

# CHAPTER 1

## SYLLABUS DESIGN

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### **Instructional objectives**

After reading this chapter, the students will be able to:

1. define the concept of curriculum and how the concept can be applied in designing an English curriculum,
2. explain the three models of curriculum planning and point out their differences,
3. explain the two approaches of syllabus design,
4. explain the basic unit that forms the bases of the five types of syllabuses,
5. describe the procedures for designing a syllabus.

The first section of this chapter presents a discussion about language curriculum development. Then, it discusses different types of syllabus designs, their assumptions and weaknesses. The next section is a brief discussion about needs analysis, as it is relevant to syllabus design.

### **What is curriculum?**

**C**urriculum is an educational concept, which involves philosophical, social and administrative factors contributing to the planning of an educational program (Allen, 1984). Curriculum is also defined as "the overall rationale for an educational programme of an institution. It includes planning, procedures for the implementation of the plan, and student's experiences in the learning process" (Kelly, 1989:14). In applied linguistics, curriculum is defined as an educational programme which describes the purpose of the programme, the content, teaching procedures,

and learning experiences necessary to achieve this purpose, and ways for assessing the programme (Richards, Platt, and Platt, 1992:94). Based on these concepts, a language curriculum is an overall language program which includes specifications of contents, teaching objectives, learning activities that aim to achieve the objectives, ways to measure learning achievements, and evaluation of each aspect of the curriculum. A curriculum also has specifications of its underlying philosophy and rationale for implementation.

In language teaching, there are three common models of curriculum planning (Nunan, 1988; Finney, 2002). First, is the content model. This model suggests that the focus of the curriculum is the content of what is to be learned by the learner. In language teaching, this model is used in the grammar-based curriculum in which the syllabus contains the grammar and vocabulary of the language. The purpose of the curriculum is to teach the language system to the learners so that they master the grammar rules and vocabulary of the language.

Second, is the objective model. This model begins with the objectives of teaching. Learning is defined a process which would result in observable behavioural changes which can be measured in terms of behavioural objectives. In language teaching, behavioural objectives have been much rejected because it imposes restrictions on the cognitive and affective aspects of learning (Tumposky, 1984) and it is difficult to determine objectives for the expressive and creative functions of language (Clark, 1987).

Third, is the process model. This model deals with humanity values as the focus in learning. The purpose of learning is to enable the student to develop self-fulfilment. It is concerned with the development of understanding, not just the passive understanding of knowledge or acquisition of specific skills. The goals of education are defined in terms of the processes and procedures through which the individual develops understanding and awareness and acquires

the skills for future learning. This model makes use of learner needs and interests in learning. This model underlies the process curricula such as those used in the Bangalore Project (Prabhu, 1983) or task-based language teaching (Long and Crookes, 1992). This study follows this curriculum model as a general background framework from which the syllabus design is derived and developed.

In the literature, there are many proposals from which curriculum models have been developed. Curriculum development refers to a series of curriculum activities that will provide a framework that helps teachers to carry out teaching activities. The framework will also help the students to learn as efficiently and effectively as possible in a given situation. Proposals for curriculum development process may vary from one to another depending on the views and beliefs of the curriculum designers. In the field of education in general, the conventional view of curriculum development is one that is derived from Tyler and Taba (cited in Oliva, 1982). Their models are prescriptive and linear covering several steps from formulation of objectives, content selection, task analysis, design of learning activities, and evaluation as the end-of-process activity. In their framework, there is no feedback to each stage of the development process.

In language teaching, there are several models of language curriculum development, four of them are presented in the table below.

## Curriculum Development Process

No	Richards (1984)	Nunan (1988)	Johnson (1989)	Finney (2002)
1	Needs analysis	Needs analysis	Curriculum policy	Curriculum policy
2	Objectives	Goals and objectives	Needs analysis	Needs analysis
3	Syllabus design	Syllabus design	Syllabus design	Syllabus design
4	Methodology	Methodology	Methodology	Methodology
5	Evaluation	Evaluation	Evaluation	Evaluation

As the table shows, the starting point of curriculum development is the identification of needs analysis with an exception in the Johnson's and Finney's frameworks where needs analysis comes second after determining the curriculum policy. Program objectives come second in Richards' and Nunan's models. However, in the Johnson's and Finney's frameworks, the second step is determining needs, which, according to Johnson, includes the development of programme objectives. The third step in the models is syllabus design. Methodology comes fourth in the models. In the four frameworks, evaluation is the last step. In summary, curriculum development comprises activities such as determining curriculum policy, identification of learner needs, setting goals and objectives, designing syllabus, methodology, and evaluation. According to Johnson (1989), evaluation process should be an on-going activity and must take place at all stages of curriculum planning. It should be clear from the models above, syllabus design is part of the whole process of curriculum development.

## **Approach to syllabus design**

As indicated above, syllabus design cannot be separated from curriculum development process. Syllabus design is concerned with the specification of what will be taught (Allen 1984: 61). In order to specify language elements for a syllabus, there are several things that should be taken into consideration; information about the learner, information about how learning activities are to be carried out, or a combination of these aspects. The most important aspect to consider in a syllabus design is what linguistic elements should be taught, what the learner wants to do with the language and what activities should be planned to stimulate or promote language acquisition (Nunan, 1988c: 26).

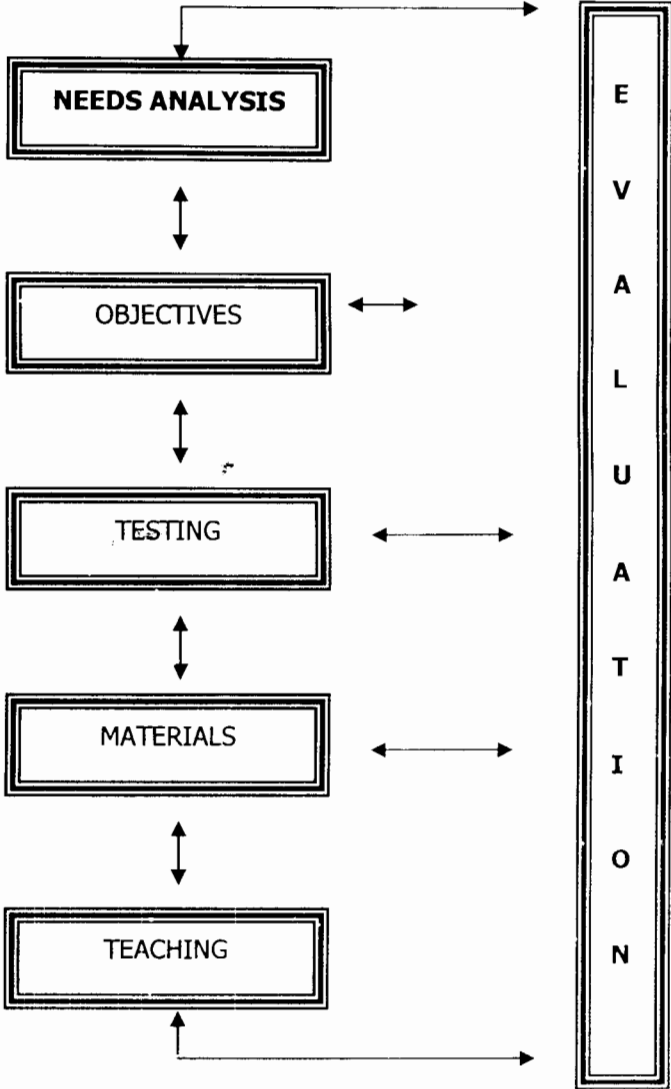
With these things in mind, people have two differing views about syllabus design. The first view states that a syllabus should only consist of lists of items to be taught. This is the narrow view. The task for a syllabus designer is to select the language items and determine the sequencing of the items. The selection and sequencing of the learning activities that can promote acquisition is not the concern of the syllabus designer. In other words, this view draws a distinction between items selection and methodology (Nunan, 1999). However, with the development of communicative language teaching, this view cannot be maintained. Selection of learning activities cannot be separated from the selection of language units to be included in the syllabus. This is the broad view of syllabus design. This study adopted the narrow view of syllabus design. It only attempted to identify the syllabus items while the selection of learning activities were left to the teacher because learning activities may vary according to the teacher's preferences or the support facilities available at the institution.

According to Candlin (1984), a language curriculum contains general statements about language learning, purposes of learning, evaluation and roles that are expected of the teacher and learners.

Language curriculum development involves three basic steps: planning, implementation, and evaluation (Nunan, 1988:3). These three steps have to be systematically developed in the design of a language program. As discussed previously, the syllabus design is part of the curriculum development process. For better visualization of the place of syllabus design in the curriculum process, the figure below (Brown, 1995:20) shows a systematic approach to designing a language curriculum, which involves needs analysis, objectives, testing, materials, and teaching. His model provides a set of logical steps and components for improvement of a language program.

Systematic Approach to Designing and Maintaining Curriculum  
(Brown, 1995)

**CURRICULUM ACTIVITIES**



In this model, curriculum development begins with identification of learners' language needs. The outcome of needs analysis will provide ideas for determining the goal and objectives of the program. The next step is designing tests based on the objectives. A test should aim at measuring the amount of learning or to find out whether the objectives have been achieved. Then, course materials are selected, made, adapted, or adopted from available sources. The last step is the teaching of materials in the classroom. As can be seen in the figure, evaluation is needed not only at each stage of the curriculum process, but also for the whole process of curriculum development. Evaluation is concerned with the analysis of relevant information at each stage of curriculum development with the aim of improving the curriculum. According to the Brown's model, the syllabus design should logically be derived from specification of objectives, which is the second step in the model. Therefore, following Brown's model, a syllabus design should follow objectives. In other words, a syllabus should be designed after determining the objectives.

## **Types of syllabus**

### *The Structural Syllabus*

The development of syllabus design has undergone several changes since the seventies. The first type of syllabus is the structural syllabus. As its name suggests, this syllabus contains a list of structures as its basic units. This syllabus is based on the assumption that language learning requires mastery of language elements and the rules by which these elements are combined (Richards and Rodgers, 1986:49) and one lesson should prepare the ground for the next lesson (McDonough, 1984), and therefore, the structure items should be graded in order of complexity (Nunan, 1988c:28). The teaching strategy follows this gradation. Each item is taught one at a time and learning is assumed to take place as a process of gradual accumulation of the structure items until the



whole language is acquired (Wilkins, 1978). Language is considered to consist of a finite set of rules which can be combined in different ways to make meaning, and language rules can be learned one by one, in an additive, linear fashion (Nunan, 1988c:29). Under the structural syllabus, the task of the learner is to integrate or synthesize the language that has been broken down into small pieces and to use them for communicative purposes when the time requires (Wilkins, 1978:2). The teaching of parts of the language is intended as,

a preparation for use because ...the structural syllabus is designed on the assumption that it is the internalisation of grammar coupled with the exercise of linguistic skills ... which affords the most effective preparation of the reality of communicative encounters". (Widdowson, 1990:132)

Therefore, according to Widdowson (1990), the content of the structural syllabus is not conceived of as units of performance, ...but units of linguistic competence. In other words, learning under the structural syllabus is an "investment in competence" (Widdowson, 1990) which can be realized in actual use when it is required.

The structural syllabus has been much criticized under several grounds. First, presenting the language structure one at a time does not reflect real communication and failed to recognise the reality of use (Nunan, 1988c:40) where different structures may be used in a complex way to show relationships between forms and meanings (Long & Crookes, 1993). This is evidenced in the way people create conversations where two or more structures are used and the kinds of structures that make up meanings are not always predictable. Second, grammatical grading is not in line with how learners acquire language. Evidence from second language acquisition (SLA) research suggests that learning does not occur in a simple, additive fashion (Nunan, 1988a:29). Grammatical grading of

contents distorts the language available to the learner and it could interfere with language acquisition, which is a global rather than a linear process. Even if a structural syllabus could be sequenced based on language development it would be impossible to organize instruction that matches the progression of acquisition accurately since acquisitional sequences vary from learner to learner (Robinson, 1998). Different aspects of grammar develop simultaneously rather than one structure being mastered at a time (Nunan, 1988a:30). Third, learners need to be exposed to language in real use with all its aspects not only at the grammar level but also at a wider context of language use or discourse level. Structural syllabus cannot provide learners with the opportunities to cope with the complexity of language use. Therefore, it is not possible to provide learners with exposure to all target language constructions including those forms needed beyond the grammar level. Grammatically graded items fail to reflect the nature of language use. In addition, second language acquisition research has revealed that there is sometimes a mismatch between what was taught and what was learned. Some SLA researchers have claimed that this mismatch is likely to occur because the syllabus items were not selected on the basis of psycholinguistic principles of learning (Nunan, 1988b:40). This could be demotivating (Wilkins, 1978) since learners are not provided with the opportunities to communicate in the language being learned as soon as possible. Presenting the language structures in a graded manner is inefficient because not all learners need to know all language structures contained in the syllabus (Long & Crookes, 1993:13).

### *The Notional-Functional Syllabus*

The drawbacks of the Structural Syllabus have prompted linguists to design an alternative syllabus, which is not based purely on the grammar of language. A new syllabus that succeeded the

Structural Syllabus is called Notional-Functional Syllabus, meant to replace and improve the Structural Syllabus (Nunan, 1988c; Long & Crookes, 1993). As its name suggests, "functions" may be described as the communicative purposes for which language is used, and "notions" are conceptual meanings such as objects, entities, states of affairs, etc. The Notional-Functional Syllabus provides a more realistic model of authentic target language use and it has more communicative value compared to its predecessor. In addition to authenticity, the Notional-Functional Syllabus also tries to be relevant to the learners' communication needs and this relevance is achieved by way of conducting needs analysis. Wilkins (1978) states that, ..."the Notional-Functional Syllabus would seek to change the balance of priorities by placing emphasis on the meanings expressed or the functions performed through language" (p.83).

Although the Notional-Functional Syllabus emphasizes authenticity and relevance to the learners' needs, it is in many respects very similar to the Structural Syllabus in terms of contents and types of exercises (Nunan, 1988c). Instead of learning about "past tense" the learner may be required to discuss "what they did yesterday". Unlike the Structural Syllabus that presents language in terms of its grammatical structures, the Notional-Functional Syllabus presents language as a group of linguistic devices such as modality and communicative functions (Long & Crookes, 1993). With these devices, the Notional-Functional Syllabus aims to equip learners with communicative skills appropriate in a range of situations. The syllabus items are arranged according to usefulness or complexity of language functions (Littelwood, 1991).

Similar to the Structural Syllabus, the Notional-Functional Syllabus is not without criticisms. The selection and grading of communicative functions is even more complex than that of the Structural Syllabus. Besides determining linguistic items, the syllabus designer has to consider language functions, which will be useful to

learners when the need arises to communicate in the language. This entails the need to carry out needs analysis to identify what sorts of communicative purposes the learner learns the language for. To carry out needs analysis is often constrained by time, resources, and expertise.

With regard to grading language functions, the problem occurs when it comes to determining the sequencing criteria. It is very difficult to determine the difficulty level of language functions, for example, "apologizing". It may or may not be more difficult than "requesting". This problem is even more complex when situational, contextual, and extra linguistic factors have to be considered in sequencing language functions.

The criticisms that have been made of the Structural Syllabus also apply to the Notional- Functional. Widdowson (1983a) points out that breaking language into pieces of language functions does not reflect how language is actually learned and it misrepresents the nature of language as communication (Nunan, 1988b:35). It is a common knowledge that communication occurs in some kind of discourse in which language functions play a role. In teaching, language functions are taught one at a time and this strategy does not fulfill the requirement for good communication. Communication utilizes a range of language functions and they are often unpredictable. The idea that learners learn one function at a time does not get support from second language acquisition research, as Prabhu (1987) points out,

There are methodological consequences resulting at least in a difference of emphasis to adopting a structural or a functional syllabus, but both kinds of syllabus have the fundamental similarity that they look on language acquisition as a planned process, of input-assimilation. They both rely on the validity of the equation: what is taught equals what is learnt. (p.273)

This suggests that learning cannot be pedagogically preplanned since learners have their own "syllabus" and it varies from learner to learner.

In the design of both Structural and Notional-Functional syllabus, the language elements to be taught are pre-selected in advance. The learning objectives are determined and there is no consideration of whom the learners may be or how the language items are learned. These syllabus types are directed and determined by external authority rather than the learners themselves. Success in language learning under these syllabuses is measured in terms of achievement or mastery of the language items taught. These syllabus types are synthetic or type A syllabus (Long & Crookes, 1992:29).

Further development of syllabus design, on the other hand, focuses on how the language is to be learned. This syllabus type does not involve pre-selection of language items. It places great emphasis on the process of language learning determined and directed by both the teacher and the learner. Success in learning under this syllabus type is determined by accomplishment of a certain classroom task. This type of syllabus is analytic or type B syllabus (Long & Crookes, 1992), or communicatively oriented syllabus (Nunan, 1988c).

The central question in designing this syllabus type is, "What does the learner want to do with the target language?" rather than "What linguistic elements does the learner need to master?" The syllabus contents are specified in terms of functional skills the learners need to master in order to be able to use the language in communication. Although this syllabus places more emphasis on language functions, grammatical items also have an important place (Nunan, 1988c). Syllabus contents may be specified in terms of learning tasks and activities rather than discrete language elements.

The contents of analytic syllabus are defined in terms of situations, topics, or themes. Wilkins (1978) suggests that the syllabus contents should be organized in terms of purposes of learning the language and the kinds of language performance that the learners are expected to perform in real-world situations. Thus, communicative purposes are the starting point of the syllabus design, as Wilkins (1978) puts it, "Analytic approaches are organized in terms of the purposes for which people are learning language and the kinds of language performance that are necessary to meet those purposes". According to Long & Crookes (1992), there are three examples of syllabuses that belong to analytic type: procedural, process, and task syllabuses.

### *The Procedural Syllabus*

The Procedural Syllabus is associated with the 'Bangalore Project' (Prabhu, 1987) in India. This syllabus is designed in terms of three types of activities:

1. Information-gap activity, which involves a transfer of given information from one person to another - or from one form or another, or from one place to another - generally calling for the decoding or encoding of information from or into language.
2. Reasoning-gap activity, which involves deriving some new information from given information through processes of inference, deduction, practical reasoning, or a perception of relationships or patterns.
3. Opinion-gap activity, which involves identifying and articulating a personal preference, feeling, or attitude in response to a given situation.

The teaching and learning activities should be designed to create conditions in the classroom for coping with problems suggested by the syllabus content in the form of task. It should be noted that the activities students do in the classroom and the language they need

are not necessarily those activities that students will need to do, or the language that they will need to use outside the classroom. The activities in this syllabus are pre-determined pedagogic activities not necessarily related to target tasks. This means that decisions on choosing a particular classroom task is not based on needs analysis.

Another salient characteristic of the Procedural Syllabus is the kind of input exposed to the students and the absence of feedback. The input is not based on graded structural items, but roughly tuned in order to communicate with less proficient learners (Prabhu, 1987). With this approach, content or message is primary and language forms may take a second place.

Despite its communicative value, the Procedural Syllabus has been criticized for its weak rationale (Long & Crookes, 1992) and its lack of real-world language needs of the learner because the syllabus contents are not derived from identification of target language tasks (Nunan, 1988a). These weaknesses make it difficult to verify the appropriateness of any particular language activity for a given group of learners. In addition to its lack of relevance, task grading and task sequencing are arbitrary which mostly are left to the intuitive judgement of the teacher. Long & Crookes (1992) also point out that the absence of feedback in teaching using the syllabus runs counter with research evidence (Long, 1988) showing that a focus on forms in language teaching is beneficial to learners.

### *The Process Syllabus*

In contrast to the Structural and Notional-Functional syllabuses that have pre-determined objectives, the Process Syllabus aims to develop natural language ability (Littlewood, 1991). The objectives in the Process Syllabus are not specified in terms of mastery of specific grammar items but non-language terms such as completion of a specific topics or classroom tasks. The contexts of learning are created and sequenced according to the demands of

communication skills not according to linguistic criteria. The syllabus items provide means of language use in order to create and exchange messages or meanings about topics or tasks. The syllabus design provides contexts, which facilitate natural acquisition processes, which is considered as a more effective way than conscious learning such as that under conventional syllabus design – Structural or Notional-Functional syllabus.

The orientation of this syllabus is social, problem solving, giving freedom to the learner to express themselves through individual learning styles and preferences. Long & Crookes (1992) explain that the syllabus will lead to a course design that can provide the following:

- (a) general decisions about classroom language learning (which students need to learn what how they prefer to learn it, when, with whom, and so on);
- (b) alternative procedures for making those decisions (the basis for an eventual working contract between teacher and learners);
- (c) alternative activities, such as teacher-led instruction, group work, and laboratory use
- (d) alternative tasks, that is, a bank of pedagogic tasks students may select from to realize the activities.

However, with its design, the Process Syllabus assumes too high level of competence in the teacher and students. Besides, given that students are free to choose how they prefer to learn, the role of the teacher needs to be redefined. This role redefinition may or may not be acceptable. The need for a range of different materials and recourses is another problem with this syllabus. More problematic is the pedagogic tasks that are not based on needs identification and this will lead to arbitrariness, selection problems, and determining task difficulty.



### *The Task syllabus*

The Task Syllabus appeared in the 1980s (Long & Crookes, 1992). This syllabus uses task as the unit of analysis rather than structures, notions, or functions commonly used in the earlier syllabus types such as Structural or Notional-Functional syllabuses, and an interest in task as the unit of analysis for developing language syllabus has been growing (Ellis, 1998:226). This interest has been stimulated by research in second language acquisition, which claims that learners have their own 'built-in syllabus'. A syllabus that uses the linguistic items and the order in which the linguistic items are taught in the classroom may not be in line with the learner's "built-in syllabus". A task syllabus design selects contents in terms of tasks, rather than linguistic structures.

A piece of task may be defined in terms of target tasks (Long, 1985; Long & Crookes, 1992) and pedagogic tasks (Richards, Platt, & Weber, 1985; Nunan, 1989; Breen, 1987). These different approaches to task lead to different approaches to the selection of classroom task. For example, Candlin (1987) chooses pedagogic criteria for selecting tasks while Long (1985a) chooses a form of needs analysis for task selection. Candlin (1987:9-10) suggests that, among others, a good classroom task should have the following characteristics: (i) a task should promote attention to meaning, (ii) objectives of a task are drawn from communicative needs of the learners, (iii) a task should promote sharing of information. Long (1985a:91) who uses needs analysis for selecting classroom tasks, suggests the following procedures to develop a task syllabus:

1. Conduct a needs analysis to obtain an inventory of target tasks.
2. Classify the target tasks into task types.
3. From the task types, derive pedagogical tasks.
4. Select and sequence the pedagogical tasks to form a task syllabus.

Referring to this procedure, Long & Crookes (1992) suggest that,

Once target tasks have been identified via the needs analysis, the next step is to classify them into (target) task types. Pedagogic tasks are then derived from the task types and sequenced to form the task-based syllabus. It is the pedagogic tasks that teachers and students actually work on in the classroom. (p.44)

Step 4 in the procedure above concerns the issue of grading which is one of the most difficult step in a syllabus design, as Nunan (1988c) says, "difficulty is the key factor in determining the ordering of items in a syllabus" (p.48). Gardner (1992:69) also points out that rigorous method for grading tasks has not yet been found and most syllabus designers rely on their intuitive judgment to grade and sequence syllabus items. Nunan suggests that tasks need to be presented to the learners according to their order of difficulty. The problem of designing a task syllabus is to determine the degree of difficulty because there are many factors that affect task difficulty. Besides, there are also factors that relate to learners' characteristics. A particular task may be considered easy for some learners but difficult for others. Linguistic aspects that are conveyed in a task are not suitable to be used as the basis for grading tasks since the problems of grading and sequencing of tasks reside not only in the tasks themselves but also outside the tasks. Among others are the number of steps involved in completing the task, the number of solutions to the problem in the task, the number of persons involved in the task, the features in the task that requires learner's cognitive resources, etc.

There are three reasons why target tasks need to be classified into task types (Long, 1985a). First, it is more effective to teach a more general task type because it can transfer to several sub-target tasks. Second, a task type is useful to all learners who may have different academic backgrounds, particularly for ESP

learners. Third, task type allows for easier selection of pedagogical tasks that is the activities that teachers and learners will work on in the classroom. It needs to be pointed out that pedagogical tasks should be made suitable to the learners' proficiency level. It has been pointed out that the design of syllabus types discussed above requires some sort of needs analysis. The following section presents a discussion of needs analysis in its relation to syllabus design.

### **Procedures for syllabus design**

The previous sections have discussed the meaning of syllabus design and several types of syllabuses. The main concern of syllabus design is the procedures that describe how learners' needs should be determined. The following sections describe the procedures for syllabus design, which focus on how to identify learners' needs, which are used to determine syllabus items.

#### *Identification of learners' needs*

The initial step in syllabus design is the identification of learners' language needs. Needs analysis has been defined differently from different perspectives. However, the perspectives taken to define needs analysis can be classified into two: pedagogical and real-world perspectives. In the earlier version of his definition, Nunan (1988c) defines needs analysis as "techniques and procedures for collecting information to be used in syllabus design" (p.13). The information includes the reasons for learning the target language, constraints, and resources that are available for implementing the syllabus. Later, in his definition of needs analysis, Nunan (1999) defines it as "sets of tools, techniques and procedures for determining the language content and learning processes for specified groups of learners" (p.35). This definition is more specific than the earlier definition. Another definition of needs analysis is proposed by Brown (1995:35) who says that needs analysis refers to

“the activities involved in gathering information that will serve as the basis for developing a curriculum that will meet the learning needs of a particular group of students” (p.35). Brown’s and Nunan’s (1999) definitions refer to the role of needs analysis in designing a language syllabus with reference to a particular group of learners.

The meaning of needs and needs analysis has raised disagreement in English Language Teaching circles and this disagreement has resulted in two different interpretations of needs analysis (Brindley, 1984). The first interpretation views it as being limited to the language that the learners will have to use in a particular target situation. This is the narrow or product-oriented orientation which views needs analysis as an activity to find out as much as possible about the learners’ present and future language needs and this activity is conducted before they learn the language. The second interpretation views needs analysis as an activity, which seeks information about the learners’ needs in a learning situation. This is the broad or process-oriented orientation, which refers to not only the language needs but also other factors such as affective and cognitive needs of the learners during the learning process. These needs include, among other things, the learners’ attitude towards learning, their motivation, awareness, personality, wants, and learning styles.

The types of needs analysis vary and there are many terms used to refer to the types of needs analysis. Brindley (1984) differentiates objective and subjective needs. Objective needs are derived from different kinds of information about the learners, which may include their current language skills and their needs in real-life communication situations. Subjective needs refer to the learners’ cognitive and affective needs in the learning situation. Information about these needs may be collected from the factors mentioned above such as the learners’ personality, confidence, attitudes, wants, and learning styles and strategies. Another pair of terms is proposed

by Berwick (1993:55). He proposes perceived needs which can be seen and verified. This concept is similar to Brindley's (1984) objective needs. Another term proposed by Berwick is felt needs derived from factors related to learners' cognitive and affective needs. This is similar to Brindley's subjective needs. In addition, there are necessities, wants, and lacks (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Necessities are what needs to be learned, wants are what learners want to learn, and lacks are discrepancy between necessity and present ability in the language. Nunan (1988c), with reference to syllabus design, proposes learner analysis and task analysis. Learner analysis is based on the information about the learner with the central question about the learner's purposes of learning the language. Task analysis aims to specify the language skills required to carry out real-world tasks. Another dichotomy is made by Nunan (1999) who distinguishes content needs from process needs. Content needs include the selection and the sequencing of topics, grammar items, functions, notions, while process needs includes the selection and sequencing of the learning tasks and classroom learning experiences. All these terms have been used to refer to the different factors and perspectives, which are used to define the concepts of needs. The present study takes the insights from objective needs (Brindley, 1984), necessities (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), and task analysis (Nunan, 1988c) to define the needs or the tasks that the learners will have to be able to do when they become tour guides. The aims of a needs analysis are to define the types of target situations in which the learners will eventually use the language, the language they will need to use, the tasks or activities they are expected to do, and language skills necessary to carry out the tasks. The subjective dimension of task analysis was not included in this study because I felt it was necessary to limit the scope of the study only to the objective dimension (Brindley, 1984) of needs analysis.

Needs analysis may be approached from three perspectives (Dudley-Evans & StJohn, 1998). The first of these approaches is the target situation analysis (TSA). This analysis focuses on the learners' needs at the end of the language course (Robinson, 1991:8); what tasks the learners will carry out, what linguistic components are required to carry out the tasks, and the level of knowledge of subject matter required in the tasks. The second approach is the learning situation analysis (LSA). It includes subjective, process-oriented needs. It is similar to the learning needs within the learning-centered approach proposed by Hutchinson & Waters (1987). In their framework, learning needs refer to what the learner needs to do in order to learn during the course. One of the questions in their framework to gather data for learners' learning needs is, "Why are the learners taking the course?" The answers to this question should refer to real-world goals and the goals should be taken into consideration during the learning process. This relates to the objective dimension of needs analysis (Brindley, 1989). The third is the present situation analysis (PSA). It seeks to identify what the students are like at the beginning of the language course (Robinson, 1991:9), for example, the students' level of ability, and their views on language learning and teaching. In addition, PSA also seeks to establish the teachers' level of ability, their views of language learning and teaching, and teaching situation with regard to learning resources available. The PSA focuses on the strength and weaknesses in the language, skills, and learning experiences.

This study uses the first approach; the target situation analysis with the focus on tasks of tour guiding and their language-related aspects. In addition, this study also includes observations of language learning activities in the classroom, one dimension of the present situation analysis. Gathering information on other aspects of the present situation analysis as described by Dudley-Evans & StJohn (1998) would certainly provide more complete profile of needs, but it

is not the purpose of the study to explore all of those aspects. The aim of the present situation analysis in this study is to find out how the language lessons are conducted and whether there are indications that target tasks and their language-related aspects were being attended to during the lessons.

The three approaches to needs analysis (i.e. TSA, LSA, and PSA) can be used complementarily (Robinson, 1991) to design a new language program or to modify an existing language curriculum (Nunan, 1996). Traditionally, language analysis is considered as a starting point in language curriculum development with language aspects used as the basis for the analysis using some criteria such as frequency, difficulty, and teachability of the language aspects (Richards, 1984). However, current approaches to curriculum or syllabus design use needs analysis as the starting point. Current approaches place relevance of the program in the needs of the learners as criterial for the development of syllabus design (Long & Crookes, 1992:37). The importance of needs analysis is recognized by Brindley (1989) who says that it is one of the fundamental principles that teaching and learning programs should be responsive to learners' needs. He further states that "it is now widely accepted ...that needs analysis is a vital prerequisite to specification of language learning objectives" (p.63). Jordan (1997) also has a similar view with regard to the importance of needs analysis in syllabus design. He regards it as a starting point for devising syllabuses, courses, materials and the kinds of teaching and learning that take place. Within ESP circles, needs analysis is considered as the first stage of ESP course design (Robinson, 1989) or as a "corner stone" of ESP courses (Dudley-Evans & StJohn, 1998) taking into account the different types of information that can be collected from the target, learning, or present situation analysis (Robinson, 1991, Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

The role of needs analysis is well recognized not only in teaching English for specific purposes or ESP, but also in task-based language programs. Proponents of task-based language programs such as Long (1985a), or Long & Crookes (1992) argue that needs analysis should be used to identify real-world target tasks for specific group of learners and the result of task analysis should be used as the bases for designing the syllabus. The role of needs identification is summarized in Long & Crookes as follows,

Once target tasks have been identified via the needs analysis, the next step is to classify them into target task types.... Pedagogic tasks are then derived from the task types and sequenced to form the task-based syllabus. It is the pedagogic tasks that teachers and students actually work on in the classroom. They will be increasingly complex approximations to the target tasks which motivated their inclusion. (p.44)

Discussions of the role of needs analysis for task identification within ESP are found in Ferris & Tagg (1996) and Ferris (1998). Drawing ideas from the ESP literature and discussions of task-based language teaching, they say that needs assessment is "vitally important for course design and materials development in specific context" (Ferris & Tagg, 1996:31). The purpose of needs analysis may differ depending on the perspectives taken by the needs analysts. It may be that the purpose is simply to describe real-world settings where the learners will be using the target language (Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1991) or to use the knowledge gained as the basis for change in the target context (Benesch, 1996). In spite of the differences, the importance of needs analysis as a starting point in the identification of tasks, language skills, and linguistic aspects is widely acknowledged.



The development of needs-based or task-based courses is not without criticism. One of the critics is Widdowson (1984) who argues that needs analysis and careful task identification would result in atomisation or a series of discrete language skills. Teaching discrete language skills is basically a training program that would lead to learners having a limited communicative ability. According to Widdowson, teaching a language effectively is teaching learners how to develop communicative capacity. Learners need to be able to use the language skills they learned in the classroom to cope with language problems they would face in the world outside the classroom, which they have not been specifically taught. Widdowson explains that a needs-based program,

...is simply a matter of describing a particular area of language and then using this description as a course specification to impart to learners the necessary restricted competence to cope with this particular area. In other words, it is assumed that the ESP is essentially a training exercise. In some kinds of ESP, training may well be appropriate, since it services a restricted repertoire of behaviour where formulae and problems to be solved correspond quite closely. This would presumably be the case with the communication of air traffic control. But it will obviously not do when the English taught is intended to be auxiliary to aims which are fundamentally educational. (Widdowson, 1984:10)

Widdowson is right in pointing out that teaching restricted competence would not result in general communicative capacity. Success of a language course would seem to depend on how the teaching and learning process is conducted and the level of learning expected. It is not entirely dependent on the specification of what is learned or course content; it is a matter of methodology. The claim

that ESP is essentially a training exercise and would result in restricted competence is a matter of empirical research. In line with this criticism of the role of needs analysis, Nunan (1999) argues that, 'the educational potential of a given course would seem to rest more with the types of learning experiences provided than with the types of content selected' (p.155). This argument points to the need for a language program to design tasks that aim to develop necessary language skills.

Another criticism of needs analysis argues that it is irrelevant in most foreign language context because learners do not have immediate needs for using the language (Nunan, 1999). In such situations, Nunan argues,

the only possible rationale for language courses must be an educational one. In other words, learners engage in the learning of a foreign language, not because there is any likelihood that they will actually use the language, but because it will foster the development of cognitive, affective, interpersonal, and intercultural skills, knowledge, and attitudes. (p.155)

This assertion is true in most schools where English is taught as a required school subject. In these schools, English is taught as a preparation for higher education or for purposes that are more general. However, in some schools where English is taught for more specific purposes such as the School of Tourism, the students do have 'immediate' communicative needs in the sense that they will need to use their language skills for job purposes as soon as they finish education. They learn English as a preparation to take up jobs, which require communicative ability in the language. The criticism by Widdowson that ESP is a training exercise does not apply to ESP in this particular educational system because English taught in the

School of Tourism is not “restricted”. The ESP program in a School of Tourism such as that at the Department of Tour and Travel Management where classroom observations were conducted covers a wide range of topics and the language skills that are required to discuss the topics are typically found in English programs for more general purposes. The language learning experiences at the school of tourism, including the one where this study was conducted, are designed with an educational view and aimed to develop communicative capacity (Widdowson, 1984).

### *Selection of syllabus content*

The second procedure for designing syllabus is content selection. The contents of a syllabus are derived from the identification of needs analysis. Unlike needs analysis, the literature that discusses content selection for a syllabus is not that extensive. Nunan (1988c) describes that the synthetic syllabuses such as the structural and functional syllabuses derive their contents according to discrete point principles (p.75). It means that the basis for content selection is the grammar or the structural items of the language. For example, the structural syllabus has a list of contents such as nouns, quantifiers, tenses, modal verbs, and so on. Similarly, in the functional syllabus, the following contents may be listed: expressing likes and dislikes, finding out attitudes, asking for information, agreeing and disagreeing, and so on. In the analytic syllabuses such as the task-based syllabus derives its contents from communication purposes for which language is used rather than structures. In other words, syllabus items for analytic syllabuses reflect real world tasks that people usually do, and in teaching, the tasks are manipulated in such a way so that they can be used as language learning activities in the classroom (Long, 1985; Long & Crookes, 1992).

### *Sequencing and grading of syllabus items*

The third step in syllabus design is sequencing or grading. It refers to putting the syllabus items in some principled order, which may serve as a guide for teaching purposes. As has been pointed out previously under Types of Syllabuses, the principles for sequencing and grading syllabus items are different with respect to whether it is synthetic or analytic. In a synthetic syllabus, the items are sequenced on the basis of simplicity and complexity of the items (Nunan, 1988c). This ordering principle has been much criticized because, among others, the order does not reflect language use in which several structure items may be utilized in a complex way to express meanings (Long & Crookes, 1993). In an analytic syllabus, the items are sequenced and graded according to,

the number of steps involved, the number of solutions to a problem, the number of parties involved, the saliency of distinguishing features, the location of the task in displaced time and space, the amount of language required, the number of sources competing for attention, and other aspects of intellectual challenge posed by the task. (Long & Crookes, 1992:44)

These criteria for sequencing syllabus items are very complex because it involves not only the inherent characteristics of the item (task) but also the range of individual differences of the speakers involved in the learning activities.

Each of these sequencing principles has its advantages as well as disadvantages. The simplicity and complexity principle under the synthetic syllabus would make teaching less complex. However, teaching structure items in a linear fashion does not match reality of language use in which more than one language structure is used simultaneously. On the other hand, the real world criteria for

sequencing contents of an analytic syllabus are very complex but teaching language under this syllabus does try to reflect how language is actually used for communicative purposes.