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CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

SECOND EDITION

Jack C. Richards

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INTRODUCTION

Curriculum in language teaching refers to the design and implementation of language courses as well as to the nature of the teaching and learning that occurs as curricula are implemented. All language teachers are involved in curriculum, although the nature of their engagement depends on their teaching context. Sometimes teachers teach to a prescribed curriculum framework established by their ministry of education or school, and they may have little leeway in terms of how they interpret and apply the curriculum. In other contexts, teachers may be more actively involved in curriculum development for their own classes and institutions. In both situations, however, teachers are generally required to make decisions about their learners' needs and how best to organize and teach a course in order to achieve successful learning outcomes. They have to make decisions about methods of teaching and assessment as well as prepare and select learning resources, including both textbooks and digital resources. Language teaching thus encompasses a great deal more than simply teaching language. An understanding of the principles, practices, and procedures involved in the different stages of curriculum development and implementation is therefore an important aspect of the knowledge base of language teachers. Curriculum development is an essentially practical activity, since it seeks to improve the quality of language teaching through the use of procedures that can be used in the planning, design, development, and implementation of curriculum innovations. Curriculum is also concerned with the processes that occur when teachers and learners engage with learning in the classroom. This book provides examples of how some of these issues have been addressed by practitioners in different parts of the world.

When we review the history of language teaching, one is struck by the fact that the nature of language teaching has often been viewed from a very narrow perspective. This is evident from the fascination with teaching methods that has characterized development in language teaching over the last 100 years. Methods have often been regarded as the most important factor in determining the success of a language program, and advances in language teaching have sometimes been seen as being dependent on the adoption of the latest method or approach, whether this be text-based teaching, task-based teaching, or CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). A perspective often missing from the method-based view of teaching is that of how methods interact with other factors in the teaching-learning process. What is the context for the introduction of new methods or a new curriculum? Language teaching occurs in very different kinds of situations, and these impact language programs in different ways. Who are the learners and the teachers? Young learners have very different needs from adults, and teachers, too, differ greatly in terms of knowledge, skills, and beliefs. What expectations do they have for the program? What learning and teaching styles do they bring to the program? And learners study second languages for different kinds of purposes: for some it may be a luxury, while for others it may be a necessity. What goals does the program have, and how are these goals expressed? In what settings will teaching take place? Out-of-class learning may be more important for some learners than classroom-based learning. The organizational structure in place to support and maintain good teaching varies considerably from one school to another as do the resources that are available to support teaching and learning. What is the role of textbooks and other resources such as technology? And what measures will be used to determine the success of the program?

Choice of teaching approach or method cannot therefore be made unless a great deal is known at the context for the language program and the interactions between the different elements involved. It is this perspective that characterizes a curriculum-based approach to language teaching.

This book seeks to describe and examine the processes of curriculum development and implementation in language teaching in order to acquaint language teachers and teachers-in-training with the fundamental issues and practices involved in language curriculum. It provides examples of these issues and procedures and highlights those that can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of an innovation in curriculum. The book offers two perspectives on curriculum. The first reflects the traditional approach that considers an effective curriculum as one resulting from the systematic procedures of needs analysis, planning goals and outcomes, syllabus design, course planning, selection of teaching methods and materials, and evaluation. This is referred to as a product-focused curriculum perspective. The second perspective presented in this book considers curriculum from the standpoint of classroom processes. While this is a less prominent approach to understanding the nature of curriculum, it complements the product-focused perspective by describing how curriculum arises from the processes of teaching and learning that teachers create in the classroom.

Changes in the second edition

A number of changes have been made in preparing the second edition of the book. New chapters have been written and new material included in a number of chapters to address the process perspective referred to above. Chapters 1 and 9 are new to this edition. Some material from the first edition that is now less relevant has been removed. Moreover, all chapters have been revised and updated to reflect contemporary issues in curriculum development. An important addition to this edition is the inclusion of case studies from practitioners at the end of each chapter. These enable readers to see how the issues discussed throughout the book are addressed by practitioners. Reflective questions are also included within chapters to help clarify or exemplify topics that are discussed, and new discussion questions have been added at the end of each chapter.

Like the first edition of *Curriculum Development in Language Teaching*, this book examines key stages and procedures in curriculum development, including needs analysis, syllabus design, planning goals and outcomes, course planning, materials development, and evaluation. It also seeks to provide an "insider" understanding of curriculum through exploring the processes teachers draw on in engaging with the curriculum. The book is intended for use in in-service courses and workshops and as a sourcebook for teachers, program administrators, and other language-teaching professionals. I hope that this revised edition will continue to provide teachers and teachers-in-training with a useful guide to the issues and practices involved in developing second language programs.

1 THE NATURE OF CURRICULUM

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter examines the following aspects of approaches to curriculum:

- Internal and external influences on curriculum
- The nature of curriculum
 - A national or state curriculum
 - An institutional curriculum
 - A general curriculum
- Curriculum and the teacher
 - The teacher's curriculum or course outline
 - The enacted curriculum
 - The emergent curriculum
- Curriculum as product and process

Case study 1 Developing a course in creative non-fiction *Dino Mahoney*

Case study 2 An institutional curriculum for a pre-service English teacher-education program
Christian Rudianto

Introduction

The nature of the world and the role of English within it have changed substantially in recent years as a consequence of globalization and the spread of English as an international language. Since the 1980s and the advent of the World Wide Web, English has become not only the language of international communication, commerce, trade, travel, media, and pop culture but also a medium of instruction for some or all subjects in schools, colleges, and universities. The role of English as the world's de facto second language means that effective programs for the teaching of English are increasingly seen as essential to national development in many countries. Mastery of English by at least a significant segment of the population is also increasingly viewed as the key to progress in education, business, industry, trade and commerce, and to membership of the international community. The growing demand for proficiency in English in different spheres of life has brought with it the demand by national educational authorities for new language-teaching policies, for the development of standards for English teaching and teacher preparation, for new approaches to curriculum design, teaching, and assessment, and for greater central control over teaching and teacher education. This book seeks to examine the nature and role of the language curriculum as a response to these issues. It addresses curriculum both as a framework developed to guide and monitor teaching and as it is created and enacted by the teacher through the processes of teaching and learning within the classroom.

1.1 Internal and external influences on curriculum

If we consider the response of the language-teaching profession to the challenges faced by curriculum planners, we find two sources of influence and direction. The first comes from within the language-teaching profession itself (or from "applied linguistics" as it is sometimes known), and the other from the world beyond academia and applied linguistics. Let us consider these two parallel sources of influence – internal and external – on curriculum approaches and practices.

Internal influences on curriculum change

Many innovations in language teaching arise from *within* the field of language teaching. As with any field of education, new theories emerge from research as ideas change about the nature of second language learning or as earlier understandings are revised or modified. The history of language teaching in the last 100 years has been characterized by strongly differing understandings of both the nature of language itself and how a second language is learned (Richards and Rodgers 2014). Scholars, pedagogues, and applied linguists have generated a body of assumptions and principles that serve as one source for reviewing approaches to language curriculum design and implementation.

These assumptions and principles are reflected in the different proposals for a language syllabus that we discuss in Chapters 7 and 8. For example, Ellis (2011) proposed ten principles derived from second language research as a basis for instructed language acquisition:

1. Instruction needs to ensure that learners develop both a rich repertoire of formulaic expressions and a rule-based competence.
2. Instruction needs to ensure that learners focus predominantly on meaning.
3. Instruction needs to ensure that learners also focus on form.
4. Instruction needs to be predominantly directed at developing implicit knowledge of the second language while not neglecting explicit knowledge.
5. Instruction needs to take into account the learner's built-in syllabus.
6. Successful instructed language learning requires extensive second language input.
7. Successful instructed language learning also requires opportunities for output.
8. The opportunity to interact in the second language is central to developing second language proficiency.
9. Instruction needs to take account of individual differences in learners.
10. In assessing learners' second language proficiency, it is important to examine free as well as controlled production.

(For an alternative but different set of "psycholinguistically based" ten principles, see Doughty and Long 2003.)

Choose any two of the principles above. What are their implications for classroom language teaching?

Current approaches to methodology reflect many of these principles. Thus, classroom activities typically have some of the following characteristics:

- They seek to develop students' communicative competence through linking grammatical development to the ability to communicate. Hence, grammar is not taught in isolation but often arises out of a communicative task, thus creating a need for specific items of grammar. Students might carry out a task and then reflect on some of the linguistic characteristics of their performance.
- They create the need for communication, interaction, and negotiation of meaning through the use of activities such as problem solving, information sharing, and role play as well as through opportunities provided by technology and the Internet.
- They provide opportunities for both inductive and deductive learning of grammar.

- They make use of content that connects to students' lives and interests.
- They allow students to personalize learning by applying what they have learned to their own lives.
- They make use of authentic texts from both print sources and the Internet to create interest and to provide valid examples of language use.

🗣️ To what extent do you make use of authentic texts as learning resources for your students?

External influences on curriculum change

The other source of influence on curriculum design is more pragmatic and reflects the demand from governments, educational authorities, employers, and learners for language-teaching programs that deliver the practical outcomes that stakeholders are seeking. Proficiency in English is not a luxury but a necessity in many countries, and growing demand for competency in English puts pressure on those responsible for designing more effective language-teaching programs (Goodwyn, Reid, and Durrant 2014). In many countries English is viewed as being important to economic development. Countries with few proficient English language speakers are reported also to have lower levels of trade, innovation, and income. A report in 2012 ranked 54 countries where English is not a first language and argued that English is key to innovation and competitiveness. The five top-ranked countries were Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, and Norway, while the bottom-ranked were Colombia, Panama, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, and Libya. The report also suggested that Italy, Spain, and Portugal were held back as a result of low levels of English language proficiency among the workforce (*New York Times*, October 28, 2012).

Large business organizations are increasingly multinational in their operations, and English is increasingly the most frequent language used for both written and spoken communication within such organizations. Many of the world's English-language learners require knowledge of English in order to enter the workforce in their countries and to advance professionally. Moreover, in many parts of the world where English has traditionally had the status of a school subject, it is now becoming a medium of instruction, particularly at university level. The motivation for teaching subjects through English is partly to improve the English language skills of graduates (as with universities in Turkey, where many courses are taught in English). However, this trend also reflects the growing need for European universities to offer programs in English to attract an international body of students and raise their international profiles – an aspect of the internationalization of English through higher education.

🗣️ Do universities in your country seek to attract international students? If so, where do many of these students come from?

These pressures engender a number of demands that need to be addressed when designing language curricula and courses (Education and Training Foundation 2015). Among the requirements of curriculum development are the following:

- Outcomes that can be delivered efficiently and in the minimum amount of time.
- Language that can be used to access content and information.
- Potential for delivery to large numbers of learners, both face-to-face and distant.
- Material that can be delivered in self-access mode.
- Opportunities for using technology and the Internet.

6 • Curriculum Development in Language Teaching

- Opportunities for context and situation-specific learning.
- Enabling learners to self-manage their own learning.
- Focus on domain-specific language use.
- Promotion of skills needed to access authentic materials.
- Promotion of problem-solving and critical thinking skills.
- Outcomes that are performance based.
- Assessment linked to task performance.

The challenge for the language-teaching profession, therefore, is to develop language programs that respond to the practical demands for proficiency in English but are also informed by current research, theory, and best practice. In comparing Ellis's list with the one above, we could say that researchers focus on *means*, while administrators and planners are more interested in *ends* or outcomes. Teachers, of course, are interested in both means and ends.



"Researchers focus on *means*, while administrators and planners are more interested in *ends* or outcomes." Is this true in your experience?

In order to respond to the demand for programs that deliver practical outcomes and are both evidence-based and research-based, educational planners in ministries of education, schools, tertiary institutions, and vocational training institutions as well as providers in the private sector are regularly engaged in reviewing their approaches to language teaching. This involves ongoing evaluation of current language-teaching policies, curriculum guidelines and syllabuses, teaching methods, textbooks, and tests. The nature and role of the curriculum is central to this process. In this chapter we will review the different ways in which curriculum is understood in language teaching and the different ways in which curricula are developed.

1.2 The nature of curriculum

Curriculum is understood in different ways and takes many different forms, including as the teacher's plans for his or her own course as well as a document developed within a ministry of education to guide language teaching at a national level. The latter is perhaps the most familiar type of curriculum, and these are designed to guide, monitor, and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching. They have an important planning and managing function. Here we refer to a curriculum as a set of statements, documents, and resources, typically developed by teams of experts in a ministry of education, university, publisher's office, or school that represent a plan for the achievement of specific educational goals, which may be at the national, regional, school, or institutional level. Curriculum in this sense refers to a *product*, and the development of this type of curriculum can be described as a "top-down" expert-driven process. The curriculum can be seen to reflect the best interpretation of the current state of knowledge concerning what a second language is and how it can be taught, as well as an understanding of how best to organize a language-teaching program. It may be regarded as a technical or semi-scientific framework for teaching and learning that has been validated through current theory, research, and expert knowledge (see, e.g., Long 2015).

Curriculum and syllabus

The terms *curriculum* and *syllabus* are used differently in different parts of the world. In North America *curriculum* is sometimes used to refer to (a) the total program of courses offered in a school and the knowledge and skills students are expected to acquire in a program of study, as well as (b) the specific goals, content, lessons, and materials used to organize and teach a particular course. The latter is known as the *teacher's curriculum*, although the term *syllabus* is often used with this meaning in the UK, Australia, and some other countries to refer to a description of the content of a course and the sequencing of content within it.

Curriculum also refers to the field of educational theory, research, and development that focuses on the nature and development of curriculum.

Curriculum development includes the processes that are used to determine the needs of a group of learners, to develop aims or objectives for a program to address those needs, to determine an appropriate syllabus, course structure, teaching methods, and materials, and to carry out an evaluation of the language program that results from these processes.

For other terms related to curriculum, see the Glossary of Education Reform (<http://edglossary.org/glossary/c/>).



What kinds of curricula are you familiar with in your teaching context? How do you make use of them?

This expert-driven view of curriculum has been dominant in the field of language teaching for many years, and throughout this book we will examine how this has led to a focus on such things as syllabus design, needs analysis, competencies, objectives, and standards as planning tools and approaches that are seen as essential to good curriculum design. Examples of curricula of this kind are detailed below.

A national or state curriculum

A national or state curriculum is typically formulated in a public document that describes the goals of the educational system in a particular country or state, generally covering education from K through 12 (kindergarten to year 12) but not including tertiary-level education. It normally includes the following elements:

- An account of the underlying philosophy of the curriculum (e.g., the beliefs or principles on which it is based).
- Details of the different subjects that will be taught, such as English, science, and mathematics.
- A syllabus for each subject.
- Details of what levels of attainment are expected for each subject.
- The teaching methods that are recommended in teaching the curriculum.
- Information on how learning will be assessed.

8 • Curriculum Development in Language Teaching

A national or state curriculum describes the goals of learning for all students and generally includes both content to be taught and performance standards. For example, the National Curriculum in England states the following aims:

The national curriculum provides pupils with an introduction to the essential knowledge that they need to be educated citizens. It introduces pupils to the best that has been thought and said; and helps engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.

The national curriculum is just one element in the education of every child. There is time and space in the school day and in each week, term and year to range beyond the national curriculum specifications. The national curriculum provides an outline of core knowledge around which teachers can develop exciting and stimulating lessons to promote the development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills as part of the wider school curriculum.

(Department of Education 2013: 6)

National or state curricula such as these are often very comprehensive. See, for example, the *English Language Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6)* produced by the Curriculum Development Institute of the Hong Kong Department of Education, which contains 359 pages of information (<http://bit.ly/1vMjv0N>) (see Appendix 1), or the *Massachusetts Adult Basic Education Curriculum Framework for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)* produced by the Massachusetts Department of Education Adult and Community Learning Services (<http://bit.ly/1tCg2lc>). Many countries have a single curriculum that provides the basis for teaching across the whole nation (e.g., Singapore, the United Kingdom). In some countries there is no national curriculum, and each state develops its own (e.g., Australia, the United States). National and state curriculum documents are usually developed by specialists in the curriculum department in a ministry of education or a state planning agency. Such curricula typically undergo periodic revision and renewal based on changes in goals, educational philosophies, educational trends and developments, as well as on their effectiveness in bringing about desired learning outcomes. (See Appendixes 1 and 2 for examples of a state curriculum.)



Is there an official curriculum for the teaching of English in your country? How is it made available to potential users?

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

SECOND EDITION

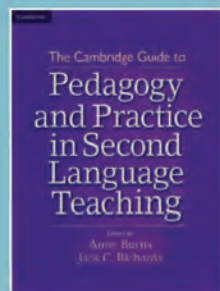
Curriculum Development in Language Teaching Second edition has been thoroughly revised and updated to reflect contemporary issues in curriculum. As well as describing and examining a traditional product-focused curriculum perspective, it considers curriculum from the perspective of classroom processes. Case studies, which are used to exemplify issues and questions – within and at the end of each chapter – allow for reflection and discussion.

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