Syllabus Vs Curriculum

Introduction:
Throughout the 1970s while language teaching theorists and practitioners excited themselves with course design for Specific Purpose language teaching, and while needs of adult migrants and private sectors or industrial language learners were extensively examined, the majority of learners of English continued to struggle with large classes, limited textbooks, few contact hours, and years of unintensive study. The work of many teachers had either been ignored by syllabus or curriculum designers, or had been interfered with by insensitive and too rapid application of ideas from ESP theory or Council of Europe discussion by administrations 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 whatever they had before.

It seemed worthwhile, therefore, to convene a symposium at TESOL Convention in Toronto in 1983 specifically to examine the role of syllabuses in normal state education. And it is 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, function and purpose of the 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.

Since a language is highly complex and pervasive, all of it (which can hardly be determined) cannot be taught at a time. Moreover all the phenomena related to the language might not be relevant or necessary to be taught to the learner/group of learners. Therefore, successful teaching of the language evidently requires a selection and then an arrangement of the teaching items/materials depending on the prior definition of the objective(s), proficiency level to be developed in the learner, duration of the program, and the like, on the one hand, and on the other, upon the consideration of the learner’s needs, lacks, aptitudes, motivation, age, personality memory transfer of training, cognitive style, and so forth. The selection and the sequencing absolutely take place in the syllabus planning stage.

With the advent of much complicate theories of language and language learning, as well as recognition of the diversity of the learners’ needs, wants, and aspirations, the concept of syllabus for SL/FL teaching has taken on new importance. It has also become highly elaborated, and has been examined at length, particularly in the context of ESP programs, and generally ELT planning. Thus the syllabus is now viewed 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 occur in the classroom.

A syllabus is required to produce efficiency of two kinds-pragmatic and pedagogical. The former is concerned with the economy of time and money. It needs the setting of instructions to be planned, and that not all learners are to be given the same treatment.

So syllabuses differ according to the practical factors present in given situation. The latter kind of efficiency is related to the 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. It is then clear that the syllabus of any kind is viewed as providing a better control of the learning process, generally by the institution and/or the teacher, but in some instance control can be and should be exercised also by the learner himself/herself. The degree and the type of control that the syllabus exercises depend on the institution-as-society. That is, in a highly democratic institution, the syllabus has to be determined and constructed by consensus.

Definition of syllabus:
This term covers the teaching learning items, materials, equipments and the evaluation tools. A finished syllabus is an overall plan the learning process. It must specify what components, or learning items, must be available, or learned by a certain time; what is the most efficient sequence in which they are learned; what items can be learned simultaneously; what items are available from the stock, and the whole process is determined by consideration of how long it takes to produce or learn a component or item. The process is under continual scrutiny by means of stock checks, or tests and examinations. If we point out the main ideas of syllabus it comes as follows:
1. A syllabus is a specification of work of a particular department in a school or college, and it might be broken down into subsections, which will define the work of a particular group or class.
2. 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 counterproductive 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 realized by the end of the course, depending on the abilities of the learners and their progress in a particular course.
3. It will specify some kind of sequence based on-
   a. Sequencing intrinsic to a theory of language learning or to the structure of specified material relatable to language acquisition;
   b. Sequencing constrained by administrative needs, materials.
4. A syllabus is a document of administrative convenience and will only be partly justified on theoretical grounds. Hence it will be negotiable and adjustable, enshrining the most useful experience of the past in order to ease the workload of the present.
5. 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 spelt out in detail as they will reflect the personalities of learners and continuing relationships established as the class progresses.
6. 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 democratic education.

Definition of curriculum:
It is considered to be a broader term used in an institution to cover politics, plans, teaching, learning items, materials, equipments, logistics everything. The first view of curriculum shows a concern with objectives and content, which are two of four elements in the traditional model of the curriculum.
The second view adds methods to the model. The methods are the means by which the ends-the objectives-are to be achieved and this forms the basis of a process view of a curriculum.

The third perspective adds a fourth and final element evaluation. This brings to us the situational model of curriculum. Evaluation, as feedback, will also form a component of the construction systems model, since quality control will be an important element of any production system. It is through monitoring and feedback that planned and actual outcomes can be compared and appropriate remedial action taken to repair failures or deficits. Thus feedback will have a formative effect on action.

The third perspective may represent a more realistic approach, since it takes account of existing systems before initiating proposals for change. The systematic changes and the installation of the new elements will, of course, require planning and the effective use of systems in order to realize new objectives, so that each of the first two approaches will make important contributions to an overall process of curriculum development.

Difference between curriculum and syllabus:
Some confusion exists over the distinction between syllabus and curriculum, since the terms are used differently on either side of the Atlantic. 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 the subpart of curriculum, which is concerned with a specification of what units will be taught.

The European term ‘syllabus’ and its North American counterpart ‘curriculum’ often seem to be very close in meaning and sometimes further apart, depending on the context in which they are used. In a distinction that is commonly drawn in Britain, ‘syllabus’ refers to the content or subject matter of an individual subject, whereas ‘curriculum’ stands for the totality of content to be taught and aims to be realized within one school or educational system. In the USA ‘curriculum’ tends the synonymous with ‘syllabus’ in the British sense.

Curriculum should not simply be seen as a kind of super syllabus because there is a qualitative difference between the two. On the one hand, curriculum may be viewed as the programme of activities, the course to learn by pupils in being educated. On the other, curriculum may be defined as all learning, which is planned and guided by the school, whether it is carried on in groups or individually, inside or outside the school. That is one school of thought regards the curriculum as a plan, while the other views it as activities.

Allen distinguishes at least six aspects of levels of curriculum:
1. Concept formation
2. Administrative decision making
3. Syllabus planning
4. Materials design
5. Classroom activities
6. Evaluation
Shaw confidently makes a line of distinction between the curriculum and the syllabus as he defines 'syllabus' as a statement of the plan for any part of curriculum, excluding the element of curriculum evaluation itself. And he concludes that the syllabus should be viewed in the context of an ongoing curriculum development process. Therefore, the terms are synonymous in USA, but in Britain a syllabus is a part of a curriculum made of many parts. But I should take the term syllabus as a part of a curriculum when the language is learned or taught as an integrated or supporting subject with others, or in a department of a different subject for example, Business Administration or Drama and Dramatics. And I would like to consider the ‘syllabus’ as an independent framework when an SL/FL is taught or learned autonomously as a subject in a department or an institution. Here any syllabus is most typically a plan of what is to be achieved through teaching and students’ learning.

Factors to construct a syllabus:
The distinction and association occurs in the sector of syllabus are important to explain the factors of syllabus designing. The syllabus is a form of support for the teaching activity that is planned in the classroom and a form of guidance in the construction of appropriate teaching materials. It is concerned, from this point of view, with what is to be done in the classroom, not necessarily with what is perceived to be taught or learnt thereby; its role is essentially to make it possible of one teacher to draw the experience of another. All these important aspects come when we have to design a syllabus with the necessary materials. And certainly there is a process to design a syllabus in a proper way.

The two main approaches of syllabus, which are considered for constructing it, are summarized below that are suggested by Davies (1976):

Type A: What is to be learnt?
- Interventionist
- External to the learner
- Other directed
- Determined by authority
- Teacher as decision maker

Content = what the subject is to expert

Content= a gift to the learner or teacher or knower
- Objectives defined in advance
- Subject emphasis
- Assessment by achievement or by mastery
- Doing things to the learner

Type B: How is to be learnt?

Internal to the learner
Inner directed or self-fulfilling
Negotiated between learners and readers
Learner and teacher as joint decision maker
Content = what the subject is to the learner
Content = what the learner brings and wants
Objectives described afterwards
Process emphasis
Assessment in relationship to learner’s criteria of success
Doing things for or with the learners

Several different factors related to the networks of psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and pedagogy claim to be taken into consideration for framing a syllabus. The syllabus is indeed concerned with the specification and planning of what is to be learned, frequently set down in some written form as prescription for actions by teachers and learners. It is also concerned with the achievements of ends, often, though not always, associated with the pursuance of particular means. It is 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 the teachers and learners, all of which underpinned by particular definitions of a desirable social order and world view. Now it is patent that the factors, which are considered for constructing a syllabus, are manipulated by the syllabus and vice-versa. Van Ek lists the following necessary components of a language syllabus:

1. The situation in which the SL/FL will be used, including the topics which will be dealt with;
2. The language activities in which the learners will be engaged
3. The language function which the learner will fulfill
4. What the learner will be able to do with respect to each topic
5. The general notions which the learners will be able to handle
6. The specific topic notions which the learner will be able to handle
7. The language form which the learner will be able to use
8. The degree of scale with which the learner will be able to perform

Here the social, psychological and pedagogical factors are confidently advocated as preconsiderations for syllabus construction. That is, the selections of the teaching items, and then their sequencing are obviously affected and even controlled by the social and psychological factors of the learner as a social being and as an individual. And the factors ultimate relate to the pedagogical factors and the overall concept of the syllabus planning.

Selection and Organization:
In the account of syllabus the focus is also on selection and organization of content, whereas, as we firmly consider, there are other approaches to syllabus which shift attention to methodology and evaluation. As a consequence of the foregoing review and discussion, it is obvious to propound a collection of typical components actively considered in designing a syllabus.

Typical Components: Set A
1. Statements about the learner:
a. Age, sex, motivation, attitude, aptitude, learning style, educational level, type of institution, previous attainment etc;
b. Specific features- derived, elite, mono/bi/multi-lingual/cultural.

2. Statement about aims and needs:
a. Reason for SL/FL learning/ teaching;
b. Skill- all or two or ..... to be taught;
c. Specific features, if any.

3. Starting and target level needs, and the determination of deficiencies, if any.

4. Information about duration/offer:
a. Length of courses, number of classes per week, total duration;
b. Homework, self-study;

5. Information about the teacher(s):
a. Qualification;
b. Training;
c. Competency;
d. Seriousness, punctuality, honesty, sincerity, regularity and the like;
e. Friendly, polite, sympathetic, humorous, democratic etc.

Typical Components: Set B
1. Content:
a. Specification of content;
b. Grammar, vocabulary and others.

2. Time
   Terms/ semesters/courses/years

3. Sequence of teaching items
   Which to be taught, which second/next.

Typical Components: Set C
1. Methodology:
   Which method to apply-Direct method or Audioligual method or Communicative Language Teaching Approach or eclectic method.

2. Aids and equipment:
   Chalk board, market board, OHP, VCR, TV, computer, cassette player and the like.

3. Books and material.

Typical components: Set D
1. Examination
2. Other Educational levels
   The relation between preceding and following courses.
3. Relation to teacher training:
   Short or long-term training.

According to McDonough the syllabus designers seem to have a relatively homogenous idea of the order of difficulty of various grammatical devices of simple English. Some kind of empirical validation of this, or empirical challenge is required, because despite gradual replacement of structural criteria by communicational criteria of sequencing in recent textbooks, the
presentation of grammatical construction is still ordered according to intuitive ideas of relative difficulty.

An early attempt to work out the implications of such findings of organizing language syllabuses was made by Valdman (1974), who discussed whether the process of pidginization could be used as a basis for grading teaching materials. But there is a problem that a little language would contain stigmatized forms, which could become fossilized. To avoid this Valdman proposed the 'Focus Approach' which Pieneman summarizes as follows:
1. The learners are allowed to use reduced and deviant forms in communicative activities.
2. However, these forms will not be brought in focus in the syllabus.
3. The learners are exposed to a fully formed input filtered only by the application of pedagogical norms.
4. The syllabus will be graded according to what is easy to acquire.

Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens have noted a surprising lack of published guidance on syllabus grading, a number of criteria have been proposed and have become accepted through use and these are listed below according to focus: structural, topic and functional.

Structural:
Frequency, coverage ability, simplicity/complexity, learnability/ teachability, combinability, contrast, productiveness, generalizability, natural order of acquisition.

Topic:
Interest and activity, need, pedagogic merit, relevance, depth of treatment, practicality, utility.

Functional:
Need: immediate and long-term, utility, coverage and generalizability, interest, complexity of form.

Alternatives Priorities in Design:
The predesigned content syllabus captures the designers selection form, and organization of the target language and its use in certain situation. 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 performance- is most often shaped and constrained by its own objectives and predetermined outcomes.

An alternative orientation would prioritize the route itself: a focus upon the means towards the learning of 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 would be the plan for gradual creation of the real syllabus of the classroom, jointly and explicitly undertaken by teachers and learners. Such a plan would be about designing a syllabus, and therefore, a guide for the map-making capacities of its users.

The need for syllabus design:
Since language is highly complex and cannot be taught all the time, successful teaching requires that there should be a selection of materials depending on the prior definition of the objectives, proficiency level, and duration of the course. This syllabus takes place in syllabus planning stage. It is the appropriate strategy of presentation.
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 to 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.

The principle of organizing a general syllabus can be structural, functional, experiential, or some combination of the three. We need this form to make the students able to communicate properly with the subject they are assigned to. The control over the text material should be exercised in a more subtle and flexible way than can normally be achieved by means of a traditional structural syllabus.

Creating and reinterpreting syllabus:
Although, we may follow a predesigned syllabus, every teacher inevitably interprets and reconstructs that syllabus so that it becomes possible to implement it in the 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, 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. The classroom is therefore, the meeting place or point of interaction between the predesigned syllabus and individual learners syllabuses. This interaction will generate the real syllabus- or the syllabus in action-which is jointly constructed by the teachers and learners together.

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 syllabuses, 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 the alternative interpretation and open to reconstruction through interactive in the classroom.

Conclusion:
More recent research into SLA has indicated a natural acquisition order, thus giving rise to the possibility of developing structural selection and grading principles in tune with this natural order. Pieneman has suggested modifying grading to bring the two in line, though without requiring learners to produce correct forms before they are ready to do so.

To construct a syllabus the designer has to have adequate experience of the social, psychological and educational factors directly or indirectly related to the teaching program. Here is no scope for adopting any arbitrary or notional matter. As the rationale behind designing of the syllabus transforms into component part, the syllabus designer becomes bound to follow the established criteria for selecting and ordering the content, choosing the methods, prescribing the material and equipment, recommending the teacher’s qualifications and determining the assessment system. When it is done the syllabus might be approximate or result in the expected or required success.
While, non-deviate input will be provided, focus on current forms in learner output will be planned to coincide with the learner's stage of readiness to produce such forms. As yet, however, the kind of detailed evidence on which to base such a progression is lacking, although the accumulation of research may result in the evolution of new criteria for organizing language input to learners to avoid some of the learning problems, which appear to have arisen from syllabuses planned according to traditional criteria for structural sequencing. Anyway, a proper designed syllabus, followed by the accurate process, is the right path for the learners.

Works Cited:


