**Lesson One: Designing a Syllabus or a Course Component**

**Session Four: Completion of Lesson One**

In this lesson another framework is suggested by Richards (2001), he introduces different levels of planning and development, or a set of instructional materials based on the aims and objectives that have been established

1. **The Course Rationale**

It is a description of the course and the nature of it. The course rationale seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Who is this course for?
2. What is the course about?
3. What kind of teaching and learning will take place in the course?

The course rationale answers the questions by describing the beliefs, values, and goals that underlie the course. The rationale is used :

- To guide the planning of various components of the course.

- Emphasize the kinds of teaching and learning the course should exemplify.

- Providing a check on the consistency of the various course components in terms of goals and values.

For developing a course rationale, the course planners need to:

- Give careful consideration to the goals of the course.

- The kinds of teaching and learning they want the course to exemplify.

- The role of the teacher and learners in the coure.

- Principles and beliefs the course will reflect.

1. **Describing the Entry and Exist Level**

To plan a language course, it is necessary to know the level at which the program will start and the level of learners may be expected to be reached at the end of the course. Generally there are elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels, but these categories are too broad for the kinds of detailed planning that a program and material development involve. More detailed descriptions are needed for students’ proficiency levels before they enter a program or targeted proficiency levels.

**3. Choosing Content**

Course content is basically the most important issue in course design. The course needs to address a specific set of needs and to cover a given set of objectives. Discussions about the course content reflect the planners assumptions about the nature of the language, language use, language learning, what are the most essential elements or units of language , and how these can be organized as an efficient basis for second language learning. For example, a writing course will include: grammar (present tense), functions ( describing like dislike), topics (different issues), skills (developing topic sentences), process ( using pre-writing), texts (writing paragraphs).

Speaking lessons can be organized around: function (opinion), interaction skills (opening and closing a conversation), topics (current affairs, business topics).

The choice of particular approach to content selection depends on:

- Subject matter knowledge.

- Learners’ proficiency level.

- Current views on second language and teaching.

- Information gathered during needs analysis.

- Available literature about the topic.

- Published materials on the topic.

- Review of similar courses offered elsewhere.

- Review of tests and exams in the area.

- Analysis of students’ problems.

- Consultation with teachers familiar with the topic.

- Consultation with specialists in the area.

Rough initial ideas are noted down as a basis for further planning and added to through group brainstorming. A list of possible topics, units, skills, and other units of course organization are then generated. One person suggests something that goes into the course, others add their ideas, and these are compared with other sources of information until clearer ideas about the content of the course are agreed on. Throughout this process the statements of aims and objectives are continually referred to and both course content suggestions aims and objectives themselves are revised as the course content is planned.

\* **Determining the Scope and Sequence**

Planning the scope and content is to address the distribution of the content throughout the course. The scope is concerned with the breadth and depth of coverage, here are some kind of questions that may help: what range of content will be covered? To what extent should each topic be studied?

Sequencing may be based on the following criteria:

\* **Simple to complex**: one way of sequencing is by difficulty level.

\* **Chronology:** the order may occur in the way events occurred in the real world. For example: brainstorming- drafting- revising- editing. In a proficiency course, skills may occur in the order normally acquired: listening- speaking- reading- writing.

**\*Needs:** learners needs outside the classroom.

\* **Pre- requisite learning**: what is necessary at one point as a foundation for the next step in the learning process.

**\* Whole to part or part to whole**: materials at the beginning may focus on the overall structure or organization of a topic before considering the individual components.

**\* Spiral sequencing:** this approach involves the recycling of items to ensure that learners have repeated opportunities to learn them.

1. **Planning the Course Content**

It has to do with mapping the course structure in a form and sequence that provides a suitable basis for teaching. Two aspects of this process require more detailed planning: selecting a syllabus framework and developing instructional blocks.

\* **Selecting a syllabus framework**: a syllabus describes the major elements that will be used in planning a language course and provides the basis for instructional focus and content. The syllabus could be:

**Situational:** organized around different situations and the oral skills needed in those situations.

**Topical**: organized around different topics and how to talk about them in English.

**Functional**: organized around the functions most commonly used in speaking.

**Task-based:** organized around different activities and tasks that the learners would carry out in English.

\* **Developing instructional blocks:** a course needs to be mapped out in terms of instructional blocks or sections. An instructional block is a self containing learning sequence that has its own goals and objectives and that reflects the overall objectives of the course. Instructional blocks represent the instructional focus of the course and may be specific (a single lesson) or general ( unit of work consists of many lessons).

The organization of the course into teaching blocks seeks to achieve the following:

- To make the course more teachable and learnable.

- To provide progression in the level of difficulty.

- To create overall coherence of the course.

Two commonly used instructional blocks are planning by modules and by units.

\* **Modules:** self-contained and independent learning sequence with its objectives. For example, 120 hours can be divided into 4 modules 30 hours each. Assessment is carried out at the end of each module. Modules allow for flexible organization of the course and can give learners sense of achievement because objectives are more immediate and specific

\* U**nits :** the teaching block is longer than a single lesson and shorter then a module. It is the commonest way of organizing courses and teaching materials. It is a group of lessons that are planned around a single instructional focus. (referred to as scheme of work). A unit seeks to provide a structured sequence of activities that lead toward an outcome. The factors that account for successful unit include:

**- Length**: sufficient but not too much material is included.

- **Development**: one activity leads to the next. The unit does not consist of a random unit of activities.

- **Coherence**: the units have an overall sense of coherence.

- **Pacing** : each activity moves at a reasonable pace

- **Outcome**: at the end of the unit, students will be able to know or do series of things that are related.

1. **Preparing the Scope and Sequence Plan**

Scope and plan are two ways by which the course can be described. This might consist of listing modules or units and their contents and an indication of how much teaching time for each block in the course.

Richards mentioned evaluation in an another chapter where he talked about the purpose of evaluation as well as formative, illuminative, and summative evaluations.

Though there are other frameworks, researchers talk more or less on the same components; the difference between them is slight.