CURRENT APPROACHES IN SYLLABUS DESIGN

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Abstract

This article examines contemporary design practices for language teaching syllabi, arguing that a modern syllabus must balance goals with an engaging, organized learning process. It begins by clarifying terminology, distinguishing curriculum as a broad strategic plan from the narrower, content-specific syllabus. The discussion surveys two overarching design paradigms: product-oriented and process-oriented approaches. Recognizing that no single approach suffices, the article advocates a multi-syllabus (hybrid) strategy that integrates components to foster communicative competence and intercultural awareness in a globalized world. Key considerations include fostering learner autonomy and personalized learning in the age of abundant digital resources, where self-paced, authentic engagement is increasingly feasible. The piece also engages with technology integration, A forward-looking emphasis is also placed on embedding global citizenship through the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to cultivate socially aware diplomats-in-training capable of contributing positively to global challenges. Finally, the article notes a trend toward flexible, authentic, real-world tasks and content, signaling a shift

from rigid, structure-centric models to adaptable, context-oriented syllabi that prepare learners for genuine, intercultural communication.

Key words: trends, syllabus, curriculum, teaching, tasks, learner, teacher, syllabus designer.

Designing a syllabus in language teaching is an important step which should be taken with thorough consciousness and great responsibility. Because syllabus is like a roadmap for the learners and the teachers throughout the whole course. A modern syllabus must reflect not only the goals and tasks, but also engaging and organized process. The main purpose of this article is to analyze trendy approaches in designing an effective syllabus.

Firstly let's define the terms "curriculum" and "syllabus" because most teachers usually confuse their meanings. A curriculum is used in a broader context, focusing on what learners are able to do at the end of the course, whereas a syllabus focuses on a narrower lesson content that leads learners to achieving these goals (Krahnke, 1987, p. 23). As Nunan states, "'curriculum' deals with planning, implementing, evaluating, managing and administering an educational programme, whereas 'syllabus' refers to the selection and grading of content as one part of the curriculum" (Nunan, 1993, p. 8). In fact, syllabus is a process which happens in the auditorium and often includes the aims and teaching materials as well as suggestion for methodology. However, Curriculum offers broad explanations regarding the reasons for language, language acquisition, and language instruction, along with a thorough outline of goals, objectives, and learning purposes, as well as the execution of a program. A syllabus can be seen as a component of a curriculum.

Nowadays researchers divide 2 general types of approach in designing a syllabus:

➤ Product oriented;

➤ Process oriented.

In the product-oriented syllabus, the goal is in the focus. However, in the process-oriented type the success of action is important. In the product-oriented approach it is mostly focused on what the students will learn or will be able to do at the end of the semester. It includes the following:

- Structural (or grammatical) syllabus: formal language structures are usually taught (for example, tenses, parts of speech, adjectives), and the syllabus organizes grammatical items from simple to complex (Nunan, 1988).

- Lexical syllabus: according to Lewis, this type focuses on lexical units—stable multi-word segments used in everyday communication (Lewis, 1993).

- Notional–functional syllabus: this type develops learners' communicative competence by focusing on notions and functions. For example, "negotiation" is a *notion*, while discussing, agreeing/disagreeing, and bargaining are *functions* (Wilkins, 1976).

- Situational syllabus: the main purpose is to teach language through real or imaginary situations (for example, in a shop, at a restaurant). It is based on social contexts and interaction between participants. Wilkins describes it as "learner- rather than subject-centered" (Wilkins, 1976, p. 16).

- In a process-oriented approach, the emphasis is placed on the learning process, skills, and tasks involved in language use. This includes the following type:

- Skill-based syllabus: this syllabus aims to develop specific language skills such as speaking, writing, reading, or listening. Jafarpour Mamaghani and Zolghadri (2018) note that skill-based syllabi are typically used in studies focusing on discrete language abilities.

In a process-oriented approach the learning process, skills or tasks in language use is mostly emphasized. Skill-based syllabus aims to develop specific language abilities such as speaking, writing, reading, or listening. Jafarpour Mamaghani and Zolghadri (2018) state that skill-based syllabi are commonly used in the following areas:

• English as a Second Language (ESL)
• Limited English Proficiency programmes (LEP)
• English for Specific Purposes (ESP)
• English for Academic Purposes (EAP)
• Language for Occupational Purposes (LOP)
• Language for Science and Technology (LST)

Content-based syllabus integrates academic subject matter with language learning, presenting linguistic development as secondary to content mastery (Brinton, Snow & Wesche, 2003). Task-based syllabus relies on learners' analytic and problem-solving capabilities (Long, 2015). Various pedagogical tasks are used, such as jigsaw, information-gap, problem-solving, decision-making, and opinion-exchange tasks (Richards, 2001, p. 162).

Currently it is recognized that no single syllabus type is universally effective, so teachers use a "multi-syllabus" approach that integrates different components, such as grammar for skills development or tasks for topic learning. That means syllabus designers must prioritize *communicative competence and intercultural skills* which will develop students' ability to communicate effectively in a globalized world to interact with people from different background. Besides the teachers must focus on student's *autonomy and personalized learning.* Due to the abundant access to

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language learning tools and applications, along with genuine English content available online, students can engage in learning whenever and wherever they choose. In its turn this enables the students to take control of their education and assist them in cultivating the strategies needed for independent learning. Also, it is convenient for students who choose self-paced learning. Now the most debated topic is *technology integration* such as AI tasks into syllabus. Though most teachers oppose using AI in learning process, it is here to meet the demands who needs it. The syllabus designers can get updated data about students' different needs, lacks etc. and develop professionally.

As we teach future diplomats for international communication, we must nurture them as socially aware individuals who want to make a positive impact in the world around them. A method to achieve this is by utilizing the *UN SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals)* as a framework for enhancing students' understanding of global challenges. Inclusion of this in syllabus emphasises on contemplating global challenges and inspiring students to engage proactively as change-makers. As we see there is a significant tendency to change product-oriented approach (structural or grammatical syllabus) into process-oriented one that will use flexible mode such as authentic, real-world tasks and content.

In conclusion, current trends favor adaptable, dynamic, and context-oriented syllabus that equip students for genuine, global interactions, shifting away from a uniform, structure-centric model.

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