

## ESP Syllabus Design

The difference between Syllabus, Course and Curriculum

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# Difference between Syllabus, Course and Curriculum

Syllabus	Course	Curriculum
Syllabus describes the summary of topics covered or units like Chapters (Baabs) in any subject.	Course is a path, sequence, development or evolution.	Curriculum is the overall content, taught in an educational system or a course.
Syllabus can contain outlines, objectives and time required.	A set of classes or a plan of study on a particular subject, usually leading to an exam or qualification.	Curriculum actually contains all the learning materials: worksheets, slides and exams.
Syllabus is a Greek term		Curriculum is a Latin term.
Syllabus is a subject.		Curriculum is a Course.
Descriptive		Prescriptive
Exam board	A course is a set of lectures that can consist of any type of content (e.g. video, documents, presentations etc).	Government or the administration of school, college or institute.
Varies from teacher to teacher.		Same for all teachers.

The basic differences between syllabus and curriculum are explained in the point given below:

- The syllabus is described as the summary of the topics covered or units to be taught in the particular subject. Curriculum refers to the overall content, taught in an educational system or a course.
- Syllabus varies from teacher to teacher while the curriculum is same for all teachers.
- The term syllabus is a Greek origin, whereas the term curriculum is a Latin origin.
- The curriculum has a wider scope than the syllabus.

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## Syllabus Defined

It seems of great importance to define ‘syllabus’ in order to have a better understanding of what it actually meant by the term in education. Hutchinson & Waters (1987: 80) define “Syllabus” as “... a document which says what will (or at least what should) be learnt”. In the same vein, Robinson (1991: 34) states that syllabus is “a plan of work and is, thus, essential for the teacher, as a guideline and context of class content.” The above assertions point out that the syllabus first concerns the teacher, and that it helps him/her plan courses.

Basturkmen (2006:20) argues that “in order to specify what language will be taught, items are typically listed and referred to as the syllabus”. She exemplifies the definition by giving a standard view of the syllabus through the figure below.

- A syllabus:
- 1- Consists of a comprehensive list of
    - content items ( words, structures, topics)
    - process items ( tasks, methods)
  - 2- Is ordered ( easier, more essential items first)
  - 3- Has explicit document
  - 4- Is a public document
  - 5- May indicate a time schedule
  - 6- May indicate preferred methodology or approach
  - 7- May recommend materials

**Figure 1 Characteristics of a syllabus (Course in Language Teaching, CUP, 1996:177 qtd in Basturkmen 2006:21)**

Another issue in defining 'syllabus' is that it is "an instrument by which the teacher,..., can achieve a certain coincidence between the needs and the aims of the learners, and the activities that will take place in the classroom" (Yalden 1987:86) that is to say that the syllabus is "a teaching device to facilitate learning" (Nunan 1988:6) which organises classroom activities according to learners aims and requirements after the process of needs identification and analysis.

## **Syllabus Design**

Nunan (1988:5) states it 'Syllabus design is mainly concerned with the selection and grading of content'. And According to Harmer (2001:295), every type of syllabus needs to be developed on the basis of certain criteria, such as 'learnability' and 'frequency', which can inform decisions about selection and ordering.

## **Syllabus Design Criteria**

Harmer (2001) came out with the belief that when syllabus designers put syllabuses together they have to think about each item for inclusion on the basis of a number of criteria. The criteria he came out with are described below.

### **Learnability**

Some structural or lexical items are easier for students to learn than others. Consequently, simpler language items are to be taught at first place then increase the level of difficulty as the learners' language level improves. Learnability implies that, at beginner levels, it is simpler to deal with the uses of was and were right after teaching is and are, rather than presenting the third conditional after is and are.

### **Frequency**

The inclusion of items which are more frequent in language, than those which are occasionally used by native speakers seems to have more sense especially at beginning levels. The use of see to express vision is less used than that which is equivalent

withunderstand (eg. Oh, I see).It is, therefore, more logic to teach that second meaning of see which is more frequent in use than the first one.

### **Coverage**

Some words and structures have greater coverage (scope for use) than others. Thus it might be decided, on the basis of coverage, to introduce the going to future before the present continuous with future reference, if it could be shown that going to could be used in more situations than the present continuous.

### **Usefulness**

The reason that words like book and pen figure so highly in classroom (in spite of the fact that they might not be used so frequently in real language use) is due to their usefulness in that situation. Similarly, words dealing with family members take place early on in a pupil's learning life because they are useful in the context of what pupils are linguistically able to talk about.

### **Designing an ESP Syllabus**

An ESP syllabus requires that the target objectives and language that the learner will be expected to master must be broken down into an optionally sequenced series of teaching and learning points.

According to Breen (1987: 83) "the meeting point of a perspective upon language itself, upon using language, and upon teaching and learning which is a contemporary and commonly accepted interpretation of the harmonious links between theory, research, and classroom practice."

### **Things to consider in Desing an ESP Syllabus**

1. The Students (Age, Language Proficiency, Level of Competence, Goals, Interests and Contributions)
2. The Task (Communication Tasks and Language Skills)
3. The Text
4. External Constraints (Time, Resources, Terminal exams and Expectations)

5. Syllabus Format ( Goals and Objectives, Topics/Activities/Skills, Time Frame, Teaching/Learning Strategies, Requirements/Expectations and Materials)

## References

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