

The Second Language Curriculum

Edited by

Robert Keith Johnson

University of Hong Kong

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藏书章

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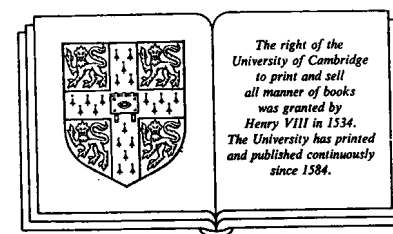
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Series editors' preface

This book in the Cambridge Applied Linguistics series presents an overview of the scope and dimension of language curriculum development and also demonstrates how many of its leading practitioners apply curriculum theory and practice to language teaching. Publication of this collection of mainly original papers is a healthy sign that, in the last few years, language curriculum practitioners have moved away from a narrow view of their work, one which focused largely on issues of content and methodology, to a more comprehensive, and at the same time, complex understanding of curriculum. This is one which encompasses policy making, needs assessment, instructional design and development, teacher preparation and development, as well as programme management and evaluation. This is a far cry from the days of 'syllabus design'.

The value of this collection of papers which Keith Johnson has assembled lies in the many different perspectives it offers on the language curriculum. Both macro and micro issues are presented, and curriculum development is seen to be a dynamic process that must be understood in its entirety if the particulars are to work with any degree of efficiency. Throughout, the emphasis is thus on systematicity and interrelatedness of elements. The message the book delivers is that if we wish to improve the effectiveness of language teaching programmes, we need to examine in more depth the hidden dimensions of language programmes. Educational institutions need to assume a greater degree of responsibility in the planning, implementation and evaluation of their own programmes and instructional materials. This book will serve as a valuable resource in this process, allowing practitioners in the field of language curriculum development to have a comprehensive introduction to theory and practice in this growing field.

Michael H. Long
Jack C. Richards

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Overview

The aim of this collection is to present 'state of the art' papers in language curriculum studies by writers who have been actively involved in shaping theory in this field and who, between them, have applied that theory in almost every part of the world and in a variety of contexts.

The idea of a 'coherent language curriculum' summarises the range of the papers included and the theme which unites them. 'Curriculum' is used in the British sense to include all the factors which contribute to the teaching and learning situation, while the term 'coherence' emphasises the interdependence of these factors and the need for mutually consistent and complementary decision making throughout the processes of development and evaluation.

To set this publication within the context of developments in language curriculum studies over the past twenty-five to thirty years, I would like to propose that applied linguistics, the theoretical arm of language teaching, has passed through two major phases in its brief history, and is now entering a third. The first phase was that of the communicative revolution when it was inspired by new ideas and iconoclastic zeal. Its main achievement was to demonstrate the inadequacies in theory and practice of the 'ancien régime', but much that was valuable fell into disrepute or neglect through a form of guilt by association. The first revolutionary phase came to an end with applied linguistics focused upon the new linguistic sciences, psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics, divorced from its structuralist/behaviourist past, and distanced, if not estranged from the mainstream of educational theory.

The second phase was one of piecemeal reconstruction, epitomised by the flowering of a thousand methods. Work worthy of greater respect was carried out on particular aspects of the language curriculum to bring it more closely into line with our new and broader understanding of the nature of communicative competence and the processes of language acquisition and use. These aspects included needs analysis, the syllabus, materials design, the roles of the teacher and the learner and the nature of classroom interaction. The insights were genuine and the progress real, but there was little interaction between or integration of the different areas.

A third phase seems to me to have been initiated during the 1980s with a growing interest in the curriculum process as a whole, attempts to put language teaching back in touch with educational theory in general and curriculum studies in particular (Stern, 1983) and to impose order on the chaos into which at least fringe communicative methodology had fallen (Richards and Rodgers, 1986). This third phase is one of consolidation and integration, with a new sense of realism replacing the ideological fervour and speculative utopianism that were all too characteristic of the revolutionary and post revolutionary phases.

This publication contributes to the 'new realism' and to a view of the language curriculum in which a discussion of any part must take account of the aims of and constraints upon the whole. The first paper, an overview, provides a framework for the seventeen papers which follow and a rationale for the sections into which the collection is divided: curriculum planning; ends/means specification; programme implementation (teacher training and materials writing); implementation in the classroom; and evaluation. The main focus of each paper is indicated in a short introduction to each section and in the overview. As would be expected from writers with such broad and diverse experience, their approach is constructive and lacks the proselytising zeal and factionalism which have done little for language teaching and learning and less for the reputation of applied linguistics as a discipline. In sum, the papers provide a major review of developments in language curriculum studies, and identify the problems that we currently face and the directions in which we need to move.

I would like to thank Jack Richards for proposing the collection, and for his consistent help throughout. Peter Donovan of Cambridge University Press and the contributors have had to put up with an editor who was not only learning his trade but travelling through China, England, Canada and Australia while doing so. Their tolerance and helpfulness have been greatly appreciated. I owe special thanks and appreciation to my wife, Anne, for her work on the bibliography and for her assistance in many other ways.

The book is organised in the following way:

Part I: Curriculum planning

In the first paper, in Part I, I describe language curriculum development, in the broadest sense, as a decision-making process. The framework I propose has three dimensions: that of policy, the aims of the curriculum, or what it seems desirable to achieve; pragmatics, the constraints on what it is possible to achieve; and finally the participants in the decision-making process, whose task it is to reconcile policy and pragmatics. Four

stages of decision making are identified: curriculum planning, ends/means specification, programme implementation, and implementation in the classroom. These stages provide the headings for the first four sections of this book. The heading for the fifth section, 'evaluation', is not seen as a stage in itself, but as a necessary and integral part of each and all of the stages already mentioned. I argue that these stages are ordered, but that the curriculum process overall must be interactive, so that decision making is fully informed; the coherence of the curriculum is more important than the 'perfection' of any or all of its separate parts.

A coherent curriculum is one in which decision outcomes from the various stages of development are mutually consistent and complementary, and learning outcomes reflect curricular aims. The achievement of coherence is said to depend crucially in most educational contexts upon the formalisation of decision-making processes and products. This formalisation facilitates consensus amongst those involved and is a prerequisite for effective evaluation and subsequent renewal. Decision making is therefore a continuing and cyclical process of development, revision, maintenance and renewal which needs to continue throughout the life of the curriculum.

In the second paper, Ted Rodgers considers the problems of curriculum planners, whose task is to set out a policy which is capable of being implemented. He maintains that failure in curriculum projects results more often from poor planning than from inadequacies in design and implementation *per se*. He develops this argument by examining three levels of programme planning: syllabus design, curriculum development and polity determination. In the same way that curriculum development may be regarded as a contextually enlarged view of syllabus design, polity determination is a contextually enlarged view of curriculum development, involving all the factors which need to be taken into account in general in educational planning, and in particular in determining the level and types of resources which will be required to implement a curriculum successfully. To assist in this process, and as a means to increase curriculum planners' awareness of the problems that are involved, Rodgers proposes a 'polity planning framework', a set of factor scales designed to assist planners in assessing the relative difficulty and 'cost' of implementing a particular curriculum change or innovation in a particular 'polito-pedagogical' context.

Peter Hargreaves's perspective is that of the evaluator and he argues that decisions relating to evaluation need to be taken during and as part of the curriculum planning process, and not, as is so often the case, as an afterthought to implementation. He presents and illustrates in use a checklist covering twelve major factors which need to be taken into account if evaluation is to be planned successfully: target audience, purpose, focus, criteria, method, means/instruments, agents, resources,

time factors, findings, presentation of results and follow-up. These factors are interdependent since decisions in relation to one affect other decisions. The importance of integrating the various aspects of the curriculum in the planning stage is expressed concisely, if not euphorically, in the term 'Des-impl-evalu-ign' which, at my urging (Ed.) was promoted from the text to the title. Hargreaves proposes a logo, derived from it, which might be awarded to projects which meet the required criteria in curriculum design. Experience suggests that the logo might not be awarded very often.

Part II: Ends/means specification

Part II deals with that stage in the decision-making process in which policy is made educationally explicit; the stage most often discussed under the headings of needs analysis and syllabus construction. On the theoretical level, discussion has concentrated upon the questions: 'whose needs?' and 'how can these needs best be assessed?' For practitioners the main problem often lies in moving beyond the findings of a needs analysis to the development of a teaching and learning programme. The three papers in this section offer different perspectives on the theoretical issues and practical problems involved: Berwick, that of a Japanese steel company; Brindley, adult migrant education in Australia; and Swales, academic service English programmes at university level.

Richard Berwick describes the general theory from which needs analysis derives, the problems in applying that theory, and the major stages to be followed through from the decision that a needs analysis is necessary to the transformation of data into a set of aims (ends specifications) and a language teaching programme. He distinguishes different approaches to design and notes that many philosophies of planning, and mixtures of them, find their means of expression in different forms of needs-based syllabuses, depending upon how the notion of need is defined and who defines it. Berwick distinguishes between the 'felt' needs of the learner and the 'perceived' needs of authority, and describes a range of data-gathering techniques under the general headings of inductive (category-generating) and deductive (category-dependent) methods of achieving a needs profile. He shows that language curriculum projects based on needs analyses require the continuing commitment and co-operation of all those involved and all those affected, over a considerable period of time. Berwick illustrates the problems that occur when theory and practice collide, and discusses approaches most likely to achieve a successful outcome in a commercial environment. He concludes that needs analyses should be designed to serve an established policy and not as a policy-making, least of all as a policy-seeking exercise.

Geoff Brindley states as axiomatic the importance of sensitivity to learners' needs in learner-centred approaches to curriculum design, and of needs analysis itself as a prerequisite for the specification of language learning objectives in curriculum design in general. The two axioms nevertheless reveal a considerable potential for disagreement over the definition of 'needs' and what 'needs analysis' should entail. Brindley identifies and attempts to reconcile two major orientations within the discussion: a 'narrow' or 'product-oriented' interpretation which focuses upon the learners' current and future uses for the language; and a 'broad' or 'process-oriented' interpretation which focuses upon the needs of the student as a learner, with the latter view requiring 'means specification' to take account of affective and cognitive variables such as attitudes, motivation, personality and learning style. Brindley discusses the feasibility of fruitful negotiation between teachers and learners in a learner-centred approach and illuminates this controversial area by proposing that needs analyses cannot be effective if conducted only at the curriculum planning stage, since learners cannot make valid choices amongst 'methods' until they have experienced the available options. The investigation of the learners' felt needs must therefore be a process which continues throughout the life of the curriculum. In this sense, needs analysis should be seen as an aspect of formative evaluation.

John Swales considers what 'counts as' a paper on programme design and its potential value. He then develops and explores the notion that an educational programme, and in particular a 'service' programme, forms part of an ecosystem within which the various participants and interest groups co-exist symbiotically in an often precarious state of balance; one in which 'all the competing but interdependent elements need to survive if the ecosystem is not to suffer damage'. The concept of 'opportunity cost', borrowed from economics, is then applied to curriculum development. 'Opportunity' represents the gains that might be obtained by successful implementation of a new or revised policy while estimates of costs must take account of the damage the ecosystem might sustain. A parasitic (no disrespect intended) service organisation would need to be particularly alert to the possible consequences of annoying or damaging the host body. Not surprisingly, the ecological approach Swales advocates is one of 'cautious gradualism', and the costs to be taken into account when assessing opportunities for curricular innovation are seen as going far beyond the human and material resources directly required for implementing an ends/means specification. The identification of appropriate ends and means therefore depends as much and perhaps more upon factors external to the curriculum (cf. Rodgers's discussion in Part I of 'polity determination') as it does upon factors controlled directly by participants in the curriculum process.

Part III: Programme implementation

Part III deals with programme implementation: the stage at which ends and means are realised as a teaching and learning programme ready for use in the classroom. It has two related aspects, the training of teachers and the preparation of teaching and learning resources. The first paper discusses the relationship between staff training and programme implementation, maintenance and renewal; the second describes the development of a teacher-training programme, or rather curriculum, since policy and ends and means all change as the programme develops; the third and fourth papers deal with the writing, organisation and evaluation of resources within a programme.

Martha Pennington argues that 'the heart of every educational enterprise, the force driving the whole enterprise towards its educational aims, is the teaching faculty' and deals with this crucial issue of faculty development under three broad headings. In the first, *The education and training of language teachers*, she outlines areas of broad agreement as well as differences of approach (holistic versus competency-based), emphasis (knowledge, attitudes, skills), perspective (optimistic, pessimistic) and conceptualisation of the teaching act (magic, art, profession, craft, science). In the second section, *Organizing a language program faculty*, she discusses the extent to which administrative constraints predetermine other aspects of the curricular decision-making process. The third section, *The evolution and growth of a language program faculty*, maps out a programme for the professional development of teachers, showing how the assignment of teachers' responsibilities within the curriculum should reflect this development, and also the complex role which evaluation needs to play in this very sensitive area.

The second paper, by Mike Breen, Chris Candlin, Leni Dam and Gerd Gabrielsen, describes the evolution of a series of teacher-training workshops conducted by the authors in Denmark since 1978. The initial aim was to stimulate interest among teachers in new methods and techniques based on communicative approaches to language teaching, but the account of the development of these workshops is less about the achievement of that aim than about achieving a meeting of minds between teachers and teacher trainers. In the first stage (transmission), the target methodology was presented by the trainers on the assumption that it would then be applied. In the process of discovering that 'transmission' was largely ineffective, the second stage (problem solving) evolved, whereby the target methodology was offered in response to problems raised by the teachers. Difficulties with this approach led to the third stage in which the workshop has focused upon classroom decision making and investigation. Thus the emphasis has moved from the trainers to the teachers to the learners, and the role of the teacher trainers

as they perceived it changed from 'expert' to problem solver to problem investigator.

Graham Low discusses the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to the organisation and structuring of language teaching materials. In addition to the traditional concerns with presentation of new material, practice designed to give mastery of that material and opportunities for integrating what has been mastered into the learners' established communicative competence, he focuses upon the patterns of organisation within and between course units, discussing past and current approaches, proposing alternatives, and introducing the terms 'feeding' and 'bleeding' to describe relationships which enhance or detract from learning opportunities. Low points out that in many courses in the past there have either been no obvious relationships or else highly contrived ones between units and between the elements within units. Writers have tended to establish sequences of activities which are then followed inflexibly regardless of changes in objectives, topics etc.

Materials of the kind Low criticises have been particularly prevalent in third world countries where the teachers' own English language proficiency and professional training have been weak. The high level of predictability of this approach makes these materials comparatively easy to prepare and use, but it has little else to recommend it. The more radical and experimental approaches generated by the communicative 'revolution' have produced activities that are interesting, interactive and varied, but my own feeling (Ed.) is that the organisational relationships amongst these activities are often still uncertain, more so in fact than in the days of structural syllabuses. In a coherent curriculum the organising principles on which the programme is based need to be stated and understood. Those principles need to go beyond the traditional concern for structural order and vocabulary control to encompass the full range of communicative functions and language skills. 'Feeding' relationships in this broader context are more complex now than in the days of structuralism and audio-lingualism, but no less essential.

Andrew Littlejohn and Scott Windeatt consider the content of the language programme rather than its organisation, and the unintended as well as the intended effects upon learners which may result from the realisation of syllabus specifications as language teaching materials. They acknowledge the difficulty inherent in establishing any direct link between 'input' to the learner and 'uptake' by the learner (a problem discussed in Part IV), but argue that it is possible at least to identify and evaluate what is 'available to be learnt'. This they do under six headings: general or subject knowledge offered in the materials; views of what knowledge is and how it is acquired; views of what is involved in language learning; role relations within the classroom; opportunities for

the development of cognitive abilities; and the values and attitudes presented in the materials.

In their title, Littlejohn and Windeatt see these issues as going *Beyond language learning...* It seems to me however that, on their own evidence, these issues directly affect both the processes of learning, and the nature of the learners' communicative competence on completion of the programme, and that therefore they constitute essential elements within any discussion of programme implementation.

The further important point emerges that 'mismatch' may exist between the language curriculum and the broader aims of society and education as well as within the curriculum itself. To return to the metaphor of the curriculum as an ecosystem: coherence, like the balance of nature, is necessary but by no means sufficient to ensure an acceptable quality of life for all the participants.

Part IV: Classroom implementation

The fourth set of decisions to be made in the curriculum development process relates to classroom implementation. These decisions determine the nature of the teaching and learning acts that will be performed, with the latter being unarguably the most crucial for the success of the whole of the curricular enterprise. Resourceful, intelligent and determined students achieve their aims in spite of ill-conceived policies, poorly formulated syllabuses, inadequate resources and incompetent teaching. Conversely a well-planned curriculum with appropriate aims effectively realised and implemented achieves little if students are apathetic and unmotivated. This fact in itself explains the inconclusive results of much research and will continue to bedevil curriculum research and evaluation until the role of the learner is acknowledged and, more difficult, taken into account in research design.

The notion of the learner as an empty vessel to be filled by a teacher from a predetermined curriculum has been unacceptable for some time, replaced by the current more positive perception of the active role played by the learner. Nevertheless enthusiasm for various reformulations of syllabuses, and for new styles and methods of materials design and pedagogical presentation has continued largely unconstrained by the growing evidence that learners' aims and the means they adopt to achieve them are not necessarily those of the official curriculum.

In the first paper in this section, David Nunan focuses upon the decisions of the learner, and the evidence from various studies that learners have 'hidden agendas', derived partly from their own aims, partly from their preconceptions about the learning process, and partly from their lack of understanding of the aims of the official curriculum

and the means adopted for achieving those aims. Nunan argues that every aspect of curriculum studies needs to be expanded to include these hidden agendas. In this way, curriculum planning, development, implementation, evaluation and research would take account of learners' perceptions of the learning process as well as those of the theorist, of what happens rather than what ought to happen and of what is learned rather than what is taught. Nunan is particularly concerned with the practical implications of the hidden agenda hypothesis in the classroom, and he proposes techniques for achieving a synthesis between the official curriculum and that of the learner.

One problem inherent in this situation is precisely that the learner's agenda is hidden, and may be inaccessible to the outside observer and indeed to the learner himself. What can be observed however is the interaction between the learner and the learning task. It is here that the official and the hidden agendas come into direct contact, the point at which the learner interacts with, and is able to operate on the curriculum. Mike Breen analyses language learning tasks in terms of three 'phases': the task as workplan (what is intended); as process (what is done); and as outcome (what is achieved). The second is seen as being the most important, the least understood, and as having the most to contribute to language curriculum development. The task evaluation cycle proposed by Breen focuses primarily on this aspect of task, and it aims at involving the learner in the analysis of tasks and in the formulation of proposals for their revision. Like Nunan, Breen sees the role of the teacher as mediator between the curriculum and the learner in a two-way process which revises both the 'agenda' of the learner and the curriculum itself to bring the two into line.

In the last paper in this section, David Stern traces the changes in emphasis in language teaching research from 'Method' as an abstraction to 'natural' learning or 'acquisition' outside the classroom, to the realisation emphasised by the two previous writers that we must come to grips with the process of language curriculum implementation inside the classroom. Stern maintains that classroom research so far has proved of limited value, because it has lacked any explicitly stated theoretical base, and consequently, in the accumulation of a potentially infinite quantity of detail, it has proved difficult if not impossible to see what is and is not important. The theoretical framework which Stern proposes to remedy this situation has three interdependent levels: theoretical concepts, policy directives and classroom behaviour, similar as levels of abstraction to those proposed by Anthony, 1963 (*Approach, method, and technique*) and by Richards and Rodgers, 1986 (*Approach, design, and procedure*). Stern maintains that the findings of classroom research can be interpreted only in so far as they can be related systematically to policy specifications, and the theoretical constructs (or approach) on which the curriculum as a

whole is based; i.e. it is impossible to evaluate classroom behaviour unless the aim of that behaviour is clear. Similarly, approaches to language teaching and learning cannot be evaluated unless those approaches have been effectively realised in classroom behaviour.

On a personal note, I am very pleased to be able to include this paper by David Stern. I met him in 1987 after many years of admiring his work and was equally impressed by his wisdom and vitality. It was a shock and a great loss to applied linguistics when he died. Very few people have been as successful in '*Seeing the wood AND the trees*', the title of his paper, or have contributed as much to theoretical aspects of language curriculum studies. The Core French project in Canada, which he initiated, is a model of conceptual clarity and attention to detail and seems, at its present stage of development, a near perfect example of coherent language curriculum development.

Part V: Evaluation

In each of the preceding sections, it has been emphasised implicitly if not explicitly that curriculum development and renewal can only proceed effectively if supported by evaluation.

James Brown defines evaluation as the 'systematic collection and analysis of all relevant information necessary to promote the improvement of a curriculum and assess its effectiveness and efficiency as well as the participants' attitudes within the context of the particular institutions involved'. He examines key definitions and distinctions within the literature related to language programme evaluation, and the various approaches developed over the past thirty to forty years, culminating in 'decision facilitation approaches'. Brown argues that these developments have been evolutionary rather than revolutionary, each building on what was learned previously. His discussion of the various 'dimensions' of evaluation: formative and summative, product and process, quantitative and qualitative, leads to a set of procedures and steps for developing and implementing language programme evaluation.

Bachman and Hudson focus upon the problem of what should be measured and the means by which measurement should be carried out. Both are dissatisfied with current approaches based on standardised, norm-referenced tests and largely undefined notions of global proficiency or skills. Their approaches are very different however. Bachman is looking towards the future and the point at which evaluation, or at least testing, can be carried out without direct reference to each particular programme under consideration. Hudson's approach is programme-based and he is concerned with practical measures which can be implemented effectively in the light of current knowledge (and the lack of it).

Lyle Bachman's proposals for establishing a theoretical base for criterion-referenced testing are based on generally accepted models of communicative competence. In line with these models, he seeks first to specify a domain of communicative language ability and second to define scales of proficiency at a level of abstraction which makes them independent of contextual features of language use. Criterion-referenced tests based on this model would provide scores that would be comparable across differing sets of instructional objectives, and would provide a valid basis for comparison across language programmes. As Bachman points out, neither the theory nor the tests exist as yet beyond a rudimentary stage of development, and he argues the need for empirical research (rather than arm-chair model building) which will guide test development and at the same time refine and validate the theoretical framework.

Thom Hudson focuses upon student performance, which he considers to be 'the key in evaluation', in terms of student mastery or non-mastery of language programme objectives. Mastery testing establishes absolute rather than relative standards (cf. tests which are intended to rank-order students). It enables the evaluator to determine whether a particular programme has achieved its intended goals, and if not, the areas in which it is deficient. However, these absolute judgements raise in acute form problems which underlie all testing: epistemological (mastery of what), ethical (how will the results be used), and technical (in this case, the problem of the cut-off point which determines whether mastery has or has not been achieved). In dealing with the first of these, Hudson compares two approaches to test data, as a sign of underlying competence, or as a sample of performance. He discusses the implications of each for the definition and demonstration of mastery, with the solution, i.e. which approach to adopt, depending upon the ends and means of the curriculum being evaluated. On the technical (and ethical) question, Hudson takes up the issues of reliability and validity in criterion-referenced measurement. He proposes statistical solutions to the former, but the latter remains problematical, with validity and therefore the ethics of mastery testing having to be argued, again on the basis of the policy and pragmatic constraints of the programme in question.

Warwick Elley's paper provides a down-to-earth conclusion to the collection. It deals with language curriculum evaluation in the broadest sense and as it is rather than as it ideally ought to be; i.e. in situations where few of the desirable prerequisites have been met. The resourceful evaluator needs often to make judgements, to quote Elley: '...about which hallowed principles are essential, which are desirable, what might be feasible under the circumstances, and what is to be avoided at all costs'. He offers pragmatic advice on how to proceed in relation to the choice of evaluator; assessing the importance of the information to be gained; identifying the aims of a programme; selecting the evaluation

design and the sample; selecting/developing the instruments; administration and marking; the importance of process as well as product; and the analysis of results. His approach suggests that there are very few curriculum situations so hopeless that they cannot be enlightened and improved by a sensible and sensitive evaluator.

For the future, it may be assumed that more rigorous accounts of communicative competence and how it develops will inform the processes of planning, implementation and evaluation of the language curriculum. In the meantime, however, the experience, enthusiasm, tradecraft, careful planning, hard work and good will of all those involved seem to be the primary contributing factors to the achievement of a coherent and successful language curriculum. Whatever theoretical advances are made, the importance of these factors seems unlikely to diminish.

PART I

1 CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

1 *A decision-making framework for the coherent language curriculum*¹

Robert Keith Johnson

Introduction

In this introductory paper, I have three major aims: first to provide a framework for discussing the language curriculum; second to define the notion of a 'coherent' language curriculum, the theme of this book as well as the title of this paper; and third to show how the other papers in this volume and the particular aspects of development they focus upon relate to the curriculum process as a whole.

The word 'curriculum' is defined here in its broadest sense, to include all the relevant decision making processes of all the participants. The products of these decision making processes generally exist in some concrete form and can be observed and described: for example policy documents, syllabuses, teacher-training programmes, teaching materials and resources, and teaching and learning acts. The processes themselves are usually more difficult to identify and analyse. They involve such questions as: Who is supposed to make the decisions and who actually does? How are these people selected and what qualifications do they have? What are their terms of reference? What resources in time, money, information and expertise are available to them? etc. Other 'process' factors such as prejudice, preconception, ambition or laziness are even harder to examine, but may be no less influential in their effects.

The framework consists of three sets of constraints on curriculum decision making. The first is policy. A curriculum which appears in all other respects to be successful, but which fails to achieve its aims, is hard to justify however much the participants may have benefited from their experience in other ways, for example socially or financially. The second consists of pragmatic considerations such as time and resources, human and material. Any curriculum design must take adequate account of these

¹ I would like to acknowledge the valuable comments of David Stern, Patrick Allen and in particular Merrill Swain on the draft version of this paper, and also the assistance of the Modern Language Centre staff at O.I.S.E., where work on the preparation of this collection was completed.

constraints or fail to achieve its aims. The third consists of the participants in the curriculum process and the ways in which they interact. Their task is to reconcile policy and pragmatics and to achieve and maintain, at each stage of development, products of the decision-making process which are mutually consistent and compatible. Such a curriculum is said to be 'coherent'.

Factors which promote coherence or its opposite 'mismatch' are discussed in the sections which follow in relation to each of these three dimensions and 'process' and 'product'. The final section considers the role of evaluation in curriculum decision making. Brief comments along the way show how the topics of other contributors to the book fit into this framework.

Policy decision making

The four stages or decision points in policy implementation are:

- 1 Curriculum planning
- 2 Ends/means specification
- 3 Programme implementation
- 4 Classroom implementation

These four headings with 'Evaluation' also make up the five section headings of this book. The planning stage consists of all those decisions taken before the development and implementation of the programme begins. Ends specification relates to objectives, and means specification to method; programme implementation involves teacher training and materials/resources development. Decision making at the classroom implementation stage has as its products the acts of the teacher and the learner (Table 1).

The term 'policy' is used to refer to any broad statement of aims whether at the level of a national curriculum (for example Japanese should be taught as a foreign language in secondary schools), or as a 'good idea' a teacher or learner may put forward for the classroom (for example: let's have a debate on Friday afternoons). In this sense the stages of policy determination, specification and implementation are ordered. The policy or idea must exist. It must then be operationally defined. Any necessary resources must be prepared. These must then be presented (a teaching act) so that learning acts may follow.

Curriculum planning

Policy makers are responding to 'needs'; their own, other people's or those of an entire society. They determine the overall aims of the

TABLE 1. STAGES, DECISION-MAKING ROLES AND PRODUCTS IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

<i>Developmental stages</i>	<i>Decision-making roles</i>	<i>Products</i>
1. curriculum planning	policy makers	policy document
2. specification: ends means	needs analyst	syllabus
	methodologists	
3. programme implementation	materials writers	teaching materials
	teacher trainers	teacher-training programme
4. classroom implementation	teacher	teaching acts
	learner	learning acts

curriculum and are influenced in varying degrees by special interest groups who are able to bring pressure to bear.

In different educational contexts, different people will play the role of policy maker and the policy will be stated more or less formally. A language learner who hires a tutor is the policy maker. However, the teacher may influence the learner to modify that policy, or may subvert it by implementing an inappropriate curriculum, for example the one that happens to be available, without mentioning the fact to the learner.

A commercial language school makes its own policy and sets this out in a prospectus. Students decide whether the aims stated coincide with their own. Policy in this case may be determined primarily by market forces.

National language policies are determined by socio-political pressures which vary from one culture and socio-political system to another; the primary consideration of most governments being to maintain, and if possible extend their power, influence and acceptability.

Policy statements tend to be utopian. 'Promises are cheap', 'hope springs eternal', and there are no limits on what is desirable. It is not the business of language curriculum specialists to tell governments or the public what they should want, but it is our business to state what is and what is not attainable and the costs of implementation. (Swales in Part II discusses the concept of 'opportunity cost' in this broad 'ecological' rather than economic sense.) There are well-established constraints on

what can be achieved, for example in situations where opportunities for learning are brief and intermittent, opportunities for forgetting almost infinite, and where there is no contact with the target language outside the classroom (for example Strevens, 1977: 29). However, governments and language schools which promise only what they can perform are likely to go out of business, and language educators who criticise policies as unrealistic sometimes find their career opportunities have not been enhanced.

There is in fact an inherent danger of mismatch between policy and the learning outcomes which the implemented curriculum is capable of achieving. Rodgers, in the paper which follows this one, maintains that decisions taken at the curriculum planning stage, and what he refers to as 'policy factors' generally, have a far greater impact on the success of curriculum development than decisions relating to the implementation of the curriculum *per se*.

Ends/means specification

Policy statements, however detailed, are directives not specifications. They are not formulated to meet the requirements of curriculum development. Ends/means specification is the process by which policy, and the means by which it is to be implemented, are operationally defined. Ends specification should provide an exact characterisation of the target proficiency. Means specification should prescribe the method by which that target proficiency will be achieved. Those who make decisions about these specifications are referred to here as syllabus writers, and the formal product of their decision making as a syllabus. If the specifications in the syllabus are inadequate, the curriculum becomes potentially less coherent (i.e. divergent decisions may be made inadvertently at subsequent stages in the developmental process) and actually more difficult to evaluate, since criteria would have to be inferred.

In the case of the Friday afternoon debates, to continue with that example, these might be designed in various ways: with advance preparation or without; with the teacher or with a student as chairperson; as a means for selecting the school debating team; to provide opportunities for the best students to extend themselves or to facilitate maximum participation by all students; to provide fluency practice; to promote vocabulary expansion, for general interest or as an opportunity to spot common errors in a 'natural' communicative context. Unless the ends are specified, an evaluator would have to guess what they might be, or impose what the evaluator thinks they ought to be. The debates themselves are in any case unlikely to be concluded successfully unless the teacher and the students have some shared understanding of the ends to be achieved and the means for achieving them.

Where a broader set of aims is concerned (for example Japanese as above), specifications at this stage of curriculum development become even more crucial, since a negotiated approach or trial and error can be successful in the context of a particular course or classroom, but is less likely to succeed where learning outcomes are expected to be comparable and examinable across several institutions or an education system.

ENDS SPECIFICATION

Decision making in this area has tended to follow one of two largely divergent lines of development. In the first, the general concern throughout education for accountability and cost effectiveness has prompted the specification of objectives in behavioural and verifiable forms. This approach, with the growing importance of E.S.P. programmes, has resulted in the development in language education of a technology of needs analysis. Problems of definition and implementation associated with various aspects of this approach are discussed by Berwick and Brindley in Part II of this book. The other approach, more cognitive in orientation, has extended the traditional notion of language learning as mastery of the grammatical system to a broader conception of communicative competence. Model building of the kind initiated by Canale and Swain (1980), supported by research programmes such as the one proposed by Bachman in Part V, may eventually lead to a developed theory of communicative competence which could support and inform decision making in ends specification (and evaluation), but a theoretical paradigm which involves the explanation of so much of human cognition will not be developed easily or rapidly. At this stage, our theories of communicative competence are abstract, speculative and fragmentary, but progress in this area has nevertheless been real. We now know enough about the schemata and processes which guide certain aspects of communication to suspect that lists of target behaviours are inadequate and possibly counter-productive either as ends specifications or as the basis for programme and classroom implementation. What we do not have, unfortunately, is an adequate descriptive account of the constructs of communicative competence that could be used in place of such lists.

MEANS SPECIFICATION

Discussions of language teaching methodology have been influenced by first and second language acquisition theory and a growing body of classroom observation studies. However, no conventional wisdom or consensus has yet emerged, as is demonstrated by the proliferation of methods, claims and counter-claims, since the demise of audio-lingualism. The communicative revolution in language teaching has broadened and enriched the repertoire of techniques available to language teachers and materials writers, but it does not as yet offer a principled basis for

6 A decision-making framework

selecting amongst them or for elevating a particular set of techniques into a globally applicable method. Even if theoretical purity could be achieved, it would remain less important for effective curriculum implementation than accommodation to the usually impure constraints of a particular educational context. The eclectic approach, a combination of experience, local knowledge, intuition and trial and error, is widely adopted for precisely this reason.

MISMATCH IN ENDS/MEANS SPECIFICATION

The practical value of a theoretical paradigm in any field of activity is that it establishes a consensus about a way to proceed and things to do. To the extent that the paradigm is established, detailed specification becomes less important; to the extent that it is not, the specifications themselves provide the primary means for achieving coherence. The communicative approach to language teaching provides many insights, but no paradigm, and the coherence of curriculums at present lies not in shared assumptions but in operational definitions. It is necessary to demonstrate that the ends specification matches the policy, and that means and ends are compatible. The grammar-translation method notoriously did not promote oral fluency, and an oral/aural approach does not develop writing skills. A Council of Europe style 'ends' specification may look like what a syllabus 'ought' to look like, but this style may be inappropriate for a policy whose aim, for example, is to promote study skills. 'Procedural display' (behaviour which enables participants to appear to be doing a good job when in fact they are not) is not limited to the classroom.

Above all, there must be no mismatch involving 'hidden' syllabuses. In many education systems the key question for students, teachers, parents, school administrators, and even inspectors is not, 'Are students gaining in communicative competence?' but, 'Are they on course for the examination?' In such a situation the examination is the ends specification, the item types constitute the means specification, and the official syllabus depends for its credibility on the extent to which the content of the examination is an adequate sample of that syllabus. Item types in examinations need to be selected and constructed with this 'washback' effect in mind. For example, if cloze is used in testing, doing cloze passages will occupy a considerable portion of teaching and learning time. If oral skills are judged by reading aloud, reading aloud will be practised, conversational fluency will not. A great deal of classroom behaviour which appears inexplicable and even bizarre in terms of the official policy can be readily understood once the 'hidden' syllabus has been identified.

Programme implementation

In the programme implementation stage, all those decisions are made which cannot be deferred until teachers and learners are preparing for or performing classroom acts. These decisions relate to the development of teaching and learning resources, and the preparation of teachers to ensure that the resources are used effectively; i.e. in accordance with the means specifications and with a clear understanding of the objectives to be achieved and the reasons for achieving them. As with earlier stages, these decisions may be made formally or informally, explicitly or implicitly, and the products are consequently more or less amenable to evaluation, revision, and transfer or adaptation to other educational contexts.

PROGRAMME RESOURCES

Teaching and learning materials provide the corpus of the curriculum. They normally exist as physical entities and are open to analysis, evaluation and revision in ways that teaching and learning acts are not; and they have a direct influence upon what happens in classrooms, which policy documents, syllabuses and teacher-training courses do not.

If the ends/means specifications constrain the materials writer too closely, creativity tends to be stifled. If the ends/means specifications are too loose, there is the possibility of mismatch, with the materials writer introducing an alternative curriculum which cannot easily be detected. My feeling is that, ideally, the materials writer should be closely associated with the process of ends/means specification (as a member of the syllabus committee for example) but should have considerable freedom in actual implementation; for example the materials writer need not be required to implement the ends/means specifications in a particular way, but must show, formally, that the specifications have been met. In practice, this idea is rarely achieved. Government curriculum units may be too rigidly constrained, commercial writers too little. The latter are usually excluded from syllabus committees on principle (to avoid charges of favouring particular publishers) and may have little understanding of the particular educational context they are writing for, particularly if they have an international rather than a specific market in mind. Commercially produced materials are generally piloted in schools prior to general release, at least by the more reputable publishers, and materials are often significantly modified as a result. However, this exercise is generally aimed at adjusting the product to the potential market rather than at evaluating the product itself. Financial and practical considerations ensure that the publisher must accommodate to the market and not the market to the publisher, who is rarely in a position to mount extensive teacher-training programmes. Many excellent lan-

guage teaching programmes have failed, their promoters falling into the hands of receivers or multinationals, because the materials were too alien, too complex, or too expensive for local taste.

These 'facts of life' notwithstanding, it is encouraging to note situations, particularly over the past ten years, where materials have been developed through curriculum projects involving materials writers, publishers, ministries of education and other consumers. On a smaller scale, E.S.P. projects have also sometimes achieved a high level of co-ordination. Collaborative ventures of this kind go a long way towards ensuring that the planning and development of a curriculum is coherent. Also, in case I should appear prejudiced against commercial publishers, I should add that large-scale materials development projects conducted without their support have rarely produced effective results. Lack of expertise, lack of resources, the impossibility of effective materials writing by committee and many other factors seem to contribute to this failure, including the low status of those involved in curriculum development within ministries of education. Talented individuals tend either to move into the commercial field or to be promoted to administrative positions which have little effect on teaching and learning outcomes, but which nevertheless carry more status, better pay and better long-term career prospects.

Even in the most highly developed materials projects, commercial or otherwise, the principles governing the selection, grading, organisation and presentation of contents are rarely stated in explicit and operational terms. A fully argued account of the relationship between the policy which is to be implemented and the constraints affecting the manner of implementation is even more rare. Teachers' guides offer advice at the level of 'procedure', stating often in considerable detail what to do with the materials, but not why the materials exist in the form that they do (F. C. Johnson, 1973, was a notable exception).

In smaller institutions, and in programmes developed by individual teachers, materials are often fragmentary, and poorly organised (for example as unordered piles of stencils in a cupboard) with little or no guidance as to how the materials should be used. This does not mean that the programme is incoherent as taught, though it may be, only that the curriculum exists primarily within the minds of its creators. When staff changes occur, the teaching materials, the only tangible evidence of that curriculum, make little sense to the newcomers. It is often easier and less frustrating to throw out what exists and begin again from scratch. However, where staffing continuity is relatively assured, the need for formalising the curriculum and for rigorous evaluation of course materials may be questionable in such institutions. A less formal, 'in-service' approach is likely to be more practicable and more productive.

Low, in Part III, discusses organising principles in materials design

which seem most readily generalisable across educational contexts. Other decisions, such as what is relevant, interesting and appropriate can only be considered within the context of a particular teaching and learning situation. Here too, the role of the materials writer is of critical importance. Littlejohn and Windeatt explore ways in which the materials writer can generate mismatch, not only within the curriculum, but between the curriculum and the broader aims of education and society.

TEACHER TRAINING

If the materials writer provides the body of the curriculum, teacher training should provide the spirit. In a coherent curriculum, teacher training would clarify policy aims as expressed in the syllabus, would show how ends and means relate, how they are embodied in the teaching programme and how particular classroom procedures complement the programme materials and optimise learning opportunities. The teacher trainer forms the bridge between the syllabus committee and the classroom, and is ideally placed to facilitate formative evaluation, to aid syllabus revision and to engage in ongoing curriculum development in collaboration with materials writers.

The reality is often the opposite of the ideal. At one extreme, the theoretical, teacher trainers tend to be specialists in applied linguistics in general, and methodology in particular. Their knowledge of the curriculum they supposedly serve is often limited, their attitude towards it may be dismissive and their efforts directed towards revolutionising rather than implementing it. They are critical of programme materials but have little contact with materials writers, and may urge teachers to create their own resources. They often have little sympathy with official policy and would like it changed, usually in a direction better suited to their favourite 'Method'. Meanwhile they espouse the cause of that method anyway, and when it conflicts, as it inevitably does, with the official examination, teachers are urged to ignore the examination. However justified their criticisms, these teacher trainers gain little credibility and have little influence, least of all with teachers. The problem is that they do not play the role which is pre-eminently theirs, that of promoting coherent implementation and development within the curriculum.

There are very different problems at the more practical end of the teacher-training continuum. These specialists are master craftsmen and they have a great deal of credibility with teachers. They see their task as one of handing down tried and tested techniques for implementing a particular programme in the classroom, and they rarely consider or ask teachers to consider the programme as an integrated whole. Their approach often makes the best of a bad programme, but it does not make the bad programme better.