
CONTENT-BASED SYLLABUS AND COMPETENCY-BASED SYLLABUS FOR ESP COURSES

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Abstract.

Since ESP is defined as an approach to language teaching in which students learn the language through content of subject matters in the field of their specialism for which they learn, the most appropriate type of syllabus for ESP courses as proposed by Krahnke's content-based syllabus with the primary consideration that it integrates the presentation of topics or tasks from subject matter classes (e.g., Biology, Math, Social, Science, etc) within the context of teaching a second or foreign language. Content-based syllabus can be defined as syllabus that the items of which comprises the various forms of language and content integration.

Key words.

Syllabus, Competence, Approach, Content based Syllabus.

Introduction.

Eskey (1997) notes that: The content-based syllabus is best viewed as a still newer attempt to extend and develop our conception of what a syllabus for a second language course should comprise including a concern with language form and language function, as well as crucial third dimension, the factual and conceptual content of such courses.

Regarding to the content itself, there is a variety of definition of it. Crandall & Richard (1990) define content as academic subject matter, while Genesee (1994, p.3) suggests content is include any topics, themes or non-language issue of interest or importance to the learners. Chaput labels content as any topic of intellectual substance which contributes to the student's understanding of language in general, and the target of language in particular (Chaput, 1993, p.150). Met (1998, p.150) identifies content as material presentation that is cognitively engaging and demanding for the learner, and as materials that extend beyond the target language

or target culture. Models of content and language integration differ in the degree to which outcomes determine priorities in designing instruction from the general to the specific: units, lessons, tasks, and activities. These priorities are likely to reflect the rational or purposes for the integration of language and content and may include: (1) Ensuring that non-native students learn the content of the curriculum and are prepared for academic success, (2) Providing students with the discourse styles and language tools of their field of study or career, (3) Enhancing language learning by providing motivating topics to communicate about, and (4) Enhancing language learning by providing meaningful, purposeful language practice opportunities drawn from a variety of topics. To sequence and organize content, according to Allen (1984), there are three basic approaches can be referred to: 1. the traditional, structural-analytic approach in which the highest priority is given to formal grammatical criteria, 2. the functional-analytical approach which defines objectives in terms of categories of communicative language use, and 3. a non-analytical, experimental, or “natural-growth” approach, which aims to immerse learners in real-life communication without any artificial preselection or arrangement of items.

In the further implementation, the content-based syllabus is possibly combined with other types of syllabus based on the consideration of types and purposes of programs to which the syllabus is directed. One type highly proposed to be combined with the content-based syllabus is competency-based syllabus. Competency-based syllabus is defined as syllabus designed based on a specification of competencies learners are expected to master in relation to specific situations and activities (Richards, 2001, p.159). Competency-based instruction carried out on the basis of the use of competency-based syllabus is a more traditional way of viewing skill-based instruction (Krahnke, 1987, p.49). It is widely adopted in vocationally oriented education and in adult ESL program. Competencies are a description of the essential skills, knowledge and attitudes required for effective performance of particular tasks and activities. In the other words, competencies refer to behavioral objectives in that they define what learners are able to do as the result of instruction (Krahnke, 1987, p.50). The characteristics of competency-based instruction described by Joyce may underlie its implementation in ESP program: (1) specific, measurable competency statement; (2) content based on learner goals/outcomes/competencies; (3) use a variety of instructional techniques and group activities; (4) use texts, media and real life materials geared to targeted competencies; (5) focus on what learners need to learn;

(6) provide learners with immediate feedbacks on assessment performance; (7) pace instruction to learner needs; (8) have learner demonstrate mastery of specified competency statements. Mulyasa (2004, p.233) noted that the basis for writing competency based syllabus covering: competence standard, basic competences, indicators, materials, learning experience, time allotment, assessment, and source/media. Competence standard and basic competence according to Mulyasa are the basic consideration to develop the main content or ESP: An Approach of English material, the teaching and learning activity, and the indicator of competency based on the student' needs and interests. Competence standard is defined as the standard of students' minimum competence required after having a particular subject course. Basic competence is included in the syllabus to give the description of how far the standard competence should be achieved (Mulyasa, 2004, p.109). Indicators refer to some specific aspects of a basic competency that show the target achievement of a certain competence through assessment. Learning experience shows teaching and learning activities to achieve the basic competencies. The activities should be gradually and carefully arranged from the simplest to the most difficult and from the most abstract to the most concrete. Assessment implies the techniques or activities done to evaluate the students' achievement in learning and their progress. While sources and media mean instructional aids applied to facilitate teaching and learning process to make it runs effectively.

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