Task-based Language Teaching have been used by teachers in the last decades, and each one has had its weakness and strength. Therefore, an appropriate teaching method should be employed to meet learners' needs, and priorities, and make the teaching effective and successful.

11. Evaluation

Evaluation serves as the final stage in the curriculum process, aiming to assess students' learning outcomes and gauge the effectiveness of the course. It encompasses various implications, such as determining



appropriate student placement, evaluating the course program, measuring learner achievements, and identifying strengths and weaknesses within the course to enhance its efficacy.

Evaluation occurs at different levels, including macro-level evaluations of national and state programs, as well as micro-level evaluations conducted at the classroom level involving teachers and learners (Nunan, 1988). In the context of task-based language teaching, Long (2015, 2016) suggests assessing student abilities using task-based, criterion-referenced performance tests.

The purpose of evaluation is to help teachers determine if the course objectives have been achieved. In cases where objectives have not been met, evaluation aims to identify the reasons for the shortfall and propose necessary actions for improvement. During the evaluation process, considerations should include who will conduct the evaluation, what aspects will be evaluated, why evaluation is necessary, when evaluation should take place, and how evaluation should be conducted.

There is typically a parallel between assessing students' learning and evaluating the course. Assessment takes different forms, with two important types being *formative* and *summative* assessments. *Formative assessment* occurs during the course to provide feedback on student progress, identify areas needing improvement, and ensure the course meets students' needs. *Summative assessment*, on the other hand, takes place at the end of the course to evaluate student achievements and determine the overall success and effectiveness of the program. Assessments should meet criteria such as being valid, reliable, fair, current, sufficient, and authentic.

VI. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this paper has been to provide important theoretical and practical rationale of syllabus types and highlight the characteristics of each syllabus. It should be noted that there should be a sound and solid bridge between theory and practice. From this perspective, syllabuses should be based upon a valid and strong theoretical basis, which consequently results in feasible and practical outcome in our syllabuses and leads to an efficient teaching and successful learning. This paper has also tried to shed light on the interrelationship between syllabus types and pedagogical approaches and methods. The key and central theoretical and practical issues and options available for syllabus designers and material developers, and language instructors in ESP, TESOL, and TOFEL were presented in order to provide the language instructors with the necessary knowledge and skills and familiarize them with the information necessary for syllabus design. This paper is, therefore, to present the key issues, options, necessary skills, and knowledge available for teachers, and material developers in order to design their own syllabus. This paper has, thus, tried to review the current views and trends on syllabus design and provide the readers with the key ideas of syllabus design, theoretical rationale, concepts, and practical approaches for those English teachers and material developers who want to develop their own courses. The main intention of the paper was, indeed, to familiarize the ESL/EFL teachers and material developers with tools and techniques in developing a course in TESOL, acquaint them with fundamental issues and practices in language curriculum development, and provide them with necessary theoretical and practical information to deepen their understanding of course development.

In sum, this study was an attempt to review, discuss the current theories and approaches to syllabus design, criticize their strengths and weaknesses, and address the role of teachers as course and material developers. Finally, the world has witnessed many significant changes in all aspects of life, including, economics, politics, and technology to this end. Language education is not an exception. Languages have changed and are still changing. Consequently, teaching methods, assessments, curricula, and syllabus types have changed too. In the future, we will see huge new changes and innovations in English language education too. Accordingly, as language instructors, we should also upgrade our skills of training in language education in order to meet the new generation learners' needs, wants, and priorities.



We still need more changes and modifications in our curriculum, syllabus design, material development, assessments, and delivery method (Rahimpour, 2021). Be noted that the world is changing very fast in all aspects of life. We should, thus, focus on innovation in syllabus design, material development, assessment, and textbooks production, teaching methods, and delivery. As language teachers and material developers, we should be able to utilize flexible and mixed-mode delivery, design appropriate syllabus for blended mode: face-to-face + online technology-based delivery which will facilitate and create more favorable conditions for efficient and successful teaching and learning, ensuring that students gain the skills and language proficiency they need to gain.

Regarding the pedagogical implications, it is hoped that the ideas initiated and reviewed in this paper will provide language teachers, material developers, policy makers and students an impetus for further research and intellectual discussions about syllabus design in ESP, ESL, TESOL, and TOFEL and provide pedagogical implications for teaching English and in particular for the syllabus designers and material developers specifically in diverse contexts. This study, indeed, is of particular relevance and has pedagogical implications for language instructors, and particularly for syllabus designers, and material developers. The paper closes with the well-known tradition “further experimental research is needed” to prove the practicality and validity of the presented approaches, methods, and ideas.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I sincerely appreciate the Director-in-Charge, the Editor-in-Chief, and the Editors of the journal for putting a lot of effort and time into publishing this journal. I wish further to thank and appreciate the anonymous reviewers for their careful reading and valuable feedback, comments and suggestions on the original version of this article. Any remaining errors are my own.

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Professor Massoud Rahimpour, Professor Emeritus of Tabriz University, was the Head of English Department, Deputy Dean of Faculty, Honorary Professor at The University of Queensland, and is currently teaching and developing Material and Assessment Tasks in AMEP (Australian Migration Education Program) and SEE (Skills in Education and Employment) at TAFE Queensland in Australia. Research interests: Task-Based Language Teaching, Syllabus Design, Second Language Acquisition, and Adult Language Learning.



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