



What English Language Teachers Need to Know

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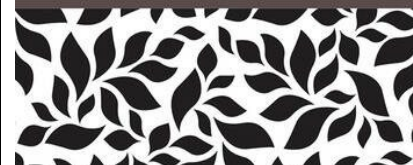
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Second Edition

What English Language
Teachers Need to Know
Volume I

Understanding Learning



Denise E. Murray and
MaryAnn Christison

ESL & APPLIED LINGUISTICS PROFESSIONAL SERIES



First written and published in 2014, the book named “What English Language Teachers Need to Know – Volume III: Designing Curriculum/2nd Edition” was comprehensively revised and updated by MarryAnn Christison and Denise E. Murray and published again in 2022 by Routledge Taylor & Francis publication. The book consists of six parts: contexts for ELT curricula, key processes in curriculum design, and four curricular approaches as linguistic-based, content-based, learner-centred, and learning-centred curricula. Newer chapters as technological and multilingual approaches besides the current research and theory and references to the instant curricular adaptations due to unexpected Covid-19 pandemic and other possible incidences in the near or far future were appended into the second edition which needed a new review.

To start with underpinning contexts for ELT curricula, the first unit prepares us to the issue of curriculum by providing the definition of curriculum, approaches to curriculum design, its linguistic content, types of curriculum, and possible adaptations of curriculum to the current matters in the world as Covid-19. The secondary unit displays the social, political, and historical contexts out of which curriculum cannot be insulated. In that sense, types of curriculum adapted from Glatthorn et al. (2006) as the recommended, written, supported, taught, tested, and learned curriculum were expatiated briefly. Beyond the above types, it is the hidden curriculum that incorporated social, ideological, political, historical, and cultural components. The third unit provides an outline of World Englishes proffered by Kachru (1986). The writers state that curriculum design should also depend on the choice of various Englishes spoken in three concentric circles; inner (BANA countries), outer circle (once colonized countries as India), and expanding circle in which English is not spoken as an official language as in Japan. In addition to the variety of Englishes, 21st century classrooms are more multilingual than ever for

economical, educational, and political reasons, which were discussed in the fourth unit. Multilingual stakeholders do not converse in English as a sole medium of instruction but translanguaging, that is exploiting more than one language in their conversations. In the fifth unit, the historical development of incorporation of technology into the curricula as so formulated in CALL (Computer-assisted language learning) was expatiated. Adopting and adapting computers into the classrooms, which might have the roles as tutors, tutee, and tools, progresses in three stages; initiation, implementation, and continuation/diffusion (Stoller, 2012).

The first five units in the first part which lays the underpinning context for curricula paved the way for the following secondary part which explains the key processes. The processes of planning, implementation, and evaluation, which is complex, recursive, dynamic, and cyclic, are imparted in curriculum design in three units, respectively. In the second part, the process of planning that was dealt in the 6th unit goes through the phases of determining theoretical framework, analysing the stakeholders, determining outcomes or goals, selecting approach and content along with the sequencing of the content, selecting materials and activities, and lastly evaluating the curriculum by linking teaching and learning to the context. As for the second stage of curriculum design discussed in the 7th unit, implementation should occur in an interconnected way within, among, and beyond lessons, courses, and programs. However, the above phases of curriculum design should also be considered in this connectivity both in the technological and naturalistic processes. Lastly, in the evaluation stage of curriculum design dealt in the 8th unit, the definition of quality in ELT, approaches to quality assurance, methods for collecting data on quality, guidelines for organizing quality standards, and the role of curriculum evaluation in the quality assurance process were enunciated.

The third part yields an outline of six linguistic-based curricular approaches between the 9th and 14th units. Structural approach with its pros and cons relies on grammatical structure that could be characterized as descriptive, prescriptive, generative, and systemic functional. The content and sequence of grammar is pre-determined on complexity, frequency, L1, and learners' individual differences and instructed either deductively or inductively. As a reaction to structural approach for its inability to lead learners to use English in interactions, notional-functional approach's main concern is to analyse language in terms of notions and functions and instruct on them. While notions could be specific as word, nouns, or adjectives, etc. they could also involve time, size, or location, etc. Functional categories, on the other hand, are personal expressions, interpersonal relations, directive, referential, and imaginative functions. Closely related to notional-functional approach is the academic language functional approach which is different from the social uses of language. The purpose of this approach is to develop learners' general academic language and its skills, such as note-taking, summarizing, and reporting through again learning that foreign language. In the similar vein of functional and academic language, genre- and text-based approach focuses on the role of written and spoken texts or genres in the curriculum design of foreign language education. Three distinctive standpoints of genre-based approach are English for specific purposes, systemic functional linguistics, and North American New Rhetoric Studies. While the first two embrace the idea of explicit instruction of genres, the last one rejects that and instead highlights the interplay between text and context with accompanying social actions of texts. The 13th unit deals with the lexical approach to curriculum design. Defining the vocabulary, the authors brief the knowledge of a word, English etymology, and the importance of word lists. The myths of vocabulary learning were also falsified by their correct learning. The role of four skills in

vocabulary learning should be taken into account in the planning of vocabulary learning. The last linguistic-based approach to curriculum design is language skills approach handled in the 14th unit. Down the ages, foundational language skills have been instructed in two models as separated and integrated and categorized between productive/receptive skills and oral/literacy skills. The book also provides the main processual concepts as top-down and bottom-up in all four skills.

The fourth part includes two content-based curricula which prioritize content instruction through language, that is major area courses as maths, etc. There are three frameworks under this approach; adjunct, sheltered, and topic curricula. The first two ones are versions of content and language integrated approach delivered in three options either by language or content specialist or in collaboration. On the other hand, topical-situational approach could be used for unconnected, voluntary, and everyday situations (at the hospital, etc.) and topics (animals, etc.). This approach goes back to the Situational Language Teaching or Oral approach which underscores communication, spoken text, and inductive instruction of grammar.

The fifth part includes three learner-based curricular approaches which consider learners' affective and social aspects besides cognitive and linguistic ones. In negotiated curriculum, the stakeholders in education, including learners, teachers, curriculum designers and others strive to reach a negotiated consensus in what and how to teach language. However, in terms of humanistic approach, the language practitioner takes the role of facilitator, guide, or counsellor touching the lives of students as a whole person to improve their proficiency level in foreign language and to have a more gratifying life and better society. Community Language Learning, Silent Way, and Suggestopedia are the three of the methods which espoused the tenets of humanistic viewpoint. Lastly, task-based curricular approach centres on the real-life tasks, problems, or projects that FL learners could face outside the classroom. In this method, language teachers help students learn how to use the language to achieve their real-life tasks through pre-task, task completion, and task review phases.

Regarding the last part, as the implemented curriculum might be quite different from intended curriculum, curriculum could also be designed backwards according to the learning outputs in the name of outcome, competency, and standards in which what students learn and how they demonstrate that knowledge is prioritized like a product. This demonstration is concretized with 'can do' statements. These competencies or skills change depending on the century, country, and institution students live and study. In terms of standards, the most germane and major standards come from the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR) which organizes the language standards in levels. The book exemplifies these three outcome-based curricula with the implementations in the other countries. However, these types of curricula are criticized as they are too rationalist, instrumentalist, reductionist, and product-driven.

As for the critical review, the strong side of the book is that each unit of the book is quite comprehensive and succinct enough with vignettes in each unit illustrating the issue under question from the real world contexts of the writers to the readers, with tasks of reflection, exploring, and expanding sections. Moreover, the language of the book is quite simple, to the point, academic albeit ambiguous in some parts and illustrative with vignettes without any inexplicable theoretical or scientific terminologies which makes it appropriate for ELT professionals in all contexts. As a negative point, since the rising trend of moral or

environmental education in the mainstream education, which is most required in the current chaotic world, is starting to be adapted to ELT curriculum and textbooks, a chapter could have been allotted to why and how to incorporate humane and environmental values into the curriculum. In addition, a conclusion including curricular suggestions for teachers, teacher educators, curriculum designers, and material writers could have been outfitted.

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