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## *Principles of Course Design for Language Teaching*

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PRINCIPLES OF COURSE DESIGN FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING. Janice Yalden. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. pp. 207. Paper: \$9.95

With the dearth of quality materials about teaching a second language, particularly in developing countries, this book is indeed a very useful guide for both experienced and relatively new teachers in designing language courses and preparing a new set of language teaching materials.

The text is logically arranged into four parts. The introductory section presents the importance of course design for language teaching and synthesizes various language and language teaching theories that may provide a good background for one who is plunging into developing study guides for language classes. The need for identifying a language teaching theory based on experience from learners and teachers is certainly useful and indispensable, and therefore such a theory according to the author must be "accessible to teachers who may be working in all kinds of different educational concepts and teaching any second language to learners of any age."

The second part, which comprises three chapters, poses some theoretical questions that are of paramount importance in the discussion of current issues on language teaching and applied linguistics, namely: the concept of proficiency in a second

language, the pragmatics of language use, and the field of discourse analysis.

The third part, (also three chapters), gives a critical discussion on the problems in language course design that are a blend of theory and practice. It likewise explains new varieties of communicative language teaching approaches, such as the functional syllabus, the negotiated syllabus, the subject-matter syllabus, and the task-based syllabus.

The last section, (four chapters), vividly presents the notion of frameworks. This is the most meaty portion of the text.

A framework, as the book suggests, is a skeletal diagram or outline of teaching-learning concepts which can be expanded into full-blown language lessons in response to the needs of the learners. It also refers to a general plan of study about teaching a second language for interactive or communicative purposes, and is usually mapped out before any teaching of a language begins in the classroom. A framework reflects the teaching context, the cultural considerations for teaching a language, and the objectives upon which language lessons can be specified. It is flexible since it can be modified, substantiated, and enriched by language teachers who are going to use it.

The book clearly suggests that before one can construct a framework, one has to

conduct a needs survey analysis of the learners. On the basis of observations, discussions with learners, and gathered information through the questionnaire and interview techniques, one will know the learners' background qualities, their learning styles and preferences, as well as their language needs. With all these data, the teacher is now ready to pursue the task of constructing frameworks to design language courses.

Furthermore, readers will find the topics on principles for designing a proportional syllabus very stimulating, as follows:

- a) the selection of a language syllabus,
- b) maintaining a balance of teaching contents: linguistic form and communicative functions of language,
- c) the teaching of meaning in contrast to form, and
- d) establishing proportions between teaching formal and functional components of language.

A proportional syllabus, as the term implies, maintains the balance of teaching between the grammatical structures and the communicative functions of language.

Likewise, the text discusses adequately the general principles for designing frameworks, namely:

- a) the design should be conducted with as much consultation as possible with those involved,
- b) it must necessarily be kept lean; that is, users of a given framework can still create relevant or related teaching units out of its general contents,
- c) the framework must be written so that it may be adapted easily, and
- d) the framework should take into account available resources.

The author justifies the use of frameworks by saying that learners require opportunities to communicate in the target language and the frameworks are used to prepare such opportunities.

The book demonstrates a proper sequencing of topics from the beginning chapter to the last. The earlier chapters introduce readers to the rationale for designing language courses and some background theories which have been synthesized and simplified for the convenience of those without any knowledge of descriptive linguistics. The later portions of the book then point out, as mentioned earlier, some current issues on language teaching and classroom approaches to language teaching-learning. With such background information, the book gradually guides the readers towards the discussion of its central theme: that of using and constructing frameworks to design language courses.

The book does not show a complete set of language lessons or teaching materials that evolves from the sample frameworks illustrated in the appendices, but does show various models of skeletal teaching guides, such as

- a) frameworks for teaching units on reading information,
- b) frameworks for opening and closing encounters in a variety of settings, and
- c) frameworks for communication needs courses.

It also suggests steps to transpose or translate the frameworks into more specific language lessons.

Finally, this book addresses itself not only to language teaching practitioners and

specialists, but also to school administrators and supervisors who are involved in the planning, designing, and implementation of language programs in their own school districts. Indeed, it is a most welcome addition to the list of professional materials that ought to be read. I recommend this book without qualification.

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