

## CURRICULUM DESIGN IN PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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*Вчителі іноземних мов мають добре усвідомлювати роль мови в суспільстві та які знання й навички потрібно формувати для опанування іноземної мови. Розвиток та імплементацію навчальних ініціативних програм можливо здійснювати декількома різними шляхами, кожен з яких має різні імплікації дизайну курикулуму. У статті робиться спроба описати та порівняти три курикулумних підходи. Поняття форвардного, центрального та зворотного дизайну забезпечує ефективне модельне уявлення про різноманітні підходи дизайну курикулуму та їх практичне застосування.*

***Ключові слова:** підготовка вчителів іноземних мов, навчальний план; форвардний, центральний та зворотний дизайн; методи, методика, оцінювання.*

*Teachers of foreign languages must have a well-developed understanding of the role of language in society and the knowledge and skills necessary to foster foreign language learning. The development and implementation of foreign language teaching programs can be approached in several different ways, each of which has different implications for curriculum design. Three curriculum approaches are described and compared in the article. The notion of forward, central and backward design provides a useful metaphor for understanding the different assumptions underlying each approach to curriculum design as well as for recognizing the different practices that result from them.*

***Key words:** preparation of teachers of foreign languages, curriculum development; forward, central and backward design; methods, methodology, assessment.*

**Introduction.** During the last decade, many educational reform efforts have focused on preparing students for life in the 21st century. In order to succeed in the next century, students need to communicate well, to be able to reason, to solve problems, and to think critically.

Languages connect students to the real world both domestically and globally. As the nation's participation in economic, social, political, and cultural realities around the world increases, the need for individuals with skills in foreign languages grows. Learning a language is a process whereby communicative competence and cross-cultural understanding are best developed over time through extensive opportunities to practice and use the language, through critical reflection and the use of higher-order thinking skills, and through connections to appropriate subject matter from the total curriculum. To ensure that students acquire the linguistic skills and cultural knowledge they need, teachers of foreign languages must have a well-developed understanding of the role of language in society and the knowledge and skills necessary to foster language learning.

The purpose of systematic foreign language development is to develop a solid foreign language foundation. The content of foreign language development follows scope and sequence of language skills in functional contexts. Curriculum development in foreign language teaching provides a systematic introduction to the issues involved in developing, managing, and evaluating effective foreign language programs and teaching materials. Foreign language teaching has reflected a seemingly bewildering array of influences and directions in its recent history, some focusing on syllabus issues (A. Burns, C. Curran, D. Freeman, J. Munby etc.), some reflecting new trends or proposals in methodology (J. Crandall, R. Docking, C. Goh, M. Snow etc.), and some with a focus

on learning targets (K. Graves, R. Hindmarsh, P. McKay, J. Shaw etc.). Researchers refer to three different curriculum design strategies to forward design, central design, and backward design. An understanding of the nature and implications of these design approaches is helpful in understanding of some past and present trends in language teaching.

*Goals:* The aim of this article is to examine three different foreign language curriculum design strategies that are referred to as forward design, central design, and backward design.

Curriculum is an overall plan or design for a course and how the content for a course is transformed for teaching and learning which enables the desired learning goals to be achieved.

Curriculum takes content (from external standards and local goals) and shapes it into a plan for how to conduct effective teaching and learning. It is thus more than a list of topics and lists of key facts and skills (the “input”). It is a map of how to achieve the “outputs” of desired student performance, in which appropriate learning activities and assessments are suggested to make it more likely that students achieve the desired results [9, c. 95-97].

Before we can teach a foreign language, we need to decide what linguistic content to teach. The content needs to be organized into teachable and learnable units called a syllabus. Criteria for the selection of syllabus units include frequency, usefulness, simplicity, learnability and authenticity. Once input has been determined, issues concerning teaching methods and the design of classroom activities and materials can be addressed. These belong to the domain of process.

Process refers to how teaching is carried out and constitutes the domain of methodology in foreign language teaching. Methodology encompasses the types of learning activities, procedures and techniques that are employed by teachers when they teach and the principles that underlie the design of the activities and exercises in their textbooks and teaching resources. Once a set of teaching processes has been standardized and fixed in terms of principles and associated practices it is generally referred to as a method, as in Audiolingualism or Total Physical Response [4, c. 23].

Output refers to learning outcomes, that is, what learners are able to do as the result of a period of instruction. This might be a targeted level of achievement on a proficiency scale (such as the ACTFL Proficiency Scale) or on a standardized test such as TOEFL, the ability to engage in specific uses of language at a certain level of skill (such as being able to read texts of a certain kind with a specified level of comprehension), familiarity with the differences between two different grammatical items (such as the simple past and the present perfect), or the ability to participate effectively in certain communicative activities (such as using the telephone, taking part in a business meeting, or engaging in casual conversation). Today, desired learning outputs or outcomes are often described in terms of objectives or in terms of performance, competencies or skills [4, c. 5-33]. In simple form the components of curriculum and their relationship can be represented as follows:

- Curriculum development in language teaching can start from input, process or output.
- Each starting point reflects different assumptions about both the means and ends of teaching and learning.

Curriculum development from this perspective starts with a first-stage focus on input – when decisions about content and syllabus are made; moves on to a second-stage focus on methodology – when the syllabus is ‘enacted’, and then leads to a final-stage of consideration of output – when means are used to measure how effectively what has been taught has been learned [4].

Forward design is based on the assumption that input, process, and output are related in a linear fashion (R. Docking, J.C. Richards and T. Rodgers, M. Tessmer, J.F. Wedman etc.). In other words, before decisions about methodology and output are determined, issues related to the content of instruction need to be resolved. Curriculum design is seen to constitute a sequence of stages that occur in a fixed order – an approach that has been referred to as a ‘waterfall’ model [7, c. 77-85] where the output from one stage serves as the input to the stage that follows. This approach is described as the traditional approach to developing a syllabus involves using one’s understanding of subject matter as the basis for syllabus planning [5, c. 143-44; 2, c. 8-17]. A syllabus and the course content are developed around the subject. Objectives may also be specified, but these usually have little role in teaching or assessing of the subject. G. Wiggins and J. McTighe [9, c. 15] give an illustration of this process with an example of a typical forward-design lesson plan:

- The teacher chooses a topic for a lesson (e.g. racial prejudice);

- The teacher selects a resource (e.g. To Kill a Mocking-bird);
- The teacher chooses instructional methods based on the resource and the topic (e.g. a seminar to discuss the book and cooperative groups to analyze stereotypical images in films and on television);
- The teacher chooses essay questions to assess student understanding of the book.

In foreign language teaching, forward planning is an option when the aims of learning are understood in very general terms. The audiolingual method, the audiovisual method and the structural situational method are examples of forward design methods. More recent examples include communicative language teaching and content based teaching.

With central design, curriculum development starts with the selection of teaching activities, techniques and methods rather than with the elaboration of a detailed language syllabus or specification of learning outcomes. Issues related to input and output are dealt with after a methodology has been chosen or developed or during the process of teaching itself. J.L. Clark [1] refers to this as ‘progressivism’ and an example of a process approach to the curriculum.

Research on teachers’ practices reveals that teachers often follow a central design approach when they develop their lessons by first considering the activities and teaching procedures they will use. Rather than starting their planning processes by detailed considerations of input or output, they start by thinking about the activities they will use in the classroom. Despite the approach they have been recommended to use in their initial teacher education, teachers’ initial concerns are typically with what they want their learners to do during the lesson. Later their attention turns to the kind of input and support that learners will need to carry out the learning activities [3, c. 149-178]. This contrasts with the linear forward-design model that teachers are generally trained to follow. Central design can thus be understood as a learner-focused and learning-oriented perspective.

The third approach – backward design – starts with a careful statement of the desired results or outcomes: appropriate teaching activities and content are derived from the results of learning. This is a well-established tradition in curriculum design in general education and in recent years has re-emerged as a prominent curriculum development approach in language teaching. It was sometimes described as an ‘ends-means’ approach [6, c. 12; 8] that 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.

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.

*Applications.* A forward design option may be preferred in circumstances where a mandated curriculum is in place, where teachers have little choice over what and how to teach, where teachers rely mainly on textbooks and commercial materials rather than teacher-designed resources, where class size is large and where tests and assessments are designed centrally rather than by individual teachers. Forward design may also be a preferred option in situations where teachers may have limited foreign language proficiency and limited opportunities for professional development, since much of the planning and development involved can be accomplished by specialists rather than left to the individual teacher.

Central design approaches do not require teachers to plan detailed learning outcomes, to conduct needs analysis or to follow a prescribed syllabus, hence they often give teachers a considerable degree of autonomy and control over the teacher learning process. Teachers may simply adopt the practices without worrying about their claims and theoretical assumptions since they offer a supposedly expert-designed teaching solution. Adoption of a central design approach may also require a considerable investment in training, since teachers cannot generally rely on published course-book materials as the basis for teaching.

A backward design option may be preferred in situations where a high degree of accountability needs to be built into the curriculum design and where resources can be committed to needs analysis, planning, and materials development. Well-developed procedures for implementing backward design procedures are widely available, making this approach an attractive option in some circumstances. In the case of large-scale curriculum development for a national education system, much of this development activity can be carried out by others, leaving teachers mainly with the responsibility of implementing the curriculum.

In conclusion, any language teaching curriculum contains the elements of content, process, and output. Historically these have received a different emphasis at different times. Curriculum approaches differ in how they visualize the relationship between these elements, how they are prioritized and arrived at, and the role that syllabuses, materials, teachers and learners play in the process of curriculum development and enactment. The notion of forward, central and backward design provides a useful metaphor for understanding the different assumptions underlying each approach to curriculum design as well as for recognizing the different practices that result from them.

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#### ВІДОМОСТІ ПРО АВТОРА

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