

English Language Syllabuses: Definition, Types, Design, and Selection

Sabah Salman Sabbah

Community College of Qatar

Doha, State of Qatar

Abstract

This article aims at probing the different types of syllabi used to teach English to English native and non-native speakers. The researcher used a chronological approach in describing each syllabus type in accordance to its emergence in epistemology of the syllabus design and pedagogical trends in teaching English in the world. Theories of language and learning, characteristics of each syllabus, and pros and cons of the discussed syllabi were highlighted throughout the article. Emphasis was also given to shed light on the interrelationship between syllabi types and pedagogical approaches and techniques. The process of syllabi design was also discussed with examples. The researcher endeavored to cite texts from proponents of authors and scholars who discussed each syllabus. The strategy used in presenting the information in this article was to list main titles and write explanatory to describe the syllabus. Primary and secondary resources were referred to for more ideas. Thus, some resources dated back to the 1985-2017. This was done on purpose to highlight authentic resources of the pioneer linguists and scholars of each type of syllabi.

Keywords: situational, functional, notional, communicative, content, task-based syllabi, syllabi design

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Introduction

Syllabus models have passed through different revolutionary changes. Each syllabus gives way to another. As a result of the constant changes and innovations in paradigms of language teaching methodology, there emerged several types of syllabuses, such as the structural syllabus, the notional-functional syllabus, the lexical syllabus, the topic-based syllabus, the task-based syllabus, the communicative syllabus ...etc. Each of these syllabuses has viewed language as focusing on certain aspects of language materials designed in certain quality and quantity to serve the main premises of the paradigm it represents.

Definition of 'a syllabus'

There are many definitions of the term "syllabus" in literature. Educationalists differentiate between two terms, namely "syllabus" and "curriculum". The curriculum is "all the relevant decision-making processes of all the participants" the syllabus is its result (Johnson, 1989, p. 33). According to Brown (1995, p.7) "A syllabus provides a focus for what should be studied, along with a rationale for how that content should be selected and ordered." Similarly, Richards (2001) defines syllabus as "A specification of the content of a course of instruction [which] lists what will be taught and tested" (p.2). Robertson (as cited in Yalden, 1987) states that:

Curriculum includes the goals, objectives, content, processes, resources, and means of evaluation of all the learning experiences planned for pupils both in and out of the school and community through classroom instruction and related programs. (P.18)

Robertson defines syllabus as "A statement of the plan for any part of the curriculum, excluding the element of curriculum evaluation itself." (As cited in Yalden 1987, p.18). Robertson concludes that "Syllabuses should be viewed in the context of an ongoing curriculum development process." (Yalden 1987, p.18). A syllabus has been compared to a blueprint. It is a plan which the teacher converts into a reality of classroom interaction. Richard and Platt (1992) state that syllabus refers to the principles of choosing and orchestrating the textbook content. They explain that by identifying the type of syllabus used, it is possible to understand the focus and contents of a course and whether the course will be structural, situational, notional.... etc.

On the other hand, Pienemann (1985, p.23) sees the syllabus as "the selection and grading of linguistic teaching objectives", while for Breen (1984, p.47) it "is a plan of what is to be achieved through our teaching and our students' learning".

On close examination, however, both these definitions seem flawed-Pienemann's emphasis on linguistic objectives missing the possible non-linguistic functions of a syllabus and Breen's attention to achievement seeming to overlook the indeterminate relationship between what is taught and what is learnt. Candlin (1984) defines syllabuses as:

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. (p 30)

Types of Syllabi

Syllabus design is thought to be based essentially on a decision about the 'units' of classroom activity, and the sequence in which they are to be performed (Robinson, 1998). Syllabi can be divided into two different types: Product-Oriented Syllabi and Process Oriented Syllabi. (Long & Crookes, 1992; Long & Robinson, 1998). Product oriented syllabi focus on what learners will know as a result of instruction and they typically list a selection of graded items to be 'learnt' by the learners. However, the focus in Process-Oriented Syllabi is on the pedagogic processes of how outcomes of teaching and learning can be achieved. Brown (1995) lists seven basic syllabus types: “structural, situational, topical, functional, notional, skills-based and task-based and these can be linked to specific teaching approaches and methods.” (p.7)

Product-Oriented Syllabi

Structural Syllabi (Ellis 1993, p.199)

Structural syllabi are one of the most common types of syllabi and still today we can see the contents pages of many course books set out according to grammatical items. The grammatical syllabus has been defined as one which consists of a list of grammatical items selected and graded in terms of simplicity and complexity (Nunan, 1988). The structures are generally presented one by one, usually, but not always, in contrasting pairs, for example, simple present versus simple past or singular nouns versus plural nouns (Long & Crookes, 1992). In his work *Notional Syllabuses*, Wilkins (1976) as cited in Baleghizadeh (2012) defines this kind of approach to syllabus design as *synthetic*.

A synthetic language teaching strategy is one in which the different parts of language are taught separately and step-by-step so that acquisition is a process of gradual accumulation of the parts until the whole structure of the language has been built up. (p.2)

The above definition provided by Wilkins suggests that the grammatical syllabus presents structures, which are graded according to grammatical complexity, one by one and are supposedly internalized by learners before moving on to the next item. The Structural Syllabus (sometimes it is called the traditional syllabus) is based on a theory of language which assumes that the grammatical or structural aspects of language forms are the most basic or useful items in learning languages. This syllabus can be said to embrace a theory of learning which holds that functional ability arises from structural knowledge or ability. Structural syllabus is based on the assumption that language rules are learned in a linear fashion and learners should demonstrate complete mastery of one rule before moving on to the next (Nunan, 2001). Nunan (1899) states “In the process-oriented syllabuses, however, the focus shifts from the 'outcomes of instruction, i.e., the knowledge and skills to be gained by the learner, to the processes through which knowledge and skills might be gained” (p.40). The procedural and task-based syllabuses are considered as examples of process-oriented syllabuses.

Objectives of the Structural Syllabus

According to that syllabus, grammatical concepts such as nouns, imperatives, plural, gerund are simply better defined than functional ones and also easily measured. For example, to make right or wrong decisions about the structural aspects of learners' language is easy in a grammar test. Ellis (1993, 2003) maintains that formal grammar instruction works by developing explicit knowledge of grammatical features. According to Ellis, explicit knowledge gained through grammar instruction helps learners in three ways. First, it helps them monitor their utterances before and after they are produced. Secondly, it helps learners notice certain features in the input. Thirdly, Ellis (2003) points out "If learners know about a particular feature they are better equipped to detect the difference between what they themselves are saying and how the feature is used in the input they are exposed to." p.149. Similarly, Cullen (2008) states that "without any grammar, the learner is forced to rely exclusively on lexis and the other prosodic and non-verbal features, to communicate his/her intended meaning." (p.221). Cullen calls this as a "liberating force of grammar." (p. 222). Following is an example set by this article author on how grammar will help listeners to understand the difference in meaning between the following sentences:

1. John is studying medicine.
2. Omar studied medicine.
3. Sami has been studying medicine for five years.
4. Jane will study medicine.

The tenses used in previously-mentioned sentences helps us to know that Sami is the one who started to study medicine and is still studying it now, whereas Omar finished studying medicine and Jane is still planning to study medicine.

Two terms, grading and sequencing, are related to structural Nunan (1988) pinpoints that "it could be argued that any proposal failing to offer criteria for grading and sequencing can hardly claim to be a syllabus at all." (p. 47) Nunan adds that often the items in each list of grammar and lexicon are arranged in order showing which are to be taught in the first course, which in the second and so on. Nunan (1988) also states that staging and sequencing are carried out according to criteria of:

1. Simplicity (simple structures are taught first)
2. Regularity (generalizable and productive structures are taught first)
3. Frequency (most common structures are taught first)
4. Contrastive difficulty (structures not found in the L1 are emphasized) and
5. Social and pedagogical utility. (p. 49)

Shortcomings of the structural syllabus: The structural syllabus has many shortcomings:

1. Meaning of words are taught separately from context. They are taught in a list of isolated lexicon.
2. As grammar is taught in rules, there is no teaching of the way in which grammar is used in an utterance to express a social context.
3. Teaching grammar is overemphasized through drilling exercises.

4. Structural syllabus may make students feel bored or demotivated.

Situational Syllabus

Both Situational Syllabus and Notional Syllabus are types of semantic syllabus. Linguistic underpinning of this syllabus is that language is always used *in context*, never in isolation. (Yalden, 1983, p.35). Ur (2000) defines a situational syllabus as “A syllabus in which the contents are organized according to situations in which certain language is likely to be employed.” (p.178) According to Yalden (1987)

The situational model will comprise units indicating specific situations, such as 'At the Post Office', 'Buying an Airline Ticket', or 'The Job Interview'. The topical or thematic syllabus is similar, but generally employs the procedure of grouping modules or lessons around a topic, something like barnacles clinging to the hull. (p. 35)

According to (Johnson, 2002) there are three types of situational syllabus differentiated by their informational content and linguistic content.

1. Limbo: Specific setting of the situation is of little or no importance. What is important is the particular language focus involved.
2. Concrete: Situations are enacted to specific settings and the language associated with it.
3. Mythical: Situations depend on a fictional cast of characters in a fictional place. (Pp.179-180).

The most familiar way of presenting a situation is as a dialogue, usually at the beginning of a lesson and the topics, settings, participants in situations can vary infinitely. Well-prepared situations can show how native speakers act and what they talk about and are concerned about. In situational language teaching, structures are always taught within sentences, and vocabulary is chosen according to how well it enables sentences patterns to be taught. Frisby (as cited in Holliday, 1994) states:

Our early course will consist of a list of sentence patterns, statement patterns, question patterns, and request or command patterns, will include as many structural words as possible, and sufficient content words to provide us with material upon which to base our language practice. (p.54).

One of the shortcomings of the situational syllabus is that the different situations created in Situational Syllabi determine the language structures to be learnt. Yalden, (1987) summarizes this limitation of situational syllabus. He states that

While situational syllabuses represent a step toward greater emphasis on the semantic component of syllabus design, there is still something missing in their organization, in that the situation in which we find ourselves does not in and of itself necessarily determine all of what we want or need to say (p.38).

Lexical Syllabus

Design of Lexical Syllabus. (Willis, 1990) and (Nunan, 1988)

The cornerstone of this type of syllabus is vocabulary. Lexical syllabuses build up vocabulary areas based on a detailed analysis of high frequency vocabulary and phrases of a selected corpus of language used in language communication. Thus, the syllabus usually contains lists of the most frequent words, their meanings, word collocations and patterns where the words can be used. Grammar, in lexical syllabuses is connected to the different patterns of words, expressions of notions and functions. But the organizing principle is lexical, and as such it can account for a far higher proportion of text and offer a more thorough coverage of the language of the target discourse situation than other syllabus types. Another benefit of a lexical syllabus is that it is clear, unambiguous in the sense that everybody can recognize what a word its phrases and patterns are. However, Lexical syllabus may contain one full page explanation of a word, its word families, its patterns, and its phrases and collocations. Most of the 700 most frequent words (which would seem a reasonable target for a 120-hour course) have at least 3 different meanings, making corpus of 2100 items. Nunan (1988) states that the length of the lexical syllabus textbook might sometimes be 350 pages.

The Notional Syllabus

One of the pioneers in writing about notional syllabus was Wilkins. Thus, most of the information of notional syllabus is based on his book “The Notional Syllabus Revisited” (1981). Notions are meaning elements that may be expressed through nouns, pronouns, verbs, prepositions, conjunctions, adjectives or adverbs. Notions are general concepts such as, “time, space, cause and effect.” Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983 (cited in Brown, 2000, p.91).

The Notional Syllabus was developed in direct response to the failings in both grammatical and situational syllabuses. The syllabus is organized in terms of content rather than the form of the language. The Notional Syllabus has as its focus the semantic content of the target language. Students must learn to express different types of meanings. Underpinning this syllabus is the idea that language is cyclic, rather than linear. Therefore, there was really no ordered approach to the grammar. It also recognized that a variety of forms are used to express the same meaning. Wilkins (1981) pinpoints that notional syllabus helps learners to use language communicatively, leading to better learners’ competence.

Functional / Notional Syllabus

In the very late of the 70s and 80s, there was an attack on the structural syllabuses (Yalden 1983, p. 28). As a result of the challenges that the structural syllabuses include, there emerged a new type of syllabuses, namely the functional-notional syllabuses on the one hand and English for Specific Purposes movement on the other. Wilkins (1981) simply redefines the language content of the structural syllabuses, and introduces the following items to them:

- a. The notions or concepts the learners need to talk about (what meanings people wanted to convey (notions)).

- b. The functional purposes for which language is used, “what people wanted to do with the language (functions).
- c. The situations in which language would be used.
- d. The roles the learners might possibly play. (p.17).

It is undeniable, as most researchers indicated, that the most significant proponent of such a syllabus was Wilkins who attempted a comprehensive explanation and endorsement of the notional-functional syllabus. Cited in Richards (2001), Wilkins states that:

A notional-functional syllabus should comprise three categories of meaning: semantico-grammatical meaning (including time and quantity), modal meaning (including an indication of the certainty and attitude of the speaker) and communicative function (including requests, complaints, and compliments, among a vast array of others). The major emphasis of the Functional-Notional Approach is on the communicative purpose(s) of a speech act. This redefined lexicon-structural syllabus is what Wilkins refers to as the "notional –functional syllabus. (p.37)

The functional view emphasizes the semantic and communicative aspects rather than the grammatical characteristics of language. Hedge (2000) highlights how the communicative revolution in the 1970s urged educators to go beyond structural analyses of language and started to define what “communicative ability” in a language means. (P.246). According to communicative approach, language is used as vehicle for the expression of functional meaning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Functional/ notional syllabus includes the topics, notions and concepts the learner needs to communicate. It is primarily based on an analysis of learners' social and/or vocational communicative needs.

Design of Notional Functional Syllabus

A notional-functional syllabus is based on the premise that communication is a meaningful behavior in a social and cultural context that requires creative language use rather than synthetic sentence building. Grammatical structures are taught not as an end in themselves but as a means of carrying out communicative functions.

A typical unit might be Giving Advice. The content of the unit would include: I think you should. Why don't you . . . If I were you, I would . . . You'd better Another example is provided in Yalden 1983, p.40

Function	Sentence forms	Realization
Ordering	imperative	Please, finish that letter, Miss Jones
	conditional	Perhaps it would be best if you finish that letter
	infinitive	We do expect you to finish that letter

	modal	You must finish that letter ,I'm afraid
	Participle	You should have no difficulty in finishing that letter.

Example on a typical unit of Notional-Functional unit (Yalden 1983 p.40)

Other examples of functions include: asking for directions, telling stories about the past, talking about rules, and requesting information evaluating, persuading, arguing, informing, agreeing, questioning, requesting, and expressing emotions. The syllabus also deals with semantic-grammatical notions such as time, quantity, space, location, motion, and agent. As the syllabus relates forms to functions, it is normal to see a few structures used to perform many functions in a Notional/ Functional textbook. There are also many formulaic utterances generally used to perform some specific function such as “No, thank you!” for polite refusal.

Finocchiaro & Brumfit (1983) list the following characteristics of notional functional approaches:

1. A functional view of language focusing on doing something through language;
2. A semantic base, as opposed to a grammatical or a situational base;
3. A learner-centered view of language learning;
4. A basis in the analysis of learner needs for using language that is reflected in goals, content selection and sequencing, methodology, and evaluation;
5. Learner-centered goals, objectives, and content organization reflecting authentic language behavior and offering a spiraling development of content;
6. Learning activities involving authentic language use; and
7. Testing focused on ability to use language to react to and operate on the environment. (p. 18-19)

Topic-Based Syllabus

Based on what (Bourke, 2006); and (Richards & Rodgers, 1994) state, this syllabus is the third type of Semantic Syllabi besides the Lexical and Situational Syllabi. Often, this syllabus is built around certain topics and themes, such as: Travel, drugs, religious Persuasion, advertising, modern architecture, sport as so on.

The topic-based textbook units start with a variety of exercise that stimulates student interest in the theme and develop the student's ability to manipulate the language appropriate to the situation and use the language of the theme. The rest of the thematic unit include activities that elaborate the theme, such as key ideas, including cultural, cross-cultural and linguistic, listening comprehension; speaking, reading, writing, and vocabulary.

Process-oriented syllabuses

More recently, applied linguists and syllabus designers have become more concerned with the

pedagogic processes of how teachers achieve their outcomes. These syllabuses include the following.

Task based Syllabus

"Task" being "anything the learners are given to do (or choose to do) in the language classroom to further the process of language learning." (Williams & Burden, 1997: p.167). Some of task-based syllabus proponents is Willis 1996.

Skehan (1996a) defines a task as an "activity in which: i) meaning is primary; ii) there is some sort of relationship to the real world; iii) task completion has some priority; and IV). The assessment of task performance is in terms of task outcome. (p.38). According to Prabhu (1992), a task is an activity which required learners to arrive at an outcome, from given information through some process of thought, and which allowed teachers to control and regulate the process." (p.2). Long (1985) defines a task as "A piece of work undertaken for oneself or others, freely or for some reward. In other words, by 'task' is meant the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play, and in between." (p.89)

The task-based content consists of activities that the learners have to do for non-instructional purposes outside of the classrooms. The content of the situations is provided by the students themselves. Tasks require the student to apply cognitive processes or higher-order thinking skills, such as evaluation, selection, combination, modification, or supplementation to a combination of new and old information. The primary theory of learning underlying task-based instruction is Krashen's acquisition theory. Tasks can be selected according to the students' cognitive and linguistic readiness for particular tasks, and their need for the particular discourse. Shorter and simpler tasks should be undertaken before longer and more complex.

Nunan (1988) suggests that a syllabus might specify two types of tasks: real-world tasks or communication tasks such as using the telephone and Pedagogical tasks like information-gap task.

Students will have a chance to come across particular structures in different contexts. Since there will be constant and natural recycling of certain structures in each unit by means of tasks, listening tasks and language study sections. Students will be provided with an opportunity to overcome their difficulties and develop their inter-language. In the communication task, the most important skill for the learner is to be able to convey a message by means of the target language, not concentrating on the language itself.

Three Types of Task-Based Syllabus

1. Procedural Syllabus 2. Process syllabus 3. Skill-Based Syllabus

1. Procedural Syllabus

The Procedural syllabus is associated with Prabhu, Ramani and others at the Regional Institute of English in Bangalore, India. Prabhu was dissatisfied with the Structural-Oral-Situational method

which had been developed and was generally in use in the 1960s, so he evolved an approach based on the principle that the learning of form is best carried out when attention is given to meaning

Task-based syllabus is designed with the concept that, while the conscious mind is working out some of the meaning-content, some subconscious part of the mind perceives, abstracts or acquires (or recreates, as a cognitive structure) some of the linguistic structuring embodied in those entities, as a step in the development of an internal system of rules. To Prabhu (1992) “Teaching *through* communication, rather than *for* communication is an important aspect of this syllabus.” (p.19). Prabhu (1992) also argues

A task in a procedural syllabus should be intellectually challenging enough to maintain students' interest, for that is what will sustain learners' efforts at task completion, focus them on meaning and, as part of that process, engage them in confronting the task's linguistic demands” (p.24).

Opinion-gap, and later, information-gap and reasoning-gap activities were favored in the Task-based-syllabus.

2. Process Syllabus

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)?' (Breen, 1987, p. 56).

3. Skill-Based Syllabus

The term “skill” in language teaching is used as a specific way of using language that combines structural and functional ability but exists independently of specific settings or situations. Examples are reading skills such as skimming and scanning; writing skills such as writing specific topic sentences or writing memos, reports; speaking skills of giving instructions, personal information, asking for emergency help over the telephone; and listening skills such as getting specific information, listening to foreign radio for news, talking orders in a restaurant and so on.

The Content-Based Syllabus

Krashen’s theory, cited in Brown (1995,2000), focuses on the fact that for learning languages to happen, sufficient opportunity to engage in meaningful use of that language should be provided. The content-based syllabus is the teaching of content or information with little effort to teach the language itself separately from the content being taught. When teaching techniques are adjusted so that students comprehended the content material as it is presented in the new language, both content and language acquisition do occur. Cited in Jalilzadeh and Tahmasebi (2014) Stoller (2002) states:

In a content-based approach, the activities of the language class are specific to the subject matter being taught, and are geared to stimulate students to think and learn through the use

of the target language. Such an approach lends itself quite naturally to the integrated teaching of the four traditional language skills. For example, it employs authentic reading materials which require students not only to understand information but to interpret and evaluate it as well. It provides a forum in which students can respond orally to reading and lecture materials. It recognizes that academic writing follows from listening and reading, and thus requires students to synthesize facts and ideas from multiple sources as preparation for writing. In this approach, students are exposed to study skills and learn a variety of language skills which prepare them for the range of academic tasks they will encounter (p. 224).

The theory of language assumed by content-based syllabus embraces the full range of communicative competence, including a structural component (grammatical competence), sociolinguistic and discourse competence (especially in school settings) and strategic competence. Content-based syllabus does not clearly distinguish form and function in teaching language but makes the language available in the contents of its functions and meanings (Brown, 2000).

Extensive reading of literature or other content material in a target language can also be seen as a type of content based learning. There are many techniques used to present content-based syllabus. Jalilzadeh and Tahmasebi (2014, 226-228) listed the following techniques: cooperative learning, task-based learning, experiential learning, whole-language approach, graphic organizers, project work, and web quests.

The Relational Syllabus

As reported in White (1988), relational syllabus is based on items like "notional relations such as cause-effect; or discourse relations, such as question-reply; or clause structure...."(p. 78). It could perhaps be included under the headings of Semantic – Functional-Textual. A relational syllabus, like grammatical and notional/functional syllabuses, would seem only to account for certain parts of the total linguistic system.

The Communicative Syllabus

It is a syllabus which specifies the semantic-grammatical categories (e.g., frequency, motion, and location) and the categories of communicative function that learners need to express (Brown, 1995, p. 95). The council of Europe expanded and developed this into a syllabus that included descriptions of the objectives of foreign language courses for European adults, the situations in which they might typically need to use a foreign language (e.g. travel, business), the topics they might need to talk about (e.g. personal identification, education, shopping), the functions they needed language for (e.g. describing something, requesting information, expressing agreement and disagreement), the notions made use of in communication(e.g. time, frequency, duration), as well as the vocabulary and grammar needed. In short, it is centered around communication (i.e. meaning, convention, appropriacy, interaction and structure).

Syllabuses and teaching methods

Cited in Richards & Rodgers (2001 pp 10-87)

The Audio-lingual Method

Audiolingualism is a linguistic, or structure-based approach to language teaching. The starting point is a linguistic syllabus, which contains the key items of phonology, morphology, and syntax of the language arranged according to their order of presentation. In addition, a lexical syllabus of basic vocabulary items is usually specified in advance. Thus, the structural and the lexical syllabi can be taught using the ALM.

Total Physical Response (Asher's Method)

The type of syllabus Asher used can be inferred from an analysis of the exercise types employed in TPR classes. This analysis reveals the use of a sentence-based syllabus, with grammatical and lexical criteria being primary in selecting teaching items. Unlike methods that operate from a grammar-based or structural view of the core elements of language, Total Physical Response requires initial attention to meaning rather than to the form of items. Grammar is thus taught inductively.

Multi-intelligence –based language teaching

Also, there is no syllabus as such, wither prescribed or recommended, in respect to MI-based language teaching. According to Wijaya (2013), multiple intelligences theory offers teachers an opportunity to develop innovative teaching techniques. However, there is a basic developmental sequence that has been proposed as a type of “syllabus” design.

The sequence consists of four stages: awaken the Intelligence, amplify the intelligence, and teach with/for the Intelligence and transfer of the Intelligence.

The Educational Broadcasting Corporation, 2004 as cited in Lunenburg & Lunenburg (2014) listed some activities used in multiple-intelligences based teaching. These include: “Writing a report or essay, composing a song, Group discussion Journal writing, making a video, choreography, communicating with experts, making graphs, putting on a play, designing posters, Constructing timelines, Hands-on experimentation. (p.7)

How to Write a Syllabus?

Bill and Gower (cited in Tomlinson 1998, 116-124) suggested some guidelines of the process of writing syllabuses and materials. In the Pre-Writing Stage, the teaching situation and the intended learner group should be analyzed. Then, Decisions should be made on the type of assessment, resources/ staffing available should. Next, the syllabus designer should have intensive information about the learners' needs, their age, level, interests, and purpose of their learning English, their weaknesses and their strengths. This information can be obtained by administering placement tests and need analysis, and surveying students' descriptive analysis.

Another important factor to consider in the initial steps is to state the learning objectives based on the information obtained in the first stage. These can be written in terms of 'can do' statements, such as the learner can talk about likes and dislikes; the learner can narrate a story in the past tense. Next, the designer starts to create activities taking into consideration the

importance of having balance of skills Vs grammar and vocabulary, deciding on the outcomes, and the suitability of topics. The last stage is piloting the new syllabus on one class and making sure that teachers are trained on the new syllabus.

The Approaches of Syllabus Design and Selection

Yalden (1983 p. 33) indicated that there are different approaches of designing ESL/EFL Syllabi and that all indicate similar conceptual poles: formal-functional, structural- contextual, grammatical-communicative, linear-spiral, difficulty approach, utility approach, synthetic-analytic, top-down versus bottom up. Difficulty Approaches to the Syllabus - easier things are taught first, more difficult things are taught later. The Linear Syllabus - content is sequenced one item after another. The Spiral Syllabus - the same item is returned to repeatedly and treated in more depth on each occasion. Utility Approaches to the Syllabus - based around what is needed, useful, and urgent for learners e.g. should they learn how to hold a telephone conversation first, or should they concentrate on managing transactions when shopping.

The Synthetic Approach in Syllabus Design

Syllabus types can be divided into two superordinate classes, synthetic and analytic Wilkins (cited in Allwright, 1997) defines synthetically-designed syllabus as “one in which the different parts of language are taught separately and step by step so that the acquisition is a process of gradual accumulation of the parts until the whole structure of the language has been built.” (p.21). In designing syllabuses based on this approach, the language items to be taught are ordered into a list of grammatical structures and lexical items.

Analytical Approaches to Syllabus-Design

Using Wilkins' (as cited in Allwright, 1997) terminology, this is the approximation of the learners' own linguistic behavior, the language being presented in an unanalyzed whole.” (p.22). Nunan (1988: p.33) defines the analytic syllabuses as those which present the target language whole chunks at a time, without linguistic interference or control.” They rely on (a) the learners' assumed ability to perceive regularities in the input and to induce rules (or to form new neural networks underlying what looks like rule-governed behavior), and/or (b) the exposure of learners to natural samples of the L2. Procedural, process, and task syllabuses are all examples of the analytic syllabus type.

Conclusion

This paper has elucidated different aspects concerning ELF/ESL Syllabi: definitions, types, advantages and shortcomings of each type, stages of syllabus design, an exploration of the relationship between syllabus design and methodology, the various approaches in syllabus design. The writer of the current article believes that no syllabus is better than the other if it serves the purpose it is designed for. The integrated-syllabus, namely using chunks of all syllabi types in our teaching will help students to learn better structures, notions, and functions more communicatively. The writer of the current article also believes that students' needs-analysis should be conducted before applying any syllabus. It would be essential that no syllabus should be imposed on

individual teachers as the teacher himself can design his syllabus based on the students' needs and the course requirements.

About the author:

Dr. Sabbah, Sabah holds Ph.D. in English Language Curriculum and Instruction. She published papers in international journals. She published two books in Jordan and Amazon.com. She presented papers in Los Angeles, Dubai, Qatar, Oman, Las Vegas, and Lisbon. She got two Awards of Excellence as a plenary speaker and the best research presenter at GRDS International Conference held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, May 2018. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1314-3399>

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