Syllabus Design as an Important Facets in Second/Foreign Language Teaching / Dr. Dunia Tahir

Abstract

This paper is an introduction to the meaning of syllabus design which is that paper of curriculum development which is concerned with selecting, grading, integrating and justifying the content of the curriculum. Also there are different types of syllabuses are introduced and described.

The history of syllabus design in language teaching characterizes the ways in which language and language learning have been conceptualized to teach language in the classroom.

Effective curriculum and syllabus design are based on understanding learners' needs and processes for learning and the factors in the context that influence the enactment of the program or course.

In language teaching the choice of syllabus is a major design and it should be made consciously and with much information as possible because syllabus provides information about a course.

Section One: Introduction

1.1   Statement of the problem

When someone wants to teach English language it is necessary to answer the following questions:

a-What kind of English do you want to teach?

b-What level of proficiency do you limit the syllabus?

c-For what purposes? What the syllabus contains?

In order to provide answers to these questions, there must be need analysis and situational analysis. They are seek to identify the role of contextual factors in implementing curriculum change. (Jack and Richards, 2001:112).

1.2   Aims of the study

The study aims at investigating the following:

- To introduce learners to the text types they are likely to encounter during their university studies.
- To facilitate the development of communication skills , both verbal and nonverbal.
- To enable learners to participate in conversation related to the pursuit of common activates with others.

1.3   The Hypotheses

In order to achieve the aims of this study ,these null hypotheses are put forward :

1-There are no statistically significant differences among EFL students in the performance of the four skills.

2-There are no statistically significant differences among EFL students in knowing how to say something in English.

1.4   Limits of the study

This study is limited to the fourth year students in the college of education for humanities ,university of Tikrit in the academic year|(2016-2017).

1.5   Value of the study

-Encourages EFL learners to bring to the classroom situations of their own skills, experience and knowledge.

-Give the opportunity to experience the pleasure of being able to communicate using English language.

1.6   Definition of the basic terms

A syllabus:

White (1988:1-2) defines syllabus as

1- "The description of the work of a particular department in a school or college organized in subsections defining the work of a particular group or class.

2- It is often linked to time, and will specify a starting point and ultimate goal.

3- It will specify some kinds of sequences based on:

   a- Sequencing intrinsic to a theory of language learning or to the structure of specific material relatable to language acquisition;

   b- Sequencing constrained by administrative needs, e,g. materials.

4- It is a document of administrative convince and will only be partly justified theoretical grounds and so negotiable and adjustable,

5- It can only specify what is taught, it cannot organize what is learnt;

6- It is a public document and an expression of a accountability".

-Curriculum

A "curriculum is a dynamic system of interconnected, interrelated, and overlapping processes. The three curricular processes are planning, enacting, and evaluating. These processes are in play at every curricular level,

whether it is a lesson, unit, course, or program. They are carried out by people and may result in an array of curriculum products such as syllabuses, lesson plans, and assessment instruments". (Murcia, 2014:49).

1.7   The plan of the study

To fulfill the aim of the study , the following procedures

1-Selecting   a sample from fourth class English department , college of education for humanities.

2- Constructing a questionnaire which assesses students' skills according to needs analysis.

3-Analyzing the collected data by using appropriate statistical methods, and finally

4- Stating general discussion of results and conclusions.

Section Two: Theoretical background

2.1 Syllabus design

It is necessary to define curriculum development in order to know the meaning of syllabus design. Murcia (2001:55) states that "curriculum includes all of the planned learning experiences of an educational system". This field was first systematized by Tyler in 1949.

Rogers(1989:26) says that the term curriculum deals with what happens in schools and other educational instructions, the planning of instruction and how curriculum plans are implemented. A curriculum refers to the knowledge that the children acquire in schools.

There are some important questions must be answered to develop the curriculum .

" What are the purposes behind the education should the school seek to attain?"

"-What are the experiences behind education should the school be provided?"

"-How can educational experiences be organized?"

"-How can we know these purposes are being attained or not?"

Tyler argued that educational objectives should describe learners behavior not the behavior of the teacher and should as a result of teaching(Tyler,1950:1)

Syllabus design is "the selection, sequencing and justification of the content of the curriculum."Content selection in language teaching will include selecting items of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary as well as topics and themes. This selection process is guided by needs analysis of various kinds. It

provides the designer details about content and setting of goals and objectives(Murcia,2001:55)

2.2 Needs analysis and situational analysis

One of the basic assumptions of curriculum development is that curriculum must be based on an analysis of learners need. Needs analysis are "procedures used to collect information about learners need". It was introduced into language teaching through the ESP movement(Jack and Richards,2001:51-53)

The goal of needs analysis is "to collect information that can be used to develop a profile of the language needs of a group of learners in order to be able to make decisions about the goals and content of a language course". The term "needs" refers to wants, desires, demands, lacks, motivation, etc. It describes the difference between what the learner can do in a language, and what he/she will be able to do (ibid:54-55).

Situation analysis is "an analysis of factors in the context of a planned or present curriculum project". These factors may be political , social, economic or institutional. The information that is gathered during needs analysis and situational analysis are very important point.(ibid:91)

The goal of situation analysis is to help teachers- learners-administrators and government officials to identify a curriculum

project. Also it serves to study and analyze a course appraisal document, government reports, ministry of education lines, policy papers teaching materials and curriculum documents (ibid).

2.3 Types of Syllabus

Krahnke (1987:9-12) explains that there are six types of syllabus explains as follows:

a-The structural syllabus

This type of syllabus known as grammatical syllabus which the most familiar of syllabus types. It is based on a theory of language. The grammatical forms are the basic and useful one in language. It is the content of language teaching, it includes, nouns, verbs, adjectives, statements, questions, complex sentences-------also pronunciation and morphology.

b- A notional /functional syllabus

This type of syllabus in which the content of the language teaching is a collection of the functions that are performed when language is used . For example informing-agreeing-apologizing---or notions, examples of notions include, size, age, color, time and so on (ibid).

C- A situational syllabus

8

The content of this type is a collection a real or imaginary situations in which language is used. The purpose behind this type is to teach the language that occurs in these situations(ibid)

d-A skill-based syllabus

The content of a skill-based syllabus is a collection of specific abilities that may play a part in using a language. Skills are "things that people must be able to do to be competent in a language". The purpose behind this type is to learn the specific language skills(ibid:10-11)

e-A task-based syllable

A task-based syllabus and a content-based syllabus are similar in that "in both the teaching is not organized around linguistic features of the language being learned but according to some other organizing principle". The content of teaching in this type is a series of complex and purposeful tasks that the students need to perform with the language they are learning(ibid:11)

F-A content-based syllabus

In content-based instruction, the purpose behind the language teaching is to teach some information that are used in language It is concerned with information while task-based

instruction is concerned with communicative and cognitive processes(ibid:12).

Murcia (2014:50) says that there are nine types of syllabus:

1-Grammatical formal or structural syllabuses

2-Notional-functional syllabus

3-Task-based syllabus

4-Skills-based approaches

5-Lexical syllabus

A lexical syllabus is based on mini-corpus of common, pragmatically useful language items and language patterns drawn from spoken and written language corpora.

6-Genre or text-based syllabus

The text-based syllable is organized around genres. Genres are spoken or written texts, such as recounts, lectures, and critical reviews structured in particular ways to achieve particular social purposes.

7-Project-based language learning

Projects as the backbone of the syllabus. Learners engage in individual and cooperative investigative and production-based tasks to complete a project.

8-Negotiated syllabus

It is also called processes syllabus grew out of the task-based syllabus, negotiation means the interaction with others that the students acquire the language through interaction.

2.4 An integrated approach to syllabus design

A integrate approach means all the elements and options discussed above (types of syllabus) are brought together into a single design. For example

1-identify the general and specific contexts in which the learners will communicate in different situations.

2-specify the communicative situations and events in which the learners will engage in.

3-put forward the functional goal that the learner will need to use it in order to take part in communicative situations.

4-in order to achieve the functional and the basic goal that the learner need , it should make a list of the key linguistic elements.

5-integrate all the above and various skill elements and sequencing them.(Murcia,2001:63)

2.5 Advantages and disadvantages of the types of syllabus design

Krahnke(1987:21-70)discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the sis types of syllabus design. It will be explained as follows:

Types of syllabus	Advantages	Disadvantages
Structural syllabus	-It is very simple and its content (nouns, verbs, adverbs----)is easy to describe. -It is the general component of communicative competence	-It makes students learn only structural knowledge and they can success in texts, but these structural knowledge prevents students to use the language in functions. -It doesn't lead the learner to think he/she only learn facts and information about language.

National functional syllabus	-It develops students ability to communicate. -The categories of language use rather than language form.	-It has only short utterances or exchanges. -It contains routines in teaching
Situational syllabus	-It develops students ability to communicate in specific settings. -The contexts and discourse have form and meaning which is coincide.	-The creation of authentic language is difficult for learners. -It increase transfer to language use in settings.
Skill-based syllabus	-Learners need to master specific types of language uses. -Learners need this type because they know what they need to do with the language.	-It addresses general language proficiency. -It is too limited students programmed for particular kinds of behavior.
Task-based	-It is very powerful	-It requires competent

syllabus	and it is applied in different settings. -All learners' age and backgrounds are suitable for	teacher that have high level of proficiency -It requires other materials and new sources behind the textbook.
Content – based syllabus	-The students learn at the same time language and subject matter. -The language is learned from the students eliminate the transfer from instruction to use.	-Beginning or low level of students is often a problem. -It leads to premature fossilization.

2.6 Course planning and syllabus design

It is important for any language course seeks to answer these questions:

-"Who is the course for?'

-"What is the course about?"

14

-"What kind of teaching and learning will take place in the course?"

The answers for these questions serve to provide the type of teaching that will take place in the course, In order to plan a language course, it is necessary to know the levels learners may be expected to reach at the end of the course.

Moreover, the most basic issue in a course design is the course content. An important questions:

-"What will the content of the course book like?"

-"What the most essential elements or units of language are?", and

-"How these can be organized as an efficient basic for second/ foreign language learning?"

The course content contains writing course, speaking course, listening course and reading course (Jack and Richards,2001:147-148).

Sequencing on the other hand means deciding which content is needed early in the course and which provides a basis for things that will be learned later. It is based on the following criteria:

-Simple to complex

- Chronology

-Need

-Pre requisite learning

-Whole to part or part to Whole

-Spiral Sequencing (ibid:149).

The purpose of curriculum planning is to provide a framework for course and unit development, to guide and support teaching and learning in the classroom, and to provide a basis for the evaluation of program effectiveness (Murcia,2014:53).

Section Three: Methodology

3.1 Introductory note

The purpose of this section is to describe the methodology and procedures which used to conduct the present study which is designed to help learners develop the ability to communicate meaning ,attitudes and feelings that can only be pre specified in a very general sense. Also it provides detailed description of the population and sample designed, data collection procedures, the instrumentation, validity, reliability and scoring scheme.

3.2 Population of the study

A population is "the group of persons whom the survey is about". A research is known as well- defined collection of individuals or subjects to which the researcher like the results of the study to be generalized (Omar,2015:59).

The population of the study includes all students in fourth year in English department College of Education for Humanities Tikrit university. The Whole population of the current study are (20) students during the academic year (2016-2017). The students come from varying language backgrounds and academic fields and they vary in age.

3.3 The sample of the study

The word sample refers to "any small group or population of individuals which is selected to present a population" (Best and Kahn,2008:13)

The sample of the students is consists of (20) EFL students randomly chosen from the fourth year students of English department College of Education for Humanities.

3.4 Data collection

The tool that is constructed in this study is a questionnaire to achieve the aims of the study .

3.4.1 Description of the questionnaire

Siniscalco and Auriat (2005:4)state that the "questionnaire are often used in the field of educational planning to collect information about various aspects of educational instruction systems. Among the types of data that can be collected by means of a questionnaire are facts, activities, level of knowledge, opinions, membership of various groups, and attitudes and perceptions".

At the beginning of the questionnaire, the students are asked to respond to all questions. The questionnaire is consists of syllabus concerned with :

-Speaking skill

-Listening skills

-Writing skills

-Reading skills

The students should choose one of the three choices:

(always ,sometimes, never) this item consists of (5)statements.

3.5 Questionnaire validity

Validity refers to "the degree to which a survey instrument actually measures the concept it is suppose to measure"

(Slavein,1992:104). A measurement instrument is considered valid if it measures what its user claims it measures.

Face validity is "a property of a test intended to measure something. It is the validity of a test at face value. It is going to measure what it I supposed to measure"(Anastasi,1988:44).

For achieving the face validity of the questionnaire and to guarantee that the items are satisfactory in assessing the students expected to use the four skills during their study. And also how important to success for students in the course of study the following abilities: listening-speaking-writing and reading.

The questionnaire have been presented to a jury members in methodology and linguistics at college of education for humanities at Tikrit university.

According to these jury members judgments ,all the items are valid and acceptable. The jury members are:

-Assit prof,Nagham Q.Yahiya (Ph.D), college of education for humanities. University of Tikrit.

-Assist prof, Manal.O.Mousa.(Ph.D), college of education for humanities. University of Tikrit.

-Najwa.Yassen.(Ph.D), Instructor college of education for humanities. University of Tikrit.

-Sammara.M. Ahmed (MA), Instructor   college of education for humanities. University of Tikrit.

Content validity is defined as "the extent to which a test or measurement device adequately measures the knowledge, skill or ability that it was designed to measure" (Mackey and Gass,2005:352).

3.6 The pilot study

The Pilot study is "a small study conducted in advance of planning project specifically to test an aspect of research design and to allow necessary adjustment before final commitment to the design" (www.aqr.org.ok)

The pilot sample of the students is limited to the EFL fourth year students College of Education for Humanities at Tikrit university. The total number of students sample is (20).

3.7 Pilot Administration of the Instrument (Questionnaire)

The pilot administration has been conducted in order to:
1- check the clarity of the instruments instructions.

2-Estimate the time allotted for answering the instruments, and

3-compute the reliability coefficient of the instrument.

It is administrated to the pilot sample of the students. This procedure is done in the academic year 2016-2017.

3.8 Reliability of the Instrument (Questionnaire)

Harris (1969:14) states that "reliability is the stability of test scores". Weir (1990:32) states that " any educational study should have a reliable test and its instruments have to be reliable". In short, reliability means that the test should be stable and consistent in measuring whatever it measures, otherwise the results would be less faith and give untrue conclusions.

3.8.1 Reliability of the Questionnaire

Test-retest reliability method is applied to calculate the reliability of the questionnaire. Test-retest reliability indicates that the same respondents respond to the questionnaire twice, the researcher would get the same answer each time, the notion is the basis of the test-retest reliability by asking the same respondents to complete the survey items of the questionnaire at different time. If the correlation between the first set of answers and the second is greater than (0,75), one can assume that test retest reliability is good (Schuman and Presser,1996:46).

3.9   Final   Administration   of   the   Instrument (Questionnaire)

After achieving the validity and reliability of the questionnaire , it has been administrated at different days to the selected sample. It is administrated in academic year 2016-2017. The researcher has explained the aim behind the instruments for the participants and testes . While the allocated time for answering the questionnaire is 60 minutes. The participants have been responded to the items of the questionnaire answered, and the testes answered, then the sheets are collected by the researcher score and tabulated them to find the final results.

3.10 Statistical Methods

The following statistical methods are used:

1 -The percentage is used to find the agreement of the jury members on the face validity of the instruments.

2 -Pearson Correlation Coefficient: It is used to calculated the reliability of the two sets of scores of the pilot study which are scored by the researcher and her colleague twice (Downie &Robert, 1983:99). The following formula is used:

the Pearson Correlation Coefficient value.

$$r = \frac{n(\Sigma xy) - (\Sigma x)(\Sigma y)}{\sqrt{[\, n\Sigma x^2 - (\Sigma x)^2\,][\, n\Sigma y^2 - (\Sigma y)^2\,]}}$$

Where:

N represents the number of pairs of data

Σ denotes the summation of the items indicated

ΣX denotes the sum of all X scores

ΣX2 indicates that each X score should be squared and then those squares summed

$(\Sigma$X)2 indicates that the X scores should be summed and the total squared.

ΣY denotes the sum of all y-scores

ΣY2 indicates that each Y score should be squared and then those squares summed

$(\Sigma$Y)2 indicates that the Y scores should be summed and the total squared

ΣXY indicates that each X score should be first multiplied by its corresponding Y score and the product (XY) summed

3- Weighted Mean : it is typically used to find the weighted mean of items of the questionnaire to count the highest or lowest weight for each item (Isaac & Michael, 1977:120). The following formula is used :

$$X^- = \frac{W_1 X_1 + W_2 X_2 + \ldots\ldots + W_n Xn}{W_1 + W_2 + \ldots\ldots + W_n}$$

where: x is the repeating value

W is the number of occurrences of x (weight)

X is the weighted mean x- is the weighted mean

Theoretical mean of the weighted mean is 3 for Likert quintuplet scale & 2 for triplet scale

4- Weighted Percentile :   is used to count the weighted percentile for each item in the questionnaire (ibid:123). The following formula is used. Where :

$$W.P.= \frac{x \div the\ highest}{100}$$

5- Chi- square is used to find whether the differences of teachers' application of organizational competence in terms of fields of specialization, and students' achievements is statistically significant. The following formula has been used:

$X2 = \Sigma [(O-E)2 / E]$ (ibid:135 (

Where :

O = the observed frequencies

E = the expected frequencies

Σ = the summation

Section Four: Analysis of Data and Discussion of the Results

4.1 Introductory note

This section is specified to display and discuss the results obtained by applying the questionnaire tool of measurement, to achieve the aim of this study.

4.2 The result of the questionnaire

This instruments consists of (4) basic questions and (20) statements with three options. To analyze the results of the whole sample table (1)explains all students, options.

Table(1)

No.of items	always	sometimes	never
1	10 %	65 %	25 %
2	30 %	60 %	10 %
3	5 %	85 %	10 %
4	5 %	55 %	40 %

5	15 %	35 %	50 %
6	5 %	70 %	25 %
7	10%	60 %	30 %
8	5 %	75 %	20 %
9	10 %	40%	50 %
10	5 %	45 %	50 %
11	20%	70 %	10 %
12	15 %	50 %	35 %
13	20 %	70 %	10 %
14	25 %	45%	30 %
15	45 %	30 %	25 %
16	25 %	50%	25 %
17	25 %	50 %	25 %
18	30 %	40 %	30 %
19	30%	40 %	30 %
20	25%	35%	40 %

According to the above table, the following results have been found :

-Speaking skills

This item consists of (5)statements. It focus on whether the students have difficulties or troubles on them and there are three choices (always, sometimes, never) the students choose one of the (3) choices.

1-Have difficulty giving oral presentation

In the first statement the results show that most of the students have the difficulty in oral presentation because 65% of them say sometimes. Very few students have no difficulty.

2-Have trouble wording what you want to say quickly enough

In the second statement more than half of the students sometimes have trouble in saying anything in English quickly 60% of them say sometimes.

3-Not-know how to say sometimes in English

In the third statement nearly of the students sometimes not know how to say something in English 85% say sometimes.

4-Have difficulty with your pronunciation of words

This statement shows that half of the students 55% say sometimes While 40% say never.

5-Find it difficult to inter discussion

Very few students sometimes while 50% of them say never.

-Listening Skills

6-Have trouble in understanding lectures

In this statement nearly all of the students sometimes have trouble 70% of say sometimes.

7-Have trouble in understanding lengthy descriptions in English

In this statement nearly half of the students have trouble 60 % say sometimes.

8-Have trouble in understanding spoken instructions

In this statement 75% of the students say sometimes , it means most of them have trouble in understanding spoken instruction.

9-Have trouble in taking effective notes

This statement deals with the students understanding the lecture and 40 % say always while 50 % say never. Half of the students do not have trouble in taking notes.

10-Have trouble in understanding the subject matter of a talk

This statement refers to good teaching that makes 50% from students say never. They do not have any trouble because 45 % of them say sometimes.

-Writing skills

11-Using correct punctuation and spelling

This statement have a big problem because 70% of the students say sometimes and 20 % say always while only 10 % say never. It is really a problem.

28

12-Structuring sentences

This shows that half of the students 50 % say sometimes. Very few students say never.

13-Using appropriate vocabulary

This statement also have a dangerous problem because 70 % say sometimes. They do not know how to use the appropriate vocabulary.

14-Organizing paragraphs

In this item the level of the students is nearly equal because 25% say always ,45% say sometimes and 30% say never that not all the students have the ability to organize paragraphs.

15-Completing written task within the time available

This statement deals with whether the time is available within the material of the exam? Most of the students say always.

-Reading skills

16-journal articles

17-Newspaper articles

These two statements show the same results that half of the students 50% say sometimes ,they have difficulty in doing them.

18-Works of fiction Entire reference or text book

19-Work book or laboratory instructions

These two statements show the same results that 40 % of the students say sometimes.

20-Computer-presented reading material

In this statement 40 % from the students say never. They do not use or read on computer while 25 % of them read on computer.

Section five: Conclusion

In designing any syllabus it must be taken in our consideration the following important points:

1-The content of language instruction must be determined by the teacher

2-A teacher who is not familiar with the formal aspect of language should not try to teach a grammatical lessons but might focus on the functions of language in different situations.

3-It is important for the teacher to know the goals of the students, their experience, prior knowledge , and the number of

the students in a given class. Students regarded as factors affecting syllabus choice and design.

It is familiar that the choice of syllabus is very important in language teaching because syllabus provides information about a course. It include a range of information and each syllabus provides clues to the learners, their purposes, and the contexts ,finally, clear goals and objectives and program/ course organization go hand in hand with assessment to support learning.

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Appendix

Students questionnaire used at university of Tikrit. In Students' course of study, how often are they expected to use the following skills, speaking, listening, reading and writing ?

-Speaking skills

How often do the following happen to you (the students)?

Statement	always	sometimes	never
1-Have difficulty giving oral presentation			
2-Have trouble wording what you want to say quickly enough			
3-Not-know how to say sometimes in English			
4-Have difficulty with your pronunciation of words			
5-Find it difficult to inter discussion			

-Listening skills

Statement	always	sometimes	never
6-Have trouble in understanding lectures			
7-Have trouble in understanding lengthy descriptions in English			
8-Have trouble in understanding spoken instructions			
9-Have trouble in taking effective notes			
10-Have trouble in understanding the subject matter of a talk			

-Reading skills

Statement	always	sometimes	never
11-Using correct punctuation and spelling			

12-Structuring sentences			
13-Using appropriate vocabulary			
14-Organizing paragraphs			
15-Completing written task within the time available			

-Writing skills

How often the students have difficulty in doing so?

Statement	always	sometimes	Never
16-journal articles			
17-Newspaper articles			
18-Works of fiction Entire reference or text book			
19-Work book or laboratory instructions			
20-Computer-presented reading material			