

Research Article

DESIGN A LISTENING AND SPEAKING SYLLABUS WITH LEARNING-CENTERED APPROACH FOR NURSES OF INTERNATIONAL MANPOWER SUPPLYING AND CONSTRUCTION JSC

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ABSTRACT

A syllabus is a document which says what students will learn in the course. But in fact there are so many different ways to define a syllabus. This stem from the fact that the statement of what will be learnt passes through various stages before it reaches its destination in the students' minds. There are three approaches to design a syllabus: language-centred approach, skills-centred approach and learning-centred one. A learning-centred course syllabus focuses on the needs of the students and their learning process. Instructors specifically include information that will facilitate the academic success of students. This paper will not only focus on learning-centred approach which is chosen to design a syllabus for a target group who will be described clearly below but give sample of one unit in the syllabus as well.

Keywords: Syllabus, Learning centered approach, Manpower supplying

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important views in the design of any English language syllabus is an identification of the learners, their likely contributions, and their needs, therefore, to identify and give priority to what learners bring to the teaching-learning process in the form of his initial competence. Only when you know the needs of the learner, can you specify the aims and objectives of the syllabus to meet these needs. Here is the introduction about International Manpower Supplying and Construction JSC. (NIBELC) NIBELC is a state-owned company, established in 1968 and transformed to JSC Company in 2005. NIBELC specializes on training high-level technicians, manpower export and building national civil works. NIBELC have already supplied thousands of Vietnamese for the international projects all over the world which brings benefits to the labors and contributes to the nation development. The basic training fields are: construction, transportation, operating motorized equipments, housemaids, hotel-supermarket staffs and etc. NIBELC has signed to contract to export 20 nurses to work in nursing home in Dubai, U.A.E. in 2 years, thus they need a syllabus of an English course to train the nurses for their future career in Dubai. To design this syllabus they use learning-centered method to approach the nurses' needs.

- There are 20 people, among the age from 24 to 30.
- All nurses graduated from Hanoi Medical College and Thai Binh Medical College where English lecturers used *Headway Elementary* by John & Liz Soars (2000) as textbooks. Therefore, nurses are considered to be at elementary level. However, according to most of them, they studied just on grammar and structures and went through listening and speaking parts.
- The instruments to define nurses' needs are questionnaires. They will work in nursing home in a foreign country where requires much speaking and listening skills (not only for their career but also for their social communication), thus a speaking and listening course is held.

- 5 nurses are working in some hospitals in Hanoi as a part-time job, 7 nurses are working at pharmacy stores and others are unemployed at the moment.
- The course will last 12 weeks and nurses will study at weekends. They will study three periods per week and each period will last forty-five minutes.
- In order to design a speaking and listening syllabus, I need to take a deeper look at the staff's difficulties in speaking:
- Some people are worried about lack of vocabulary and structures to express their ideas.
- Some answered that they are not good at pronunciation and intonation.
- Some have difficulties such as making mistakes because they are not confident and being bad at listening so they could not understand much.
- Others said they had difficulty in expressing ideas about topic because they lack knowledge about the topics.
- All nurses confirmed that they hardly have opportunities to practice English because they had not any sample conversation.
- Based on the nurses' needs analysis, I attempt to set aims and objectives of the speaking & listening syllabus.
- Aims:
 - To provide nurses with basic techniques in speaking and listening skills.
 - To improve nurses' general knowledge.
 - To enable nurses to communicate effectively with partners and patients, establish and maintain relationships with members of the target community and present their ideas about personal and social issues in English.
- Objectives:
 - To help nurses develop different oral communication skills including using body language, or gestures.
 - To provide opportunities for nurses to engage in real talks.
 - To familiarize nurses with vocabulary situation.

REVIEW OF LEARNING-CENTERED APPROACH TO COURSE DESIGN

A learning-centered course syllabus focuses on the needs of the students and their learning process. Instructors specifically include information that will facilitate the academic success of students (Table 1 – Appendix) A learner-centered approach to learning and teaching sees learning as the active construction of meaning, and teaching as the act of guiding, scaffolding and facilitating learning. This approach considers knowledge as being an ever-changing process, which is built upon the learners' prior experience (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 59f). A learner-centered approach provides opportunities for students to practice critical and creative thinking, problem solving, and decision making. This involves recall, application, analysis, synthesis, prediction and evaluation; all of which contribute to the development and enhancement of conceptual understandings. A learner-centered approach also encourages students to demonstrate ownership of their ideas and to reflect on and monitor their thinking as they make decisions and take action. In the key learning area of EFL, learning experiences should be adjusted as required to meet the abilities, needs, and interests of individuals and groups of students. This may mean providing different amounts of time, space or materials, and offering a range of levels and types of support to students. Students may engage in experiences in different ways, or make choices from a range of options so that learning is relevant and meaningful. This approach can involve both students and teachers in the design of learning and assessment opportunities, and requires negotiation and flexibility (Wajnryb, 1992: 124). According to Hutchinson and Water (1987:72), "we would reject the term a learner-centered approach in favor of a learning-centered approach to indicate that the concern is to maximize learning" because of the following reasons:

- The learner is the only one factor to consider in learning process.
- Learning can and should be seen in the context it takes place.
- Learning should be seen as an external process since learning is not just a mental process, it is a negotiated process between individuals and society.

This approach says that we must look beyond the competence that enables someone to perform, because what we really want to discover is not the competence itself, but how someone acquires that competence. Learning-centered approach is an integration of language-centered approach and skills-centered approach, considers the learners at their full components at every stage of learning process: 'syllabus and materials evolve together with each being able to inform the other'. The learner' needs as 'users' and 'learners' of the language are both met. Educators must remember that learning occurs within each individual as a continual process throughout life. It cannot be avoided. People learn at different speeds, so it is natural for them to be anxious or nervous when faced with an unfamiliar learning situation. Positive reinforcement can enhance learning, as can proper timing of the instruction. When dealing with skill acquisition a trainer can do worse than utilizing the apprenticeship model mentioned earlier. "Apprenticeship focuses closely on the specific methods for carrying out tasks in a domain. Apprentices learn these methods through a combination of what Lave calls observation, coaching and practice, or what we, from the teacher's point of view, call modeling, coaching and fading."(Collins et al., 1989, p. 455). This is the way most of us learned to drive and is appropriate for developing practical skills in most emergency management areas. Initially the trainer demonstrates or models the desired skill or behavior. This may be a practical demonstration or may be accomplished through video or computer simulation. The important

thing here is that the learner has a clear mental image of what constitutes acceptable performance. One demonstration will not, in most cases, be sufficient. People learn through repetition. Coaching involves observing learners while they carry out a task and offering hints, scaffolding, feedback, modeling, reminders and new tasks aimed at bringing their performance closer to expert performance. Coaches should expect the learner to make errors and should provide reinforcement. Reinforcement is simply providing praise or correction to assist the learner to move nearer to acceptable performance. One of the simplest models of reinforcement is that used internationally by the Toastmasters organization. This is the CRC (commend, recommend, commend) model. Feedback always starts and finishes by pointing out the aspects of performance that are good or improved and recommendations should be provided. Any criticism should be leveled at the task not at the learner. It is neither acceptable nor effective to provide punitive self-efficacy reducing reinforcement in the guise of "instruction". The Sunrise report into the training of fire-fighters in the United Kingdom looked at a number of training establishments (Baigent, 2003). Some of these they labeled as progressive and some as regimented. They stated that "if you bully someone in training, set impossible goals, and teach facts rather than understanding, then it is likely that, as they mature as fire-fighters, they will fit-in with bullies at the station, challenge organizational goals, and resist"(p. 1) the agreed strategic direction of today's fire service. The report concluded that the progressive training centres were more likely to turn out effective fire-fighters. "There is considerable concern throughout the Fire and Rescue Service (particularly with trainers) that "standards are dropping". Shifting the emphasis from trainer led control to facilitating trainee's self-motivation is unlikely to lead to a drop in standards. It is an important step towards ensuring the Fire and Rescue Service is equipping itself to develop. Trainers set the standard but it is a visible standard with a clear purpose"(p. 13).

Dee Fink (2003, 2004) describes a multistage design process for creating integrated courses that promote significant learning.

- Identify critical components of the course: learning goals, teaching and learning activities, assessment procedures, and strategies for providing feed-back to students. Instructors who begin design of a course by identifying learning outcomes are more likely to select other course components that align and integrate with learning outcomes, with no disconnects between components.
- Create the overall course structure and sequence of instructional strategies that promote the course learning outcomes.
- Finalize the details of course mechanics. Create a system for assigning grades and write the course syllabus.
- Identify and debug potential problems in managing the course. For example, will students have enough time to complete the background work for an assignment before the assignment is due? Will students have access to the resources needed to complete assignments? Are the required readings available on campus?

Include formal mechanisms for assessing the learning activities in the course. Good course design concludes with planning how the instructor will evaluate of the effectiveness of assignments and instructional strategies. Not every assignment works perfectly the first time we implement it. Moreover, change over time is inevitable. Disciplinary changes may require changes in course learning outcomes. Changes in the skill sets of new cohorts of students present challenges and may require modified strategies for teaching and learning. Technology may render an existing teaching activity

ineffective or irrelevant. New technology may present opportunities for creating new, more effective learning activities. In the absence of continuous self-reflection and evidence-based evaluation of course components, a well-designed course will become obsolete and ineffective.

RATIONALE

A learning-centered approach helps students to develop a “can-do” attitude. It is effective, motivating, and enjoyable. I would like to propose some characteristics which make me decide to choose this kind of approach to design a course syllabus. The syllabus with learning-centered approach will help students not considered to be empty vessels. They come with their own perceptual frameworks. The main aim is not just on what is taught but on how effective learning should be promoted. This also means students learning becomes the main preoccupation of the teacher (not his or her performance as a teacher or a raw number of facts to be transmitted to the students). On the other hands, it is recognized that students learn in different ways and have different learning styles. Personalized or individualized responses are encouraged. This helps to foster creativity in students. Besides, learning is recognized as an active dynamic process in which connections between different facts, ideas and processes are constantly changing and their structure is continually reformatted. Such connections are fostered through dialogue between teacher and students and students with their peers. This kind of syllabus will help them to develop human relationships and communicative skills. Students are constantly encouraged to formulate and reformulate their hypotheses in the solution of problems and tasks they work. Students will have chances to construct their own meaning by talking, listening, writing, reading and reflecting on content, ideas, issue and concerns. Students are known not to be passive receiver of knowledge but, rather active participants. Students have the responsibility to accommodate the learning process to their own unique learning style in order to structure their learning. Teacher’s role is that of a guide who assists students in the difficult process of constructing their individual system of knowledge. For instance, teachers will need to show students how to become responsible for their learning by giving them opportunities to frame questions effectively on their own, to see how problems can be represented and to determine how to gather information relevant to these problems. Another example highlighting the role of teacher with a learning-centered approach syllabus ensures that students operate within their zone of next development. More precisely, teachers need to shape expectations so that students can recognize relevant information as it emerges, as well as to interpret new data in constructive and organized ways. These actions will contribute to their capacity to retain knowledge over time and to have an active role in it. Learning-centered approach syllabus helps students to become more open and more efficient at making decisions on their own and it also recognizes that interactions between teacher and students are natural, thus breaking the psychological barrier whereby students see their teachers as experts. In addition, what to be learnt is determined by the child’s understanding at the precise moment and knowledge is build upon and constructed on what the learner already knows. In short, a syllabus with learning-centered approach will help to establish a contact and connection between students and teachers. It sets the tone for the course and describes the writer’s belief about learning, teaching and assessment. It also acquaints students with the structure of the course and contains handouts or detailed assignment descriptions. Thanks to learning-centered approach, students can define responsibilities for success a determination their readiness for the course. A well-written learning-centered syllabus additionally states how the course fits into the curriculum and overall program, describes available learning resources, communicates

technology requirements for the course and contains difficult-to-obtain reading materials. Last but not least, it describes effective student study habits, included materials that support learning outside the classroom. This paper focuses on nurses of NIBELC who are going to work abroad. They themselves understand their wants and needs than anyone else, thus a syllabus is designed based on their requirements, thank to learning-centered approach. Now, nurses are in active situation in which they can choose what they want to learn, what they need to accomplish when working abroad. That makes them motivated to study. Moreover, what nurses learn will help them much for not only their career but also their life abroad, not to get scores or grades. In learning-centered class, the teacher is an instructor or a facilitator. A syllabus with learning-centered approach compiled with learning-centered teaching method in class will make the relationship between nurses and the instructor closer. So nurses won’t find pressured when studying, which makes them learn better. Those nurses will have chances to learn multiple concepts, facts, and skills, often embedded in larger projects and problems. They will also develop autonomy, capacity for self-regulation and sense of responsibility.

SAMPLE OF COURSE SYLLABUS

Allocation of time

This syllabus is for nurses from NIBELC JSC who will work in nursing house in 2 years in Dubai, U.A.E. The course will last in 12 weeks, nurses have three listening and speaking periods per week and each period lasts for forty-five minutes.

Quantity and structure of the subject

Quantity: Number of module: 1
 Number of unit: 9
 Structure: Number of theory period: 30%
 Number of practice period: 70%

Organization of the syllabus content

Course organization, either on the lesson level or on the overall organization of the course is very important, since it provides the teachers and students with clear ideas of what will be taught.

From the survey results about situations and needs analysis, the syllabus is topic syllabus and it should be organized into the following content areas:

Objectives: After the lesson, the nurses will be able to:

- Revise Present Simple and Past Simple.
- Know how to make questions and negative.
- Know how to use short answers.
- Know how to make offers and requests.
- Know how to use time expression
- Be equipped with vocabulary or new words related to the topic.
- Take note while listening, summarize the main ideas and listening for specific information.

Designed tasks:

Task 1: Work with a partner. What are some of the most common problems for which people go to a doctor when seeking medical advice and an examination? Do you ever look for a medical advice?

Table 1. Organization of the syllabus content

Lesson (1/3periods)	Topics	Language functions
1	Foreign language learning	Discussing about good environment, most difficult skill and how to improve speaking and listening skill
2	Small talk, conversational openings	Making small talk, making introductions
3	Hotels, reservations, services	Asking about types of hotels, asking for details, making a reservation, checking in, making requests, calling hotel services
4	Telephoning	Asking to speak to someone, offering to take a message, writing messages down, leaving a message, calling for information
5	Cultural socks	Discussing the culture of Vietnam and Dubai, how to avoid cultural socks
6	Medical industry	Giving background of medical industry in Dubai.
7	Progress oral Test 1	
8	Health care	Providing health care systems and policies in Dubai
9	Food	Preparing healthy food for patients
10	Medical service	Discussing medical facilities between Vietnam and Dubai
11	Progress oral Test 2	
12	Review	

Sample of a unit syllabus

Example of a pedagogical syllabus for nurses of NIBELC

Unit	Topic	Skills	Functions & notions	Structures	Lexis	Activities
Unit 10	Medical service. 1. Making an appointment. 2. Describing a person's medical history.	- Taking notes. - Summarizing the main ideas. - Listening for specific information.	- Describing. - Explaining. - Giving instructions. - Following instructions.	- Present Simple. - Past Simple. - Offers and request. - Short answers.	- Medical terms. - Time expression.	- Information gaps. - Discussing. - Multiple choice. - Roleplay.

Task 2: Listen to the conversation and choose the best answer.

- What is the man's name?
 - Russell
 - Randall
 - Ronald
- From the conversation, how did the man probably find out about Dr. Carter?
 - He saw the office on his way home from work.
 - A friend referred him to Dr. Carter's office.
 - He found Dr. Carter's number in the phone book.
- What time does he schedule an appointment to see Dr. Carter?
 - Tuesday
 - Wednesday
 - Thursday
- Why does the man want to see the doctor?
 - He hurt his knee when a tall ladder fell on him.
 - He injured his ankle when he fell from a ladder.
 - He sprain his hand when he fell off the roof of his house
- What does the nurse suggest at the end of the conversation?
 - The man should put some ice on his injury.
 - The man needs to come into the office right away.
 - The man ought to take it easy for a few days.

Task 3. Fill in the blank with the words from the box.
Check with your partner

Happen	Case	Sprained
Referred	Nature	

- The doctor _____ me to a special who might be able to help me more.
- I _____ to know a good health center you might want to visit about your skin problem.
- The full _____ of the patient's condition was not clear until the doctors began the surgery.
- In the _____ of severe medical emergencies, patients are rushed to the city hospital for immediate care.
- Ah, my ankle is killing me, I think I might have _____ it.

Task 4: Role-play

Work with a partner. You are in a hospital

Student A: You are a nurse.

Student B: You are a patient.

The guest has several requests. Use these situations. Change roles after three conversations.

- The patient wants to make a nose plastic surgery.
- The patient has a headache in a week.
- The patient wants to have a routine examination.

Task 5: What are you major concerns in visiting medical facilities, for example, a doctor's office or a hospital in Dubai? What differences have you noticed in the medical care, facilities and attitudes of doctors and nurses towards patients in comparison with those in your own country?

CONCLUSION

It is clear that a syllabus plays an important part in the teaching and learning process. An appropriate syllabus contributes to the success and fulfills the objectives of an English course. With the fact that English for Specific Purposes has become an important branch in the English teaching as it helps students to become more active in their specific field of study as well as their real work. The aim of this paper was to design a listening and speaking syllabus with learning-centered approach for nurses in NIBELC JSC. The paper analyzed the literature reviews of learning-centered approach to design a syllabus, which helps me to identify the reasons why I chose this approach to design a listening and speaking syllabus. A sample of a unit designed for the nurses is also shown above to prove how effectively learning-centered approach is applied to suit the nurses' wants and needs for their careers.

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Thank you very much for your help!

SECTION I: Topics needed to be included in the ESP listening and speaking syllabus for nurses of NIBELC.

Please tick in the boxes the topics that you think should be included in the ESP listening and speaking course and add more topics of your own if necessary

1 = very relevant; 2 = relevant; 3 = fairly relevant; 4 = not relevant

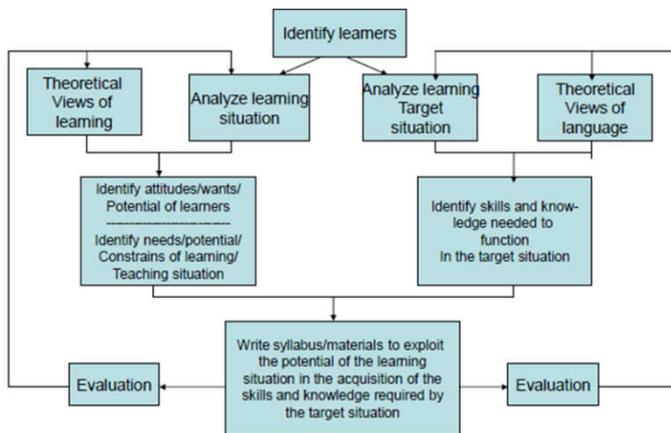
Items	Topics	1	2	3	4
1	Holidays and festivals				
2	Family				
3	Cultural socks				
4	Telephoning				
5	Health care				
6	Medical industry				
7	Music				
8	Food				
9	City life and country life				
10	Small talk, conversational openings				
11	Money				
12	Diseases				
13	Medical equipments				
14	Foreign language learning				
15	Hotels, reservations, services				

SECTION II: Questions related to nurses' needs and wants

Please circle what you think is/ are suitable to your situation.

- Why do you learn English?
 - To help my job.
 - To finish my course.
 - To communicate every day.
 - To go abroad to study.
 - To work in foreign countries
- What do you think about listening and speaking skills to your job?
 - Very necessary
 - Necessary
 - Rather necessary.
 - Not necessary.
- How do you evaluate your English listening and speaking skills now?
 - Very bad
 - Bad
 - Average
 - Quite good
 - Good
- How do you feel listening and speaking lessons while you were at college?
 - Not satisfied.
 - Not very satisfied.
 - Satisfied.
 - Very satisfied.
- How do you evaluate the content of the topics in listening and speaking lesson?
 - Very interesting and suitable with the medical job
 - Very interesting but not suitable with the medical job
 - Quite suitable
 - Too difficult
- What is your opinion about the activities designed in listening and speaking lessons while you were students?
 - Very interesting and suitable with your level.
 - Very interesting but difficult
 - Too difficult with your level
 - Boring

APPENDIX I



APPENDIX II

QUESTIONNAIRE

Respondents: Nurses of International of Manpower and Construction JSC. (NIBELC)

Purpose: Collecting ideas to design an ESP listening and speaking syllabus for nurses of NIBELC. The syllabus is expected to be appropriate to the training objectives of the college and to meet nurses' needs. Your thoughtful assistance in completing the following items is highly appreciated. All information provided will be used for the course purposes only.

- 7. How do you take part in activities in listening and speaking lessons?
 - a. Enthusiastically.
 - b. Not very enthusiastically.
 - c. You are very shy.
 - d. You only speak when the teacher asks you
 - e. I don't know what to say.

- 8. What do you have difficulties in listening and speaking lessons?
 - a. Not confident to get some errors.
 - b. Wrong pronunciation and intonation
 - c. Lack of vocabulary and structures to express ideas.
 - d. Not the same conversation sample to practice
 - e. People speak too fast so you can't understand much
 - f. Lack of knowledge about the discussed topics.
 - g. Other difficulties:

- 9. Things will make you satisfied in the listening and speaking lessons:
 -
 -
 -

- 10. Things will make you unsatisfied in the listening and speaking lessons:
 -
 -
 -

- 11. In your opinion, what can improve your listening and speaking skills?
 -
 -
 -