General English Syllabus Design

Milestones in ELT

The British Council was established in 1934 and one of our main aims has always been to promote a wider knowledge of the English language. Over the years we have issued many important publications that have set the agenda for ELT professionals, often in partnership with other organisations and institutions.

As part of our 75th anniversary celebrations, we re-launched a selection of these publications online, and more have now been added in connection with our 80th anniversary. Many of the messages and ideas are just as relevant today as they were when first published. We believe they are also useful historical sources through which colleagues can see how our profession has developed over the years.

General English Syllabus Design

This collection of papers emerging from the 1983 TESOL Convention in Toronto examines the role of general syllabuses in state education, at that time a relatively neglected area in comparison with ESP syllabuses. Authors of papers were invited to address three key aspects: the relationship between syllabus and learner; the design of syllabuses; and how a syllabus should be evaluated. The first paper, by HH Stern, provides a useful historical overview, as well as highlighting differences of perspective expressed at the conference, including his own viewpoint. Janice Yalden flags up the negotiation processes involved in designing a syllabus, before addressing basic organising principles. HG Widdowson relates language syllabus issues to the general educational context. Following chapters by Candlin, Breen and Allen, the publication ends with the editor Christopher Brumfit's chapter on syllabuses and English language learners' heterogeneous needs.

GENERAL ENGLISH SYLLABUS DESIGN

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GENERAL ENGLISH SYLLABUS DESIGN

Curriculum and syllabus design for the general English classroom

Edited by

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University of London Institute of Education

ELT Documents 118

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the 1970s, while language teaching theorists and practitioners excited themselves with course design for Specific Purpose language teaching, and while the needs of adult migrants and private sector or industrial language learners were extensively examined, the majority of learners of English continued to struggle with large classes, limited text-books, few contact hours and years of unintensive study. The work of many teachers had either been ignored by syllabus and curriculum designers, or had been interfered with by insensitive and too rapid application of ideas from ESP theory or Council of Europe discussions by administrators who did not fully realize the implications of the innovations so proudly presented. As a result, several national educational systems have 'gone communicative' or 'gone functional-notional', and then retreated after a brief trial period to whatever they had before.

It seemed worthwhile, therefore, to convene a symposium at the TESOL Convention in Toronto in 1983 specifically to examine the role of syllabuses in normal state education. And it also seemed worthwhile not to rush too quickly into arguments about the detailed design of syllabuses, but to clear the ground first on the definition, purpose and function of syllabuses, for many of the difficulties in discussion of (for example) Wilkins' influential 'Notional Syllabuses (1976)' result from the enormously varying interpretations of the term 'syllabus'.

Accordingly I approached the contributors to this volume and suggested a set of ground rules for our discussion, in order to ensure that we did not talk entirely at cross-purposes when we came together in Toronto. The procedure we used is briefly summarized below, and can be followed through the structure of my own contribution at the end of the book: other contributors have given extended final papers, but I have included the two initial papers presented, followed by brief further comments, in order to illustrate the procedure in practice.

The TESOL Convention took place in March 1983. By the beginning of the preceding October we all aimed to circulate to each other approximately five statements about the definition, purpose or function of syllabuses in general English teaching, and these brief statements were also made available to everyone attending the symposium. In addition, each speaker produced a short summary (aiming at about four sides each) of a brief presentation of twenty minutes, followed by ten minutes for clarificatory questions. These papers were to be circulated in advance, and were also distributed at the

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symposium. We hoped by this means to ensure that we were addressing the same kinds of issues, and isolating key factors to be considered before embarking on the design of specific syllabuses for specific conditions.

When the six speakers had delivered their presentations (unfortunately, Janice Yalden's paper had to be read, as she was ill and unable to attend), Professor David Stern had agreed to present a lead speech in reaction to the prepared papers, in order to initiate discussion. The initial presentation took about three hours, including questions, and the whole of the second block of three hours was devoted to this response and free ranging discussion from the floor.

I suggested at the beginning that there were three issues for us to consider:

(a) the extent to which syllabuses need to be made explicit, and their relationships with different types of learner;
(b) basic organizing principles and how these should be realized;
(c) the nature of (or the need for?) evaluation procedures.

In practice, as will be clear from the papers in this book, different speakers placed different emphases on these questions. With the exception of my own, as indicated above, all these papers are revised and extended versions, taking into account points made in discussion, so that they represent a variety of independent perspectives on a fairly carefully prepared discussion.

I have opened the book with David Stern's excellent overview, even though it actually followed other people's contributions. This paper clearly sets the whole discussion in its historical context, and clarifies some of the major areas of difference between the various presenters. Since the rest of us represent only ourselves as individuals, the order of presentation is not important, and I have followed reverse alphabetical order, except that my own notes come last, illustrating as they do the format of the various papers presented at different stages in the discussion.

Before examining the individual contributions, the reader may be interested in the extent of agreement and disagreement in the initial statements circulated by the six presenters. Below is an attempt at collating the major points made before the formal discussion started.

Definition and Function of Syllabuses

1. A syllabus must be related to a broader curriculum (JPBA, CJB), and to a larger social context reflected in the 'hidden curriculum' (MPB), which may be either supported or criticized through the syllabus (CNC).
2. It is a device for public planning (JPBA, MPB, CJB, HGW, JY), but for teaching not learning (CJB, JY). Thus it operates as a means of control (HGW), and must be administratively workable (JPBA, MPB, CJB).

Planning may be limited to a broad curriculum level, the specific syllabus remaining more spontaneous and local (CNC).

3. It involves initial specification with discrete items (JY) which must be selected, defined and graded (JPBA, MPB), with an appropriate starting point (JPBA, CJB) and end point (JPBA) or at least goal (MPB, CJB). There will be sequencing which is intrinsic to the language or content system, and extrinsic, administratively determined, sequencing for items which do not fit into a system (CJB), and the items taught should not be explicitly linked to time (CJB).
4. It generates a set of units of work (JY), and implies particular methodologies (MPB); indeed the methodology can be considered part of the syllabus specification (CNC).
5. It should be negotiable during use (MPB, CJB, HGW, JY), and after (MPB, JY), but constraints will be needed as support for some students (HGW); however, it may be considered a retrospective record rather than a prospective plan (CNC).
6. It can lead to many courses of study (JY), and should produce general competence, unconscious automatic abilities and conscious metalinguistic capacities (JPBA).
7. The language syllabus will interact with other syllabuses, but will be the fundamental one—others will include cultural, communicative activity, etc. (JPBA), or it can be viewed partially in terms of items of content, skills of behaviour, and values of ideology (CNC).
8. It must be evaluated by a range of procedures (JPBA) as part of our responsibility to be democratically accountable (JPBA, CJB, JY).

A further symposium, on issues of practical implementation, is planned for TESOL 1984 in Houston.

A number of institutions and organizations contributed to the symposium in various ways. These include the British Council, TESOL, The Pergamon Institute of English (Oxford), and the Modern Language Centre of Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. In addition, I am also most grateful to Patrick Allen and Janice Yalden, who piloted all the final arrangements for the TESOL Convention through the administrative preparations, and to all my colleagues on this colloquium for their suggestions, co-operation, support and enthusiasm.

CJB
January 1984

Reference

Wilkins, D. A. 1976, *Notional Syllabuses*, Oxford University Press.

Introduction

At our first session yesterday we were treated to a real feast, an extraordinary, concise, very brilliant set of presentations on the ESL curriculum or the ESL syllabus, as most of our presenters called it. My task today is to recall and review what has been said, and to comment on it as a lead-in to a discussion of the issues and questions that have been raised.

1. Terminological Comment

Why 'syllabus'? Until recently this term has not been widely used in North America. In Britain, however, it is quite a common, not even a particularly technical, educational term. It is associated, above all, with the widespread British institution of the external examination. Every such examination has its 'syllabus', that is a statement of the subject matter, topics, or areas to be covered by the course leading to the particular examination. Students and teachers consult the syllabus in preparation for an examination, and very often the teaching of a course will be strictly guided by the syllabus in question. In North America, the terms 'course of study', 'curriculum', or 'program' often cover more or less the same ground. Three aspects of a curriculum/syllabus are usually under discussion: its objectives, the content, and the sequential arrangements. As we shall see shortly, when some British applied linguists have recently talked about 'the learner's built-in syllabus' (Corder 1967) or 'the notional syllabus' (Wilkins 1976), the term is used somewhat metaphorically.

Our presenters have used the term 'curriculum/syllabus' more or less in its accepted form. They have, for example referred to the specification of the *what* of instruction or its content, the definition of a subject, the ends of instruction, what is to be achieved, and what will be taught. There has certainly not been any disagreement among us about what it is we are talking about when we talk about 'syllabus' or 'curriculum'. Some of our symposiasts, as we shall see shortly, have a preference for defining syllabus/curriculum rather narrowly (e.g., Widdowson) and exclude teaching methodology from the curriculum concept, while others (e.g. Candlin) prefer a wider definition which, besides content and objectives, includes learning experiences and evaluation.

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2.   Background to the Discussion

Why this sudden concern about ESL syllabuses? To understand the reasons for this development and also to understand some of the issues our presenters have had to come to grips with, it may be useful to put our discussion into a slightly historical perspective. The kind of symposium we have here today belongs to an ongoing debate which has at least been ten years in the making. In other words, the concern is neither new nor sudden. Indeed, the origins of this debate go back almost a quarter of a century.

Towards the end of the fifties began a movement which has gained increasing momentum over the last two decades. This movement can be seen as a reaction against the persistent preoccupation in language pedagogy with teaching method. It consisted of various attempts to solve the perennial problems of language teaching by focusing more on teaching objectives, on teaching content, and curriculum design rather than on teaching methodology.

Four developments illustrate this trend:

1. The first was the production, since the late fifties and throughout the sixties, of ambitious large-scale programmes in foreign languages. Although they did not involve any new principles of curriculum design, the scope of these programmes was vast. They usually covered several years of language instruction and attempted, through multimedia kits, workbooks, tapes, filmstrips, and so on, to deal comprehensively with all aspects of a programme, and thus gave creators and users a sense of the range, balance, continuity, and diversity of curriculum design.
2. On a more theoretical level, two well-known books on pedagogy, published in 1964 and 1965, respectively, *The Linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching* by Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens, and Mackey's *Language Teaching Analysis*, offered first major conceptualizations of curriculum in language teaching. The main concepts, advanced in both these works–selection, gradation, presentation, repetition, and testing–have become widely accepted and have been regularly used in language pedagogy over the past twenty years. I would, however, like to draw attention to a weakness in the curriculum scheme of both books. Next to no reference was made to the curriculum concepts which were being developed in educational theory. Language teaching curriculum thought remained within the framework of applied linguistics. This absence of links to useful educational theory concepts is still a weakness in present-day thinking about curriculum in language teaching. This deficiency was even noticeable in this symposium, as I hope to show shortly.
3. A third development to which importance can be attributed is the 'syllabus critique', embodied in a few seminal articles of the period 1966 to about 1973. These articles looked critically at the accepted curriculum theory of the kind that had been expressed by Mackey or by Halliday,

McIntosh and Strevens and raised a number of fundamental questions. As was mentioned previously, Corder (1967) advocated the idea of the learner's natural or 'built-in syllabus', thus suggesting the possibility of a syllabus based on developmental criteria. Newmark (1966), Reibel (1969), and Macnamara (1973) expressed in very persuasively argued papers a deep scepticism about the whole idea of linguistic selection and sequential arrangement of language data.
4. A fourth development from about 1970 has been strangely absent from our symposium, although indirectly its influence could be felt: I refer to the Council of Europe Modern Languages Project. The Council of Europe papers and Threshold Level syllabuses illustrate the reaction in the 1970s against a narrow linguistic structuralism and the preoccupation with teaching method in foreign language teaching. The scholars who developed this project emphasized needs analysis and semantic principles of content selection. It is here that Wilkins' work on notional syllabuses became crucial. The principles, developed in this project, found practical expression in the Threshold Level syllabuses published between 1975 and 1982.

In my view, the Council of Europe Modern Languages Project has been one of the most important developments on the curriculum issue in the 1970s. I am puzzled why most of our presenters made no reference to it and indeed, in some cases, indirectly criticized it. Thus, Candlin obviously referred to it when he spoke about the 'so-called needs analysis' or, I thought, he also had the Council of Europe project in mind when he talked pejoratively about curricula which offer 'a management view of language and language learning'. There were of course several other important developments on curriculum questions in the 1970s in which, incidentally, the members of this symposium have played a leading role. But I will not elaborate on these. What I have said should be enough to give us something of the background to our present symposium.

3. Current Views on Syllabus

We are now coming to the current views on syllabus/curriculum which were so eloquently expressed in the short, very condensed six presentations we heard yesterday. In reviewing them I will offer my own, highly personal interpretations of how I understood them, in the hope that this account will trigger off a lively discussion of the issues. I recognize in the six statements we have heard a few major current trends.

The first trend is represented by Candlin and Breen, the 'Lancaster School'. This school of thought has strongly reacted against the notion of a fixed syllabus which can be planned, pre-ordained, and imposed on teachers and students. For this group, it is not a choice between structural and functional syllabuses. The principle of any fixed inventory of language items, such as the Council of Europe syllabuses, is unacceptable to them. They regard the

syllabus as open and negotiable. They envisage that the curriculum would be negotiated by the teacher with a given group of learners. Breen acknowledges that one has to set out from a plan ('a predesigned syllabus'). But such a syllabus is inevitably interpreted and reconstructed by the teacher; equally, the learner creates his own curriculum. Consequently, the predesigned syllabus by itself is 'a paradox'. It only makes sense if it is used for the creation of three other syllabuses: the teacher's, the individual student's, and the syllabus of the class. Good syllabus design, therefore, according to Breen, takes these other syllabus realities into account from the outset. Breen's ideal syllabus focuses on the learning process and assists learners to draw 'their own route maps'.

Candlin, even more radically, rejects 'a syllabus which requires learners to bank received knowledge', and to attain predetermined 'states of knowledge'. He proposes 'a syllabus which encourages learners to explore ways of knowing, to interpret knowledge, and to engage in dialogue'. Such a syllabus is 'interactive' and 'problem-solving'. 'Syllabuses are social constructs, produced interdependently in classrooms by teachers and learners. . . .' Understood in this way, ideally syllabuses become 'retrospective records rather than prospective plans'.

It is clear that Candlin—even more than Breen—rejects the idea of a fixed plan which imposes objectives, a content, and a teaching methodology upon the teacher who, in turn, imposes this syllabus upon the student. In rejecting it, does Candlin not really reject the idea of syllabus altogether? Does it still make sense to talk of syllabus, if the syllabus is only a retrospective record?

Widdowson and Brumfit, who can be said to represent another direction, which we might call the 'London School', find the Lancaster view extreme and unrealistic. They are challenged by it; they react against it; they certainly do not accept it as their own. They put forward what they would consider an alternative and more realistic approach.

Thus, Widdowson appears to argue: a syllabus is necessary; it is economical, and it is useful. If the chips are down, 'the teacher knows best', and therefore don't let us indulge in any nonsense about 'negotiating' the curriculum. This does not mean that Widdowson advocates a narrow, specific prescription for teaching. Like Candlin and Breen, he also likes the idea of freedom for the teacher. To achieve it without losing the benefits of a well designed syllabus, Widdowson makes a conceptual distinction between syllabus and teaching methodology. The syllabus provides the framework with a good deal of latitude for 'teaching-learning activities' because Widdowson separates the concept of syllabus which is confined to content specification from teaching methodology which is not part of his syllabus concept. Widdowson suggests that a syllabus should be structural; it is the methodology that can be communicative. 'There is no such thing as a communicative syllabus.'—a rather surprising statement for someone who has written a seminal book

called *Teaching Language as Communication* which surely is not only a prescription of methodology but also of content.

Brumfit's position is similar to that of Widdowson. 'A curriculum', he says, 'is a public statement' serving all kinds of practical purposes. His concern, however, is not so much the question of freedom and constraint which has been so dominant in the Lancaster group. His paper is more concerned with the characteristics and quality of the syllabus itself. He discusses criteria to bear in mind for the development of a good syllabus. In his view, rather like Yalden's whose statement we will consider next, he argues that a syllabus must be based on concepts of language, language learning, and language use. It can be related to several underlying theoretical disciplines. But this does not mean that a syllabus must be theoretically 'pure'. The main thing is that it is efficient. It must specify content—linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, cultural, and substantive (in this respect it comes close to the syllabus we shall describe below as the 'Toronto School'). In the arrangement of the content, sequencing is inevitable. As a rough guide, he distinguishes structural aspects which can be systematized and other aspects which can spiral round this core (Yalden offers a similar prescription); but, in general, he recommends as the guiding principle practical teaching considerations and great flexibility in order not to inhibit the good teacher.

Yalden's formulation, rather neatly, is a bridge between the London viewpoints we have just described and the Toronto School we will turn to next. Like Brumfit and Widdowson, Yalden recognizes the practical social necessity of a syllabus. A syllabus is inevitably a public statement. Yalden's criteria—pragmatic and pedagogical efficiency—are rather like Brumfit's insistence that a syllabus is a practical document: an efficient syllabus is good, an inefficient one bad.

Again, like Brumfit, Yalden identifies the theoretical underpinnings of the syllabus content. If we view language as learned, then the logic of grammar rules imposes a sequence; if we view language as acquired (in Krashen's sense), there is no linguistic content restriction; if we base a syllabus on language use, then, following the Council of Europe, we require a needs analysis, and the identified needs impose the choice of syllabus content. The last of these three options is the one that at present, according to Yalden, offers the most practical possibility for syllabus construction. The organization of the content is complex. It has formal and functional components. Once again there is a dual progression, one linear, the other spiral. In my interpretation, Yalden's view of the curriculum has an affinity to Brumfit's, the Council of Europe's, and the Toronto School, represented by Allen.

Yalden recognizes that the learner may have an input to make into the curriculum. But, unlike Breen and Candlin, she is not preoccupied with the learner's role in syllabus development. For her, the syllabus is primarily a teacher's statement about objectives and content, and that this should be so is not a matter of particular concern to her.

Like Yalden, Allen who represents what I would like to call the 'Toronto School', is again not concerned with the question of the learner's role in syllabus development. He accepts the need for a syllabus as unquestioned. The issue for him is much more a question of constructing a theoretically sound and practically useful curriculum.

Allen's curriculum can perhaps best be understood biographically. About ten years ago, Allen working with Widdowson in Edinburgh produced teaching materials for English for special purposes in which the attempt was made to reconcile structural and functional (discourse/speech act) elements. A few years later, when Allen worked in the Modern Language Centre in Toronto, his thinking about curriculum was influenced by two projects: one was the Language Teaching Modules Project, which was a materials development project which pioneered independent language teaching units on a basis of empirical content research combined with a strong formative evaluation component. From this project Allen took over an interest in a language curriculum with a strong emphasis on substantive content. A second influence was no doubt the immersion experience which was an equally important activity in the Modern Language Centre. It introduced Allen to the value of experiential language learning through the teaching of subjects other than the language itself as a means of language learning. The threefold approach which Allen has described in his paper – structural, functional, and experiential – seems to me to be an attempt to integrate in a systematic way three strands which each have a contribution to make to the acquisition of proficiency. The structural and functional component are also present in Widdowson's, Brumfit's, and Yalden's formulation. The experiential component, although to some extent present in Widdowson's and Brumfit's papers is resolutely treated as a part of the curriculum only in Allen's paper. The issue of course is how most effectively these components can in practice be combined so that they are integrated in a true sense and not simply three different parallel syllabuses. The example of some teaching modules Allen referred to indicates some of the ways in which this integration can take place.

4. Personal Viewpoint

The six presentations I have reviewed have given us a very helpful introduction to the main issues of the ESL curriculum/syllabus discussion in this decade. I would like to conclude my remarks by adding a few personal critical observations.

To begin with, I would like to draw attention to a distinction which has been largely overlooked. To my mind, the absence of this distinction arises from the fact that I mentioned previously, namely the lack of contact among applied linguists with curriculum theory in general educational studies. This is, on the one hand, the distinction between curriculum or syllabus, that is its content, structure, parts, and organization, and, on the other, what in

curriculum theory is often called curriculum processes, that is curriculum development, implementation, dissemination, and evaluation. The former is concerned with the WHAT of curriculum: what the curriculum is like or should be like; the latter is concerned with the WHO and HOW of establishing the curriculum. Both are of course legitimate ways of looking at the curriculum, but they should not be mixed up. I feel that we have not made that distinction sufficiently clearly. Thus, it seems to me that Breen and Candlin and to some extent Widdowson are largely concerned with the WHO and HOW while the others have been mainly concerned with the WHAT.

4.1   The curriculum concept

All our symposiasts were agreed that curriculum/syllabus is concerned with content, objectives, and sequence. Should it include more than that? Candlin, Breen, Allen, and Yalden seem to include also instruction and methodology. Candlin, for example, is anxious to avoid an overly rigid division between these different aspects of teaching. Widdowson deliberately keeps the concept of syllabus restricted so that the area of freedom in methodology for the teacher is seen to be wide. I personally have a preference for a fairly comprehensive definition of curriculum/syllabus, because language teaching has suffered from an overemphasis on single aspects, and a wide comprehensively conceived definition expresses the view that language teaching is multifaceted and that the different facets should be consistent with each other. I believe that our symposiasts would not disagree with this point of view.

As for the content, not surprisingly, I tend to be close to what I have called the Toronto School. Language curricula, in my view, have tended to be narrow and lacking in substance. In some systems it may well be that the ESL/EFL curriculum is overloaded and needs lightening; but my impression is that ESL curricula (distinct from EFL) tend to be 'lightweight', lacking in design, organization and substantive content. With that consideration in mind I would like to see—especially, for language teaching in general education—curricula which have four components: (1) A language proficiency component which can well be formulated in the structural–functional combination that is expressed in the Yalden, Brumfit, Widdowson, and Allen schemes. (2) Next, I believe it is important for the curriculum to contain provision for an experiential component of the kind specially mentioned in Allen's proposal. In addition, to both these, I would (3) like to see a distinctly identified cultural component which in ESL/EFL terms would express itself as knowledge about one or several anglophone target communities. Finally, for ESL/EFL in general education, I would like to see as fourth component one I refer to as general language education which is meant to offer an opportunity and an encouragement to the learner to reflect about language, language learning, and culture in general. I believe that several of our symposiasts have similar ideas, for example, Breen who insists on learning about learning, as well as Widdowson and Brumfit who both

emphasize the place of ESL in general education. There are problems with this kind of fourfold approach to the language curriculum which I will not elaborate on here because I have dealt with them elsewhere (see, for example, Stern 1980, 1982).

On the question of *the approach to curriculum processes*, the WHO and HOW of curriculum development and its implementation, I am glad to note that these issues have been raised in our symposium. Several of our presenters (in particular, Candlin, Breen, Widdowson and, to a certain extent, Brumfit, too) expressed concern about prescriptivism in curriculum development. The issue is not confined to ESL/EFL curricula; it arises universally in most educational systems where often an uneasy compromise in curriculum development exists between a central authority, regional agencies, the school and individual teachers. In language learning the more we emphasize the autonomy of the learner the more important it is to find a formula which involves learners in the curriculum processes, as Candlin and Breen have rightly pointed out so emphatically. However, the more we emphasize flexibility and negotiation of the curriculum the more important it is for us, as teachers, to have something to negotiate about, and, surely, as Brumfit, Widdowson, and Yalden have stressed, it is important for the teacher to define the parameters, to provide direction, and to have the resources at our disposal which make up ESL/EFL as learnable and worthwhile subject matter in general education.

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SYLLABUS DESIGN IN GENERAL EDUCATION: OPTIONS FOR ELT

JANICE YALDEN

Introduction

The consideration of syllabus design for general English language teaching is the task we had set ourselves in preparing these papers. Yet I find it difficult to separate completely the issues in general programmes from those which arise in looking at ESP situations. There are more similarities than one might suppose. The relationship of the syllabus designer in ESP may be to a sponsor or employer, and in general ELT to parents and/or educational institutions. In each case, however, decisions will be taken by the syllabus designer on behalf of the classroom teacher and the learner which will have a steering effect on teacher–learner interaction. This is true whether the designer of syllabus *is* the classroom teacher or not.

Questions of 'high surrender value' and accountability are present in both types of educational setting, too. At least, they are in any society in which the educational system is run democratically, as a microcosm of the society in which it operates. I recognize that this is not the case everywhere; however, I am primarily concerned with ELT in Canada, and thus primarily with our own socio-political context, and with the implications for education just mentioned.

In such a context, a syllabus for a second-language programme is not a guide for private use by teacher and learner, nor is it the autonomous creation of either teacher or learner. It is a public document, a record, a contract, an instrument which represents negotiation among all the parties involved. It concerns, in the first instance, the ends of the instruction, its social purpose. The means also have to be negotiated; but this is a secondary consideration, for in all negotiation, many constraints other than those dictated by physical setting of instruction and the current state of pedagogical theory must be considered. For example, even constraints imposed by language planning have to be considered, since time available, resources, and motivational factors may all be dependent on the status of the target language, and the age of the learners and content of instruction can be affected also (Bell, 1982). This is fairly evident. One can go further, however. Judd, for example, states that '. . . TESOL is a political act. . . . Those of us engaged in teaching of English to a non- or limited-English speakers are . . . directly or indirectly, implementing a stated or implied language policy' (Judd, 1983). All the more

reason to work out a statement on the goals of instruction and the means to be used in reaching them.

1.   The Need for a Syllabus

If the above considerations are valid ones, the need for a planning instrument of some kind is clear and has been a subject of discussion for centuries (Kelly, 1969, Diller, 1978). Much of the debate has centred around various 'methods' of language instruction, most of which are now seen as having treated primarily the structural or linguistic component of second-language learning. With the advent of more complex theories of language and language learning, as well as a recognition of the diversity of learners' needs, wants and aspirations, the concept of the syllabus for second-language teaching has taken on new importance. It has also become much more highly elaborated and has been examined at length, particularly in the context of ESP programmes, but also more and more in general ELT planning.[1] It thus replaces the concept of 'method', and the syllabus is now seen as an instrument by which the teacher, with the help of the syllabus designer, can achieve a degree of 'fit' between the needs and aims of the learner (as social being and as individual), and the activities which will take place in the classroom. It is thus a necessity in terms of providing educational services to the community to which the teacher is responsible.

A syllabus is required in order to produce efficiency of two kinds. The first of these is *pragmatic efficiency*, or economy of time and money. The setting of instruction has to be planned. Not all learners will be given the same treatment, and so syllabuses differ according to the practical constraints present in any given situation.[2] The second kind of efficiency is *pedagogical*: economy in the management of the learning process. Instruction provided in an institutional setting is assumed to be a more efficient method of dealing with learning than allowing the learner to proceed in a non-structured environment. This has long been recognized, even though individuals have always also managed to acquire second-language proficiency independently. And even the most ardent supporters of the 'natural growth' school (see Allen, this volume) will admit that classroom instruction is both desirable and necessary.

Thus, it is clear that a syllabus of any kind is viewed as providing for control of the learning process (see Widdowson, this volume), generally by the institution and/or teacher, but in some instances control can and should be exercised also by the learner. Although the term 'syllabus' may have some negative connotations in the literature of education (particularly in the Canadian context where local school boards have a great deal of autonomy), it is being used here in a particular sense which must be made clear. The degree and type of control that the syllabus exercises depends on the institution-as-society; that is, in a highly democratic institution, the syllabus has to be determined by consensus. It cannot be imposed by fiat. In the kind

of setting within which we work in this country, a syllabus is partly therefore an administrative document (as well as being a pedagogical one), and should contain explicit administrative information.[3]

1.1   Should a syllabus be explicit, and if so, to whom?

A syllabus in ELT must be explicit for the teacher, and should be at least partially produced by teachers (using expert help as needed and as available). The relationship of the syllabus designer to the teacher can range along a continuum from directive to descriptive (Yalden, forthcoming). That is, the teacher *qua* classroom manager is dependent on the syllabus when the relationship is directive. If the teacher is free to do as he or she pleases, then the syllabus designer merely describes what has gone on, in order to maintain a record or to be able to examine retrospectively (in Candlin's terms) the syllabus created through interaction between teacher and learner. I am assuming here that the relationship needed for general ELT is one in which the syllabus designer is directive; this is implicit in my definition of syllabus. But to have the teacher participate in syllabus production ensures complete understanding of the end product, thus fulfilling the need for economy in general planning, and in particular, in teacher preparation.

A syllabus can be more or less explicit for the learner. The learner must have some idea of content, but the amount of input he/she has into determining either ends or means depends on educational background, age, type of programme and a host of other factors. However, learner input into syllabus design is not to be excluded *a priori* in general education.

A syllabus must be seen as making explicit what will be taught, not what will be learned. A range of outcomes must be expected; a first-stage syllabus (or specification of content) does not constitute an expression of objectives for a *given* group of learners, but rather a summary of the content to which learners will be exposed. Any adaptation or realization of such a set of specifications may include objectives, but these should be expressed in terms of a range of values; students' achievements should also be expected to fall within an acceptable range rather than being narrowly defined.

1.2   Basic organizing principles

Since a syllabus includes many practical and social constraints, it is only partly answerable to principles having to do with theories of language and of second language acquisition/learning. Other organizing principles having to do with overall curriculum design, prevailing philosophy of education, and so on, must enter into play. That this is a common state of affairs in education is discussed in these papers in this volume, and so I will not pursue this point further. Nevertheless, in the present general discussion, it is convenient to set aside pragmatic considerations or practical constraints to the extent that it is possible, and to consider only general principles directly connected with development of a syllabus for ELT.

A syllabus should, in the first instance, be a specification of content, and only in a later stage of development a statement about methodology and materials to be used in a specific instance. The need for efficiency dictates the need for organization of content, but may also affect the organisation of materials. In any discussion of organizing principles, it is generally assumed that both sequencing and continuity of content should be considered. In this context, there has been much discussion of how to (a) identify types of meaning and of components of communicative competence, and subsequently (b) how to decide what can be taught systematically and what can be taught non-systematically, what can be approached in a linear fashion and what cyclically. Answers to question (b) depend on one's view of language as a part of the sum of human knowledge, and on a view of how and how much of this knowledge can be transmitted, and what the conditions for such transmission may be.

Statements about organizing principles to be derived from the present state of linguistic theory can be reduced to the following set of options:

1. The principles of organization of a syllabus must be answerable to a view of how language is learned.
2. The principles of organization of a syllabus must be answerable to a view of how language is acquired.
3. The principles of organization of a syllabus must be answerable to a view of how language is to be used.

Let us consider each of these possibilities in turn. If (1) is taken as first principle, it follows that the next step is to choose organization based on the structural core, on the grounds that 'we are more likely to learn effectively what can be perceived as a system than what can only be perceived as unrelated items' (Brumfit, 1981:91). That is, since it appears that structure is the only aspect or component of language than can be taught systematically, it follows that it should be so addressed, and form the back-bone of instructions.

If (2) is taken as a first principle, then linguistic content for a syllabus does not need to be organized at all. Instead, the right environment for natural growth of the target language should be provided. This probably implies some study of the interests and characteristics of the learners to provide input to the syllabus regarding non-linguistic content. But no strictly linguistic criteria need to be applied; psycholinguistic considerations and motivational criteria will suffice. The organizing principle is the theory of natural language development. One of the axioms of this theory is that language development occurs in a series of stages which can be described empirically. Classroom activities (whatever their content) should thus be graded according to these stages (Terrell, 1977, 1982; Krashen 1982).

If (3) is taken as first principle, we would have to agree with Wilkins (1981) that no particular organizing principle emerges (and one may take as

important starting points different things on different occasions), but whatever the starting point, other parameters will be entailed. It is assumed that a forecast of the settings for use of the target language will be available, however, and that it will influence the design considerably.

Of the three possibilities, (1) and (3) leave the least amount of freedom of choice to the teacher or materials designer. For if one chooses (1), a structural core is implied, and must be followed out; if one chooses (3), the teacher/materials writer has less freedom of choice in interpreting the syllabus if settings are known (or prescribed) than if they are not (Wilkins, 1981). but if one chooses (2) the teacher/writer is quite free to choose settings, content and materials. The only linguistic control is exercised by the learners themselves who are described as following (unconsciously) patterns of natural growth (Krashen, 1982). Thus they themselves provide the syllabus. Basing activities on the 'natural growth' progression along the lines suggested by Terrell leads to a syllabus which de-emphasizes language as form, and 'classical' syllabus design procedures such as needs analysis, use of inventories, specification or linguistic content and so on, are seen as peripheral as best and as superfluous, constraining, or even harmful at worst.

Without rejecting totally either the first or the second statement of organizing principles, I would like to present here an argument in favour of adopting the principle of language use (option 3) as the primary one in general ELT. Given the functional nature of general education today, it seems that in order to provide a useful and stimulating environment in the language classroom it would be as well to accomplish two related tasks: to stress the connections between present study and future use, and (b) to exploit the 'inter-organism' rather than the 'intra-organism' aspects of the second language development in the classroom (Ellis, 1981).

In order to attain the first objective, to link language study to future use, some information on the purposes for which the target language will be used can be of great value, even in general education. Adoption of the principle of language use as the chief one in syllabus design can be instrumental in meeting one of the major difficulties in second-language teaching, that is, how to provide the content around which communicative interaction in the classroom can take place, when there is no longer a standard 'method' to be followed. Some idea of what the components of 'classical' syllabus design are (and how to get information on or from a particular group of learners) does indeed help to provide ideas for communicative course design.

This procedure leads naturally and logically to the second task: concentration on the inter-organism aspects of second language development in the classroom. This kind of emphasis does not exclude consideration of and experimentation with the 'natural growth' sequences that are posited. It is rather a matter of emphasis in syllabus design. This emphasis can accommodate also Candlin and Breen's prescriptions for language activities in the classroom, springing from the view of the native language as

communication rather than form (Candlin and Breen, 1979). That is, since all language learners have communicative abilities which they share with all other users of the target language, classroom activities should be geared to having them exercise these natural abilities. However, in order to spark communication in the classroom or anywhere else, one must have something to communicate about, and needs analysis procedures can contribute to determining what topics might be of interest.

In going back to a consideration of positions (1) and (2) *vis-à-vis* (3), we will find that they should be viewed as applicable at two different levels of syllabus design. (1) and (2) concern the second level (materials and methodology), and (3) really focuses on the first phase of the design process. (1) and (2) are primarily concerned with the linguistic component of second-language programme preparation; (3) gives other aspects equal or greater weight. In most analyses of communicative competence being used today in preparing second-language programmes, many components other than the purely linguistic are included. Brumfit (this volume) suggests that the syllabus has linguistic, interactional and content aspects; Ullman (1982) described a model for syllabus design which includes separate components for language, communicative activity, culture and general language education. In order to include consideration of all of these components of language and com- munication, and to provide opportunities for language development in each area, we must greatly expand the complexity of syllabus design. In so doing, the linguistic component loses its predominant position, and syllabus design for language learning takes on a different shape than the one most teachers are used to. It becomes often largely non-linguistic and consequently may come to resemble syllabus design for other subject matters. Immersion teaching in Canadian schools is an example of a language-learning environment in which the syllabus is built largely around content that is not linguistic, but subject-matter related.[4]

2. An Application of the Third Organizing Principle

Relating language teaching to other disciplines (as in the University of Ottowa experiments),[5] or to subject-matter teaching, as in Immersion teaching, is certainly one way of providing relevant content. I would like to present another model, in which the content is derived from a needs analysis and which is described elsewhere (Yalden, 1983a) as a 'proportional' or 'balanced' syllabus. It is a model which can be used where neither the Immersion nor the 'sheltered classroom' format is possible – for example, (but not exclusively) in a non-English speaking environment. It is an attempt to include a number of components which are to be treated both systematically and non-systematically. It is thus a rejection of the globally systematic as well as the globally non-systematic approach.[6].

The organization of this syllabus is semantic (individual study of linguistic

form is possible, according to learner preference, but the emphasis is on meaning and on communication). The linguistic component is treated non-systematically, and is derived from functional areas of language use. The component which provides continuity is the theme, which constitutes a framework for several units or modules of instruction. It is chosen in terms of the needs and wishes of the learners, and several themes may be used during a single language course. These themes may be subject-matter related, but may equally well be themes of general interest.[7] Topics and behaviours provide the focus and content of individual units or modules. This pattern of organization implies a task-oriented methodology, but because of the presence of a general theme, the tasks are often enveloped in a simulation related to the theme. Within each 'module' proportions can be varied to ensure balance between linguistic accuracy and communicative fluency, in Brumfit's terms (Brumfit, 1980) – that is, between control of structure and of communicative appropriateness.

The application of these ideas produces theme-linked segments. A sort of 'beading' occurs, where the theme is the string, and the modules represent beads of topics and tasks which elicit certain behaviours. Within each bead, a proportional approach is maintained, and the whole string can also be arranged so as to represent a proportional shift from form to function (in general education, for example), or from function to form (in adult education or ESP courses).

$$A - \left(B^1\right) - \left(B^2\right) - \left(B^3\right) - \left(B^h\right) -$$
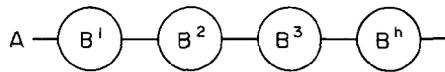
A = thematic and topical elements (the 'string')
B = linguistic and intractional elements (the 'beads').

Organization of the thematic and topical elements follows a chronological or logical linear progression. The linguistic and interactional elements are organized proportionally and spirally, and as a function of feedback from the learners. Form may predominate initially and the emphasis shift to functions, discourse, and rhetorical skills later, somewhat as in Allen's variable-focus model[8] except that the shifts take place more often. They are also not confined to any particular level of instruction, nor are they predictable. The teacher may attempt to sequence and control them, for the sake of having a plan with which to enter the classroom, but should be prepared to modify the plan where and when necessary.[9] What this form of organization produces is a framework within which the teacher can work, producing plans for classroom interaction as she/he goes along. It will exert the steering effect I referred to at the beginning of this paper, so will be more effective if users of the framework have had some input into its preparation. It most certainly is not a 'method' but an approach to bridging the gap between the first phase of syllabus design (the specifications) and the second (classroom methodology and materials). It is based on language use at the first level of design, but can

accommodate considerations of learning theory and of acquisition theory, at the second level of design. It is probable that this separation of the syllabus design process into two distinct levels may help to resolve some of the difficulties with classical procedures, and some of the conflicts between proponents of the three positions on organizing principles I have outlined above.

Conclusion

The complexities of testing linguistic and communicative performance are well known inside the profession and are now becoming well known outside it as well. However, these matters are not at issue in discussions of syllabus design. There is need, to be sure, for common terminology and for consensus on procedures in order to evaluate the outcome of the teaching/learning process; but as far as syllabus design is concerned what is required is a terminology that can be used simply for description.

The design and use of frameworks which will accommodate different types of segments or 'beads' within a single ELT programme would be helpful. This will permit comparisons at many levels of instruction as well as internationally. However, the comparisons will take the form of description of the syllabus and evaluation of the communicative performance of the learner – but not of evaluation of the syllabus.

Notes

1. See, for example, the *Programmes d'études, anglais et français langues secondes*, prepared by the Ministry of Education of the Government of Quebec.
2. For a full discussion of this problem, see Yalden, 1983b.
3. I would like to express my indebtedness to Christopher Brumfit. Conversations with him have helped me to clarify my thinking on this aspect of the role of the syllabus.
4. See Swain, 1981, and Genesee, 1983, for clarification of the design of Immersion programmes.
5. Results of experiments in teaching psychology and French, based on Krashen's 'sheltered classroom' model, were presented by P. Hauptmann, M. Wesche and others, at the 14th Annual Colloquium of the Canadian Association of Applied Linguistics, Quebec City, May 27, 1983.
6. See Johnson, 1982, for an excellent discussion of this distinction.
7. Anne Donaldson and Ellen Cray have prepared five such units for an EAP programme at Carleton University, Ottawa.
8. For a discussion of the differences between Allen's model and the proportional one, see Yalden, 1983a, Chapters 6 and 7.
9. An application of this approach can be seen in the course in Indonesian, produced by C. S. Jones and myself for the Department of External Affairs, of the Government of Canada in 1982. In this course, the treatment of the structural component is left to the discretion of the teacher. In other applications, it might be prepared to some extent by the designer.

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EDUCATIONAL AND PEDAGOGIC FACTORS IN SYLLABUS DESIGN

H. G. WIDDOWSON

I want in this brief presentation to try to place issues relating to language syllabuses into a more general educational context.

It seems to me that formal education is of its nature a superposed second order culture which consists of schemes of conceptual organization and behaviour designed to supplement the first order processes of primary socialization. Its purpose, as I see it, is to give ideas, attitudes, actions, beliefs and so on a shape which they would not otherwise have so as to prepare learners to participate in areas of social life beyond their immediate environment and to extend the range of their individual experience.

The whole set of such schemes constitutes the curriculum. A syllabus is a particular scheme fashioned for a particular content area. A syllabus, then, defines a subject.

This formulation immediately raises a number of fundamental problems. I have suggested that education makes provision for both future social role and for individual development. But the relative weighting given to each of these general purposes will vary greatly with different educational policies. Some will focus almost exclusive attention on future social role, seek to direct the curriculum towards the satisfaction of manpower needs, and calculate educational success in terms of service to the socio-economic well-being of the state. In this case, syllabuses will be designed to be accountable to measures of utility will be (in Bernstein's terms) 'position-oriented' and will seek to impose conformity and convergence. Other policies will allow for a greater degree of divergence and individual development, be less fixated on productivity, and incline to 'person-orientation' (see Bernstein 1971).

As projections of educational policy, then, a curriculum, and the different syllabuses within it, will conform to varying ideological decisions about the purpose and nature of education as a whole. But a syllabus is not only an *educational* construct; it is also a *pedagogic* one. That is to say it not only defines what the ends of education through a particular subject ought to be, but it also provides a framework within which the actual process of learning must take place and so represents a device by means of which teachers have to achieve these ends.

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This dual relationship between policy on the one hand and methodology on the other obviously makes the syllabus a potential source of conflict. Consider a case, for example, where educational policy requires a high degree of conformity to established norms of behaviour and is therefore position rather than person oriented. Such a policy is not likely to be consistent with a pedagogy which encourages independent initiatives in learning. A syllabus which incorporates such a policy, with public examinations in close support, will place constraints on methodological innovation, no matter how pedagogically desirable this might be. Conversely, one might have good reason to suppose that a person-oriented methodology with an emphasis on learner autonomy is to be favoured on the grounds that it is more effective in the promotion of learning, but it might run counter to a prevailing position oriented educational policy which requires the imposition of teacher control, and strict conformity to the established syllabus which embodies its ideology.

In the field of TESOL we tend these days to favour general pedagogic criteria in our proposals for syllabus reform and are inclined to disregard particular educational considerations. And the criteria have become increasingly person-oriented. So it has been suggested, for example, that the essential, if not only requirement, of a syllabus is that it should allow learners to negotiate their own progress through communicative activities in class with the minimum intervention from the teacher. Now this kind of methodology might be highly desirable from the pedagogic point of view – learners would perhaps learn a second language most effectively by this kind of relatively unconstrained purposeful interaction. But we cannot ignore the constraints of particular educational settings, and suppose that a pedagogy of this kind is universally applicable. Where education is person oriented, a person oriented pedagogy will be feasible and will be preferred to a position oriented one. But where education is position oriented, there will be problems. And these problems will not only have to do with the methodology coming to terms with an incompatible syllabus. They will also arise with learners and teachers, whose expectations and attitudes will have been shaped by the established educational orthodoxy which informs conventional pedagogy, not only in English teaching but in the other subjects in the curriculum. One cannot expect that learners will very readily adopt a pattern of behaviour in the English class which is at variance with the roles they are required to play in their other lessons.

I do not wish to deny the importance of pedagogic criteria. And if we could establish a set of attitudes, dispositions, behaviours which characterize the good language learner, whatever his/her primary and secondary cultural background (cf Naiman, Fröhlich, Stern and Todesco 1978), or if we really could be sure that we had identified a fundamental pedagogical principle (cf Krashen 1981), universally valid and operable in all educational settings, then we could make strong claims for the primacy of pedagogy in the design of syllabuses. Even so local educational constraints would have to be taken

into account. The design of a syllabus and its implementation by means of methodology can never be solely a pedagogic matter.

Proposals for a person-oriented approach to language teaching/learning are not anyway, I think, entirely motivated by pedagogic considerations. They are influenced too by an educational ideology which proclaims the rights of individuals against the imposition of institutional control. I would subscribe to such an ideology myself and in an open society I can say so (others are not so fortunate). And it is, perhaps, because the proponents of person-orientation recognize institutional influence on syllabus design that they suspect that it is always educationally imposed against the interest of learners and have sometimes suggested that syllabuses should be abandoned altogether as pedagogically undesirable. Let the learners learn in their own way under the benevolent and unobtrusive guidance of a kind of expedient methodology.

But it seems to me that there is a positive aspect of constraint which suggests a pedagogic justification for the syllabus. It provides for security. I have said that the general purpose of education is to initiate people into a secondary culture and this means that they are drawn away from sole reliance on the patterns of familiar experience. They find themselves in a potentially bewildering world, one in which their confidence and self-esteem are likely to come under threat. In such a situation, they are likely to need some directions which will indicate the paths they are to follow, some certainties in which they can feel secure. The syllabus can serve as a convenient map. No doubt there are some people who need no such guidance, who can plot their own route without feeling lost, but many, it would appear, need help and cannot easily alleviate their own anxiety. We might note in passing that the proscription of all use of the mother tongue in the methodology of second language teaching over recent years not only cuts the learner off from a valuable source of language experience upon which to base new learning, but also, perhaps more crucially, creates conditions in which they will feel insecure and anxious in face of the unfamiliar. The syllabus in this case is pedagogically needed to compensate for this deprivation. When other means are found to accommodate these affective needs, then the syllabus becomes accordingly less crucial for this purpose. But even so, it is important to remember that not all travellers are or wish to be explorers of the unknown. Freedom of action, one might add, is anyway only meaningful when bounded by constraint of one kind or another; without such constraint, initiative tends to dissipate in anomie, a state of disorientation and normlessness.

Rather than seek to abolish the syllabus as a pedagogically disruptive imposition, it would seem to me to be more reasonable to accept that, desirable though deschooled self discovery might be (cf Illich 1970) from the point of view of enlightened democratic ideology, most societies will continue to favour institutionalized education. Syllabuses, and the examinations which ratify them, are therefore always likely to be with us and so will

the need to come to terms with them. The zeal for reform cannot always cast reality in its own image. Furthermore, we should recognize also, I think, that the syllabus does have a pedagogic justification. What we have to do, it seems to me, is to define the role of the syllabus in such a way that it allows for pedagogically effective methodology to operate within the constraints delimited by educational policy.

This is not an impossible proposition. We might define a syllabus, for example, as essentially a stereotypic construct which provides a point of reference for procedural work in classrooms which converts the stereotypes into actuality. In this sense, the syllabus is simply a framework within which activities can be carried out: a teaching device to facilitate learning. It only becomes a threat to pedagogy when it is regarded as absolute rules for *determining* what is to be learned rather than points of reference from which bearings can be taken.

The question now arises as to what kind of stereotypes are most likely to be effective in language learning. We might focus on elements of the abstract system as in the much-maligned structural syllabus, or on the notions and functions which this system is used to express, or of idealized schematic constructs of situated language events—Firth's context of situation (see Firth 1957, 182, Palmer 1968, 178). If one recognizes the stereotypic character of the syllabus, I am not convinced that it much matters which of these, or other, alternatives is taken. Bearing in mind the points made earlier about particular educational factors it would seem to me to be politic to prefer the scheme which is likely to be most acceptable locally. None of them self-evidently allows any greater latitude than any other for methodology to set up the most favourable conditions for actual learning. As defined here there is no such thing as a communicative syllabus: there can only be a methodology that stimulates communicative learning. Wilkins makes the claim '(The notional syllabus) is potentially superior to the grammatical syllabus because it will produce a communicative competence' (Wilkins 1976, 19). But it cannot itself produce anything of the kind. It has been supposed that such a syllabus lends itself naturally to a methodology that will produce such effects, but this again needs to be demonstrated: it cannot simply be taken on trust. For it is perfectly possible for a notional syllabus to be implemented by a methodology which promotes mechanistic habit formation and in effect is focused on grammar; and conversely for a grammatical syllabus to be actualized by a methodology which develops a genuine capacity for communication.

My argument, then, to reduce it to its rather elementary essentials, is that pedagogy, no matter how well supported by theories of learning, must come to terms with local educational attitudes and policies. These are bound to constrain what can be done in syllabus design and in classroom methodology. If, as I argue, it does not matter to much how a syllabus is designed, so long as one accepts its stereotypic function, then there seems little point in expend-

ing persuasive force to change it. I think that people who have been seeking to achieve a breakthrough in syllabus design have probably been fighting on the wrong front. It is methodology where reform is likely to be more feasible and more effective. But even here one needs to proceed with caution and respect local educational attitudes as reflected in the attitudes and dispositions of learners and teachers. In our enthusiasm to reveal to the world the enlightenment of our own vision, we are apt to forget that this vision is in all likelihood itself culturally induced and that for other people in other cultures it may appear only as a delusion.

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SYLLABUS DESIGN AS A CRITICAL PROCESS

CHRISTOPHER N. CANDLIN

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1.

When one acquires a syllabus, either in the form of an institutional document or as a textbook, it is as well to reflect on what it is that one is buying. *Caveat emptor* applies as much in the world of education as it does in the market-place. On the face of it, the transaction should present little problem: one is acquiring access to an ordered collection of items of knowledge, selected and sequenced with the purchaser in mind and designed to carry him, with as much care and expeditions can be managed, from a state of ignorance to a state of knowing.

Before we part with our cash, however, we might initially bear the following questions in mind:

(*i*)   Can we be so sure that all the knowledge we would like to be exposed to and gain from such a syllabus can be so clearly identified as items? Is it not likely that many of the key procedures, concepts and criteria associated with a subject, and defining of it, are not so specifiable, either because they cannot be translated into objectives for learning or because their very problematicness is the essence of the state of knowledge of that subject at that point in time? As Stenhouse (1975) argues in relation to the understanding of the processes of historical causation, 'they are the focus of speculation, not the object of mastery'.

(*ii*)   Should we not consider that it is likely to be difficult to specify a general syllabus, as a metaphor for learning, in terms specific enough to satisfy all the different possible purchasers? Moreover, if the syllabus is to be successful, ought it not to expect some changes in the state of knowing and experience of its differentiated users over time? That, after all, is its *raison d'etre*. If so, is it not unhelpful to formulate a procedure in advance which is designed precisely to foreclose in practice exactly those opportunities for personal changes of direction which characterize learning?

(*iii*)   Furthermore if we have some experience of the commodity being put on sale in its syllabus package, we may wish to discover by a deeper look what view of the subject-matter in question has been taken by the syllabus designer. Why has some knowledge been selected for inclusion, why some highlighted, why some held to be dependent on some other in this sequenced presentation?

Seen against the background of these questions, out syllabus takes on a much more significant aspect. Rather than merely being an ordered sequence of selected and, as it were, innocuous items of content, timeless and obscure in origin, separated from the world, it reveals itself as a window on a particular set of social, educational, moral and subject-matter values. Syllabuses seen in this perspective stand, then, for particular ideologies. This is most clearly seen, as I have hinted, in terms of the choice of content, its prioritization in the subject in question, and in the relationship of the learner to that content and to the teacher implied by the procedures of acquisition for that knowledge which the syllabus displays. Syllabuses typically come in two ideological forms; one which requires learners, in Freire's (1975) critique, to bank received knowledge as a collection of 'communiques' or states of knowing, and the other which, in Dewey's (1910) sense, encourages learners to explore ways of knowing, to interpret knowledge and to engage in dialogue with it and with themselves. A negotiation, if you like, both of knowledge and of the procedures for engaging that knowledge. A syllabus of the former type is extrinsic, idealistic and presents a picture of static 'reality'; the latter type is personal, intrinsic and is one of 'reality' in process. Sociopolitically, we may say that the first acts to sustain some social order, the view of the world whence the syllabus came, through this unchallengeable selection and organization of content done on behalf of rather than by the learner, while the second acts to engage and challenge this world-view, through a praxis of action and reflection by all the participants to question its content and organization. In the context of an essay on communicative competence. Habermas (1970) proposes the twin terms *Handeln* and *Diskurs* which we can usefully expropriate for the purposes of this syllabus distinction at the same time as using them to point up a particular contrast in language teaching and learning. *Handeln* is that act of the learner in which he conforms to the values and principles transmitted through teaching; *Diskurs*, in contrast, is a readiness to negotiate value, a critical nonconformity in given cases to transmitted principle. Habermas makes use of these two terms in the context of discussing the pragmatic value of utterances in the classroom and in particular the opportunities offered (or denied) to learners to question meanings. We shall return later in this paper to the implications of this dichotomy for the content and the methodology of language teaching syllabuses.

The purpose of this contribution to the Colloquium is to explore this second type of syllabus, and to discuss how it is to be defined in the special context of language teaching and learning. A convenient method of exploration, and an appropriate one for this paper, is to use the traditional syllabus of the first type as an object of critique.

2.

Syllabuses are concerned with the specification and planning of what is to be learned, frequently set down in some written form as prescriptions for action by teachers and learners. They have, traditionally, the mark of authority.

They are concerned with the achievement of ends, often, though not always, associated with the pursuance of particular means. As I have suggested earlier, they are necessarily, though not obviously, imbued with particular educational philosophies, views of the subject-matter and how it may best be learned, beliefs about the relationship between teacher and learner, all of which underpinned by particular definitions of a desirable social order and world-view. In Barnes' (1976) view, education in terms of such syllabuses becomes a 'package-deal' where values are bound up with content and where learners are consequently presented with a take-it-or-leave-it choice.

In practice, syllabuses can be broadly or narrowly defined. Broadly defined, we may expect them to offer information about particular audiences of learners, their target needs for learning the subject-matter in question, from which are derived their objectives, and their state-of-knowing at the commencement of the syllabus activation. Furthermore, we may look for characterization of the situational context of teaching and learning, some quite detailed analysis of the subject-matter content in terms of manageable units and classificatory schemata, and, in particular, statements of mandatory or preferred routes through this content in terms of some ordered sequence of teaching and learning. Breen & Candlin (1980) offer a detailed account of these organizing principles in terms of focus, subdivision, sequence and continuity—see also Breen (this volume). Less commonly in such a broad syllabus of the first type, we may find some account of preferred methods by which this content is to be presented to learners and interacted with by them. We may also discover how the learning of this content is to be evaluated in terms of the levels of knowing required of the learners by the institution whose syllabus it is. Such evaluatory procedures may, in turn, be accompanied by a description of the kind of demand that this content and these methods and procedures may make upon teachers, less commonly on learners, and rarely, if at all, on the syllabus designers themselves. All of the above, as I have been at pains to indicate, infused by particular social, educational, moral and subject-matter specific principles and definitions.

Narrowly defined, and, in addition, now perhaps locally at the level of a school or even a particular class rather than any larger institutional frame, such syllabuses are restricted to mere collections of items of content, derived from a special view of the subject-matter in question, broken down and sequenced in order to facilitate, it is claimed, and optimize, it is implied, their learning by learners in classrooms. They act, thus, as a general metaphor for particular subject-learning.

It will be clear from this characterization, that whether broadly or narrowly defined, syllabuses of this type place a premium upon the specification of content. It is at this point that we can return to and expand upon some of the critical questions raised at the outset of this paper.

We can begin by asking with Lawton (1973) and Barnes (1976) among

many others, where this content comes from and who determines what the
syllabus is to contain. It is called forth by some set of stated objectives
themselves deriving from needs assessment of learners, we must on the one
hand accept that there is some content-bank which can be so drawn upon
(wherein content is amenably stored in units of account) and, on the other be
so sure that we can so delicately specify these learners' needs that objectives
and thence specific content can in fact be identified. We could further wonder
who is involved in this process of identification, and whether the learner has
much part in it at all. We might then probe more deeply, and ask whether it is
possible to separate so easily what we have been calling content from what we
have been calling method or procedure, or indeed whether we can avoid
bringing evaluation into the debate? Is it not more plausible that all these
elements in the specification of the process of learning implied by a syllabus
influence each other and cannot, as a consequence, be treated in isolation?
We could go on to argue that any such syllabus premised upon a
pre-packaging of knowledge seen-as-items, oriented as it is to the institution
or to the teacher as agent, is likely to be at odds with a syllabus, oriented to
the learner, whose function can only properly be one of facilitating the
exploration precisely by that learner of his or her own values and ways of
'cutting up the world'. Such ways, moreover, which will frequently be at odds
with those identified externally, in advance and on his or her behalf.

No doubt other criticisms can be advanced; it is hard to avoid the conclusion,
however, that these syllabuses of the traditional type act as commands for
what is to take place. They state ends and furthermore prescribe means which
may or may not be consonant either with those ends or with the content which
had been identified. They are centralized, management-oriented and
predictive. Fortunately, however, they are not inevitable. Typically, this lack
of inevitability is unplanned. In practice, in the process, these syllabus
specifications become modified, objectives and the means to their attainment
changed. Other content, alternative experiences, different modes of
evaluation are introduced as practice tells us that we cannot specify the order
of what is to be taught and certainly not the order of what is to be learned.
What results is what Stenhouse (1975) refers to as a continuing disparity and
conflict between intention and reality, between theory and realization,
between what he calls an 'ends-means model' and an 'explicit-action-change
model'. Now such a tension between what is and what should be can, as
Dewey (1910) among others has pointed out, be a valuable and necessary
characteristic of education, but only if the should-be is personal and
uncharted, not imposed and pre-defined.

If the syllabus is sensitive to this disparity, then it can allow for formative
experiment and evaluation and consequent changes in both content and
direction. If it is insensitive, then both teachers and learners become
alienated and incapacitated servants of a set of requirements at odds with
their individuality and with the realities of the classroom. This latter scenario
is, in my experience, frequently the case (see also Jackson (1966, 1968) cited

in Stenhouse (1975)). Indeed, accommodating these opposing forces of specification and actualization is a major problem of syllabus design and implementation. It is the view of this paper that this accommodation cannot be attained, as some of the other papers in this collection seem to suggest (see Widdowson, Brumfit, Allen and Yalden in this volume), merely by making a syllabus of the first type 'more sensitive', or by establishing a series of parallel syllabuses grounded in the same principles of design. The contradictions involved in such an approach are too deep for that. We need to examine the feasibility of its alternative, at first epistemologically and then in subject-specific practice (cf. Johnson (1983) for additional comment on this question of internal contradiction between syllabus content and syllabus method).

3.

A first step towards achieving a syllabus of this second type is to attempt this accommodation by making purposes, content, methods (or, better, learning experiences), and evaluation, interdependent, with a particular focus on the integration of content and experience. A syllabus would then avoid the mistake of regarding knowledge as information and would expect to be concerned as much with the learning experiences it offered to learners as with the subject-matter content of those experiences. Here one would be reiterating Stenhouse's (1975) maxim that 'education as induction into knowledge is successful to the extent that it makes the behavioural outcomes of the students unpredictable'. Indeed, one might take the argument a stage further, and assert that the content of any experience is necessarily bound up with the process of the experience itself. In Postman and Weingartner's (1969) words, 'the critical content of any learning experience is the method of process through which the learning occurs' Certainly it is possible to argue that the view of content we have is closely connected with our view of how this content is to be communicated in classrooms, and, moreover, the roles to be adopted in this process by teacher and learner. Barnes' (1976) studies have amply documented that. Furthermore, in stressing, as I have done, how content is not 'value-free' we imply that to 'know' content is to explore its values, and that it is this exploration of values which implies a methodology where content cannot reasonably be seen to exist independently of its interpretation. We are thus inexorably driven towards a syllabus of 'how' which is interconnected with the syllabus of 'what' Such a syllabus must of necessity be oriented towards those who interpret it rather than towards those responsible for its specification, in particular, of course, towards the learner who in the company of his peers and his teachers, determines both his or her own objectives and routes. It is this vested and mutual interest in personal objectives which secures the continuing relevance of the syllabus for the learner. Thus in this view, the syllabus becomes a dynamic and negotiated concept rather than one which is static and imposed. As such, it is in turn better positioned to forestall the incipient likelihood of a painful fracture of intention and reality that I refer to as common above. Moreover, we can now

add 'why' and 'how well' as guiding principles for this syllabus, as well as 'what' and 'how'.

Such an interactive syllabus suggests a model which is social and problem-solving in its orientation rather than one which transmits preselected and often predigested knowledge. The model thus becomes one in which participants, both teachers and learners, are encouraged to ask questions from the outset about syllabus objectives, content, methodology and experiences, and their evaluation. Moreover, the model is productive rather than merely reflective, in that it is through such questioning that new knowledge can be created and brought to bear in turn upon the entire syllabus process.

As I shall indicate later in relation to the language learning syllabus, such a praxis-oriented model would be appropriately realized through a series of problem-posing tasks, if you like, a series of guided experiences, focusing both on what is to be learned and on how and why it is to be learned. In the carrying out of these tasks, and, indeed, in the selection and evaluation of them, there would be a natural reason for a dialogue between the contributions of the learners and those of the teacher. In such a way, Habermas' *Diskurs* could be applied to the process of syllabus design and implementation itself, and not be confined merely to the realm of interpersonal communication (see also Candlin & Breen 1969, Breen & Candlin 1980, Breen 1983).

Although the experience-oriented syllabus model of the second type that I am advocating here incidentally will act to break down the barriers between teachers and learners erected by an intensional view of the diffusion of subject-matter knowledge, we need to acknowledge that in this continually interchanging relationship of teacher–learner and learner–teacher there is an equivalent continuing need to reflect their two perspectives. As role of teacher and learner interchange they carry with them particular perspectives which affect how the objectives, content/experiences and evaluation of the syllabus will be viewed and judged. Guarding these two potentially contrastive perspectives from working against the process of co-investigation by teachers and learners of some chosen content or experience is a continuing and active syllabus problem. Often the point of tension and rupture occurs in the participants' alternative interpretations of each other's long-term needs (captured neatly in German by the term *Bedarf*) and short term wants and lacks (German *Beduerfnis*), themselves a reflection of the larger conflict between syllabus models of the first and second types.

One consequence of the promotion of this second model must immediately be faced. This focus on problem-solving with its implications for social negotiation among participants towards unpremeditated outcomes will make difficult any precise long-term planning for the introduction of predetermined content. In fact, such distanced long-term planning is inimical to the

model. We become preoccupied with the negotiation of content/experience and evaluation, as a reflection of participants' long-term and short-term purposes, needs and wants, and, in so doing, concern ourselves necessarily less with the syllabus as tactical blueprint and more with it as tactical account. Syllabuses of the second type take on the character of a retrospective record rather than a prospective plan.

In arguing thus for a retrospective syllabus I am, of course, aware of the proper institutional demands for a clear statement of forward planning. None the less, the arguments already advanced in this paper suggest that there are major objections, ideological, social, psychological and pedagogical, against the imposition of a step-by-step programme on teachers and learners which all must follow. Given that we do not know how best to sequence content and experience to optimize learning there is a certain futility in attempting to impose such a sequence. This is not to be taken to suggest, however, that content and especially sequencing are unimportant (see Schinnerer (1977, 1982)), merely that we should take them out of teachers' control, as Allwright (1980) advocates, and set about offering the conditions in terms of which experimentation about the possibilities of sequencing content and experience precisely can take place.

How else can we reconcile these two positions? The way forward may be to plan at two levels, neither of which is at the level of the syllabus, as traditionally defined, and where at both levels the term plan is differently interpreted. At one level, that of the curriculum, we would site guidelines for purposes, content/experience, and evaluation, paying considerable attention to precisely those ideological, social, psychological and pedagogical influences I have identified, as well as the important implementational constraints of the educational system or institution in question. Such guidelines would offer information about learning in general and the learning of the subject-matter in question in particular, explore the epistemology of the subject and examine carefully teacher–learner role relationships as well as advocating a wide variety of learning formats and learning experiences. Furthermore at this curriculum level we may locate banks of items and accounts of procedures for drawing upon them as open-ended examples of usable data and information. Such a set of guidelines is currently available in the Rahmenrichtlinien Neue Sprachen for the German Land Hesse (Hessischer Kultusminister 1980) and discussed at length in the publications of the Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Englisch an Gesamtschulen (BAG 1972ff). Planning at this level is more a matter of overall strategy.

In the variable exercise of these learning experiences and formats, and in the negotiated selection from these open-ended banks, guided by the curriculum principles, syllabuses of the second type emerge as joint constructs of teachers and learners, recording the how, what and the why. It is in this classroom process that we observe the second level of planning at work. This is the level of tactical sequencing of action and activity, both of which are

clearly appropriate and necessary for any human endeavour. Such tactical planning addresses matters of what is to be done, what questions suggest themselves to be asked, what processes are most conducive to the exploration of the problem being addressed, what additional information is needed, what activities are worthwhile (in the sense of Raths (1971), cited in Stenhouse (1975)). This level is that of the everyday decision-making of the classroom, co-operatively carried out by those most closely affected, namely the teachers and the learners. From this decision-making emerges, in fact, two syllabuses not one; a syllabus for *learning* and a syllabus for *subject-matter and procedures* (broadly defined) in which, incidentally, syllabus evaluation cannot be some externally imposed monolith but must be intrinsically variable. From this dialogue, then, between curriculum guidelines and classroom action, syllabuses of the second type emerge as accounts. These accounts will be varied as to their content and their means of being recorded. We may expect information on learning goals, the nature of the content worked upon and the manner of the working, what explanations were required and provided, what ways were employed for measuring progress, what types of activity were entered upon, what specific tasks, who was to do what tasks and take what responsibility, what time was allocated and used, and so on. In terms of record, we may expect video or audio-recorded sequences of classroom action, documentation in writing by teachers and learners, perhaps in terms of plans and accounts, perhaps in terms of wall newspapers and learner diaries, profiles of performance against agreed criteria (internally or externally imposed), results of classroom experiments and the like. For some indication of these possibilities see Dam (1982) in the context of secondary school foreign language learning.

From this dialogue between curriculum guidelines and classroom action we may expect several outcomes. Firstly, as we indicate above, syllabuses emerge as accounts. Secondly, such syllabus accounts act themselves as powerful informative evaluations of the programme itself. They offer us windows upon the operation of the curriculum guidelines in the classroom and as such not only provide statements about learning and teaching but also about the difficulties inherent in implementing the guidelines themselves. In Parlett & Hamilton's (1972) terms, these accounts offer 'illuminative evaluation' on the operation of the programme, the influences and con-straints upon it, the advantages and disadvantages for its participants and the effect it has on them and their learning. Evaluation is thus bound up with the process of developing the syllabus itself. Moreover, the syllabus as account has an important role to play in curriculum change. It is only from the tension between classroom action and curriculum guidelines, recorded in syllabuses, that we can expect innovation. It is this tension which can drive curricula forward, maintaining their relevance to the society of the classroom and that of the world outside. For this tension to be productive in this sense, however, two conditions at least have still to be met. The first we have referred to and deals with syllabus and participant accountability, the keeping of classroom records. The second requires the keeping open of clear

lines of communication between those involved in the classroom tactics and those involved with curriculum strategy. (For a model of curriculum development premised on this philosophy see Candlin 1983.) Meeting the first condition will satisfy the planners' and the authorities' duty and desire for regulation; meeting the second will satisfy the teachers' and the learners' desire and responsibility to affect their own conditions of work and allow them to become involved in the process of curriculum research and development as they go about teaching and learning.

4.

The foregoing has not been in any sense subject-specific. It has explored some issues in general. Nor has it concerned itself with the particular problems of implementation of the proposal in relation to a given subject. It is time to turn to language.

As it happens, language, language learning and the history of language teaching curriculum development offer rich content for this particular debate. In support of the alternative model of syllabus I have been advocating I will draw support from our understanding of the nature of language, especially in the light of recent studies in pragmatics (see Leech 1983, Levinson 1983), and from research into the process of second language acquisition, drawing on the work of Long (1983b), Long and Larsen-Freeman (in preparation), Pienemann (1983), Swain (1983), Porter (1983) *inter alia*. Much of the argument that has been adduced against syllabuses of the first type has received specific support from applied linguists concerned with language teaching during the last ten years. At first, this support concerned itself more with a redefining of syllabus content, away from a purely lexico-syntactic focus towards one which was primarily (but not, it should be noted, exclusively) semantic and pragmatic (see, among many others, Widdowson 1973, 1978; Candlin 1972, 1973a & b; Wilkins 1972). The impetus of the English for Special Purposes movement (for a historical overview see Swales 1983) and, as a special example, the work of the Council of Europe's Modern Language Project (see Trim 1973; Van Ek 1977 *inter alia*) aided this redefinition with its focus on the need to imbue the syllabus content with greater target authenticity. (For an exceptionally well-documented account of this process of content, and latterly, process change in a secondary school curriculum, see the publications of the Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Englisch an Gesamtschulen BAG 1972 ff.)

Increasingly, however, it is clear from the contributions of workers such as Candlin (1976, 1978); Widdowson (1978); Breen, Candlin & Waters (1979), and the specific exchange of views in *Applied Linguistics* Vol 2 No 1 (1981), that the linguistic and language teaching critique of the 'type one' syllabus came from other sources than those merely concerned with a need for some 'functional' or 'ESP' gloss on an otherwise fundamentally unregenerate syllabus organization. For discussion in one particular curriculum develop-

ment context, see Candlin (1983b). In the first place, there was an increasing concern that the view of language implied by some list of 'functions' and 'notions' was as limiting to the learner as one based on grammatical structure, in that it offered little account of any principled ways of relating form to function, implying as it did a discreteness among both sets of items which was belied by actuality. In the second place, it was felt that any syllabus for language learning and teaching ought to be premised as much on learning principles as it was on the arrangement of subject-matter content, whether functional or formal, and however tailored it was to learners' apparent target repertoires.

Unfortunately, the educational, social psychological and, one must say, ill-informed publishing pressures in favour of a continuation of syllabuses of the first type proved too strong for either of these concerns, despite the fact, as I shall emphasize, that they pointed clearly towards the alternative syllabus proposal I have been advocating. (See in this context, Richards 1983.) It must also be said, however, that whereas the proposals for 'functional-notationalism' in syllabus design could draw upon established accounts, the underpinning ideas going back at least to Hornby (1944) and Jespersen (1905), the critiques to which I now refer were only beginning to be formulated pragmatically and psycholinguistically in the mid-seventies and later. They were, however, articulated, and in the applied linguistic and language teaching literature not merely in the specialist journals. It proved in practice all-too-easy for the textbook writer and the syllabus designer merely to adopt the 'new' semantic and functional units into traditional sequences. 'Refusing' and 'Talking about the Past' simply replaced the 'Simple Present' as a syllabus unit in what has become rapidly as imitated syllabus sequence as Harold Palmer's much imitated order in his *Corso Internacional de Ingles* of the early 1940's. Indeed, syllabus designers and teachers were, and still are, being presented with this change as if it represented a fundamental shift in syllabus conception (see Finocchiaro 1978; Finocchiaro & Brumfit 1983) rather than mere relabelling. With the exception of the best products of ESP thinking (i.e. those actually based upon sociolinguistic description (cf Candlin *et al.* 1975, 1976; Jupp & Hodlin 1975; Swales 1980; Ewer & Boys 1981) rather than those constructed on more imaginative bases (cf Bates & Dudley-Evans 1978)), the selection of these functional items bore no evident relationship to any consideration of particular personal or culture-specific ideologies, despite the fact that to talk in terms of functions at all ought to have implied in the language teaching context an acknowledgement at least of the plurality of values. All learners, apparently, would value identically, and, what is more implausible, in the same sequence and via the same linguistic forms. It is hard to imagine a greater travesty of language as a system for the exchange of meaning and value. In short, such reintroduction of what it was ostensibly designed to replace, aided by a methodology equally unchanged in its transmissiveness, merely required learners to learn what was set before them, asking no questions. For particular examples, see Abbs & Freebairn (1976ff); Jones (1978) among many others. Considerations of

content as both 'what' and 'how', let alone 'why', played little role, and an updating of topical focus had little effect on a basically unchanged syllabus design. (See Candlin & Breen 1979 for discussion). There are some notable exceptions (see Abbs *et al.* 1978; Candlin & Edelhoff 1982, and, in particular Prabhu 1978, Allwright 1982), but in general the opportunity afforded to syllabus innovation by the sociolinguistically influenced pressures for change in content specification and organization by the critique of the early 1970s has received little support. What changes there have been, have unfortunately been limited to cosmetic adjustment.

In part this can be set at the door of a too simple view of language adopted by textbook writers and syllabus designers. In retrospect, for example, the Council of Europe specifications (especially the linguistically crude *Threshold Level* (1973), less so the more carefully constructed *Niveau Seuil* (1980)), and Wilkins' Notional Syllabus (1976) played into the hands of those who regarded syllabuses of the first type as unchallengeable. (See Widdowson 1979 and Candlin 1982 for some comment.) They did so by basing their plans for syllabus organization on a simple reading of early speech act theory (Searle 1969; Austin 1962) where acts were seen as discrete items to which, in Levinson's words (1983) linguistic forms could be mapped on by *fiat*, or else in some unclear way associated by reference to 'context'. Moreover, the complexity of this operation was either ignored, or simply vitiated by the lack of any great contextual provision within the materials themselves. The plausibility of a speech act approach to the analysis of discourse was gradually being undermined, not only by linguists (see Leech 1978, 1983) but also by social anthropologists (see Levinson 1981, 1983) and by applied linguists (see Widdowson 1978; Candlin 1976), and could not therefore be upheld in the uncritical form in which it was eagerly adopted by syllabus designers and materials writers. This is not the place for an extended discussion of this problem, but it is worth observing in passing that it is less speech acts as such which raise problems for learners, there being much evidence in favour of their universality (see Brown & Levinson 1978), but rather their particular occurrence and placing in culture-specific events and activity-types, their consequent realization in language-specific forms, and their role in conversational and written discourse which constitutes the learning problem. All such matters require an understanding of underlying principles of relation between form and function, extended contextual evidence and a process of interpersonal negotiation, themselves precisely the conditions excluded in principle or in practice by syllabuses of the first type or in materials deriving from them. As Leech (1983) points out in the context of a discussion on modes of analysing discourse:

> one can criticize some . . . models of discourse analysis from the same point of view as that which applied to semanticist and pragmaticist approaches to illocutionary force. In the past, the influence of grammatical models has led to a tendency to compartmentalize and hierarchize units of discourse as if they were constituents in some immediate constituent analysis   this is an error corresponding to that of treating speech acts as discrete and mutually exclusive categories.

It is then, in part, to accommodate these criticisms that the second approach to syllabus design and organization is being advocated. Here, content derives from data provided by teachers and learners and achieves its particular value in the process of private and public negotiation in the classroom (see Breen 1983). Lexico-syntactic items become part of the discourse in the classroom context, the main object of which process is to enable the pragmatic principles of the participants to be matched against each other in the context of understanding and producing text. Here, except for certain *par excellence* cases, value is not transmitted as a matter of *Handeln* but negotiated as *Diskurs*, and grammatical structures become associated in context with certain values, some of which, of course, they possess intrinsically as part of their semantics. Grammar, following Krashen (1982) is not an object of focus, it is a means for action and a motive for evaluative judgement. Such a process, as Gumperz (1982 a & b) has amply shown, is deeply ideological.

In sum, then, contemporary analyses of language in use not only insist upon meaning negotiation but have offered some procedures and practices whereby this negotiative process can be informed by general and activity-type specific pragmatic principle. The argument here is that such a process underpins our syllabus of the second type, requiring records of values shared, principles put into practice and developed, forms of language learned through problem-solving acts of classroom discourse, in the course of which process the two organizing levels of curriculum and classroom interact and influence each other for change. For further discussion, see Candlin (1983d) Prabhu (1983); Johnson & Porter (1983); Breen (1983)).

Turning now to the psycholinguistic evidence, and in particular that arising from first and second language acquisition research, it is not difficult to demonstrate that the demands of the first syllabus type far outstrip our present capacity to motivate. Consider what it does in fact demand: that we can clearly identify learning 'items' and that we can prespecify the optimum sequence for their presentation in order to optimize learning by the audience, whatever its size. Even if we were to ignore the evidence (Snow 1979; Peters 1983; Drew 1982; Keenan 1976a) that sees acquisition as arising out of a discoursal interaction between child and caretaker where intention, value and context interact to enable acquirers to 'learn how to mean' (Halliday 1976) from the responses they receive; even if we were to take a much narrower view of language than the previous discussions on pragmatics would warrant (i.e. lists of lexico-syntactic, notional and functional units), we would still be requiring the syllabus to take predictive decisions concerning the optimal learning moments for these items by our learner audience. However impracticable this requirement of the syllabus must seem, we should pursue the discussion into the domain of second language acquisition research especially, where there has been much relevant discussion on the relationship between input and intake (see long 1983c *inter alia*) and on the problems associated with any proposals for the sequenced presentation of language items (for discussion see Schinnerer 1977, 1982; Long 1983a). Schinnerer's

arguments against any principled sequencing on grounds of frequency and difficulty being unoperationalizable in practice are cogent, and so we must turn to second language acquisition research for some psycholinguistic motivation. Here, although there is much evidence to suggest that learners do not proceed in a graduated step-by-step symmetrical process from zero knowledge to mastery (see Felix 1981; Gass 1983; Schumann 1978), thus negating the strong implication of any syllabus of the first type, there is evidence that learners of second languages clearly follow some kind of sequence to whatever level of mastery they feel operationally satisfactory for their purposes. The questions that remain have to deal with whether such sequences can be identified in terms of units at all, and if so, which, and whether there are patterns of sequence which would at least warrant some rough attempts to preserve, perhaps for a particular learning group, a motive for syllabuses of the first type, albeit weaker in nature. A current exchange between Pienemann (1983) and Long (1983a) provides some very valuable discussion to this debate. In what follows, I draw extensively on the arguments of Long, in the context of a reading of Pienemann.

Pienemann's argument, on the basis of longitudinal studies of learners of German as a foreign language, is in support of the strong claim that there exists a connected linguistic and psycholinguistic sequence of syntactic structures (in fact, some six word-order rules) such that, in his words, 'instruction can only promote acquisition of the structures if the learner's interlanguage is close to the point where the structure to be taught is (would be) acquired in a natural setting'

The nub of the argument is that the structures in question contain within them their own processing prerequisites such that to violate the order would be to render the structure in question unprocessable, and, hence, unlearnable. From this Pienemann concludes that the structures would not be teachable out of order, either. As Long points out, such a proposal, if acceptable, would have clear classroom applications; teachers would follow the natural acquisition order even if this involved the presentation to the learners of stigmatized ('pidginized') forms, and, presumably, the production of such forms by the learners. To be fair to Pienemann (and perhaps in response to the negative pedagogic response to a similar idea advocated by Valdman (1972)) he does suggest in such circumstances that the teacher should 'jump' to the next fully grammatical form.

At first sight, such a proposal by Pienemann might appear to offer support for syllabuses of the first type. It would motivate the sequenced presentation of learning items. There are, however, a number of objections that can be raised, some of which are presented in the paper by Long.

Firstly, there is the matter of whether language in the pragmatic sense discussed above can be captured by a focus on grammatical structure, however identified. Secondly, there is a logistical objection based on

practical classroom realities. Pienemann's thesis (the 'teachability hypoth-esis') rests on the capacity of the syllabus designer and the teacher, on the basis of some general principles of second language acquisition dealing with as yet only lightly sketched concepts of processing prerequisites, to present the particular structures in question at appropriate moments for the individual learners, gauging their personal *états d'apprentissage*. Such a schema is only plausible on the drawing board, not in the average instructional setting since, as Allwright (1976) points out, teachers rarely follow their own lesson-plans in language instruction, and, as Long points out, such a proposal fails to acknowledge that learners grouped at one stage for optimum intake would not necessarily be in such a state of collective readiness at another stage if the path of second language acquisition does not run predictably smooth, as it does not (see Kellermann 1983 for further evidence). Thirdly, again as Long points out, Pienemann's argument implies a rejection of the input hypothesis, both in its initial form (see Krashen 1982) and in its modified input plus interaction form (see Long 1978, 1983a), whereby intake is variously negotiated by learners in unpredictable orders on the basis of a 'syllabus' which is in the control of the learner. The role of the external 'syllabus', and hence that of the designer and the teacher is to provide for those opportunities for interaction between learners and text, learners and teachers, learners and peers, through which items, principles and values can be made comprehensible.

In sum, Pienemann's arguments are flawed psycholinguistically, linguistical-ly and pedagogically, and what Long is arguing for is a syllabus under learners' control. Such a proposal matches our syllabus of the second type; one in which learners in the company of their peers and their teachers chart their own paths to acquisition on the basis of negotiated interaction with input contained within a range of problem-solving tasks, assisted by the kind of feedback envisaged in Schinnerer (1978, 1982); Candlin & Edelhoff (1982); Allwright (1983); and Schachter (1983). Indeed, it would seem that we can now support the contention contained within Breen & Candlin (1980), that a syllabus of the second type provides a powerful confluence of the three motivating forces behind any proposal for the language teaching syllabus, *viz.* a view of language in harmony with a view of language learning set in an environment conducive to the development of both.

5.

Although the focus of this TESOL Colloquium was directed towards the content and the organization of syllabuses, rather than upon syllabus implementation, I should like to conclude by making some practical suggestions. These will be the subject of a more detailed paper in the Second Curriculum/Syllabus Colloquium at TESOL 1984.

At points during the foregoing I have advocated that syllabuses of the second type will be characterized by a set of problem-solving tasks which have the

purpose of creating conditions for value-identification, meaning-negotiation and comprehensible input by the learner. Furthermore, we have evidence from Prabhu (1983) that such tasks are as operationalizable at the secondary level as they have shown to be for ESP (Candlin *et al* 1978; Phillips & Shuttlesworth 1978; Waters & Hutchinson 1983), for teacher in-service education and training (Edelhoff 1982), and in humanities education (Stenhouse 1975). Long (1983a), as we have seen, expressly advocates such a task-based approach as a way of honouring the second language acquisition evidence. It would not be difficult to forge an alliance with those concerned with fieldwork training in social anthropology (including language-oriented work on the ethnography of speaking) (see Brislin 1978) or even those concerned with practical ethics (Drammer 1983). Problem-solving tasks are not motivated merely psycholinguistically, but for many other reasons related to the educational process.

In summary, then, we can expect that many disciplines will have a useful contribution to make to task design and specification. It may well be the case that target repertoire analyses will influence task content and method, and better understood processes of cognitive prerequisites and demand of tasks on learner strategy. We may assume that as elsewhere task tokens may be associated with task-types, perhaps in the general manner indicated by Long (1983a) on the basis of work in ESP. Classifications of task types on the basis of learner interaction with data have been proposed in outline by Candlin & Edelhoff (1982), Swales (1984) and Waters & Hutchinson (1982). All of the above follow Krashen (1980) and Hatch (1978) in advocating a focus by the learner on the non-linguistic outcomes of the task rather than on the accompanying and facilitating language, though in principle a task which has both language as its focus and as its facilitation ought not to be excluded, providing that it meets the twin characteristics of any such task, *viz.* that it allows for differentiation and poses a problem (see Breen, Candlin & Waters 1979; BAG 1978, 1981). Most importantly for this paper, such tasks would focus on both content and procedure, thus meeting the requirements of educationalists such as Barnes and Postman & Weingartner on the one hand, and linguists concerned with the application of principles to meaning negotiation in context, like Leech. They would also, *pace* Freire, be in the hands of the learner.

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Overview

In this paper, I wish to begin by offering a brief analysis of language teaching syllabus design in terms of the main function of the syllabus and the principles of organization which guide its construction. From this analysis, I argue that — however carefully designed a syllabus may be — any syllabus has to be continually reinterpreted and recreated by teacher and learners when it is actually used in the classroom. I also offer an outline of alternatives now available to us which question conventional priorities in syllabus design. In the context of these alternatives, and with particular reference to the creative reinterpretation of the syllabus in the classroom, I propose the notion of a Process Syllabus. The paper concludes with a brief account of the main characteristics of a Process Syllabus for classroom language learning and teaching.

1. Defining a Language Teaching Syllabus

In our experience as teachers, we either design our own syllabuses or we have to adopt a previously established syllabus which serves the institution or state within which we work. Any syllabus is most typically *a plan of what is to be achieved* through our teaching and our students' learning. We are probably most familiar with plans which are intended to be predictive. These are constructed before the actual teaching–learning process to provide an ordered framework of achievable objectives. In order to facilitate teaching and learning, the plan identifies and divides up what is to be achieved according to certain principles of organization.

We may also be familiar with reflective or retrospective plans which are constructed during or after the actual teaching–learning process–a plan of what is being achieved as we go along, or one which reviews what has actually been achieved by our learners. Even a predesigned plan, however, is inevitably and continually *reinterpreted* by ourselves and by our learners. Both the original construction and the reinterpretation of the plan are creative activities. Such creativity will be shaped by the particular frames of reference — the experiences, attitudes, and knowledge — of the designer and the users of the plan.

In language teaching, the prime function of a syllabus has been to map out *the content or subject-matter* of our courses and, thereby, to indirectly guide and serve the teaching and learning of that subject-matter. The syllabus offers a 'route map' to its users which has the potential to provide overall continuity and also particular points of reference. It can indicate where we are going, where we are, and where we have been.

A syllabus is a shareable plan—by definition—and therefore open to inspection and evaluation. Perhaps we would require our syllabus to be accessible and meaningful to anyone who is directly or indirectly concerned with its use. Thus, fellow professionals in our work situation should be able to follow the same plan or take it as an indication of the subject-matter which has been covered in our course. For a plan to be genuinely accessible, it would certainly need to provide continuity and points of reference for our learners also. We would expect a syllabus to provide criteria for evaluation and to order subject-matter in ways in which coverage can be checked. That is, there would be steps along the route at which we could evaluate progress and at which we could check the appropriateness of the plan itself.

2.   Constructing the Syllabus

The principles of organization which are applied in the construction of a syllabus are selection, focus, subdivision, and sequencing (or grading). Conventionally, these principles are applied to what is to be achieved in a 'top down' or analytical way. Starting with a general view or definition of the target language and/or its use, more specific objectives or 'needs' are selected as appropriate subject-matter. From these objectives, representative aspects and elements of the subject-matter are focused upon—e.g. particular structures, sets of functions, or a range of communication events. Honouring the constraint that the teaching–learning process will occur in real time, the content is further subdivided and sequenced. Subdivision involves the breaking down of subject-matter into manageable units. Subdivision is also usually hierarchical, with larger superordinate units (e.g. grammatical systems, communication situations, or themes and topics) containing and entailing smaller units (e.g. particular rules, or functions, or specific vocabulary). Sequencing, on the other hand, involves the marking out of subject-matter along a path of development. Sequencing is usually step-by-step through more immediate objectives on the way to some overall achievement. Many syllabuses, however, draw a path from 'A' to 'B' as a sequence of overlapping circles or as a gradually widening spiral, both of which indicating a return to, and refinement of earlier steps along the route.[1]

These principles of selection, focus, subdivision, and sequencing are never applied to what is to be achieved in an objective or neutral way. We apply them—as designers or users of the syllabus—from a particular point of view or *frame of reference*. Therefore, the plan we construct or use will represent a particular view of language (of our subject matter); a particular view of how

the subject-matter might be 'best' internalized by learners; and a particular view of the conditions offered by the classroom for the transmission of the subject-matter. Our views on each of these phenomena will interrelate and this interrelationship will be the specific frame of reference from which the plan itself is created. In other words, any syllabus will express—however indirectly—certain assumptions about language, about the psychological process of learning, and about the pedagogic and social process within a classroom. We may uncover the particular frame of reference underlying a syllabus by asking: 'What precisely is selected and focused upon?' and 'How is the subject-matter actually subdivided and sequenced?'

To illustrate particular views and assumptions which influence current syllabus design, we can consider just the principle of *sequencing* as an example. Here we are concerned with the step-by-step route or the developmental path which the plan might offer. The particular views of language, learning, and classroom conditions held by the syllabus designer will generate particular criteria for sequencing the content of the syllabus. If the syllabus represents a view of language as a formal system, then the criteria for sequencing will relate to 'simplicity' or 'complexity' of structures or phonological aspects of the language, and therefore suggest a route through the subject-matter which starts with what may be more 'simple' or 'basic' and moves to the more 'complex' or 'specialized'. If the syllabus represents a functional view of language, then 'usefulness' or 'frequency' criteria will guide the sequence in which the content would be covered—obliging us to start out with the most generalizable or most commonly used vocabulary, speech acts or communication events (and their linguistic exponents) and thence move on to what may be less frequent or even rather specialized uses of the language. The syllabus may be sequenced on the basis of a particular view or learning. It may oblige us to start with subject-matter which is 'easier to learn' or more 'familiar' to the learner before moving onto that which is 'harder to learn' or 'unfamiliar'. Similarly, criteria derived from a view of learning may require the learner to begin with what may be more 'manageable' or to take smaller steps at a more gradual pace before moving to larger and more demanding steps. The syllabus may also represent a particular view of the conditions offered by the specific classroom situation. Criteria related to the teaching of the subject-matter may suggest a sequence from what is 'easy to teach'—or even more amenable to teaching—to what is 'harder to teach'. Alternatively, given a syllabus which has to be sensitive to rather specialized social or professional 'needs', the particular classroom situation may therefore demand initial coverage of what may be most 'urgent' in the quickest possible time before moving to what is 'less urgent', more demanding in time, and perhaps something of a luxury.

Clearly, some of these criteria for sequencing subject-matter will overlap with one another. However, the criteria actually applied in the ordering of subject-matter will reflect different views and priorities and result in differences in the sequencing of content from one syllabus to another. In

addition, the criteria themselves can never be strictly 'objective' and they will be assumptions or good guesses rather than established 'facts' about language, learning, or classrooms. Linguists, for instance, often strongly disagree about what may be 'simple' or 'complex' in language just as psychologists of language hold different views concerning 'easiness', 'familiarity' or 'manageability' in language learning. Similarly, the syllabus designer can never predict in precise ways those aspects of the subject-matter which will, in reality, prove 'easier', 'more familiar', or 'most urgent' for any particular learner. Therefore, the sequence adopted by the designer will reflect a general and, perhaps, idealized view of the relationship between the subject-matter and the teacher and learners who will work through it.

3.   Creating and Reinterpreting a Syllabus

Although, as teachers, we may follow a predesigned syllabus, every teacher inevitably interprets and reconstructs that syllabus so that it becomes possible to implement it in his or her classroom. Similarly, learners create individual learning syllabuses from their own particular starting points and their own perceptions of the language, learning, and the classroom. We may regard learners either as people who are trying to redraw the predesigned plan (a plan which is mediated through the teacher), or we may see learners as uncovering the route for the first time—in a sense, discovering the new language as if it had never been explored before. A learner's individual version of the route *may* harmonize with the teacher's version, which—in turn—*may* harmonize with the predesigned plan. The classroom is therefore the meeting place or point of interaction between the predesigned syllabus and individual learner syllabuses. This interaction will generate the *real* syllabus—or the syllabus in action—which is jointly constructed by teacher and learners together. The predesigned syllabus is therefore something of a paradox, for it serves to gradually render itself redundant. It is always replaced in its implementation by that syllabus which is jointly discovered and created in the classroom.

In the lesson-to-lesson reality of language teaching, we are continually concerned with three syllabuses: the teacher's version of the predesigned plan, the individual learner syllabus, and the unfolding syllabus of the classroom—this last being the synthesis of the other two. One important implication of this for syllabus design is that a 'good' predesigned syllabus is one which is positively amenable to alternative interpretations and open to reconstruction through interaction in the classroom. Perhaps the most meaningful and accessible syllabus will be one which deliberately provokes the shared creation of the real syllabus by the classroom group.

4.   A Cautionary Tale

So far, I have reviewed some of the characteristics of current syllabus design. My emphasis has been upon the construction and reinterpretation of plans. I

have suggested that such plans emerge from—and are viewed from—the particular frames of reference of the designer and the users. Finally, I suggested that the real language learning syllabus is itself a synthesis through the interaction of the predesigned plan with the individual syllabuses of the participants in the classroom.

In the brief discussion of the principle of sequencing, I used the metaphor of a route map which we may follow as teachers and which our learners may navigate with us.[2] The metaphor also serves to express both the value and limitations of maps. Perhaps an extreme—though salutary—example of these limitations is provided by a story from Czechoslovakia. A young lieutenant, recently entrusted with his first platoon, eagerly sent forth his men on an expedition in the Carpathian mountains with the instruction that they return to camp by nightfall. In the early hours of the morning, the lieutenant had reached a state of deep concern because the platoon had not reappeared. Only much later the next day were the men at last sighted, struggling down the foothills. The lieutenant, overcome with relief, hurried to meet his platoon. The sergeant explained that they had become utterly lost and only managed to find their way back by means of a map which one of their number happened to have with him. Surprised by this, because the original expedition had been proposed without the aid of maps, the lieutenant demanded to see the valued document. He discovered that it was a map not of the Carpathians, but of the Swiss Alps.[3]

I think there are two lessons we can draw from this story for the design of syllabuses. First, that learners are likely to *need* plans in order to have a sense of direction and continuity in their work. If a predesigned plan is in any way inaccessible to them—in terms of its 'fit' with their own routes and their own frames of reference—then learners are very likely to *seek to create* their own plans, however naïve or transitory these may be. Secondly the genuine value of a syllabus may be far less in what it tries to represent than in the *actual uses it may serve* in a classroom. A plan of subject-matter can, for example, offer 'external' criteria against which 'internal' classroom achievements and learning outcomes could be continually related. The content syllabus may serve as a check sheet for the group in terms of what may be worth knowing and achievable or in terms of what ought to have been known or attained. I wish to pursue both these deductions further after considering alternative orientations which now seem to be available to us for future syllabus design.

5.   Alternative Subject-Matter

We may regard what is to be achieved in language learning as a repertoire *of* communication or as a capacity *for* communication. Syllabuses with which we are most familiar have oriented towards repertoires of the target language, defined and subsequently organized on the basis of linguistic structure, or language use (e.g. functions), or communication events or situations. Here the emphasis has been upon a knowledge of the rules and conventions

governing usage and use; our subject-matter being the nature of target language communication itself. In other words, the syllabus has organized and presented a knowledge of what spoken and/or written performance is like.

An alternative orientation would be towards the capacities required of a communicator — in whatever medium — during target language communication. Here the emphasis would be upon the capabilities of applying, reinterpreting, and adapting the knowledge of rules and conventions during communication by means of underlying skills and abilities. In other words, an emphasis upon knowing *how* to participate in target language communication. Of course, knowing 'what' and knowing 'how' are interdependent; being able to share meanings entails and refines our knowledge of the systems through which meaning is conveyed. However, the *emphasis* of conventional syllabus design has been upon systems of knowledge external to learners rather than upon skills and abilities which learners initially bring to communication, and which they have to engage during communication.

In addition, conventional syllabus design has oriented towards language as primary subject-matter (although other cultural or thematic content may be used in the presentation of the language in certain syllabuses). An alternative orientation would be towards the subject-matter of *learning* a language. This alternative provides a change of focus from content for learning towards the process of learning in the classroom situation.

6. Alternative Priorities in Design

I have suggested earlier that any syllabus will express certain assumptions about language, about the process of learning, and about the potential contributions of the classroom. Most often, syllabus designers have given priority to the first of these. The predesigned content syllabus captures the designer's selection from, and organization of the target language and its use in certain situations. The designer draws the map beginning at the destination. The result being that the whole of the rest of the map — the route through the new language and its performance — is most often shaped and constrained by its own objectives or predetermined outcomes.

An alternative orientation would prioritize the route itself; a focusing upon the *means* towards the learning of a new language. Here the designer would give priority to the changing process of learning and the potential of the classroom — to the psychological and social resources applied to a new language by learners in the classroom context. One result of this change of focus would be that the syllabus could become a plan for *the gradual creation* of the real syllabus of the classroom, jointly and explicitly undertaken by teacher and learners. Such a plan would be *about* designing a syllabus and, therefore, a guide and servant for the map-making capacities of its users. Primarily it would be a plan for the activity of learning within the classroom group.

7. Content and Process

The alternative orientations which I have briefly described, and which are summarized in Figure 1, do not imply a rejection of conventional points of view which have influenced syllabus design. Conventional priorities can be regarded as being entailed *within* the alternatives. However, the alternatives do imply a significant change of emphasis. To extend the map-making metaphor to the act of map reading, the alternative orientations represent a shift of the needle of a compass from the direction of the language towards the direction of learning and classrooms; from ends towards means.
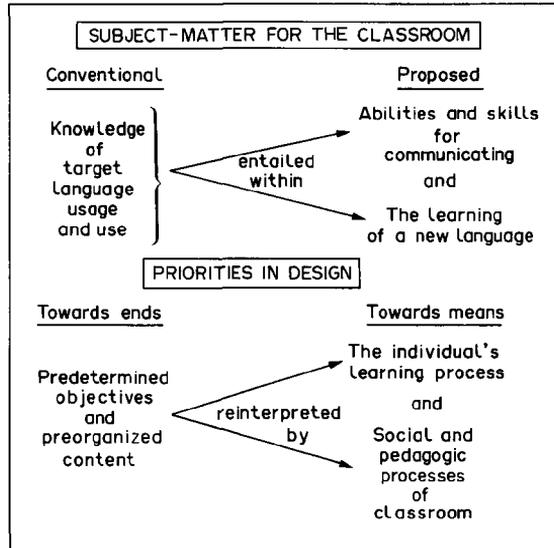
Figure 1.   *Alternative Orientation in Syllabus Design*

A greater concern with capacity for communication rather than repertoire of communication, with the activity of learning a language viewed as important as the language itself, and with a focus upon means rather than predetermined objectives, all indicate priority of process over content. One of the apparent advantages in the designing of the content or subject-matter syllabus is the selection and organization of a body of knowledge somehow independent of how that knowledge may be worked upon by learners in a classroom. Thus, content syllabuses may be predesigned and later 'applied to' and 'followed by' the teaching–learning process in the classroom. However, this apparent advantage is undermined by reality. The genuine priority for the participants in the classroom is that knowledge be worked upon in ways which facilitate its teaching and learning. Subject-matter consequently becomes subsumed within—and changed by—the pedagogic and social process of the classroom.

If the prime function of all syllabuses is to provide a plan which may guide and serve the activities of teaching and learning, then one of their desirable

characteristics will be their compatibility with the actual process of working-out—and working through—content or subject-matter. Given that teaching and learning are dynamic and creative activities—inevitably involving the reinterpretation of content—perhaps we need to consider a second type of syllabus which could coexist alongside, and probably incorporate more familiar content syllabuses. This second type of syllabus would be a plan relating to the teaching and learning process made available by the classroom. Such a plan could be superimposed upon any content because it would directly address the shared activities of selecting, focusing upon, subdividing, and sequencing appropriate subject-matter—activities which could be desirably and publicly undertaken in the classroom itself.

8.   What Does a Process Syllabus Contain?

We can view the teaching and learning process as involving a range of decisions—decisions to be taken by teacher and learners in relation to classroom language learning. Generally speaking, decisions have to be made concerning three major elements of classroom work: participation, procedure, and subject-matter.

Matters of *participation* relate to the question: 'Who works with whom?' It has to be decided whether the teacher works with the whole class, with sub-groups, or with individual learners. Similarly, whether learners work alone, in pairs, in groups or as members of the whole group. Concerning *procedure*, decisions have to be made concerning: Who does what with whom, with what resources, when, how, and why? Breaking this larger question down, specific decisions relate to the following questions:

Which particular activity or task is to be undertaken?

What specific materials or other resources are to be worked upon during the activity or task?

At what point in a lesson or series of lessons, and for how long?

How should the actual work be undertaken? What steps may be followed through?

For what learning purpose(s) will the activity or task serve?

The third decision area relates to *subject-matter* and can be identified by the question: 'On what do learners work?' It is this particular question which conventional syllabus design has primarily addressed. A content syllabus may also propose particular answers to one of the earlier procedure questions: 'For what learning purpose(s)?'. A content syllabus may often outline certain learning objectives, but these will tend to be more general objectives, closely related to preselected subject-matter, and therefore not as specific as the more immediate purposes of the learners in a particular classroom group. Within the dynamics of the classroom, very particular and important learning purposes emerge, often related to a certain activity or task and sometimes discovered by the teacher or individual learners only *through*

the activity or task. An example would be when a learner or group of learners decide to focus on a particular extract of target language data (in whatever medium) in order to uncover the workings of tense markers in verbs, having discovered in an earlier task that such markers seemed both important and the source of problems.

Clearly, all these decisions concerning classroom language learning are closely related. The choice of alternative participation, for example, will influence the choices to be made within other decision areas. Certain types of activity may be best undertaken as groupwork rather than individually or by the whole class, just as certain procedures may be more appropriate for particular tasks and not other kinds of task. In addition, all of the questions outlined above are somewhat more general questions to do with participation, procedure, and subject-matter. When directly addressed in the classroom, other more precise and immediate questions requiring decisions will arise.

What is the role of the content syllabus within this decision-making view of the classroom process? From the kinds of decision areas so far identified, it can be seen that any content syllabus would be incorporated *within* other decisions, and the principles of organization of content (outlined in section 2 of this paper) would be applied as a central part of the overall decision-making process. The general question: 'On what do learners work?' leads to decisions regarding how such content will be most appropriately selected and what specific content would be most suitable for the chosen learning purpose. Subsequently, teacher and learners together (or learners alone) will be involved in deciding which aspects of the selected content may be focused upon, how the content may be subdivided, and in what sequence the content may be ordered. In sum, classroom decisions about content or subject-matter will be the same kinds of decisions as those made by the syllabus designer. If a Process Syllabus was adopted within a classroom, it is very likely that the actual content syllabus of the group would be created in an on-going fashion. The Process Syllabus would generate a particular content syllabus. I suggested earlier that a predesigned content syllabus can function as an 'external' check on what learners may come to know or achieve. But even this, perhaps, minor role for the pre-designed syllabus implies that the classroom group will need to reinterpret that syllabus against its own frames of reference. One of the main functions of the Process Syllabus would be to raise learner reinterpretation of any predesigned syllabus to an explicit and shared undertaking. In other words, the Process Syllabus provides the framework within which either a predesigned content syllabus would be publicly analysed and evaluated by the classroom group, or an emerging content syllabus would be designed (and similarly evaluated) in an on-going way.

Given its primary function as the means whereby appropriate content or subject-matter can be explicitly and continually related to the unfolding

syllabuses of learners in the group, what would a Process Syllabus contain? In essence, it would *generate alternative answers* to the major decisions relating to classroom language learning (including the decisions identified so far and important subordinate decisions relating to them). Therefore, a Process Syllabus addresses the overall question: 'Who does what with whom, on what subject-matter, with what resources, when, how, and for what learning purpose(s)?' Such questions would be proposed as matters for joint decision in the classroom. They could be appropriately applied to the whole course, to a single week of a course, to a lesson, or even to a single activity or task. Also, the questions requiring classroom decisions would represent the initial and prevailing feature of this kind of syllabus. We can view a Process Syllabus as a framework of questions requiring joint decisions and an index of possible alternatives requiring agreed choices. A Process Syllabus is made up of four 'levels', each of which entails the 'level' below it. At the highest level are those *decisions for classroom language learning* which have already been referred to and which relate to participation, procedure and subject-matter. The particular alternatives chosen at this level (from suggested alternatives within the Syllabus) would then become the *agreed procedures* for the particular classroom group. Such agreed procedures may take the form of a 'working contract' for the class or a plan for the way(s) in which work would be undertaken in the class.[4]

The third level within a Process Syllabus indexes alternative *activities* available to be undertaken in the classroom. A particular Process Syllabus may offer a categorization of available activities which identifies each activity's relevant characteristics or its potential use within the classroom. On the other hand, another Process Syllabus would actually contain a file or 'bank' of activities to be selected from or added to during teaching and learning.[5] Within this level there is the fourth, and final level of alternative *tasks*. These would be mapped-out similarly to activities and many would be incorporated within larger activities. It is at the level of tasks that the actual working process of the classroom group is realized in terms of what is overtly done from moment to moment within the classroom. (Examples at task level would include such things as agreeing a definition of a problem, organizing data, deducing a particular rule or pattern, discussing reactions, etc.)

A Process Syllabus is therefore a framework for decisions and alternative procedures, activities, and tasks for the classroom group. (A summary of this framework is offered in Figure 2). Such a plan, when predesigned, will be constructed on the basis of the four 'levels' – from decisions down to specific tasks or task types. It will characteristically offer alternatives which have to be considered and decided upon by the particular classroom group. The *actual* Process Syllabus of a particular class would emerge from the alternative chosen and, in this way, any predesigned Process Syllabus would be the basis from which the particular reflective or retrospective Process Syllabus of the class will be constructed. The group's construction of their own Process Syllabus will itself emerge from continual evaluation of the

Level 1 – | DECISIONS FOR CLASSROOM LANGUAGE LEARNING |

relating to participation, procedure and
subject-matter
(Who does what with whom, on what content,
with what resources, when, how and why?)

Level 2 – | ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES |

To be chosen from and agreed upon as
basis for 'working contract' of the
classroom

Level 3 – | ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITIES |

To be selected from on the basis of
appropriateness to decisions at
Level 1

Level 4 – | ALTERNATIVE TASKS |

To be selected and undertaken within
Activities

| ON–GOING EVALUATION |

of chosen Tasks, Activities, and Procedure
concerning their appropriateness and
effectiveness in relation to initial
Decisions made

Main characteristics : Framework of questions requiring
joint decisions in the classroom and an 'index' or 'bank'
of alternatives requiring agreed choices. Each level or
element interrelates with the others – a higher level
entailing those below it.
Its actual use involves continual evaluation and, thereby,
a cyclic process through the levels from level 1 to 4 and
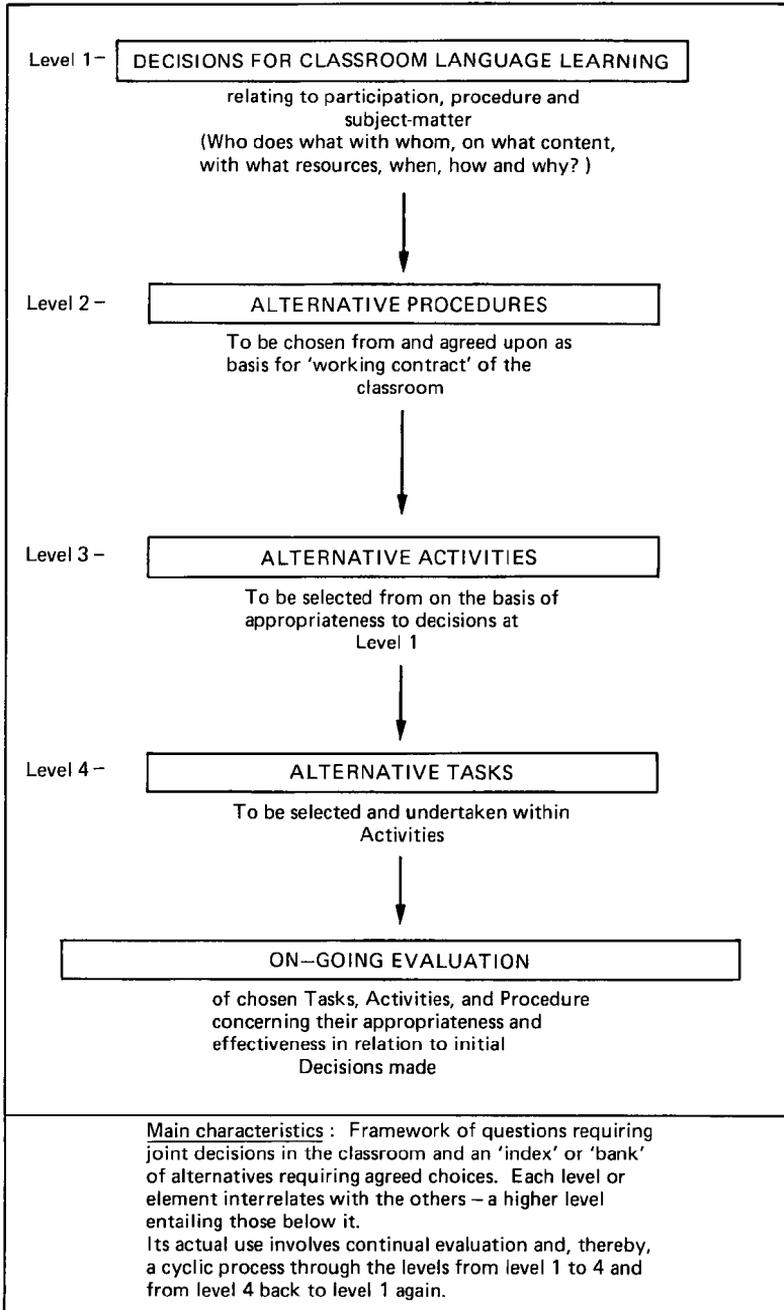from level 4 back to level 1 again.

Figure 2.   *The 'Levels' or Elements of a Process Syllabus*

appropriateness and effectiveness of particular procedures, activities, and tasks initially worked within. Thus, on-going evaluation of the teaching–learning process in the classroom would be a crucial activity, and it would involve teacher and learners *reconsidering* other alternatives at all four levels of the Syllabus.

The primary function of a Process Syllabus – involving decisions, agreed choices, and continual evaluation – will be to guide and serve the explicit interaction in the classroom between any content syllabus and the various and changing learner syllabuses within the group. Therefore, a Process Syllabus would directly activate and encourage the creative construction and reinterpretation of subject-matter by the participants in the classroom. Such a plan will provide a basis for the discovery of various routes for learning and, thereby, generate the actual classroom syllabus in a publicly shared and explicit way.[6]

9.   Why Process Syllabuses?

In the past, we have devoted much thought and energy to the construction of content or subject-matter syllabuses. In a sense, we have been indulging in a certain amount of self-deception. We have hoped to be able to organize subject-matter in order to render it more manageable for our learners. However, we are also aware of the fact that our learners will reconstruct and reinterpret whatever plans we offer in order to make the subject-matter their own. We may certainly refine predesigned plans on the basis of closer consideration of how our learners prefer to reconstruct and reinterpret subject-matter. Thus, research into how learners undertake the learning of a new language may inform conventional syllabus design. In this paper, I have proposed an alternative approach. To directly involve learner reconstruction and reinterpretation of subject-matter in an explicit way in the day-to-day work of the classroom; to engage learners themselves in the design of their own classroom syllabus. One of the potential outcomes of such an approach would be that *the classroom itself* could more overtly provide the teacher – and the learners – with actual data on language learning and learner syllabuses, and with alternative classroom syllabuses, all of which could better inform subsequent syllabus design.

A Process Syllabus is, in a sense, a syllabus of 'method' placed alongside and interrelating with a syllabus of subject-matter. However, within the actual world of the language classroom, the theoretical division between content and process is, at least, falsified or, at most, realized as a very fine distinction. Even a predesigned content syllabus expresses certain assumptions about how that content may be 'best' learned and how it may be 'most appropriately' presented in the classroom. Thus, content syllabuses carry hidden prescriptions for the teaching–learning process. A Process Syllabus, on the other hand, openly addresses teaching and learning and, particularly,

the possible interrelationships between subject-matter, learning, and the potential contributions of a classroom. Therefore, any content syllabus would be subsumed *within* the emergent Process Syllabus of the particular group. The latter will involve the learners in applying their own principles of organization to content or in the continual reinterpretation and reorganization of some externally predesigned content syllabus. In other words, such a syllabus of 'method' serves the selection, focusing, subdivision, and sequencing of most appropriate content.[7]

In beginning this paper with a definition of the language teaching syllabus, it was suggested that we are most familiar with syllabuses which address the question: 'How can we best organize *what* is to be achieved in order to facilitate its transmission?' The kind of syllabus which offers a particular answer to this question tends to give priority to language as a system of knowledge somehow 'external' to learners and classrooms. A Process Syllabus, on the other hand, addresses an alternative question: 'How can we actively encourage interaction between the new language and individual learning syllabuses so that the real classroom syllabus will emerge in an explicit way?' This question implies a search for balance between 'external' subject-matter and those 'internal' resources for language learning offered by learners and classrooms. The question also leads us to more precise questions. Thus, 'How might we best realize and involve the learner's own principles of organization when confronted with new knowledge?' and how might we best exploit the special contributions which the social context of the classroom can provide for language learning?' A Process Syllabus may provide a starting point by offering a framework within which individual learners and classroom groups can directly participate in the creation of plans. In the past, we may have *deprived* learners and classroom groups of worthwhile responsibilities by endeavouring to draw such plans on their behalf.

Notes

1. These cyclic or spiral syllabuses assume that what the learner learns at some earlier point becomes the 'core' or basis for later learning. This earlier learning thence becomes refined—the 'core' or base of the spiral widens. Such syllabuses see learning as accumulative—or, more precisely, aggregate—rather than a step-by-step addition of knowledge.
2. Douglas Barnes originally applied this metaphor of a route map to a teacher's lesson plan when he was discussing a particular lesson during an Open University television programme (Open University Course 262, *Language & Learning*: 'Teachers & Pupils Talking'). The concept of 'navigation' in classroom language learning has been proposed by Richard Allwright in his (1982) paper: 'The Importance of Interaction in Classroom Language Learning' Presented at the TESOL Annual Convention, Honolulu, Hawaii, May 1982.
3. This story is beautifully told by the poet Miroslav Holub in his 'Brief Thoughts on Maps' from *Notes of a Clay Pigeon* Secker & Warburg, London, 1977. I have to admit to changing the actual mountains originally referred to by Holub!
4. I offer below an example of the kind of 'working contract' which may be evolved. The example comes from Anna Lise Christensen, a teacher of English in a Danish secondary

school, and it represents her own '10 Commandments' for her class. In discussing it with her—and with other teachers from Denmark—it was felt that this kind of agreed procedure could certainly be jointly drawn up by teacher and pupils together:

a. I want to talk to you at least once a week.
b. Speak as much English as you possibly can.
c. Be prepared for every lesson so that you know what you're going to do. Otherwise you'll easily waste time.
d. Every lesson starts with an introduction by me. Maybe I want to recommend a book or talk about a film, T.V. programme, etc.
e. Every lesson ends with you writing down what you've done this lesson and what homework you're going to do for the next lesson. Homework can also be going to the library to get books in English.
f. Please have an alternative in case things go wrong.
g. Tape-recorders are not toys.
h. It's *your* responsibility that you do something useful in every lesson. Make sure you don't always choose the same activity.
i. Remember to book tape-recorders, rooms, special books beforehand. Give me a note of your name and wish. If too many people wish a room or tape-recorder at the same time, you may need your alternative.

All teachers, of course, have working procedures like these. Only some teachers write them out as a 'contract' to be given to their pupils. In this paper I am suggesting that working procedures be proposed by both teacher *and* learners and that these become a 'contract' which is open to amendment through later evaluation of how things have gone.

5. For a more detailed description of the main characteristics of activities see Breen, M. P., Candlin, C. N. & Waters, A (1979) 'Communicative Materials Design: Some Basic Principles' *RELC JOURNAL*, Singapore, Vol 10, No. 2. The distinction between content and process as applied to teaching materials is also discussed in this paper.

6. Readers familiar with the work of N. S. Prabhu and the Bangalore Project may see a relationship between his 'Procedural Syllabus' and my proposals concerning Process Syllabuses. I regard the two as different in function and nature. My interpretation of Dr Prabhu's task-based teaching programme is that subject-matter usually not associated with a language class (e.g. mathematical problems) serves as a means whereby the language may be used and, thereby, acquired (in Krashen's terms). Also, that the syllabus is 'Procedural' in the sense that the learners undertake learning tasks (e.g. problem-solving) of a more general nature rather than *language learning* tasks. The Syllabus of the Bangalore Project is also pre-designed. A Process Syllabus, on the other hand, is aimed at the direct and explicit involvement of a class of learners in the reinterpretation and/or creation of the syllabus of that classroom. Language subject-matter, the subject-matter of the learning process of individuals and the group, and any other selected subject-matter may be generated by a Process Syllabus. Participation in decision-making, agreement of procedures, choice and undertaking of activities and tasks, and the on-going evaluation within all of these, are proposed as means for the use and development of the new language by learners. Tasks, as I have suggested, are the actual working 'events' within an activity, within an agreed procedure, and selected through the overall decision-making process of the class. Whether tasks may be seen as of a more general learning type or specifically of a language learning type is not a defining feature of a Process Syllabus. Finally, a Process Syllabus is a framework or blueprint of questions requiring agreed decisions within the class and an index (or catalogue) of alternative procedures, activities and tasks to be chosen within the class. Such a framework may be predesigned. The *actual* Process Syllabus which is worked out in the class would, of course, be created reflectively or retrospectively; it would be designed as the teaching and learning proceeded.

The 'Procedural Syllabus' is an important and fascinating experiment wherein the conventional content syllabus is replaced by a syllabus of tasks. For readers who may be unfamiliar with the work of Dr Prabhu and his colleagues see: *Regional Institute of English Newsletters* Vols 1 & 2 and *RIE Bulletins* Nos 4 & 5, from the Regional Institute of English, Bangalore, Madras, South India.

7. For a challenging discussion of the distinction between content and method in teaching see, for example, Postman, N. & Weingartner, C. (1969) *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth.

1. Syllabus as Part of Curriculum

The European term 'syllabus' and its North American counterpart 'curriculum' sometimes appear to be very close in meaning and sometimes further apart, depending on the context in which they are used. This has caused a great deal of confusion as papers on second language teaching have passed to and fro across the Atlantic. I think it is time to establish a clear distinction, and I would like to propose one as follows: curriculum is a very general concept which involves consideration of the whole complex of philosophical, social and administrative factors which contribute to the planning of an educational programme. Syllabus, on the other hand, refers to that subpart of curriculum which is concerned with a specification of what units will be taught (as distinct from how they will be taught, which is a matter for methodology). In fact, one could go further in the analysis of curriculum, and distinguish at least six aspects or levels, all of which are potentially relevant to this discussion:

(a) *Concept formation.* The level at which we establish general principles of second language education, including our concept of what constitutes L2 proficiency, and the role of language in society.
(b) *Administrative decision-making.* The level at which we determine a practical course of action, given a particular set of social, political and financial constraints, thereby establishing the general objectives for an educational programme.
(c) *Syllabus planning.* The level at which we define the specific objectives for a programme. We do this by compiling inventories of items to be taught, planning timetables and points of contact with other subjects on the curriculum, and establishing basic principles of selection and grading.
(d) *Materials design.* The level at which we create texts, games, exercises, simulations, 'authentic' practice and other activities which provide the context within which teaching and learning take place. Materials design may or may not involve a publication phase, depending on the nature of the material or the size of the population at which it is aimed.
(e) *Classroom activity.* The level at which an individual teacher presents, interprets, and adapts a given set of materials to fit the needs of a particular student group. Since materials design and classroom activity are particularly closely related it is often convenient to group them together under the general heading of 'methodology'.

Finally, we have to consider *evaluation*, the point at which we establish procedures which will enable us to test the validity of our decisions at any one of the previous five levels.

The above factors are not necessarily fixed in a rigid hierarchy—we do not always need sophisticated theoretical concepts in order to make administrative decisions, nor does syllabus planning have to precede the development of classroom methodology as a universal rule—but if we take a broad view of curriculum all six levels can be identified and related to one another on a scale of decision-making which ranges from the more general at the top to more specific decisions at the lower end of the scale. Moreover, it is clear that the point on the scale where the major decisions are made can affect the nature of the curriculum as a whole. It is well known, for example, that decisions made on the conceptual level may result in proposals derived from current developments in psychological or linguistic theory which cannot be put into effect because they fail to consider what will and will not work in the classroom. Administrative decision-makers have to take into account not only the general principles which emerge from concept formation, but also a wide range of practical factors such as the size of the budget, the number of students in each class, the amount of time available for language teaching, and the teachers' level of proficiency in the target language. Moving further down the scale, an overemphasis on materials design at the expense of classroom initiative can lead all too easily to the tyranny of the textbook writer, who often does not hesitate to prescribe detailed programmes for students he has never seen, or even for countries he has never visited. The recent shift in responsibility from the textbook writer to the teacher has led to a number of proposals for a more flexible, humanistic, and individualized approach in which there would be less emphasis on the prior specification of curriculum content, and more scope for the development of a methodology of classroom interaction. This in turn has led to a reaction on the part of those who feel that in the interests of efficiency there should be at least some prior selection of data, which leads back to the concept of a grammatical or functional syllabus, or some combination of the two.

When we are developing a general language curriculum, therefore, we have to make a series of interrelated decisions on a number of different levels—conceptual, administrative, methodological, and those relating to syllabus planning and evaluation—which have to be kept in a delicate balance with none of the factors gaining too much weight at the expense of the others. This is a different issue from that other balancing act which takes place in the classroom, where we try to establish what H. E. Palmer (1921) called a 'multiple line of approach', or a reasonable combination on the practical level of two or more methods which appear to be in conflict on the theoretical level. I will return to the classroom in a moment, but first I would like to say something about the decisions that have to be made at the top of the curriculum scale, where we formulate our ideas about the nature of language and of the language process, and about how language functions in society.

2.   Some Basic Conceptual Factors

Since language learning does not take place in a vacuum, but is always part of a broader educational programme, it is necessary to consider L2 instruction against the background of developments in general curriculum theory. In a recent survey, McNeil (1981) distinguishes four major influences, all of which have had a profound effect on the way we think about the teaching of language and other subjects. The four viewpoints are: (a) the academic, which seeks to promote economy of effort by encouraging understanding of the structure of a discipline; (b) the technological, which has a behavioural or empirical emphasis, and which tends to specify learning objectives in forms that can be easily manipulated, measured, or observed; (c) the humanistic, which emphasizes the need to provide personally satisfying experiences for every individual; and (d) the social-reformist, which stresses the needs of society as a whole, and sees the school curriculum as a means of bringing about desirable social change.

The history of education during the past hundred years can be interpreted as a process in which the four major influences have asserted themselves one after the other in an endless cycle of pendulum-like, dialectical swings in fashion. Just as the location of decision-making at any particular points on the curriculum scale leads to distinctive types of language teaching, in the same way it can be demonstrated that a particular conceptual or philosophical orientation can have a far-reaching effect on what takes place in the classroom.

Thus, the academic viewpoint led to the establishment of grammar-translation during the nineteenth century, and can be identified as a factor involved in the call for a more 'cognitive code' approach in the 1960s. The most striking example of a technological approach to L2 teaching is, of course, the audio-lingual method in the more extreme forms which evolved under the combined influences of structural linguistics, behavioural learning theory, electronic gadgetry, and commercial enterprise. Methods which have a technological, behavioural emphasis are currently out of favour as far as classroom methodology is concerned, but they are still a major influence in the area of testing and Programme evaluation. The humanistic viewpoint has emerged most strongly at the level of classroom activity, where it has led to the development of a number of approaches which stress the importance of a more natural and co-operative learning environment, and the self-realization of the learner as an individual. Finally, the social-reformist approach—taking Canada as an example—has led to the establishment of broad educational strategies with an emphasis on bilingualism, multi-culturalism, language maintenance, the development of culturally compatible programmes for immigrants and native peoples, and other aspects of language planning which are felt to be consistent with the growth of a more efficient, progressive, or just society.

It is important at the conceptual level that we should have a theory of what

language is and how it is learned. The teaching of a second language involves particularly complex decision-making partly because our theoretical models are controversial and still in a process of evolution. The purpose of L2 education is to bring about an improvement in the proficiency of the learner. In thinking about proficiency as it relates to curriculum design I have found it useful to maintain the traditional distinction between competence and performance, and to divide performance into two major aspects: (a) the development of specific communicative skills, and (b) the part played by an implicit/explicit knowledge factor similar to the one proposed by Sharwood-Smith (1981) drawing upon research by Bialystok and Krashen. It continues to be necessary to postulate competence as an abstract, idealized, underlying system which includes far more than linguists have been able to explain and most of which lies well beyond the performer's threshold of conscious awareness. It can be hypothesized that competence is not a unitary concept but includes at least three components: a knowledge of the formal systems of lexis, morphology-syntax, and phonology (grammatical competence), a knowledge of the ways in which expression units combine into meaningful sequences (discourse competence), and a knowledge of the ways in which utterances are produced and understood appropriately in context (sociolinguistic competence). A number of writers have proposed a fourth component, strategic competence, which comprises knowledge of how to avoid potential difficulties in communication, how to cope with breakdowns when they occur, and how to enhance the effectiveness of communication in general by employing a variety of rhetorical, stylistic, and affective devices. I will not consider these factors further, since I feel that they can be more conveniently handled as a subcomponent of sociolinguistic competence.

Turning to the two major aspects of performance, it is necessary to provide for the development of the four skills, which can be considered either as reciprocal pairs (speaking–listening, reading–writing), or in terms of receptive and productive processes. It may also be useful to consider which combinations of skills a learner may be called upon to perform concurrently (for example: reading, note-taking and listening while taking part in a seminar discussion), and the patterns of sequential interaction between the four skills, as they occur in various types of context. The importance of including both knowledge-oriented and skill-oriented activities in second language programme, particularly those designed for adult learners, was recognized by Palmer in the 1920s and has recently been re-emphasized by Bialystok, Rivers, Krashen, and Canale, among others. Thus we can represent target language proficiency as consisting of at least three competence factors (grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic), interrelated with four skill factors (listening, speaking, reading, writing), which in turn interact with two awareness factors (unconscious/conscious, or implicit/explicit). This gives us a combination of 24 factors which have to be taken into account in the development of teaching materials and tests. All the factors have to be considered in a curriculum for general language teaching, which by definition rules out more narrowly conceived objectives such as those which

have been proposed in the context of English for special purposes.

3. The Need for Syllabus Planning

Since language is highly complex and cannot be taught all at the same time, successful teaching requires that there should be a selection of material depending on the prior definition of the objectives, proficiency level, and duration of the course. This selection takes place at the syllabus planning stage. Having decided what to teach, we must then decide on an appropriate strategy of presentation; this requires that the course material must constitute a coherent body of knowledge which is capable of being analysed in terms of its own internal logic, and the material must be of such a nature that we can break it down into a set of individual learning items which will be presented in a certain order. Traditionally, this process has been referred to as grading, the purpose of which is to 'avoid the confusion caused by the casual or perfunctory arrangement in which a confused mass of words retards, repulses, or perplexes the mind' (Mackey 1965:205). Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens (1964) make a further useful distinction between 'staging' (the division of the course into time segments) and 'sequencing' (the order in which the item should be taught within each time segment). The general principles of selection and grading have been recognized since at least the 16th century–Mackey in the above quotation is paraphrasing Comenius–but there has been little agreement about the specific ways in which these principles should be applied to a particular teaching programme. Underlying the current proliferation of studies on L2 syllabus planning, there appear to be three approaches: (a) the traditional, structural-analytic approach in which the highest priority is given to formal grammatical criteria; (b) the more recent functional-analytic approach, which defines objectives in terms of categories of communicative language use; and (c) a non-analytic, experiential, or 'natural growth' approach, which aims to immerse learners in real-life communication without any artificial preselection or arrangement of items. Thus, within the communicative interaction model, it is possible to identify a more specific, natural growth hypothesis which 'takes the experiential here-and-now as the teaching focus, rather than the external and fixed curriculum' (Jacobovits and Gordon 1974:44). According to the advocates of 'natural' or non-analytic language teaching, it is not the grammatical syllabus in particular but the whole concept of a preselected inventory of items which is wrong. The proposed solution is to place less emphasis on syllabus planning, and more emphasis on the development of a methodology of co-operative classroom interaction.

It is the natural growth hypothesis, then, which appears to constitute the most serious challenge to traditional concepts of syllabus planning, and for this reason it is worthwhile exploring it in a little more detail. In assessing the role of the non-analytic growth model it is convenient to consider it first in the context of 'informal' task-related programme where there is a serious commitment to the achievement of fluency in a rich target-language

environment. A good example of this approach is provided by Canadian-style immersion teaching at the high school level: 'Its basic philosophy is simple: in order to learn a language, it is important that learners . . . become involved in real-life communication, that is to say, not simulation, role-playing or other games, but genuine communication in which the learner has to participate' (Stern 1980:58). A similar type of programme, designed for remedial language teaching at university level, based on a process of student problem-solving with minimal teacher involvement, is described by Allwright (1979). In addition to immersion and remedial teaching, however, we have to consider the needs of medium-oriented core language pro-grammes which take place in a more formal classroom setting and where the time available for practice is limited to an hour a day or less. In the natural growth approach the material is not as a rule broken down analytically by the teacher, but is presented 'a whole chunk at a time' in the expectation that the students will perform the analysis and convert the data functionally to their own use. However, as Brumfit points out, if there is a time limit on the learning process we cannot wait for appropriate samples of the target language to emerge spontaneously. In the interests of efficient learning, there must be some selection of data by the teacher, and various judgements about selection can be compared only if they are based on a set of descriptive categories which are capable of being interpreted systematically (Brumfit 1979:184). I will continue to assume, then, that for language teaching in general we need to recognize a level of syllabus planning in which an inventory of items to be taught can be developed in a systematic and objectively verifiable way.

The principle of organization in a general language syllabus can be structural, functional, experiential, or some combination of the three. Whatever the nature of the analysis there will always be some items which are less complex, more regular, or more familiar than others, and which are therefore easier to learn. It seems that some form of grading, either implicit or explicit, is a universal requirement in language teaching. The principle of grading is inherent in structural and functional syllabuses arranged on a taxonomic basis, but it also extends to experiential, non-analytic language teaching. Those methods which place a high value on naturalistic, real-life input usually contain a hidden curriculum which enables the teacher to maintain control over the material, although in such cases the nature of the control is relatively unobtrusive and indirect. In most circumstances, then, the choice is not between close control, and no control at all, but between 'finely tuned' (explicitly graded) and 'roughly tuned' (implicitly graded) input for the learner. As Krashen (1982) points out, it is possible that natural, communicative, roughly-tuned input which does not aim directly at the next stage in the learning sequence may have advantages in that it reduces the anxiety level, provides more opportunities for recycling, and focuses attention on meaning rather than form. It is important to note that this approach does not constitute a case for the abolition of grading. It does, however, require that control over the course material should be exercised in

a more subtle and flexible way than can normally be achieved by means of a traditional structural syllabus.

4.   A Variable Focus Approach to Methodology

Whereas in the past theorists have often tried to account for the whole of language learning in terms of a single multi-purpose model (habit–skill or cognitive–code, structural foundation or communicative interaction), there is today a growing recognition that the complexity of language makes it advisable to return to some version of Palmer's multiple line of approach. This broader view is reflected in the area of syllabus planning. Thus, Ullmann (1982) discusses the objectives of French modules in terms of four interrelated planning instruments: a language syllabus, a communicative activity syllabus, a culture syllabus, and a general language education syllabus. In a project concerned with the development of subject-related ESL modules for use in high schools we have adopted a similar multi-focus approach, but one in which we emphasize the interaction between a 'central' language syllabus and a 'concurrent' Canadian studies syllabus, of a type which could provide meaningful content in a general English course (Allen and Howard, 1981). When we examined Canadian studies programmes in terms of both content and language it became clear that the level of conceptual skills involved in a learning task and the degree of language complexity required for the performance of that task were closely interrelated. At the same time, it was clear that the internal structure of the language system (the medium) must be independent of the principles of organization which characterize a particular content area (the message), since many languages can be used to express a single message, and many messages can be expressed through the medium of a single language. It seemed to us, therefore, following McNeill (1981), that it was necessary to distinguish a vertical dimension of syllabus planning where we could consider the relationship between successive time segments in the language learning process, and a horizontal dimension where we could consider the relationship between language as medium, and the message content in different situations and subject areas that language can be called upon to express.

What is the relationship between the syllabus, seen as an inventory or checklist of items, and methodology in its two aspects of materials design and classroom activity? I have suggested that the concurrent trend in second language teaching is for the main focus of decision-making to move to the classroom, and that we should acknowledge this without losing sight of the other curriculum levels. When the emphasis is on classroom interaction the aim is not so much to accumulate separate grammatical items or functions in an ordered series, but rather to encourage the students to use all the resources of the language that are available to them to meet the demands of a particular target situation. The dominant concept is that of a functionally effective body of knowledge which exists at a particular stage in the learning process and needs to be practised in circumstances which approximate as

closely as possible to natural language use. The crucial question for language teaching is: can we provide practice for the transitional system at stage X while at the same time ensuring that students move as efficiently as possible to a more complex system at stage Y? Can we reconcile the notion of 'functionally effective transitional system' with that of 'controlled developmental sequence'; or, in Brumfit's terms, can we combine classroom activities for fluency with classroom activities for accuracy in the same programme, or in the same activity?

If we postulate a multi-factor view of language proficiency, and an approach to syllabus planning which incorporates both vertical and horizontal dimensions, it seems likely that we will have to accommodate more than one aspect of methodology. The task which confronts us at the materials design and classroom level is to determine how information from the various syllabuses can be incorporated into a coherent teaching programme. This is undoubtedly one of the most complex areas of curriculum, since it involves at least six principles: selection, integration, focus, sequence, iteration, and cyclicity. In order to teach, we have to make a selection of material from the relevant syllabuses, and integrate it into a sequence with an appropriate focus. The proposed methodology contains three basic types of activity: structural practice, drawing upon the grammatical component of the language syllabus; functional practice, drawing upon the discourse and sociolinguistic components of the language syllabus; and experiential practice, drawing upon one or more of the concurrent or 'horizontal' syllabuses, which are defined in terms of cultural knowledge, other-subject content or general life experience, according to principles which exist independently of the target language *per se*.

In recent years there has been increasing interest in the development of a more comprehensive language teaching methodology which would enable us to implement different approaches to classroom activity at different points in an overall programme. Two Canadian examples of this trend are the 'variable focus' model associated with recent work in the Modern Language Centre at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (Allen, 1980), and the 'balanced' or 'proportional' curriculum currently being developed at the Centre for Applied Language Studies at Carleton University, Ottawa (Yalden, 1983). Yalden's discussion centres round the observation that 'communication is unsystematic and unpredictable, but we use systematically learned and organized language to achieve it'. It follows, according to Yalden, that we must reject both 'globally non-systematic' and 'globally systematic' approaches to language teaching and instead develop a type of programme consisting of a number of connected segments, each with a different focus, which will operate in a cycle and which may be varied to suit the requirements of any situation.

Yalden's proportional curriculum may be compared with the variable focus model which we are in the process of developing for ESL modules (Allen and

Howard, 1981). In both approaches the basic unit of organization which provides a framework for all the methodology components is that of the communicative setting, which may be expressed in terms of topic, theme, or task. The following diagram shows how, within a particular thematic context, a language syllabus may be balanced by a concurrent content syllabus which incorporates its own, non-linguistic, principles of organization:

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            ┌──────────────────────────────┐
            │    Communicative setting     │
            │    (topic, theme, or task)   │
            └──────────────────────────────┘
              │                        │
              ▼                        ▼
    ┌───────┐   ┌──────────────────┐   ┌───────┐
    │       │   │   Methodology    │   │       │
    │ Language│  │        (F)      │   │Concurrent│
    │ syllabus│→ │      /   \      │ ← │ syllabus │
    │       │   │    (S)──(E)      │   │       │
    └───────┘   └──────────────────┘   └───────┘
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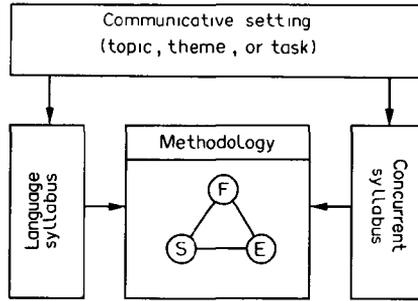
Figure 1.

In the Allen-Howard model the language syllabus and the content syllabus both feed into classroom methodology, which contains three interconnected activity components: structural practice (S) which is systematic and controlled on the grammatical level, functional practice (F) which is systematic and controlled on the discourse level, and experiential practice (E), which is fluency-oriented and not subject to any kind of linguistic control, although we will expect it to be meaningful and organized in terms of the task being undertaken or the message being conveyed. In the diagram the three methodology components, or focal areas, are joined by paths which can be traversed in either direction to form a cycle of activities. In addition, we can reiterate (i.e., go round any one of the circles an unlimited number of times), or leave out one (or two) of the components altogether. This gives us a basis for comparing different language teaching programmes in terms of variable cycles of activities, and also a means of generating ideas for the production of classroom materials. For example, at different stages in a learning sequence we could have a single-focus programme which consists entirely of structural segments, a dual-focus programme which consists of alternating structural and functional segments, or a trifocal programme which contains structural, functional, and experiential segments either in an equal balance or in asymmetrical cycles. In each type of programme the segment types can occur in any order. The combination of three focal areas, together with the principles of cyclicity and iteration, allows for infinite variation in the organization of classroom activities, without losing sight of the basic organizing principles which are common to all programmes. In every case the aim is to provide a rich learning environment with the widest possible range of materials (systematic and non-systematic; knowledge-oriented and skill-oriented; authentic, simulated and controlled) in a suitable balance depending on the course objectives and the proficiency level of the students.

5.   An Approach to Curriculum Evaluation

Curriculum decision-making must be subject to some form of evaluation, in order to check that the results of our decisions are meeting their stated objectives, and so that knowledge about curriculum processes can accumulate in a systematic and responsible way. Evaluation can take place at any one of the five levels of concept formation, administrative decision-making, syllabus planning, materials design and classroom activity, and various testing procedures have been developed which are appropriate at different points on the curriculum scale. Teachers and other practitioners are particularly interested in the results of evaluation at the materials design and classroom levels, since these are the aspects of curriculum which relate most directly to the success or otherwise of a language teaching programme.

Instead of talking about evaluation in general it is often easier to take a specific instance of work in progress, and the example I would like to draw on is that of a project which is concerned with the development of ESL modules for use at the high school level in Ontario (Allen and Howard, 1981). The aim of ESl modules is to provide training in English in association with other school subjects, and thereby to 'infuse important themes and topics of educationally worthwhile content and substance into the otherwise conventional language class' (cf. Stern, Ullmann *et al.*, 1980). Thus, from one point of view, ESL modules can be regarded as an experiment in English for special purposes. At the same time, however, the objectives and organization of the modules is virtually identical with those of a conceptually enriched general English programme, where linguistic and other-subject skills develop concurrently.

It can be said that an experiential fluency-oriented curriculum based on individual student needs is the point at which English for special purposes and general English teaching fuse and become indistinguishable. I will therefore discuss evaluation in the context of a joint ESL and Canadian studies programme, on the understanding that the specific subject area in this case will be taken as representing all aspects of the thematic or experiential content of English language teaching in general.

In ESL modules we make a distinction between formative evaluation, which is an integral part of the materials development process, and summative evaluation, which is carried out after the materials have been published and are in use in the schools. Formative evaluation includes pilot-testing, interviews with teachers and consultants, classroom observation, and validation of the subject-area content. Although formative evaluation has been part of the project from the beginning, summative evaluation procedures have not yet been fully developed. One reason for this is the great temptation which exists in the early stages of a project to put the main emphasis on the development of materials which are eagerly awaited in the field. Another reason is the fact that the summative evaluation of classroom materials is highly complex and requires a major effort backed up by funds

which are specifically provided for the purpose. Many problems remain to be solved in this area. For example, summative evaluation may include the provision of tests which have to be administered to groups of students before and after they have used the module. However, the construction of suitable pre-tests and post-tests will depend on our concept of what constitutes L2 proficiency in an integrated curriculum where linguistic and conceptual skills are developing concurrently. Whereas most previous testing instruments have stressed the students' knowledge of grammar and vocabulary as ends in themselves, an experiential approach to language teaching requires the development of tests which check the student's ability to use language as an instrument of communication within a specific educational context. In other words, in our pre-tests and post-tests we will have to assess not only the students' knowledge of formal aspects of language, but also their ability to use this knowledge for different communicative purposes, and the degree to which they control the oral and written discourse patterns which are characteristic of the other-subject area.

Our experience so far suggests that the most effective approach to summative evaluation would be based on a combination of testing, interviews, questionnaires, and classroom observation, as follows:

1. *Pre-tests and post-tests.* The tests, which will be administered to students before and after they have been taught the module, might include the following components: (a) comprehension of the logical thought processes in a written text; (b) knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, and of functions such as defining, describing and classifying which relate to the Canadian studies subject area; (c) ability to write creatively, and to arrange related ideas in a logical sequence; (d) ability to follow an oral presentation, to take notes, and to prepare a summary of information.

2. *Teacher interviews.* These may be semi-structured to ensure that data are collected consistently, but at the same time they should be open-ended in order to encourage teachers to share their personal views and experiences. Among the topics dealt with might be the following: (a) information about the schooling setting, the needs of ESL students in the school, and the ways in which ESL instruction relates to the Canadian studies programme; (b) information about how the module was taught; (c) the teacher's comments on the content and format of the module; (d) the teacher's opinion of the value of the module, and his/her suggestions about how future modules might be made more effective. It is possible that some of this information could be obtained by questionnaire, or by a combination of interview and questionnaire.

3. *Student questionnaire.* The aim will be to discover whether or not the module was a success from the student's point of view. Questions could be elaborated along the following lines: (a) Did you find the material in the module interesting? (b) Did you find the activities useful and relevant to your needs? (c) Do you feel that the module helped you to improve your knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary/to

understand and to express logically connected sequences of ideas/to improve your study skills and general ability to handle the academic subject area? (d) If you were helping to design a similar module, what improvements would you like to suggest?

4. *Classroom observation.* In addition to interviewing teachers and students, or asking them to fill out questionnaires, it may be desirable to obtain a more objective, over-all impression of how the modules are handled in the classroom. For this purpose, some informal classroom observation will take place to complement the other evaluative measures. The observation will not have a structural focus, but will be designed especially for use in classrooms where the aim is to provide a balance between ESL and Canadian studies, and between structural, functional, and experiential aspects of language teaching.

It is clear from the above that the current debate about the relationship between quantitative and qualitative research methods is highly relevant to curriculum evaluation. To put it in simple terms, the issue revolves around the question of whether we should study human beings in all their irritating diversity, or whether we should try to reduce the world to order with the help of mathematics. Christina Paulston has argued in a recent paper that the currently dominant quantitative paradigm, with its emphasis on objective, 'hard' and replicable data, is not sufficient by itself and needs to be supplemented by a more qualitative, ethnomethodological approach which would be process- rather than outcome-oriented, and which would emphasize the participant's rather than the observer's point of view (Paulston, 1980). Similarly, McNeil (1981) refers to 'pluralistic' approaches to research which will 'capture a richer slice of educational life' than those models which rely exclusively on numerical data and rigorous experimental designs. Such procedures as students and teacher interviews and informal classroom observation are often criticized on the grounds that they involve subjective decisions and are therefore potentially controversial. Qualitative researchers, on the other hand, point out that a certain amount of bias is inevitable whatever the method being used. As Mike Long puts it in a recent survey of classroom observation schemes: 'Ethnographers recognize the bias inherent in one person's reporting events, but some feel it is as safe or safer to trust one's own insights as it is to trust another's alleged objectivity' (Long, 1980:28).

Concern about the over-rigid application of mathematically precise methods of measurement and testing is far from new. In December 1972 a conference of educators at Churchill College, Cambridge, concluded with a statement which amounted to a call for a new style of evaluation. According to the conference participants, past attempts to evaluate curriculum had failed because of:

(a) an under-attention to educational processes including those of the learning milieu;
(b) over-attention to psychometrically measurable changes in student

behaviour (that to an extent represent the outcomes of practice, but which are misleading simplifications of the complex changes that occur in students); and

(c) the existence of an educational research climate that rewards accuracy of measurement and generality of theory but overlooks both mismatch between school problems and research issues and tolerates ineffective communication between researchers and those outside the research community. (Lawton, 1978)

The alternative suggested by the conference was a more qualitative approach which would include the use of case studies, teacher and student interviews, participant-observation, and the analysis of 'naturalistic' school and community data in order to supplement the more rigorous types of experimental design which are largely based on testing and statistical analysis. A technique of qualitative evaluation emphasizes good judgement, commonsense, and the use of interpretative human insights and skills, and therefore tends to appeal to researchers who identify themselves with the humanistic tradition in education—particularly perhaps to those who are not fortunate enough to have a strong background in statistics. In discussing the new methodology McNeil (1981) uses such phrases as 'an artistic problem', 'connoisseurship and criticism', and 'ways of seeing rather than ways of measuring'—metaphors which are clearly drawn from the world of the arts rather than from scientific method.

It would, undoubtedly, be a mistake to think in terms of two clear-cut schools of curriculum evaluation: traditional and experimental on the one hand, and non-traditional or ethnographic on the other. I am basically in sympathy with the belief that quantitative and qualitative research methods are not mutually exclusive, and that they tend to throw useful light on one another when they are used concurrently in the same study. That at least has been our experience in the materials development and classroom observation projects in the Modern Language Centre. The important point is that any research in the field of syllabus planning and materials design must include an evaluation component if it is to achieve any credibility. It is unfortunately a well-known fact that many materials are published and widely used with only a minimum of evaluation having taken place. Although at a time of rapidly diminishing resources there is an increasing temptation to neglect formative, summative, and longitudinal evaluation, this is a tendency which must be resisted if we are to remain accountable to the educational community, to the taxpayer, and to ourselves.

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FUNCTION AND STRUCTURE OF A STATE SCHOOL SYLLABUS FOR LEARNERS OF SECOND OR FOREIGN LANGUAGES WITH HETEROGENEOUS NEEDS

CHRISTOPHER BRUMFIT

1. Initial Statements

(See comments in Introduction on the structure of this contribution)

Syllabuses for general English teaching

(While I called the symposium in my circular letter 'Syllabus/curriculum design for TESOL', I would wish to restrict the term 'syllabus' to what is the responsibility of the language teacher, with 'curriculum' implying the total provision within a school. But I see no point in getting into terminological arguments, as long as we all agree that we are primarily concerned with the specification of the responsibility of the language teacher.)

 I. A syllabus is a specification of the work of a particular department in a school or college, and it may be broken down into subsections which will define the work of a particular group or class.
 II. In practice, it is often linked to time—semesters, terms, weeks, or courses which are tied to these. But this link is not essential, and may be counter-productive in that the time is teacher-based rather than learner-based. But a syllabus must specify a starting point, which should be related to a realistic assessment of the level of beginning students, and ultimate goals, which may or may not be realised by the end of the course, depending on the abilities of learners and their progress in a particular course.
 III. A syllabus must specify some kind of sequence of events, even though the criteria for sequencing will be of two kinds and not simply be the result of a 'natural' or systematic presentation of material:
    i) sequencing intrinsic to a theory of language acquisition, or to the structure of specified material relatable to language acquisition;
    ii) sequencing constrained by administrative needs: of material which is necessary for the course but which can, in principle, be regarded as usable at any point during the programme, for example certain kinds of cultural information.
 IV. A syllabus is a document of administrative convenience (hence III,ii above) and will only be partly justified on theoretical grounds. Hence

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it will be negotiable and adjustable, enshrining the most useful experience of the past in order to ease the workload of the present.

V. A syllabus can only specify what is taught; it cannot organize what is learnt. It can, methodologically, allow for opportunities for acquisition and/or learning, but such opportunities cannot be spelt out in detail as they will reflect the personalities of learners and the continuing relationships established as the class progresses.

VI. Not to have a syllabus is to refuse to allow one's assumptions to be scrutinized or to enable different teachers to relate their work to each other's. It is consequently an essential feature of work in a democratic profession or as part of a democratic education.

2.   Summary of Presentation

2.1   Function of a syllabus

A syllabus is a public statement of the work of an educational unit; whether a school, a class, an individual teacher, or a department is theoretically unimportant and determined by the needs of each different institution. A public statement is necessary mainly because an explicit statement of activity makes it available for scrutiny and improvement—without such a public statement criticism is made harder. It also provides a useful administrative base, so that different teachers know the varied responsibilities and commitments of other teachers, so that continuity is maintained between classes and groups, and so that a common statement of terms of reference is available. Consequently a syllabus can play a key part in in-service education of teachers, in creating professional awareness and co-operation on an informed basis.

2.2   Limitation

A syllabus will be limited externally by the broader curriculum within which it operates, by the administrative constraints (in terms of teacher capacity, time available, physical space and equipment available, size of class, and so on), and by the characteristics of the students in whose service it has been devised. A syllabus will certainly imply certain ideological, social and political presuppositions by its very existence. But its prime function is to reduce the 'hidden curriculum' as far as possible by establishing an organization which is made explicit for debate and consequent improvements.This is of course itself a statement of ideological position (broadly Popperian see Magee, 1973), and may be challenged. A syllabus can only be a device for teaching, which can be publicly influenced, if not controlled. It should make itself available as a device to assist learning, but it cannot define learning which is a private, and immensely complex and varied operation.

2.3   Theoretical status

A syllabus is primarily a practical document, which is to say that it is a piece of technology designed to cause change in the behaviour of teachers and students. If it operates inefficiently it is therefore by definition a bad syllabus. This fact imposes severe constraints on its theoretical purity. But at the same time, it is a document which is intended to translate our understanding of how language is learnt into practical action, so it must have a specifiable relationship with what we know of the nature of language, language acquisition, second language learning, and language use. It must also, however, have a specifiable relationship with what we know of pedagogy, school organization, and social, economic and political demands, and these too may be formulated in terms of theory (sociological, political, management, etc.). A syllabus thus shares the problems of education in general in being concerned with the theoretical demands of several disciplines and also with practical consequences in an often theoretically confused world. The result of this is that each syllabus much be renegotiated in an ad hoc way, in close relation to the needs of the teachers, students and administrators who will have to work with it. Beyond the kind of general philosophical position outlined here, dogmatic statements about how each syllabus should be organized in detail will be inappropriate. Nonetheless, some general points may be made about features of successful syllabuses, based on experience in various places, but–even if we accept the claim that such syllabuses have been successful–the possession of such features cannot be said to reveal truths about the nature of language. A syllabus is inevitably so closely bound up with particular social and cultural settings that it is practically impossible to operate backwards, and translate from syllabus implementation back to statements in linguistics or psycholinguistics. This is because the variables are by definition uncontrollable (at least in a free society) in the operation of a syllabus within different classes, schools or lessons with different teachers – or indeed with the same teacher at different times.

2.4   Possibilities in specification of content

Logically, there are three general types of analyses available for a specification of a product arising out of language teaching (though we should note that they are all analysts' categories, and will not necessarily reflect the perceptions of students). The first type of analyses is that of the linguist – formal analyses of phonology, syntax, morphology, or certain types of semantic categories such as notional when limited to semantico-grammatical. The second type is interactional analyses of various kinds, such as emerge from social psychologists, anthropologists, and perhaps stylisticians: situational and functional categories, leading on to analyses of discourse and rhetoric which result from the interaction between context and formal organization. The third type of analysis is an analysis of what is talked or written about – the 'content' of the language activity. Such analyses may be based on the language being learnt, so that literature in English, or the

linguistics of English (usually under another name) may be taught in English courses. They may also be based on general education, as in immersion programmes in which one way of evaluating what has been learnt in English could be to test performance in the subject (history or physics, say) which is being learnt through the medium of English. A final possibility under this heading is the cultural content—a content which is presumably socially directed, aiming to teach such cultural understanding as is necessary to operate effectively in the foreign language with a specified group of (usually native-) speakers. (This is developed further in Brumfit, 1984).

It should be noted that each of these three types of analysis presumes a different view of the nature of language learning. The first (which might include methods as diverse as grammar-translation, audiolingualism, and The Silent Way) presumes that first we learn the system, either inductively or deductively, and only later use it freely for ourselves. The second presumes that we learn to discourse, to interact and to communicate, again it could be either inductively (Counselling Learning?) or deductively (certain types of ESP course, or some of Savignon's work: 1972). The third presumes that above all else we need interesting and motivating content, which could be quite abstract (Prabhu's Bangalore programme of problem-solving activities: see Johnson, 1982; 135-144) or specific (immersion programmes, literature courses). Unlike the other two, this type of specification presumes an inductive procedure for the language work itself.

It is, of course, possible to specify the processes available in the classroom, but these are not, I would maintain, capable of being usefully turned into a syllabus, because they cannot be sequenced so that there is a feeling of development; they are better regarded as a limited set of orientations from which teachers will select in organizing their classrooms for the most appropriate activity at any particular moment, taking into account the objectives at that stage in the lesson, the state of student and teacher feeling, and other factors which affect the necessary classroom improvization.

2.5   Sequencing a content specification

I have argued elsewhere in favour of using what can be system-atized as the *basis* for syllabus development, and allowing what can not be systematized to spiral round a core (Brumfit, 1980b); I have also suggested that since the syntactic system is generative and therefore economical, there are not yet compelling reasons to discard it as the most fundamental component of the language syllabus. However, we should recognize that the issue of which of the various analyses specified in IV above to choose must depend on a local combination of tradition, teacher expertise and student expectation and not on *a priori* claims. There has been highly successful language teaching with all of these procedures, and with almost all possible combinations. We are not entitled to assume that all students, or all teachers, are going to expect (or ought to expect) the same structure of syllabus

throughout the world. Eclecticism and tolerance of diversity must inevitably result from our recognition that a syllabus is not a theoretical statement about language. But theoretical statements about language nonetheless have a part to play in enabling us to account for successful teaching – and the structure of a syllabus may be a contributory factor (along with efficiency of organization, personality of teachers, quality of student, and methodology, among other factors) to particular success. But the exact nature of sequencing can only be a matter of trial and error, building on existing tradition. Insofar as a syllabus is a practical, and therefore political document, it must build on what is already being done, in similar settings if new work is being started, in the past if revision is being undertaken. Otherwise it will be imposed from the outside, on teachers who do not understand the need for change, and will fail, and create nothing but insecurity and resentment.

2.6   How a syllabus should be used

Thus a syllabus must be seen as a document to be negotiated with teachers, and preferably produced *by* teachers. Instead of seeing it as a way of innovating from above, we should see it as a way of creating a broad framework for clarification, and therefore gradual change, of the best current practice. It should develop into a document sufficiently clear and structured to provide a crutch for the untrained or inexperienced teacher, and sufficiently realistic and flexible not to inhibit the professionally committed, fully experienced and imaginative. Indeed, it should be seen mainly as a device for converting the former to the latter, and enabling the latter to keep innovating, communicating and improving. Thus a syllabus should generate a whole range of different methodological possibilities, and different types of material to work from.

2.7   Evaluation

It will be clear from what I have said before that I am suspicious of the claim that syllabuses can be evaluated objectively. How do we evaluate other kinds of social policy, like alternative electoral procedures, or new administrative structures? Here, as with syllabuses, we are concerned primarily with 'fit'with a group of people as they work, and we need effective, regular feedback mechanisms so that changes can be tried out, and swiftly withdrawn if they make people unhappy – but we cannot in a field such as this, where there are so many personal and organizational factors to take into account, expect to devise evaluation instruments which can be context independent. We should, of course, make use of diaries, and statistical data in our discussions – quantitative material of all kinds – but we cannot expect to express the success of a social policy, which is what a syllabus really is, with any formal rigour.

3. Further Brief Comments

There is a risk, which our discussion has not entirely avoided, that theorists will establish an unnecessary divide between those who wish—and can afford—to be doctrinally pure, and those who have to plan because they have to teach tomorrow. The perspective from which I have written my own contributions has been largely that of someone who may have to plan a scheme to work from. Consequently, the issue of what is definable and predictable becomes very important. There is no point in classifying interaction as part of a syllabus specification unless it is describable in terms which can either be tested eventually or which can be listed for planning purposes without distorting the true nature of communication. Part of the argument about systematicity (Wilkins, Paulston and Brumfit, 1981) is an argument not about the importance of interaction but the describability of the concept for learning purposes. A syllabus which specifies learning content may not be able to specify teachers' classroom procedural choices without limiting them so much that they are unable to respond to the immediate personal and interactional needs of individuals or groups in the class. Methodological discussion may therefore be in the form of discussion of wide ranges of possible options, with indications of criteria for choice, on the basis of the best informed experience of others with similar classes. But this valuable discussion can only inform a particular teacher, it cannot determine actions. There must still also be *planning* principles to enable teachers to think about their own work. They have to make choices about whether to concentrate on presentation, practice, correction or free communicative activity in particular parts of lessons, and what the formal elements are by which they will think about these activities. It is not helpful to suggest that the process of making necessarily improvized choices is the same as that of planning what can be planned; nor is it helpful to imply that we should not or cannot plan. The important question is how best to plan, and when to do it precisely and when vaguely because to do it precisely would be to destroy the interactive process we are trying to encourage. Paradoxically, the radical wish to incorporate methods into a syllabus may—if interpreted strongly— limit the freedom of teachers and students more than the traditionalists' refusal to specify in that area at all.

The key issue is the relationship between learning and teaching. While we know that learners are widely held to be influenced by teaching, and while research evidence may support this view (Long, 1983), the precise relationship between specific teaching acts and learner uptake remains indefinable in any complex operation such as language acquisition. Thus, while the terms in which teachers plan and think about their input may enable us to specify a syllabus for teaching, such terms can never specify a syllabus for learner response. For this, a degree of freedom is essential in communicative activities which may be highly negotiable (depending on administrative factors such as the size of class and range of support facilities) but which cannot be preplanned in *language* terms, since it depends by

definition on the unpredictability of the language being used (see Brumfit, 1984, for an extension and justification of this argument). For this work, motivation may be provided by an extrinsic syllabus such as literature, culture or immersion teaching, but this is not a language syllabus. Some kind of scheme still needs to be devised for the systematic introduction, exposure or presentation of students to language in terms of its intrinsic characteristics – unless, that is, we believe that completely random exposure is adequate, a position which has not been explicitly defended.

A syllabus may be used restrictively, of course, but there is nothing intrinsic to a preplanned syllabus to make it restrictive. Far more restrictive in practice will be a general view in the teaching profession that public specification of teaching plans is somehow reactionary or opposed to current language learning theories. Then public scrutiny of teaching assumptions (whether linguistic or ideological) will be made harder, the passing on of insights derived from teaching experience will be obstructed, and clear thinking by trainee teachers will be discouraged in a demand for the subjectivity of individual interpretations of specific and separate classroom negotiations. No doubt this will work well with teachers and learners of genius, but the rest of us need to learn from the experiences of others, and syllabuses contribute to this process.

The ideological issue relates to the openness of the teaching profession and the structure of educational institutions. In Tanzania in 1969 I was able to work with a teaching syllabus which was not compulsory but which provided an example for young, inexperienced or untrained teachers either to follow or imitate. Experienced teachers could (and did) depart from it in their own institutions, but they were expected to defend their departures, and also to contribute them, where they felt it to be appropriate, to revised editions of the syllabus at annual conferences of teachers for that purpose. But the negotiation required government backing for conferences and for flexibility in the schools. The ideological issue impinges on administration and politics, and extends far wider than education and language teaching.

Yet I cannot imagine a situation where it is not better to specify what can be specified, if only to offer it as a hypothesis for other people to criticize. The very fact that we participate in discussions of this kind suggests that we need our guidelines to be as clear as possible. A syllabus is no more (and no less) than a specification of what can, and should, be thought out clearly ahead of time. However negotiable it is, we must have a starting point for the negotiation.

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GENERAL ENGLISH SYLLABUS DESIGN

Discussion of curriculum and syllabus design in recent years has concentrated on ESP or adult learning needs. This collection of papers, based on a TESOL Symposium, is designed to redress the balance by looking closely at the rationale for language syllabuses in general teaching, where the needs of learners cannot be predicted.
A distinguished group of Canadian and British contributors, including H. H. Stern, Patrick Allen, Janice Yalden, Chris Candlin, Henry Widdowson and Michael Breen, address themselves to such questions as:

- Why we need syllabuses and who they are intended for;
- How they should be related to learning theories;
- How closely they should be specified;
- What their relationship is with teaching methodology;
- What is meant by a 'procedural syllabus', and by a 'retrospective syllabus', and how these can be justified;
- What is the best form of internal organisation for a general language syllabus;
- Whether and how syllabuses can be evaluated.

The arguments in this collection are likely to influence syllabus designers throughout the next decade, while in an authoritative overview H.H. Stern has linked the discussion with the recent history of curriculum design in foreign language teaching.