AMPLIFIED OBJECTIVES AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The plethora of intricate events surrounding language use situations demand language educators to contemplate the context and the variables impinging on and impacting users and messages. This study sketches out what might be contained in developing a realistic curriculum, that is the realities deployed and projected in the materials, methods, assessment and evaluation. Authenticity and validity are linking tenets serving as focal points in the process.

Keywords: amplified objectives, curriculum development, lower secondary, Thailand

Introduction

To fulfill the goal of curriculum development, we propose that amplified objectives are suitable parameters. The amplified objective parameters include the following:

1. Message variables: modality of communication, genre, channel of communication, language function, denotation-connotation, meaning—direct reference, inferences, style, register, theme, topic, situation—(content strand, thematic structure are determined pragmatically using learner variables as guidelines)

2. Sender variables: status, role, intention, attitude, overt and covert meaning

3. Receiver variables: status, role, profession, expectation, attitude
**Review of ELT Objectives**

If we review ELT curriculum objectives over the last 50 years we could come up with a list something like the following: Behavioral Objectives (Bloom, 1956, Mager, 1962); Performance Objectives (Valette & Disick, 1972); Learning Objectives (Munby, 1978); Functional Objectives (van Ek, 1975). Another alternative that we are proposing here is what we have termed, 'Amplified Objectives for Language Learning' (Wongsothorn, 1993, 2003)

**Amplified Objectives**

Amplified objectives are several steps beyond the behavioral objectives. They are much finer and more specific. Amplified objectives have been used for language program evaluation (Wongsothorn, 1986), for assessments of parents', students' and teachers' needs for language (Sikkhachai, 1987; Sittisarn, 1987; and Pakpian, 1987) and for analyzing English language course texts (Wongpinit, 1996).

To trace the development of amplified objectives, one has to start from behavioral objectives, which define human learning in measurable terms, but still lack necessary ingredients to cope with human communication through the medium of language. Baker (1974: 18) criticized behavioral objectives for their incapacity of being the basis for syllabus development. The reason for this is that behavioral objectives lack the specification of representative content, necessary for content recycling if students fail to meet certain objectives.

Amplified objectives, which concretely specify an area of language communication, can help shape curriculum developers in

1. grading the contents
2. identifying the skills and sub-skills
3. setting the standard of attainment
4. providing remedial information
5. linking up with the preceding and following amplified objectives
An Example of Amplified Objectives (AO)
(From Wongsothorn, 1993, 2003)

Amplified Objectives might include all or some of the following:

- Function [or purpose of the discourse]
- Modality [formal/informal]
- Genre [narrative, recount, procedure, argument etc.]
- Status/Role [inferior to superior, husband to wife]
- Style [direct or indirect]
- Register [what is the subject of the communication; to whom; what mode of communication]
- Discourse channel [spoken or written]
- Context of situation and culture

Research findings concerning constructs of communicative language abilities will shed light on curriculum design. Should the courses integrate reading with vocabulary, writing with grammar, speaking and listening with sound, vocabulary, and grammar? Should listening be integrated with speaking and writing, is another? Should writing be integrated with speaking (both productive skills) or with reading (both visual channels) or should reading be integrated with writing-reading-and oral presentation? Yet the student level of learning is also crucial for the design. Should sound modality be emphasized for young learners? Should oral skills and literacy be equally emphasized for the intermediate learners? Should literacy be more emphasized in academic-oriented curriculum for upper intermediate-advanced learners of English? These questions are answerable if evidence from research for each category of learners having the same needs or having differing needs can be found.

Below is a suggestion for AO application to curriculum design for the lower secondary level:

For Lower Secondary Level

*Language Skill-Language Component Dimension*

Oral skills 75% - Listening, Listening-Writing, Listening-Reading-Writing, Sound Discrimination, Word Stress, Speaking
Reading and Writing (25%)--Writing, Reading, Vocabulary, Reading-Writing, Grammar

**Socio-Cultural Dimension**

**Situations:** English in a fun context e.g. games, social events, celebrations, etc.
**Status & Role of Language Users:** Real and imaginative roles; equal and unequal statuses

**Discourse Dimension**

**Genre:** stories, songs, documents, anecdotes, news stories
**Theme:** IT, great men of the century, exploration into the unknown, space exploration
**Topic:** Leonardo DaVinci, New Galaxy, Y2K, IMAX Theatre
**Attitude:** Positive, negative, narcastic, sincere
**Mood:** Joyful, serious
**Formality:** Intimate, informal, casual, formal
**Function:** Describe, narrate, invite, inquire, give information, etc.

**Conclusion and Recommendation**

In planning a curriculum for language learning, the external functioning in the contexts of use or the E-Language (E for external) has been emphasized, not the I Language--(I for Internal) in the same way as studies in applied linguistics (Widdowson, 1999).

It is therefore appropriate to start curriculum design from the perspectives of amplified objectives, which incorporate communicative dimensions of language use in real life situations for everyday communication, for academic pursuits, for careers, and for entertainment. In other words, amplified objectives with the material/media variables, learner variables, communication variables, language and function variables will empower curriculum developers to carry on their tasks with confidence that what they are going to create will be very useful, reliable, experiential-based and perhaps more importantly a possible reflection of reality.
References and Further Readings


Bloom, B.S. (1956) *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, the classification of educational goals*. New York: McKay


