CURRICULUM APPROACHES IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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The spread of English as the world's defacto second language requires governments, ministries of education, schools and others involved in English language teaching to constantly review their English teaching programs. Language teaching policies and practices are subject to constant cycles of revision as one approach becomes "old", failing to live up to its promises, and a new one is brought in to replace it. Central to any innovation in language teaching is the nature of the second language curriculum. In this chapter we seek to provide an overview of how curriculum has been understood and practiced in second language teaching.

1. The curriculum as product

Curriculum is understood in different ways and takes many different forms (Richards 2013: Christison and Murray 2014). The most familiar types of curriculum are those that 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 either at the national, regional, school or institutional level. Curriculum in this sense refers to a *product* and development of curriculum of this type 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 is a seen as a technical or semi-scientific framework for teaching and learning that has been validated through current theory, research, and expert knowledge (Pinar and Irwin 2004).

There are several different kinds of product-designed curriculum, depending on what their purposes are, who they intended for, and how they are to be used.

1.1. A national or state curriculum
This is typically 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:
- o an account of the underlying philosophy of the curriculum (e.g. the beliefs or principles on which it is based),
- o the different subjects that will be taught such as English, science, and mathematics,
- o what levels of attainment are expected for each subject,
- o the teaching methods that are recommended in teaching the curriculum,
- o how learning will be assessed.

Curriculum documents of this kind are often very comprehensive such, as 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) 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 curriculum (e.g. Australia, the US). National and state curriculum documents are usually developed by specialists in the curriculum department in a ministry of education or a state planning agency.

Curriculum of this kind are developed through a process of research and consultation with universities and other educational institutions, curriculum specialists, employers, teachers, parents and sometimes learners. Such curriculum typically undergo periodic revision and renewal based on changes in goals, changes in educational philosophies, educational trends and developments, as well as their effectiveness in bringing about desired learning outcomes.

1.2. An institutional curriculum

The range of courses that universities, schools, institutes and other educational institutions offer is also referred to as a curriculum. It will reflect the needs of students in the institution at any given time – since students' needs often change and changes in the curriculum may be needed to reflect changes in the student population. It may provide information that helps attract students to the institution, it provides accountability to parents and other stakeholders with an interest in the school's performance, and it can serve as a basis for the selection of textbooks and the development of classroom materials, tests, and other forms of assessment. It may describe in detail the language content and skills expected to be covered in each course. These may form the basis for syllabi for individual courses. An institutional curriculum is often developed by a team of teachers with relevant experience and expertise and will often be based on a needs analysis of the different students groups or clients that the institution serves (Basturkman 2010: Richards 2016).

1.3. A teacher's curriculum

This is often referred to as a syllabus and is a document a teacher uses in planning his or her lessons. It can be thought of as an action plan based on the information given in the school curriculum for a particular course. It will typically describe the course goals, the objectives or learning outcomes and the scope and sequence of materials to be covered. It may also list specific items to be taught and tested at different stages of the course. It may be developed by an individual teacher or group of teachers or by others in the institution who have the responsibility for developing courses. The level of detail included in the teacher's curriculum will depend on how the teacher or the school intends it to be used. Two teachers may develop a course that addresses the same aims and learning outcomes but each teacher takes a very different route to achieve their outcomes. In some settings it may be a requirement that teachers prepare a fully elaborated syllabus and associated scheme of work that is available for review by others. In others much more leeway is given to teachers to develop a syllabus that reflects their own personal working style. It may be a much more provisional set of guidelines that will be uses as a "springboard" by the teacher rather than as a lesson-by-lesson template that he or she will follow (Graves 1996: 2000).

1.4. A general curriculum

Some curricula are developed by national or international educational bodies or organizations such as the Council of Europe or the United Nations (http://bit.ly/1pptxh4) and are available to be used by anyone for whom they are relevant. An example of a curriculum of this kind

was the Council of Europe's *Threshold Level* – one of a series of communicative syllabuses for the teaching of general English at the elementary, intermediate and upper-intermediate levels and that has been widely used as the basis for the development of courses and textbooks. Another example is the *Common European Framework of Reference*, which has been similarly used. While the latter is not a fully developed curriculum it is often used world-wide as a reference in developing courses for particular groups of learners (http://bit.ly/1iNvAIB). Curricula of this kind are often promoted as examples of expert-derived curricula based on research and needs analysis (depending on the target learners) and include social-survival or occupationally related curricula (e.g. curricula for engineers, new arrivals, nurses, factory workers, restaurant employees, telephone operators). (Kantarcioglu, E. and Papageorgiou, S. 2012: Council of Europe 2001).

2. Developing and implementing a product-focussed curriculum

In designing a curriculum, the designers have to make a variety of decisions concerning what is to be taught (e.g. vocabulary, grammar, texts, skills), what outcomes are to be achieved (e.g. ability to take part in a job interview; ability to write business correspondence) and the teaching methods that will be employed. These decisions will also reflect the context and manner in which the curriculum will be implemented. Contextual factors relate to the setting for the curriculum, the institution, the teachers, the learners, available means and resources, and are identified through what is referred to as situational or environment analysis (Richards 2016; Nation and Macalister 2010). The manner of implementation may be face-to face, blended, or online, each of which will have a different impact on aspects of the curriculum design.

In language curriculum development, two complementary processes have been made use of to develop a curriculum. These can be described as forward design and backward design.

2.1. Forward design

Forward design is based on the assumption that curriculum design constitutes a sequence of stages that occur in a fixed order – an approach that has been referred to as a "waterfall" model (Tessmer and Wedman 1990) where the output from one stage serves as the input to the stage that follows. The starting point in forward design is the language syllabus. This approach is described in Richards and Rodgers (2014, 155), summarizing Docking (1994) comment:

… the traditional approach to developing a syllabus involves using one's understanding of subject matter as the basis for syllabus planning. One starts with the field of knowledge that one is going to teach (e.g. contemporary European history, marketing, listening comprehension, or French literature) and then selects concepts, knowledge, and skills that constitute that field of knowledge. A syllabus and the course content are then developed around the subject. Objectives may also be specified, but these usually have little role in teaching or assessing of the subject. Assessment of students is usually based on norm referencing, that is, students will be graded on a single scale with the expectation that they spread across a wide range of scores or that they conform to a pre-set distribution .

2.2. Syllabus design

Syllabus design is central to the notion of forward design. This was a growth industry from the mid 1920s through to the latter part of the 20th century and led to a number of key

publications in which different approaches to syllabus design were proposed (e.g. Wilkins 1976, Munby 1978, Willis 1996). Debate over criteria for the choice of syllabus items (*selection*) as well as criteria for their sequencing (*gradation*) was a dominant issue in applied linguistics in the early and mid 20th century, as described in Mackey's influential book *Language Teaching Analysis (*Mackey 1965). Intuition, frequency counts as well as text analysis have all been used as procedures in syllabus design and have resulted in different kinds of lists that have been used as the basis for language courses.

For example West's *General Service List* (1953) identified a core set of some 2000 lexical items need to sustain language ability. Hindmarsh (1980) identified 4500 words grouped into seven levels, a similar total to the list included in the Council of Europe's Threshold Level (Van Ek and Alexander 1975). Lists of the core set of grammatical items learners needed to master were also developed such as Hornby's *Guide to Patterns and Usage in English* (1954), which together with subsequent variants (e.g. Alexander et.al 1975) have provided the basis for the grammatical syllabuses underlying language courses and course books ever since. Communicative language teaching replaced grammar and lexis as the primary components of a syllabus with communicative units of syllabus organization. This led to proposals for a number of additional different syllabus models, including notional, functional, lexical, text (Mickan 2013) and task-based-models (Van den Branden 2012:Ellis 2003: Long 2014). More recently corpus analysis amd discourse analysis have been made use of to update or replace the earlier generations of lists that have been used in syllabus design. O'Keefe et al (2007,22) suggest that "course book dialogues, and even entire syllabi, can be informed by corpus data". An example of a vocabulary syllabus based on corpus data is Coxhead's Academic Word List (2000), which identifies some 570 head words beyond a core vocabulary of 3000 or so words which are common across a range of academic disciplines. Discourse analysis has also played an important role in the design of courses in English for Special Purposes where the identification of the lexical, syntactic and textual structures of different genres is a pre-requisite to teaching specialized genres (Basturkman 2010).

2.3. Syllabus and methodology

With a forward design approach, decisions about teaching processes or methodology *follow* from syllabus specification. Ideally, the planner starts with a theory of language and a syllabus derived from it and then looks for a learning theory that could be used as the basis for an appropriate pedagogy. However a syllabus does not necessarily imply a particular methodology. A structural syllabus can be embodied in an audiolingual as well as a task-based course, and there are many different ways in which a text-based or functional syllabus can be taught.

2.4. Two examples of forward design approaches in language teaching

Communicative language teaching (CLT) and content and language integrated learning (CLIL) are both relatively recent examples of forward design applications in language teaching (Richards and Rodgers 2014). CLT was part of a paradigm shift in lnguage teaching in the 1960s and 70s in which grammar-based approaches to teaching seen in the then dominant teaching methods of auiolingualism and situational language teaching were replaced by a methodology that sought to teach language both *as* and *through* communication. Central to this enterprise was a communicative syllabus and a related communicative methodology. The best known of the communicative syllabuses that were developed was known as Threshold level (Trim 2012, 26), which contained a syllabus made up of functions, notions, and topics as well as more traditional language-based units.

Content-based Instruction (CoBI) and its more recent variant CLIL are also examples of forward design (Coyle, D., P. Hood, and D. Marsh. 2010). They seek to develop language proficiency as well the mastery of subject matter, critical thinking, and other cognitive skills through the use of a syllabus that integrates both language and subject matter (e.g. science, geography, history, environmental studies). Although CoBI and CLIL may take many different forms, as with other forward design models the process of developing a curriculum typically starts with the design of a syllabus that contains both content and language components. This then leads to the choice of suitable instructional materials as well as selection of activities for delivering, reviewing and assessing instruction (Crandall 2012, 150). The following example (from Mehisto, Marsh and Frigolos 2008, 50-69) illustrates in summary form the procedures used to develop a one-week science unit on volcanoes:

1. Content and language needed for the topic of volcanoes is identified.
2. Aims in terms of content learning, language learning and skills learning are identified.
3. Resources chosen to facilitate a variety of whole class, group based and individual activities focussing on different aspects of content and language.
4. Informal assessment procedures used to assess student learning.

Like other communicative approaches, the instructional processes used in CoBI/CLIL are varied and no specific teaching methods are prescribed.

With forward design approaches, the planning and development of each stage in the curriculum development process is often carried out by different specialists who have expertise in each process, such as specialists in syllabus design, methodology, and assessment. Graves (2008, 150) describes this as a "specialist approach", and comments:

In the specialist approach, the potential for mismatch [i.e. lack of alignment between the different components of the curriculum –author's note] is great because each different group of people performs different curricular functions, uses different discourses, and produces different curricular products.

2.5. Backward design

The second approach used in developing a product-based curriculum is known as backward design (Wiggins and McTcTighe 2005). Backward design starts with a careful statement of the desired results or outcomes: appropriate teaching activities and content are derived from the learning outcomes. Three steps are required:

1. Identify desired results
2. Determine acceptable evidence of learning
3. Plan learning experiences and instruction

In education this approach is more commonly associated with the use of objectives in curriculum planning.

2.6. Backward design through objectives

The use of objectives in curriculum design is a well-established tradition in general education and was sometimes described as an as an "ends-means" approach, as seen in the work of Tyler (1949) and Taba (1962), who viewed instruction as the specification of ends as a pre-requite to devising the means to reach them. The process consists of:

Step 1: diagnosis of needs

Step 2: formulation of objectives

Step 3: selection of content

Step 4: organization of content

Step 5: selection of learning experiences

Step 6: organization of learning experiences

Step 7: determination of what to evaluate and of the ways of doing it

Taba 1962: 12

The role of methodology was to determine which teaching methods were most effective in attaining the objectives and a criterion-referenced approach would be used for assessment. Tyler's work had a considerable impact on curriculum planning and helped establish the use of objectives as planning units in instructional design. An objectives-based approach reflects the essential assumptions of backward design. The planning process begins with a clear understanding of the ends in mind. A variety of teaching strategies can be employed to achieve the desired goals but teaching methods cannot be chosen until the desired outcomes have been specified.

2.7. Needs analysis in backward design

Identifying learning outcomes or objectives is often seen to depend upon a systematic analysis of the learners' communicative needs, and procedures referred to as needs analysis emerged in the 1960s as part of the systems approach to curriculum development. Needs analysis is part of the process by which aims and objectives are determined (Huhta, M., K. Vogt, E. Johnson and H. Tulkki. 2013: Log, 2005: Nunan, 1988). The steps involved are:

1 identify learner's communicative needs

2 develop statements of learning objectives

3 identify linguistic content and skills needed to attain the objectives

4 prepare course plans

5 select materials and teaching methods

2.8. Backward design in task-based language teaching

Needs analysis is also the starting point for curriculum development in some versions of Task-Based Language Teaching and is used to determine an inventory of target-tasks learners need to be able to master in the target language.

The design of a task-based syllabus preferably starts with an analysis of the students' needs. What do these students need to be able to do with the target language? What are the tasks they are supposed to perform outside of the classroom? Using different sources and different methods (such as interviews, observations, and surveys) a concrete description of the kinds of tasks students will face in the real word is drawn up. This description, then, serves as the basis for the design and sequencing of tasks in the syllabus.

Van den Branden 2012, 134

The methodology of this approach to TBLT is then built around activities or tasks that require communicative language use, from which the learners need for particular aspects of language are derived:

Van den Branden 2012 133,

2.9. Competency-based instruction

Competency-Based Instruction is another widely used example of backward design (Auerbach 1986: Christison and Murray 2014: Richards and Rodgers 2014) . With CpBI the starting point of curriculum design is a specification of the learning outcomes in terms of "competencies" – the knowledge, skills and behaviors learners involved in performing everyday tasks and activities and which learners should master at the end of a course of study. Curriculum development with CpBI starts from a similar stage as TBLI in the version described above. Advocates of CpBI suggest it has similar advantages to the backward design approach proposed by Wiggins and McTcTighe (2005).

Competency-based approaches to teaching and assessment offer teachers an opportunity to revitalize their education and training programs. Not only will the quality of assessment improve, but the quality of teaching and student learning will be enhanced by clear specification of expected outcomes and the continuous feedback that competency-based assessment can offer.

Docking 1994:15

Like other backward design approaches, CpBI makes no assumptions about teaching methods, since any set of classroom activities can be used that enables students to master the desired competencies. However since student learning is assessed on the basis of performance and the ability to demonstrate mastery of pre-specified skills and behaviours, teaching is generally based on helping learners acquire the communicative skills needed for specific situations, tasks and activities. As with other backward design approaches, needs analysis is the starting point in curriculum development.

2.10 Standards and the Common European Framework of Reference

A related approach to backward design is through the use of *standards* (also known as *benchmarks, core skills, performance profiles* and *target competencies*) (Samway, 2000; Katz and Snow, 2009: Christison and Murray 2014). Standards are descriptions of the outcomes or targets students should be able to reach in different domains of curriculum content, including language learning, and are generally specified in very general terms. For example standards related to the use of both oral and written language could include:

Students will develop knowledge and understanding of:

- The relationship between texts and contexts
- Cultural reference in text
- The relationship between purposes and structures of texts
- Language forms and features of texts
    McKay 2000

The primary motivation for an increased emphasis on statements of learning outcomes in the design of language programs and particularly the use of "standards" as ways of identifying learning targets across a curriculum is described by Leung (2012, 165):

...the prominence of outcomes-based teaching in the past thirty years or so can be associated with the wider public policy environments in which the twin doctrines of corporatist management (whereby the activities in different segments of society are subordinated to the goals of the state) and public accountability (which requires professionals to justify their activities in relation to declared public policy goals) have predominated.

In order to assist in the planning process, standards are generally accompanied with more specific "indicators" that "describe assessable, observable activities or behaviors that may be performed to show the standard is being met "(Katz and Snow 2009,67). These are often described in terms of competencies. Perhaps the most widespread example of backward design using standards in current use is the *Common European Framework for Reference for Languages* (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001), which is designed to provide a "common basis for explicit description of objectives, content and methods of the study of modern languages, within a wider purpose of elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks' etc. across Europe " (Council of Europe, 2001:1). It describes six levels of achievement divided into three broad divisions from lowest (A1) to highest (C2) which describe what a learner should be able to do in reading, listening, speaking and writing at each level. However no language content is specified and it is the teacher's or course designer's responsibility to work out how the outcomes can be achieved and to develop teaching strategies and materials and content relevant to the context in which they are teaching.

2.11. Evaluation in a product-based curriculum

With a product curriculum, curriculum processes are seen as ways of bringing order, control and direction into language teaching and language course design. Evaluation is viewed as essential to maintaining the effectiveness of a program. As Kiely comments (2009, 99): "[program evaluation] is about effectiveness, and traditionally the answer has been sought in terms of test results, a language learning theory, or a particular syllabus".The role of evaluation is hence to determine the extent to which planned outcomes have been achieved and syllabus content has been mastered. It is improvement-oriented. The rigor with which curriculum development is carried out – employing processes such as needs analysis, determining learning outcomes, designing a course and syllabus framework and using effective methods of teaching and learning – will determine the success of the outcomes. Each component of the curriculum – the assumptions on which it is based, the objectives, the syllabus, the teachers, the teaching methods, the learners, and the forms of assessment used – is subject to scrutiny during ths process. The questions asked and the processes used during the evaluation will depend on who the primary stakeholders are, such as policy makers, education officials, providers of language programs, teachers, parents, and learners (Elley, 1989: Kiely, R. and P. Rea-Dickins 2005).

3. Curriculum as process

While the development of product-focussed curriculum frameworks is a major educational enterprise ocupying specialists in ministries of education, universities, schools and private institutes, the enactment or realization of the curriculum at the school and classroom level is

the primary determinant of success in teaching and learning. The way the curriculum is understood by teachers, how they adapt curriculum guidelines, syllabuses and materials to to their learners' needs, and the classroom processes that result as they engage in day-to-day teaching, are all aspects of the *curriculum as process*. The focus of the curriculum as process is how the teacher seeks to create affordances for learning within the classroom through interactions among the teaching context, teaching resources and the learner (Graves 2008). This view of a curriculum involves viewing the classroom as a site where teachers and learners participate in classroom tasks and activities, adapt and extend teaching materials and resources based on moment-to-moment incidents that arise during the teaching process, and where teachers and learners negotiate their identities through the interactional processes involved (K.Richards 2006). The participants in the curriculum – teachers and learners – "create" the curriculum through the processes of interaction they make use of to negotiate and understand the content of their course and the materials and resources that they employ. This is what Aoki refers to as the *lived curriculum* (Pinar and Irwin 2004).

In general education this approach was advocated by Bruner (1966) and Stenhouse (1975) who argued that curriculum development should start by identifying the processes of inquiry and deliberation that drive teaching and learning – processes such as investigation, decision-making reflection, discussion, interpretation, critical thinking, making choices, co-operating with others and so on. Content is chosen on the basis of how it promotes the use of these processes and outcomes do not need to be specified in any degree of detail, if at all.

Clark's description of the features of "progressivism" captures the essence of the curriculum as process:

- *It places less emphasis on syllabus specification and more on methodological principles and procedures*
- *It is more concerned with learning processes than predetermined objectives*
- *It emphasizes methodology and the need for principles to guide the teaching learning process*
- *It is learner-centered and seeks to provide learning experiences that enable leaners to learn by their own efforts*
- *It regards learners as active participants in shaping their own learning*
- *It promotes the development of the learner as an individual*
- *It views learning as a creative problem-solving activity*
- *It acknowledges the uniqueness of each teaching-learning context*
- *It emphasizes the role of the teacher in creating his or her own curriculum in the classroom*
  Clark 1987 49-90

The "curriculum as process" perspective has been reflected in languge teaching in a number of different ways.

3.1. Novel methods of the 1980s

A number of language teaching proposals emerged in the second half of the 20th century that rejected the need for pre-determined syllabuses or statements learning outcomes and were built instead around specifications of classroom activities. For example Krashen and Terrel's Natural Approach (1983) proposed that communicative classroom processes engaging the learners in meaningful interaction and communication and at an appropriate level of difficulty were the key to a language course, rather than building teaching around a predetermined

grammatical syllabus. There is no need for clearly defined outcomes or objectives. The purpose and content of a course "will vary according to the needs of the students and their particular interests" (Krashen and Terrell 1983:65). Goals are stated in very general terms such as "basic personal communication skills: oral" and "basic personal communication skills: written".

Curran's *Counseling Learning* was another process-centered method that attracted some attention when it was introduced in the 1980s and was an application of principles of counseling learning to language teaching. The classroom becomes a community of learners and teacher (the knower) and students enter into a process in which their interactions, experience and response to learning is seen as central to driving the teaching-learning process. There is no pre-determined syllabus and no specific linguistic or communicative goals. These are specific to each class and an outcome of the social interaction that occurs during the lesson. Students typically sit in a circle and express what they want to say. Translation by the teacher is used to help express the learner's intended meaning. Later, interactions and messages are recorded and revisited as a source of reflection, analysis, and further practice.

3.2. Dogme

A more recent example of a process view of the curriculum has been labelled Dogme (a term taken from the film industry that refers to filming without scripts or rehearsal) by Scott Thornbury – who introduced the approach to language teaching (Meddings and Thornbury 2009). It is based on the idea that instead of basing teaching on a pre-planned syllabus, a set of objectives and published materials, teaching is built around conversational interaction between teacher and students and among students themselves. The syllabus or language focus is not pre-planned and language and content emerge from the processes of interaction and negotiation that the teacher initiates. Midlane comments:

A Dogme approach focuses on emergent language; teaching is not a question of imposing an external language syllabus, but of nurturing the students' in-built language-learning mechanisms and language acquisition agenda.

www.deltapublishing.co.uk/content/pdf/teaching-unplugged/TU_TEFL_review.pdf accessed 9 July 2015

3.3.Post-method teaching

This term is sometimes used to refer to teaching which is not based on the prescriptions and procedures of a particular method or which follows a pre-determined syllabus but which draws on the teacher's individual conceptualizations of language, language learning and teaching, the practical knowledge and skills teachers develop from training and experience, the teacher's knowledge of the learners' needs, interests and learning styles, as well as the teacher's understanding of the teaching context (Kumaravadivelu 1994). The teacher's 'method' is constructed from these sources rather than being an application of an external set of principles and practices. The kinds of content and activities that the teacher employs in the classroom as well as the outcomes he or she seeks to achieve will depend upon the nature of the core principles that serve as the basis for the teacher's thinking and decision-making.

3.4.The ecological classroom

Van Lier (2010) captures the notion of the curriculum as pocess when he refers to the classroom as an 'ecology'. As summarized by Graves (2008, 168):

In a classroom as an ecology, learning is not a system of 'inputs' which individual learners convert into 'output'. Rather, the environment provides affordances or opportunities for meaningful action. …. In the ecological perspective, the curriculum does not start out by specifying and sequencing materials, 'but with the 'activities, needs, and emergent purposes of the learner. On the basis of activities and emergent needs, the teacher makes resources available in the environment, and guides the learner's perception and action towards an array of affordances that can further his or her goals' (ibid:8).

Tsui (2005, cited in Graves 2011, 168) contrasts the ecological approaches with traditional product-based approaches by comparing the kinds of questions a teacher might ask working within both approaches:

Product-based issues:

What linguistic forms do we want to teach?

How do we represent these items in the form of tasks or activities?

How do we get learners to use the target items to complete the tasks or activities, either individually or in pairs/groups?

Are there any gaps between the target language structures/functions and those produced by the students?

Process-based issues:

What opportunities are afforded for learners to participate in meaning making?

What kind of shared understanding needs to be established among the learners?

What kind of participation framework is being set up and what are the role configurations for the group and for the individual learner over time?

What opportunities have been created by learners in the process of participation?

The examples of process-focussed curriculum cited above have in common the priority they attribute to learning processes, classroom participation, and the role of the teacher and the learners in creating opportunities for learning. The syllabus or learning input - rather than being something that is predetermined or prescribed and regarded as essential in initiating curriculum development, is rather an *outcome* of teaching and learning. In the product-focussed curriculum testing has the role of assessment *of* learning (i.e. achievement testing) while with the process curriculum a more dynamic role for assessment is assumed – assessment *for* learning – where teaching and assessment inform each other at every stage of the teaching/learning process. There is more of an emphsis on *understanding* than *judging.* There is a greater role for teachers, through engaging in reflective practice, action research, classroom research, exploratory practice (Alwright 2003) and other forms of classroom inquiry – which in addition to helping better understand the way curriculum is enacted can "constitute a source of inspiration, personal fulfilment, and career development for teachers' (Kiely 2009, 101).

3.5. Evaluation within a process-based curriculum

Evaluation from a process perspective has two aspects: one is to collect information on different aspects of the curriculum for anyone who may need such information. This can be called *descriptive evaluation*. Examples of issues that might be explored from this perspective could include timing, time on task, classroom management,: how the teacher organized and managed classroom activities, grouping arrangements, participation patterns, feedback etc. Much classroom action research or teacher inquiry can be regarded as evaluation of this kind and may be either teacher initiated or be carried out by others.

The other aspect of process evaluation can be referred to as *reflective evaluation.* This view of evaluation is inquiry based and is concerned with knowledge building, with understanding, and with explanation. The focus is less on diagnosing and improving and more on a holistic exploration of teaching in context. A reflective view of evaluation views the classroom as a complex ecological site in which unfolding events and processes in the classroom shape the way in which participants think, feel and act. Questions that evaluation seeks to answer from this perspective include:

- How do teachers and learners understand the curriculum?
- What is the nature of language teaching and learning?
- What does it mean to the participants?
- What roles do they participate in?
- What is the nature of the experiences they participate in?
- What learning opportunities arise during lessons?
- What do these activities mean to them?
- What underlying values and beliefs underlie the curriculum?
- How does the teacher realize her principles and values in teaching?
- How are teacher and learner identities negotiated through their interactions?

The following activities illustrate a reflective and ecological approach to evaluation.

Reflective teaching

Reflective teaching refers to teaching that is accompanied by critical processing and review of practice (Richards and Lockhart 1994: Farrell 2008). Dewey proposed this approach when he wrote of "reflective inquiry" (1933). Rogers clarifies the notion of reflective inquiry and reflective teaching:

…a reflective teacher does not merely seek solutions, nor does he or she do things in the same way very day without an awareness of both the source and the impact of his or her actions. Rather, from his or her practice and the students' learning, the teacher seeks meaning and creates from this a theory to live by, a story that provides structure for the growth of the students and of the teacher. When the teacher seeks solutions, he or she also pursues connections and relationships between solutions so that a theory might grow. This theory guides practice (which includes but is not limited to problem solving) until it encounters a situation where the theory no longer serves, at which point, through more reflection, it is either revised, refined, or discarded, and a new theory is born.

Rogers 2002, 849

Exploratory practice

This refers to a form of practitioner inquiry elaborated originally by Allwright (2003) that involves focus on an issue or question (such as the teacher's role in the classroom) exploring the issue from multiple directions and using information that results as a basic for critical reflection and awareness raising. Central to the notion of exploratory practice is that it involves adding a dimension to one's existing teaching practice rather than intervening in some way to change practice (as is the case with action research). The processes involved could involve peer observation, discussions, narratives, blogs, reviewing video or written accounts of lessons, or analysis of critical incidents in order to arrive at new understandings of the meaning of everyday classroom life.

Lesson study

This is a form of collaborative inquiry in which a group of teachers co-plan a lesson that focuses on a particular piece of content of unit of study (Fernandez 2002). Throughout the planning process, they draw on outside resources, including textbooks, research, teaching theories, and engage in extended conversations while focusing on student learning and the development of specific outcomes. Once the plan has been developed, one member of the team volunteers to teach it, while the others observe. (Sometimes outsiders are also invited to observe). After the lesson, the group discusses their findings in a colloquium or panel discussion.

4. Conclusions

All curriculum depend on the interaction between product and process and one cannot be considered without its relation to the other. An over-emphaiss on the technical-rationalist and top-down approach to the curriculum reflected in a product-based approach, can fail to acknowledge the personal and situated nature of the curriculum in action. In the past this has often lead to failed efforts to implement curriculum changes, since they gave insufficient attention to the context for which it was intended and to the roles of teachers and learners in "re-imagining" the curriculum. Carless (2105. 368) commenting on the failure of CLT in Hong Kong, reports:

The CLT syllabus of the 1980s failed to take root fully because of the failure of policymakers to take into account features of the context which would clearly mitigate against the implementation of a learner-centred, processs-oriented teaching approach.

 On the other hand a focus on process without consideration of the intended outcomes – a bottom-up approach - can lead to teaching without purpose. As Wiggins and McTighe (2005: 16,17) comment:

The error of activity-oriented design might be called "hands-on without being minds-on" – engaging experiences that lead only accidentally, if at all, to insight or achievement….activity-oriented curricula lack an explicit focus on important ideas and approach evidence of learning. …[learners] are led to think the learning is the activity

instead of seeing that the learning comes from being asked to consider the meaning of the activity.

Graves (2011, 152) hence emphasizes the interelationship between the different dimensions of curriculum – referred to here as the product and process dimensions:

The processes of planning, enacting and evaluationg are interrelated and dynamic, not sequential. They move back and forth to inform and influence each other. Classroom enactment shapes planning and vice versa. Planning shapes evaluation and vice versa.

Hence the product and process persepective on the curriculum can be thought of as providing two different lenses with which to focus on the nature and process of the second language curriculum.

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