

CHAPTER 5

CURRENT LANGUAGE SYLLABUSES: AN ANALYSIS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reports on an analysis of a representative sample of language teaching syllabuses from Scotland, Europe, the U.S.A, Africa, Australia and Hong Kong. The aims of this analysis are twofold:

- to determine to what extent current syllabuses are task-based, and,
- to establish what these syllabuses specify.

In a response to a written request, several syllabuses from Scotland, Europe, the U.S.A., Africa, Australia and Hong Kong were received. Syllabuses for foreign languages, English as first language and second language are analysed. They were selected on the basis of their task-based characteristics, and they are a representative sample of such syllabuses.

The following syllabuses are discussed:

Foreign languages:

Graded Levels of Achievement in Foreign Language Learning syllabus, Scotland.

English as L1:

Alabama Course of Study, English Language Arts, USA
The Alaska Model Curriculum Guide, Language Arts, USA

English as L2:

The Dutch Syllabus for ESL, The Netherlands

The Botswana Syllabus for ESL, Botswana

The Australian Language Levels Project, ESL, Australia

The Target Oriented Curriculum Programme of Study for ESL,
Hong Kong

There is an increasing tendency to refer to language programmes or projects, rather than to syllabuses. This is presumably to provide a wider and more holistic framework in which different syllabuses can be developed.

5.2 GRADED LEVELS OF ACHIEVEMENT IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING (GLAFL)

Clark was influential in the renewal of syllabuses for modern foreign language teaching in Lothian, Scotland. Clark's (1987:131-185) work in the Graded Levels of Achievement in Foreign Language Learning (GLAFL) project made it possible to accommodate pupils of heterogeneous achievement in one group. The GLAFL framework was initially reconstructionist, and from the needs analysis attempted to establish the following:

- a series of graded stages and a suggested teaching course for each;
- an internal assessment scheme designed to inform the teaching-learning process and keep the pupil informed of achievement, and
- a scale of levels of performance (LoP) to which pupils can be assigned on the basis of performance and end-of-stage communicative tests.

Stages and levels indicate the differences that exist between learners within a specific period (normally designated as a school year in other language programmes). Stages indicate the process towards set objectives, whereas levels indicate individual performances within a stage. Although pupils are in the same grade, they are seldom at the same stage or level. The

unique GLAFL system allows stages and levels to overlap. Three levels exist within each stage: the pupil has just reached a level, is well on his way towards the next level, or is just about ready to start the next level. A series of overlapping stages are also established to indicate progress to the next year. This system was initially used in the secondary school only and lengthy negotiations between pupil and teacher made it possible for both to agree on which level and which stage the pupil should be - a process not possible with school beginners. Page (1983:298) concedes that the definition of levels initially relied heavily on the intuitive decisions of teachers of what they perceived their pupils would be expected to know at the end of a level. He also points out that most of the content was initially selected by introspective analysis by teachers.

The problem of whether objectives should be described in terms of holistic tasks or sub-tasks, is addressed by including the sub-tasks without atomising the task into minute parts. An example of the discrete description of sub-tasks in order to complete a holistic task is given in Table 3 (Page & Hewett, 1987:28).

<i>Level 1</i>
<i>I can:</i>
1. ask for tickets for a bus or train
2. ask how much that costs;
3. understand how much that costs.
<i>Task</i>
<i>I can buy tickets for use on public transport.</i>

TABLE 3: An example of a holistic task description and discrete functions and notions

Content selection and grading follow a two-dimensional approach. Both a Communication Syllabus and Language Resources Syllabus (or Instructional Syllabus) are provided. Teachers can either start at the task in the Communicative Syllabus and work towards the functional, notional and grammatical exponents or start with the

Instructional Syllabus and work towards the final achievement of the task.

Classroom activity was initially characterised by the exercising of sub-skills by means of dialogues, but a later move to a progressivist approach produced experimental and open-ended teaching. Jigsaw listening and reading, and information and opinion-gap activities, leading to the solution of real problems, were found to be particularly beneficial in the pursuit of communicative activities.

Clark (1987:163) says that teachers as well as pupils need to be consulted for the selection of activities. If only pupils are consulted, 'fun' activities only are bound to be selected.

An important aspect of the GLAFLL Project is the delineation of levels and stages of achievement. The progression of levels in the Lothian syllabuses is determined by the addition of topics, or by the recycling of topics on a higher level, or a combination of adding and recycling topics. Within each level there are also overlapping stages of performance (or enabling waystages). Table 4 indicates the overlapping nature of levels and stages. Each stage overlaps with the preceding one, yet each stage has a number of aims in common with other stages. This enables the teacher to teach different levels within a stage at the same time, although such a system of differentiation is not easy.

Clark (1987:141) describes the quantitative and qualitative progression of the stages as follows:

Each successive Stage would:

- contain all the previous Stages plus a bit more
- call for a higher Level of communicative performance as a result of an expected increase in communicative capacity.

Stage	Level
1	0
	1
	2
or	
	1
	2
2	3
or	2
	3
3	4
3	2
	3
or	4
4	3
	4
	5
or	
	4
5	5
	6

TABLE 4: The overlapping nature of levels and stages of GLAFL

Various task-types are used, e.g. tasks relating to conversation and correspondence. Table 5 is an extract from a description of Clark and Hamilton's (1984:30) of one such category of tasks. It describes the event, task or activity the pupils are involved in, the functions and notions underlying the tasks and examples of tasks. It is clear that the description of tasks involves a number of components.

The syllabus makes a conscious effort to reconcile process and product-oriented approaches. It provides guidelines as to why the pupil should learn specific tasks, what the pupil should learn and how the pupil should learn. Page and Hewett (1987:79) point out Clark's contribution in proposing the explicit teaching of grammar within context; an approach that was initially unpopular

in communicative teaching.

Tasks: Conversation and correspondence

<i>Event</i> <i>1. Identifying a person or object</i> <i>Conversation in groups or pairs</i>	<i>Functions and notions likely to be involved</i> <u>Functions</u> <i>Describing</i> <i>Seeking information</i> <i>Seeking confirmation</i> <u>Notions</u> <i>Size, colour, shape, position, parts of body, clothes, possessions, actions, contents of handbag, etc. + physical and psychological characteristics</i>	<i>Pupil A has a picture of a thief.</i> <i>Pupil B has several pictures and must identify the one described by Pupil A as the thief.</i> <i>Pupil A has a picture of his lost bicycle.</i> <i>Pupil B has several pictures of bicycles and must identify the one described by Pupil A as the lost one.</i>
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TABLE 5: Task description in GLAFLL

Clark and Hamilton (1984) solve one of the most daunting problems of the language teacher, and that is to provide a structured and integrated approach that addresses the reasons for including learning content (why a pupil should learn specific tasks), the process of the learning period (how the pupil should learn) through suggestions of activities and resource materials, and the products of learning (what a pupil should be able to do after learning). The aims and objectives of teaching are sub-divided under the task-types and organised under functions (using verbs e.g. 'attracting attention, seeking information' to indicate the tasks) as well as extensive lists of possible notional content. The main task also contains a verb.

Although the syllabus indicates functions and notions, tasks or events are used as units of analysis. As there is a purposeful interactive activity, e.g. 'seeking information through

conversation' which yields a definite measurable outcome (i.e. the achievement of the task) through a process of communication that the learner engages in, the GLAFLI syllabus can be regarded as task-based in its approach.

The GLAFLI Project propagates the use of Pupil Progress Cards that indicate the formative testing that is performed throughout the year on pupil demand. The pupil takes responsibility and negotiates his performance to some extent with the teacher. Not only does the Level of Performance (LoP) record reflect real pupil performance and a synopsis of what they can do, but it also boosts confidence and provides a structure to help pupils understand the rule-based nature of language. The successful completion of tasks for oral competence, for example, places a pupil on one of three levels of proficiency. Each level includes the following parameters:

- communicative ability;
- range of structures;
- grammatical accuracy and appropriacy;
- pronunciation;
- hesitancy/speed, and
- length of utterance.

Clark provides a set of criteria and a fixed framework within which the teacher can assess any performance, not intuitively, but measured against the guidelines provided.

It was intended that pupils should take stage tests when they were ready for them, but as this proved burdensome, groups or whole classes are allowed to take centrally devised end-of-stage proficiency summative tests are taken by the entire group if and when the group is ready for them. Summative tests need not be taken at the end of the year, but they do indicate the end of a stage. Time limits to reach objectives are of no concern to either teacher or learner as individual profiles reflect individual progress. Teachers involved in the GLAFLI Project were

also involved in the regional development of tests so that objectives were harmonised and standardisation promoted.

The Progress Card contains four columns. The first indicates the learning tasks (preferably in the form of a holistic communication task that is later broken down into discrete functions or notions) and the second column has a space for the pupils to tick when they have completed a task to their own satisfaction. The third column is for the teacher (or peer) to indicate that the task has been checked by another person (should it be required) before the final assessment. The fourth column is for assessment according to the scheme of levels worked out by individual schools for the profiling of learners' progress.

Interaction patterns are characterised by pupil-to-pupil interaction and the teacher increasingly becomes the organiser, facilitator and orchestrator of classroom events, rather than the dictator.

One of the most distinctive and valuable contributions of the GLAFLS syllabus is the scientific and structured attempt to select, grade and sequence learning content according to a given set of criteria. Task-types that reflect real-life communicative skills, such as 'buying things', 'seeking information' as well as educational tasks, e.g. 'classifying and identifying objects' are used to organise content. The tasks are graded according to an increasing demand on knowledge and language resources and are sequenced from easy to difficult in such a way that the stages overlap. Fluency and accuracy skills are practised adequately. The decision of when to assess the successful accomplishment of a task is mostly left to the pupil, who submits himself for assessment as soon as he judges that he can successfully complete the whole task. During task execution, explicit teaching of language as object of study also takes place. As the pupil knows what criteria are used when he is being assessed, he judges whether or not he is ready for assessment. The pupil uses self-assessment, peer assessment and finally teacher assessment to

progress. More importantly, language learning becomes part of the learning process *per sé* and is not viewed as something removed from the complex and intertwined process of life-long learning.

The GLAFLS syllabus succeeds in providing teachers and learners with a firmly structured plan for language learning and teaching which also provides enough space for teacher and pupil to satisfy individual needs and circumstances.

5.3 TWO AMERICAN SYLLABUSES FOR FIRST LANGUAGE LEARNING

A written communiqué to all states in the USA resulted in the receipt of education documents and syllabuses for English in 17 states. However, many states are in a transitional period as regards the approach to language teaching and learning and could only provide interim and discussion documents.

The American school system is divided into the following stages (the school years are indicated in brackets):

- Primary (Kindergarten-2);
- Upper Elementary (3-5);
- Middle School (6-8), and
- High School (9-12).

Two comprehensive documents, namely the Alabama Course of Study English Language Arts (1994), the Alaska Model Curriculum Guide (1989) are discussed. They are both English First Language syllabuses.

5.3.1 Alabama Course of Study - English Language Arts

The *Alabama Course of Study - English Language Arts* is fairly representative of the approach that most states in the USA follow. The syllabus provides a developmental profile of learners at a certain level and sub-goals for every developmental stage. Student outcomes are further described in terms of recommended

activities and in terms of the minimum required content of the level concerned.

All language activities in the syllabus centre around the goal that pupils should evolve into 'effective communicators that appreciate life-long language usage and learning'. The following nine principles are stated (Alabama Course of Study, 1993:11):

- *meaning-centered activities;*
- *language kept whole;*
- *student involvement in authentic activities;*
- *student interaction;*
- *curriculum integration;*
- *print- and media-rich environment;*
- *multicultural literature;*
- *critical and creative thinking and*
- *developmentally appropriate instruction.*

The sub-goals are the objectives that the learners should work towards, described in terms of what they should be able to **do**. The objectives are task-based as they indicate, through the use of verbs, a purposeful action (e.g. read with ease materials encountered in daily lives) and a learning process (e.g. apply strategies to construct meaning). There is an emphasis on problem-solving skills (e.g. categorising). Accuracy and fluency are emphasised through the description of grammar and spelling outcomes and through the requirement that communication should be effective, competent and confident. Products or outcomes are measurable and concise. Various interactive tasks are the organising units of the syllabus. Task-types are not used for the organisation of content, although examples of task-types such as 'following directions' are given. The following extract illustrates fourth grade content (Alabama State Department of Education, 1993:48-49):

FOURTH GRADE

PROGRAM GOAL: 1. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATORS

SUB-GOALS

A. Apply strategies to construct meaning from oral, written and visual material.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Students will

1. Link oral, written, and visual material to prior knowledge and construct meaning experiences to expand comprehension.
2. Construct meaning from printed materials by applying appropriate strategies across the curriculum.
Examples: predicting, using context clues, questioning
3. Read with ease materials encountered in daily lives.
 - Informational
Examples: classroom texts, catalogs, directories
 - Recreational
Examples: writing by self and peers, trade books
4. Employ study strategies with increasing facility to gain information.
Examples: previewing, questioning, following directions, categorizing, skimming
5. Use reference sources for a variety of purposes.
Examples: table of contents, encyclopedias, telephone directories, electronic media.
6. Become more active listeners by applying appropriate strategies.
 - Establishing purposes
 - Focusing on the listening task
 - Discriminating among received messages
 - Assigning meaning to messages received
 - Using self-monitoring techniques to assess effectiveness
7. Express meaning through writing sentences and paragraphs in an organized manner.
Examples: attending to mechanics, grammar, and usage; spelling correctly.
8. Write with ease in academic, social, personal situations.
 - Letters
 - Friendly
 - Business
 - Thank-you notes
 - Envelope addresses
 - Invitations
 - Journals
 - Messages
 - Book reports
 - Poetry
 - Forms

B. Express meaning effectively, competently and confidently in various spoken and written modes.

Content selection reflects the developmental stages of year groups. The four language skills are addressed separately. Guidelines are given for teaching outcomes, e.g. '(Students) develop a sense of audience and begin to control the structure, tone, and final form of writing'. Ideas for resources are also given, e.g. 'Multicultural literature might include *The Lost*

Umbrella of Kin Cu by Eleanore Estes' (Alabama State Department of Education, 1993:47).

Grading is done in terms of separate year groups. A fifth grader, for example, writes content-area reports and consults thesauruses, in addition to revisiting fourth-grade outcomes. Outcomes indicate increasing sophisticated levels of cognitive input for older pupils (Alabama State Department of Education, 1993:56-57). The principles by which grading is done are not given, apart from the synopsis of the pupil's developmental progression. Outcomes reflect both a qualitative and quantitative progression in the grading process. Sequencing of learning content is not described in the outcomes of a grade. An integrated approach to the teaching of the language skills is advised. The teacher, however, still does not know exactly when to teach what or in what way teaching and learning opportunities should follow one another. It is clear that they have to integrate the skills during a teaching activity to reach the various outcomes, but the principles by which the teacher should follow up one task with another are not discussed.

Checklists are provided from Grade 6 onwards by which pupil performance can be assessed. The following categories (Alabama State Department of Education, 1993:87-90) provide extracts of what are considered during assessment:

- purpose (all modes);
 - Has the speaker/writer addressed the topic?
 - Is the piece presented appropriately in the chosen mode?
- content (by mode);
 - Descriptive mode**
 - Does the writing/speech clearly describe someone/something?
 - Has the writer/speaker used vivid sensory details?
 - Are other relevant details included?
 - Narrative mode**
 - Does the writing/speech clearly narrate a sequence of events?
 - Does it tell explicitly what happened?
 - Does it provide a definite time frame?
 - Expository mode**
 - Does the writing or speech present reasons, explanations, or steps in a process?
 - Has the speaker/writer used logical order?
 - Has the speaker/writer used appropriate sequencing of steps or ideas?
 - Does the writing or speech contain a main idea, supporting ideas and a conclusion?
 - Persuasive mode**

- Does the writer/speaker present reasons and examples that influence action or thought?
- Has the writer/speaker clearly stated an opinion with supporting details and/or specific examples?

Other categories include:

- audience (all modes);
- organisation and clarity (all modes);
- writing mechanics
- sentence formation
- sentence structure and
- grammar and usage.

The Alabama syllabus includes research findings in a concise and synoptic manner at the beginning of every grade to motivate the inclusion and grading of learning content. Teachers understand at a glance what their pupils should be able to do at the end of that year. Because the syllabus is organised in grades, the increasing level of sophistication in both the quality and the quantity of content is evident. The document uses tasks as units of analysis to indicate what pupils should be able to do.

The syllabus is teacher-friendly in that a teacher can relate program goals to sub-goals and student outcomes. The selection of learning content is related to the main goals of the programme and indicates an awareness of the demands of the modern world. What is less clear is the selection of themes and topics that encompass the tasks, and little guidance is given as to the preferences of pupils at certain ages. A task like 'categorising', for example, may include the categorising of butterflies into different species or objects into different shapes, sizes and colours. The teacher may still be at a loss as to which task the pupils will prefer.

Although the grading of tasks indicates grade levels, the grading of tasks within a year is not provided. 'Categorising', for example, does not indicate what makes the one task of categorising more difficult than another task of 'categorising'. Likewise, the sequencing of tasks is not clear. Practitioners want to know what task is best for the beginning of the year, what task may require more maturation and independent work from

the pupils and is, therefore, best scheduled for later in the year.

It is not clear whether assessment takes place after the completion of sub-tasks, whole tasks or at the end of the grade. The assessment system is refined to the point of being cumbersome, but the process and the product of learning are assessed and accuracy and fluency skills are both included in assessment. Assessment criteria are comprehensive and clear. Questions (in the form of a checklist) indicate the considerations that the teacher should keep in mind, e.g. 'Has the speaker/writer addressed the topic?'. Communication skills are not only viewed as fluency skills - an equal emphasis is placed on the assessment of accuracy skills, such as grammar and spelling. What is not clear, however, is when assessment should take place; should assessment be continuous and, if so, how should it be done? Should assessment be approached holistically, i.e. only after the task has been completed? Should the group be assessed at the same time or do pupils volunteer for assessment when they feel they are capable of executing a task? Another problem is that the assessment criteria become too clumsy to use for every assessment task. The considerations are so numerous that it is cumbersome to apply them to every task. Examples are given of grammar structures that should be mastered, but in the form of a checklist for the sixth to eighth grade. For the less able teacher, it may be beneficial to have examples of structures required for every grade.

In conclusion, the Alabama syllabus is a planned, scientifically accountable and orderly syllabus that assists teachers to plan language teaching and learning sensibly. A possible shortcoming may be the fact that the teacher still has to do quite a bit of planning on his own and integrate the outcomes and skills in lesson units, themes and topics - a skill that not all language teachers may have.

5.3.2 The Alaska Model Curriculum Guide - Language Arts

The Alaska syllabus emphasises the crucial role of language in learning: 'Language Arts is the heart and soul of every school's curriculum. It's the basic skills center, the core, the foundation which forms the basis for all other academic disciplines' (The Alaska Model Curriculum Guide for Language Arts, 1989:iii). The aims for language learning have been updated in the Alaska Student Performance Standards (1994). They are the products of extensive consultation with educators, business representatives and parents, and are:

All Alaska students will

- *speak and write well for a variety of purposes and audiences.*
- *be competent and thoughtful readers, listeners, and viewers of literature, technical materials and a variety of other information.*
- *identify and select from multiple strategies in order to complete projects independently and cooperatively.*
- *think logically and reflectively in order to present and explain positions, based on relevant reliable information.*
- *understand and respect other people's perspectives in order to communicate effectively.*

These aims emphasise the metacognitive skills involved in language learning that are defined by Ellis (1994:536-538) as '...(making) use of knowledge about cognitive processes and (constituting) an attempt to regulate language learning by means of planning, monitoring and evaluating'.

The objectives are described in terms of processes, e.g. 'follow a recipe' and products, e.g. 'bake a surprise' and reflect purposeful everyday tasks. The use of verbs indicate the pupils' active involvement (either hands-on or mentally) and it is clear that their existing knowledge is challenged by new tasks that they have to execute. Fluency and accuracy are developed, as is clear in an outcome such as 'In reading selections aloud, use correct pronunciation of homonyms' (The Alaska Model Curriculum Guide for Language Arts, 1989:39). The activities produce measurable outcomes and the syllabus can be regarded as a task-

based one. As is the case with the Alabama syllabus, tasks are used as organising features, rather than notions, functions or grammatical items. Task-types are suggested (e.g. classify positional relationships between concrete objects), but they are not classified into specific types.

The Alaska Model Curriculum Guide for Language Arts (1989) provides a firm scaffolding for the teaching of languages under the headings of topics/concepts, objectives/outcomes and sample learning activities. These are described in terms of the four language skills to which have been added integrated language processes and study skills.

The stages of primary and secondary school education have been grouped together in an attempt at greater flexibility in the system. There is no strict delineation of years or grades within a stage and individual districts are to refine objectives to accommodate the graduation requirements.

A description of the reading skill for Grades 4-6 (The Alaska Model Curriculum Guide, 1989:41) reads as follows:

TOPIC/CONCEPT	LEARNING OUTCOME/OBJECTIVE	SAMPLE LEARNING ACTIVITY
READING	The learner will: Know a number of purposes for reading: - to learn new information and ideas - to imagine other places and situations - to be entertained - to gain self-knowledge - to function in contemporary society	Read every day for pleasure and for information. Use reading to find out something he/she is interested in knowing. Have a treasure hunt to use reading to help him/her get to an unfamiliar place. Subscribe to a children's periodical or newspaper and read it regularly. Follow a recipe and bake a surprise for his/her family. Read a mail-order catalog and fill in an order form.

Skills are divided into sub-components. The reading skill, for example, is further sub-divided into perception, phonetic analysis, concept formation, structural analysis, vocabulary, comprehension and literature. Each, in turn, is comprehensively discussed in terms of outcomes and sample learning activities.

No criteria for the selection of content are given, although examples of suitable content are included in the learning activities. Some tasks reflect everyday activities, such as reading for entertainment and some tasks are more educational, e.g. 'classify a variety of statements from a recorded speech as facts, inferences or value judgements'.

The grading of content is done by means of a quantitative and qualitative progression. Outcomes of the previous stages are revisited, but more tasks are added as the pupil progresses. A task such as 'use discussions to explain what he/she thinks about a topic or idea' (The Alaska Model Curriculum Guide for Language Arts, 1989:31) seems to be a macro task, and practitioners are not guided in what topics or ideas are suitable for a particular stage. The sequencing of tasks appears to be arbitrary, and so many examples of teaching activities are given that teachers may find themselves bewildered by the many possibilities, not knowing when to include what and how to follow up one task with the next.

A variety of assessment techniques is suggested and teacher observation, peer response, portfolio collections of writing and artworks, tapes of oral language use, criterion-referenced and standardised testing, writing assignments and parent observations and insights are encouraged (The Alaska Model Curriculum Guide for Language Arts, 1989:v).

The Alaska syllabus provides teachers with examples of possible activities that they can employ. The long-term aims indicate a dedication to communicative expertise and life-long learning. Objectives are described in terms of expected learning outcomes that answer to the criteria for task descriptions. Although the

syllabus is not organised in terms of task-types, the provision of topics/concepts are helpful in assisting teachers to concentrate on certain aspects of a skill, e.g. under reading the skills of comprehension and vocabulary are addressed separately. The integration of all skills while doing a task is suggested. If the pupil is, for example, busy with comprehension, suggested activities include 'Summarize what is stated in a paragraph or story in one or two sentences. Locate information in a selection that verifies a personal idea or opinion. Identify and write words that can be made into contractions....' (The Alaska Model Curriculum Guide for Language Arts, 1989:14).

It is not quite clear how tasks are selected, nor how the tasks are graded within a year, or from one year to the next. Assessment is not guided adequately in the syllabus to do justice to the process. Teachers don't know when to assess, how to assess and by which criteria to assess.

In conclusion, the Alaska Model Curriculum Guide provides extensive lists of possible learning activities or tasks and provides considerable support for practitioners. Topics or concepts that are part of the four language skills, as well as the study skills and integrated language processes indicate an awareness of the complexity and interwoven character of learning and language learning. It is a thorough document that addresses issues that are sometimes neglected, like notetaking and research skills. At the same time it addresses accuracy skills like spelling and grammar. The absence of explanatory or guiding principles by which tasks have been selected, graded and sequenced is a shortcoming and more guidance can be given as to the assessment of pupil performance.

5.4 THE DUTCH SYLLABUS FOR ESL

One syllabus from Europe is discussed, namely the Dutch syllabus for English as an L2.

The Dutch Department of Education (1993) provides a core syllabus for modern foreign language learning that includes ESL. Aims for the end of the basic education period (roughly the end of the primary school career) are described, although no age or school year is attached to this period. The learner moves on to continued ('voortgezette') education once the knowledge, skill and ability required in the basic education Phase can be demonstrated.

The Dutch Core Curriculum (1993:34-38) divides aims into main development areas ('domeinen') and sub-areas of development ('subdomeinen'). Core objectives are described for each of the sub-areas. Article 264 of the Dutch Official Gazette (1993:4-6) emphasises the need to sensitise learners to the multicultural context of their society, as well as the need to harbour loyalty towards their own cultural context. The unique social, knowledge and experience framework of every pupil is recognised.

The Dutch Core Curriculum (1993:34-38) describes the main development areas as the following:

- communication skills;
- compensatory strategies and techniques;
- socio-cultural competence, and
- the orientation towards learning foreign languages.

The four language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing) are described as sub-areas of development under communication skills. A total of 19 core objectives (for each skill and for main development areas) are described. The main development areas are long-term, general aims that are envisaged by the syllabus designer. The sub-areas of development can be compared with specific aims that focus on language skills, and the core objectives correspond with criterion-referenced objectives as described in 3.6.2.

The following is an extract from the Dutch Core Curriculum

(1993:34-38) for the learning of languages other than the L1:

MAIN DEVELOPMENT AREAS	SUB-AREAS	CORE OBJECTIVES
A. Communication skill	Reading	Pupils understand the content of instructions, headings, warnings and announcements if the vocabulary and structure is simple enough.
	Listening	Pupils can select relevant information from functional texts that are heard via radio, television or the telephone e.g. weather forecasts, traffic information and programme announcements.
	Speaking	With reference to topics from personal experience, school, study, informal social contact and recreation, pupils can: - give and ask information; - give and ask an opinion; - give and ask views; - describe someone or something; - relate what has happened; - relate what will happen; - express negative and positive emotions; - compare;
	Writing	The pupils can: - write a standard letter making a booking or asking information in the tourism sphere; - write a simple personal letter to * arrange or cancel a meeting, visit or other contact; * make a short announcement; * express gratitude * greet * convey good wishes
B. Compensatory strategies and or techniques		Pupils can use compensatory strategies and techniques in cases where their knowledge use of the language is inadequate. These compensatory strategies include strategies for the production of language as well as the interpretation of received language: - the use of compensatory interpretative strategies such as deducing meaning from context; - the use of productive compensatory strategies such as circumscription; - skills that enable pupils to utilise dictionaries and resource materials such as grammar overviews.
C. Socio-cultural competence		Pupils have insight into and an understanding of the unique cultural character of the speakers of the target language as well as cultural expressions specifically relevant to the L2 group.
D. Orientation towards the learning of the target		Pupils know in which countries and spheres the target language is used as communication language vehicle and they have insight into the role and importance of the target language in the

international arena, as well as business, technological, social and cultural contexts inside and outside their own country.

The objectives are for the greater part described in terms of task-based learning. They reflect interactive, purposeful physical or mental actions that produce a measurable accomplishment or outcome. All objectives contain verbs that describe the action the learner undertakes. The syllabus outcomes are product-oriented as well as process-oriented, but much work is left for practitioners (especially inexperienced ones) to plan and organise day-to-day teaching.

Tasks suggest focusing on language that the pupil needs to function in certain areas. Although there is no categorisation of objectives into task-types, the delineation of areas of use are reminiscent of such a categorisation. There is an emphasis on 'tourist' language (e.g. making bookings), although the diverse and complex needs that may manifest in L2 learners (e.g. knowledge, social and experience needs) are included to some extent. The practical value and relevance to the pupil's world are suggested through everyday topics (e.g. warnings, announcements, schedules, weather reports and the like).

Suitable reading texts (Dutch Core Curriculum (1993:34) are texts that:

- are simple regarding structure and vocabulary and the main ideas are explicitly stated;
- link the existing knowledge of the learner with the new knowledge, taking the development level of the learner into consideration;
- are relevant and preferably presented in their original form (realia), and
- allow personal correspondence to relate personal interests, school, study and occupation, informal social contacts and recreation of the learner.

Listening tasks are:

- simple regarding structure and vocabulary;
- clear and audible without noise interference;
- not slowed down unnaturally, but the tempo should not be too fast;
- not marked by accent too strongly and
- derived from authentic and relevant texts.

Speaking and writing task outcomes are:

- pupils should express themselves in such a way that the intended purpose of the communication can be understood without too much trouble, also by L1 speakers who do not have much experience in communication with L2 learners. This implies that the learner must adhere to principles of accuracy in expression, word use, pronunciation and grammar. Although grammar errors should not be over-emphasised, the distortion of intended communication through grammar errors should be eliminated. Pupils should be able to produce at least one comprehensible sentence in response to questions or remarks from a discourse partner.

There is no sequencing of tasks in any specific order, apart from references to the pupils' level of development. No guidance is given to determine the level of sophistication of either receptive or productive language.

The assessment of pupil performance is not addressed separately and because stages of development are not indicated it is not clear how or when pupils advance to the next level. The completion of the task is the objective, but no indication is given of how a task is executed, e.g. 'making a booking or asking information in the tourism sphere' doesn't indicate the level of sophistication required.

The activities are relevant and purposeful, and they lead to

measurable products. The process of accomplishment may be either physical (visible) or mental (invisible). The learning processes are described in terms of strategies, techniques and meta-cognitive awareness of language learning. Tasks are not broken up into sub-tasks; holistic tasks are provided. Tasks are not formally classified into task-types, although topics familiar to the pupil (e.g. school, friends and hobbies) are suggested. The tourist-related language may be relevant for older pupils, but the syllabus doesn't make it clear how age or proficiency differences can be approached. Judgement of what is 'simple' language is left to the teacher and tasks are not graded. It is not clear when a pupil is ready to progress from one task to another, or whether tasks are recycled on a higher level of sophistication. It is also not clear whether sub-tasks or holistic tasks should be assessed.

The Dutch syllabus is an example of a task-based language syllabus, but a teacher who feels in need of more scaffolding may have difficulty organising language lessons in such a way that the diverse and exacting needs of pupils are met.

5.5 THE BOTSWANA SYLLABUS FOR ESL

The Botswana syllabus for the teaching of English, adopted in 1992 is similar to the outcomes-based approach propagated in many western countries. English is an L2 in Botswana.

The Botswana school career is organised into twelve years. All pupils should attend at least nine years of schooling (called the lower primary and upper primary levels). The L1 of most pupils and teachers in Botswana is Setswana and pupils start English as subject in the third year of schooling, in preparation of using English as medium of instruction (MOI) from the beginning of the secondary school year onwards.

The syllabus makes it clear that the teaching and learning of English should enable the pupil within four years to learn all

subjects through the medium of English. Most pupils start with no knowledge of English. The aims (Botswana English Syllabus, 1992:71) for the upper primary years are described as follows:

Pupils should also use English to:

- Understand what other people are talking or writing about.
- Make it clear what they are talking about.
- Discover facts on their own and from other people.
- Discover people's opinion and express their own.
- Respond to and give instructions.

The syllabus is organised under topics, general objectives and specific instructional objectives that are measurable. An extract from the listening and reading skills serves as examples of how the syllabus is organised:

TOPIC	GENERAL OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES
Listening	By the end of year FOUR, pupils should be able to	
	1. understand ways of greeting.	- respond to greetings appropriately.
	2. identify the spoken name(s) of an object or a person in a picture or a real person or object	- in isolation. - in a phrase. - in a sentence. - in longer continuous prose.
	3. from a selection of word cards, on the chalkboard, in the pupils' books, or in other teaching materials pupils should identify	- a single spoken word. - phrases. - sentences.
2. Reading	4. understand speech related to pictures.	- identify spoken phrases and sentences relating to pictures or actions. - point out differences between pictures according to a spoken test or a dialogue.
	1. Recognise words and numbers	- identify and name individual words and numbers and relate them to the environment and to pictures and look these words up in their dictionaries.
	2. Recognise different kinds of scripts used in Botswana.	- recognise and read both print and handwriting of the appropriate level.
	3. Vocalise words and sentences.	- read aloud texts of appropriate level and type with acceptable pronunciation,

*intonation, stress and rhythm,
such as verse, dialogues and
plays.*

Fluency activities (like pointing out differences between pictures based on oral descriptions) are practised, but the explicit teaching of grammar is also stressed. Teachers are assisted by appendices that include the language structures deemed necessary for the primary phases. Verbs, e.g. 'understand, recognise, vocalise' are used to indicate objectives and the activities are purposeful.

There is little evidence of reasoning-gap or problem-solving skills. Little emphasis is placed on interactive activities with peers. Although the aims and objectives are partly described in terms of tasks, these aims and objectives can be improved to challenge pupils' existing knowledge parameters.

There is little reference to specific concepts that pupils will need for the English MOI classes. Grammar items are included in appendices, but it is not clear how these items should be taught - integratively or linearly, once only or recycled at higher levels?

The grading of content is left to the intuition of practitioners. The grading of tasks for one year and from one year to the next does not indicate progressively more demanding activities (Botswana English Syllabus, 1992:71).

Assessment is not addressed separately, and during the four years in question, the teacher has no indication of when to assess what and according to which criteria. Pupils are expected to respond in 'longer continuous prose', but it is not clear how the response is to be measured.

The Botswana syllabus is a good example of a task-based language syllabus, as it provides extensive support regarding the general and specific instructional objectives to be taught. It is

teacher-friendly in that a teacher can locate specific objectives easily. Grammatical items are listed and frequent examples are given of possible activities, e.g. 'pupils should respond and act according to instructions related to simple actions (as in games: sit, touch, point to, etc.)' (Botswana English Syllabus, 1992:73).

The integration of skills, objectives, themes, grammatical items, etc. is, however, not explained. Teachers may not be sure what is expected of them, and may include topics, themes, notions and functions, grammatical items and tasks at random. The selection and grading of content may become blurred from one year to the next due to the lack of specific guidelines. Teachers may start at the top of the list and try to work through the suggested objectives in a linear manner. Suggestions for resource material or topics and themes may also assist teachers who are unsure of what to include in materials.

5.6 THE AUSTRALIAN LANGUAGE PROGRAMME

Clark was invited to Australia in 1985/1986 to launch the Australian Language Levels (ALL) programme in cooperation with Scarino and Morley. The Graded Levels of Achievement for Foreign Language (GLAFLL) schemes were used as examples of the approach of assessing pupils against a rising scale of predetermined proficiency levels. These are described in terms of criteria as to what the students should be able to do, and how well they should be able to perform at each level in the target language.

Since the initial implementation of the ALL programme for languages other than English, the growing numbers of ESL learners in Australia has led to the specific inclusion of English as a second language in the ALL documentation.

The ALL Guidelines (Scarino et al., 1988a) provide guidelines for the implementation of the project. As the ALL Guidelines (Scarino et al., 1988a) propose that the best aspects of the classical

humanist, reconstructionist and progressivist approaches (cf. 4.3) to language learning be reconciled in one approach, the broad social (objective) and the personal (subjective) needs of the learner can be accommodated.

The ALL Guidelines (Scarino et al., 1988a) divide language learning into five broad aims which are in turn refined into general objectives and specific objectives. The aims for learning ESL (Scarino et al., 1988b:22) are:

- communication purposes, divided into the categories of communication for interpersonal use, informational use and aesthetic use;
- sociocultural purposes;
- learning-how-to-learn purposes;
- language and cultural awareness purposes, and
- general knowledge purposes.

An extract from the task bank describes specific goals and objectives for the first three stages (Scarino et al., 1988b:66-70):

Focus on communication goals (Stages A - C)

Specific goal: Establish and maintain relationships, and discuss topics of interest e.g. through the exchange of information, ideas, opinions, attitudes, feelings, experiences, and places.

Some suggested objectives

To be able to:
interact in the classroom
with teacher and other
learners

Some suggested objectives

interact in classroom
management

talk about self/under-
stand when others talk
about self

Some suggested activities

interacting in whole class activities, in group
activities and in play (mainly Stage C, though
Stage A learners can be encouraged to interact
with teacher and with background speakers)

Some suggested activities

listening to and following teacher's directions
in everyday classroom management and setting up
activities (A - C)

using the target language for certain everyday
routines e.g. roll call, morning greetings,
asking to borrow something, birthday song, etc.

(A - C)

drawing self, greeting someone (A: One word
greeting written below the drawing → C:
dressing up corner/fashion parade

making 'All about me' books; teacher describes what learners say about pictures in the book

(A - C)

drawing silhouettes from an overhead projector image on the wall; teacher scribes/learners write what they want to say about themselves

The ALL Guidelines provide support in task description through a delineation of contexts, themes and topics, likely communicative functions, notions, grammar, likely modes of communication and suggested text-types. An example is:

Contexts: home, school, local area etc.

Themes and topics: self, family, friends etc.

Likely communicative functions: (divided into 5 categories)

<u>Socialising</u>	<u>Exchanging information</u>	<u>Getting things done</u>
using different modes of address	identifying	requesting
greeting	asking for/giving information	suggesting
introducing	describing	making arrangements
etc.	etc.	reacting to offers, requests
		suggestions etc.
<u>Expressing attitudes</u>	<u>Organising and maintaining communication</u>	
expressing admiration	attracting attention	
expressing approval/disapproval etc.	expressing lack of comprehension etc.	

Notions: (divided into 7 categories)

<u>People, places, things, events, qualities and ideas</u>	<u>Time</u>
people	present time
places	past time
things	etc.
actions/events etc.	

<u>Space</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>
location	numbers	shape	price
	expression of amount	physical appearance	evaluating things
		colour	seen, heard, done, eaten, etc.
	expression of degree	sound etc.	truth/flasehood etc.

Relationships between units of meaning

comparison

possession

negation

Grammar: basic word order, the verb group, verb markers and noun phrase relationships etc.

Likely modes of communication: conversation (face to face), listening for information (instructions, announcements)

Suggested text-types: (divided into reading and listening)

<u>Reading</u>	<u>Listening</u>
signs and notices	announcements
magazines	tape/slide representations
labels etc.	directions, instructions etc.

Verbs are used to indicate the mental and physical activities in which pupils are involved. Problem-solving or reasoning-gap activities challenge pupils' present levels of knowledge (e.g.

'interactive communication about self' - here the pupil cannot predict what questions he might have to answer or points he may be asked to elaborate upon). The interactive quality of tasks is stressed by the ALL Guidelines (Scarino et al., 1988a). The purposeful activities produce measurable outcomes.

Activities which integrate content and method form the experiential focus of the programme, supported by exercises that deliberately focus on formal instruction. The ALL Guidelines (Scarino et al., 1988b:19) define activities as 'the purposeful and active use of language where learners are required to call upon their language resources to meet the needs of a given communicative situation'..

Learners are given many opportunities to participate in purposeful language use and are given a wide range of activities to facilitate the use of language. The learner is not sure what language will be used or what meanings will be exchanged in the interaction and has to rely on cognitive strategies to maintain communication. Contextual support is provided to ensure that learners comprehend what is communicated to them. Focus on vocabulary and structural aspects of English is an essential part of the ALL project. Exercises assist learners in gaining increasing control over structural elements, while at the same time improving individual learning strategies and skills.

One of the most distinctive features of the ALL Guidelines is a comprehensive layout of what tasks are suitable for what stages and how the tasks follow one another. Clark's initial work regarding levels and stages in the GLAFLS syllabus (cf. 5.2.2) has been refined to produce an elaborate system of levels and stages. A framework of progressive, interlocking stages determined by learner characteristics that influence syllabus content at any one stage (ALL Guidelines, 1988a:32) suggests content for every stage. The Stages are designed to cater for learners who have varying degrees of exposure to the target language outside the classroom.

In the ALL programme it is possible to have beginners at every stage and provision is made for a beginner to start at any of three levels, namely junior primary, middle primary and upper primary. The content and processes vary according to the demands of the age level concerned; a beginner in junior primary and a beginner in middle primary hardly have the same interests, resources or needs. The description of the stages includes an outline of the target group for that stage and a general statement about prior experience in English (if any) the learners are likely to bring with them.

Learners are believed to differ regarding their conceptual range in English, their ability to deal with the English cultures, their language development in English and their skills development. Learner development is indicated in spheres that give an indication of suitable themes and topics (ALL Guidelines, 1988b:8). The learner is believed to develop from sphere 1 to sphere 4 (Scarino et al., 1988b:7-9).

The spheres are:

Sphere 1 - What learners can see, hear and touch is represented in this sphere. This, in practice, represents the classroom situation and in this sphere words are merely an accompaniment of action.

Sphere 2 - This sphere represents what learners know from their own experience and daily life. Although they cannot hear and see this information at the moment, they have done so personally before. The existing information can be brought to mind in the classroom by the use of words. Themes and topics in this sphere would include self, family, friends, home, school, pets, holidays and leisure.

Sphere 3 - The third sphere represents what the learner has not experienced directly, but may call to mind with the help of the imagination, pictures and other stimuli. Themes from literature, events of general interest and other subject knowledge are examples of themes and topics within this sphere.

Sphere 4 - The last sphere represents what is brought to the learner's mind through the spoken, written or printed word alone. Social and environmental issues, jobs and careers, comparisons between countries, relationships with others and current events serve as examples of themes and topics.

A typology of activities and exercises, as represented in Table 6, gives guidelines for methodology. Tasks are rated from those that have the greatest communicative potential to those that have the least communicative potential. It is recommended (Scarino et al., 1988b:19) that teachers combine tasks or activities and exercises, provided that the learners' interest and cooperation are retained.

The sequencing of tasks is closely linked to the level of difficulty. Tasks are sequenced in a progressively challenging manner, frequently revisiting previous tasks on a more sophisticated level of learning and adding new tasks.

1. Real/realistic communication activities

Activities that involve the communicative use of English in non-simulated contexts (e.g. problem-solving, information/opinion gap activities)

Examples: planning field trips, keeping diaries, writing to penfriends in England, ESL learners in neighbouring schools etc.)

2. Practice communication activities

Activities that involve the communicative use of English in simulated roles and contexts (e.g. role-play with the use of unpredictable language)

Examples: buying food in a supermarket, writing a message to your mother etc.)

3. Shaping exercises

Exercises that develop and structure language within an extended piece of discourse (e.g. cloze, substitution tables, matching exercises, dictation etc.)

Examples: dialogue studying and then substituting alternative sections of the dialogue, constructing a diagrammatic mind-map of key ideas/elements and writing a summary of all/part of the text, pronunciation exercises etc.)

4. Focusing exercises

Exercises that focus on elements in the communicative process such as form, skills and strategies (e.g. grammar exercises, learning vocabulary lists, practising pronunciation, using cognates to guess meaning)

Examples:

form - exercises on vocabulary, structure etc.

skills - cognitive and learning-how-to-learn skills

(further elucidation is provided to the teacher including specific language skills)

communication strategies include activities before, during and after a communicative activity. Pupils may read a letter in a group and before writing a reply decide on the vocabulary they will need.

During an activity pupils may interview one another about likes/dislikes, while the teacher moves around and provides assistance. Worksheets may be completed after an activity to practise/revise material that was used.

TABLE 6: The ALL typology of activities and exercises

The 'Table of Language Use' (Scarino et al., 1988b:22) (cf. Addendum 3), can be used by the ESL teacher as an organising vehicle for a task-based model. Within the categories of the communicative use of language, six types of tasks are described to indicate how activities are organised to encompass the dimensions of communication. These task or activity types are:

- establish and maintain relationships and discuss topics of interest e.g. through the exchange of information, ideas, opinions, attitudes, feelings, experiences and plans;
- participate in social interaction relating to solving a problem, making arrangements, making decisions with others, and transacting to obtain goods, services, and public information;
- obtain information by searching for specific details in a spoken or written text, and then process and use the information obtained or obtain information by listening to or reading a spoken or written text as a whole, and process and use the information obtained;
- give information in spoken or written form, e.g. give a talk, write an essay or a set of instructions;
- listen to, read or view, and respond personally to a stimulus e.g. a story, play, film, song, poem, picture, and
- be involved in spoken or written personal expression e.g. create a story, dramatic episode, poem, play.

The modes are also indicated in which the desired communication can take place. The link between communicative dimensions and activities is indicated and the modes, skills and strategies that are focused on during any such activity are also indicated. The task-types are organised in such a way that the teacher can see how they relate to the modes and language skills (indicated in the penultimate outer parameter) most likely involved in the task. The category of communication (indicated in the outer parameter) relates to modes, the skills and the types of tasks that the ESL teacher may select.

The ALL Guidelines (Scarino et al., 1988c:44-45) define assessment as making considered judgements about pupils' performance. Assessment is not perceived as an 'added-on' aspect, but as an integral part of the learner-centred approach to language teaching and learning. The following must be monitored:

- learners' language development;
- whether learners learn what they are taught and whether they display the ability to perform communicative activities at a level appropriate to their aspirations and apparent potential;
- the outcomes of self-directed or peer assignments, and
- the process by which learners learn.

Monitoring by the teacher is preceded by peer-monitoring and self-monitoring. Criterion-referenced assessment is used. The ALL Guidelines propose a holistic approach to assessment, i.e. a holistic task assessment rather than one asking about discrete bits of knowledge or skill.

What is to be assessed is indicated in the following way:

Communication Goal/Activity-type 1

Establish and maintain relationships, and discuss topics of interest e.g. through the exchange of information, ideas, attitudes, feelings, experiences, and plans (interacting and discussing)

The nature of the assessment activity

Stage 1

the learner is required to exchange information, ideas, opinions, attitudes, feelings, experiences, plans with others in oral interaction or correspondence

the learner is able to predict to a large extent its nature and content

Linguistic demand

the language required for its successful completion may be comprised of short, simple sentences

the situations and topics with which it deals are within

the learner's experience

Level of support in conversation activities, the learner is offered support by the interlocutor e.g. by adapting the level of talk and its speed to the learner's level, by providing repetition, rephrasing, and paralinguistic support

in correspondence activities the learner is offered support through the description of the activity and/or through the text

A comprehensive assessment instrument that indicates the assessment of pupil response according to two categories is provided. These categories are:

- content, and
- the quality of performance (divided into communication goals, sociocultural goals, learning-how-to-learn goals and general knowledge goals)..

Each category is again sub-divided into criteria measured during performance. All aims should be reflected in assessment, i.e. communicative aims (that encompass fluency and accuracy), sociocultural, metacognitive, language and cultural awareness aims and general knowledge. Formative assessment is done by both pupils and teachers who observe performance. Formal end-of-unit tests may be divided into discrete point tests (during which atomistic aspects are assessed), semi-direct tests for measuring contextualised language behaviour and direct tests that are holistic in nature and assess whether pupils can carry out activities. The end-of-stage tests are done when pupils feel ready for them. Regional input in devising end-of-stage tests has increased standardisation and validity (Scarino et al., 1988c:48-58).

The ultimate aim of learning and assessment is that learners can do what they set out to do. The involvement in, commitment to and

ownership of assessment schemes by the pupils seem an essential part of the successful attainment of the goal. Pupils are encouraged to use progress reports, self-assessment techniques and peer assessment to create a realistic profile of their performance and progress. Such a profile does not only concentrate on atomistic skills, but provides a fair reflection of pupils' performance. Descriptive assessment, i.e. describing what tasks individuals, classes and groups can execute may be used (Scarino et al., 1988c:56-59).

The ALL Project is a good example of a task-based language syllabus for ESL. It provides a comprehensive framework that addresses just about every variable in language learning in detail. Comprehensive template materials are available for teachers who may feel the need to use them. As every stage of the syllabus process is described, motivated and elucidated with an elaborate set of materials, the ALL Guidelines provide a highly structured approach to the language teaching and learning process. The macro, meso and micro levels of syllabus design are presented in a logical and cohesive manner. The ALL Project uses tasks as units of analysis to organise content. These tasks occur in task-banks and are organised in six main types of activities or tasks that also indicate the possible modes of communication (or language skills) that are involved. The aims and objectives are described in terms of the outcomes that pupils reach at certain levels and at certain stages. These are criterion-referenced and reflect both process and product, as well as fostering an awareness in the pupil of how to best organise his own language learning.

The most valuable contribution of the ALL Project is the sophisticated model that provides guidelines for the selection, grading and sequencing of learning content. Guidelines are provided by which any teacher can select tasks according to expected learner profiles at a certain age, grade these tasks according to a set of criteria and sequence the tasks to accommodate particular needs and circumstances.

Assessment is likewise directed by scientifically accountable and specific criteria that provides for self-, peer- and group assessment. The emphasis on levels and stage enable pupils to report for formative assessment when they feel they are ready and, although some pupils may need to be cajoled into being assessed, they gain confidence through self- and peer assessment. Summative assessment loses some of its potential to intimidate, as pupils know that they have progressed to expected end-of-stage outcomes. Instead of a traditional report specifying the year that a pupil has graded from, the report indicates a stage and level, e.g. Stage 3, level 4.

The comprehensiveness of the ALL Guidelines may, however, prove cumbersome in implementation. Although most teachers supported by a sophisticated education environment will benefit from such an elaborate system, teachers who themselves struggle with proficiency may have difficulty implementing it.

5.7 THE TARGET ORIENTED CURRICULUM PROGRAMME OF STUDY FOR ESL

Clark, Scarino and Brownell were also instrumental in drawing up a Framework for the Target Oriented Curriculums (TOC) renewal initiative in Hong Kong. They were not, however, involved in the implementation of the programme; this was done by the Education Department.

The TOC initiative is based on an integrative holistic approach to learning, rather than the compilation of atomised and progressive steps to reach a designated objective (cf. 2.3.3.2).

The Hong Kong language situation is similar to the South African one, in that almost all pupils are L2 speakers of English and they are taught by teachers who themselves are L2 speakers. Although all primary schools offer Chinese as MOI, many secondary schools offer English as MOI. The Hong Kong primary ESL school syllabus is divided into two key stages, and dimension targets (or aims) for every stage (called Key Stages) are given in the

syllabus. The dimensions define the purposes of Hong Kong pupils' learning English. These are the interpersonal, knowledge and experiential dimensions (cf. 2.3.3.2). The dimension targets describe targets within each dimension for the various stages. Objectives increase in complexity as the learner progresses (Clark, Scarino & Brownell, 1994:2).

The learning target for the curriculum may be set out as 'To develop ever-improving intellectual, aesthetic, social, ethical, emotional and physical capabilities to lead a full life as an individual and to play a positive role in the life of the community' (Clark, Scarino & Brownell, 1994:36). Learning targets may also be described for learning areas such as 'Language and Literacy'.

An overview of the integrative system of Learning Targets and Objectives for a subject is given in Table 7.

SUBJECT TARGET

<i>Interpersonal Dimension Targets</i>	<i>Knowledge Dimension Targets</i>	<i>Experience Dimension Targets</i>
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<i>Dimension Targets for Key Stage 1</i>	<i>Dimension Targets for Key Stage 1</i>	<i>Dimension Targets for Key Stage 1</i>
2	2	2
3	3	3
4	4	4

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

FORM AND FUNCTIONS
SKILLS AND STRATEGIES
ATTITUDES

TABLE 7: An overview of the hierarchy of Learning Targets and Objectives of TOC

Each dimension (cf. 2.3.3.2) is then sub-divided into aims or targets. These are:

Interpersonal Dimension Targets	Knowledge Dimension Targets	Experience Dimension Targets
To develop an ever improving capability to use English	To develop an ever improving capability to use English	To develop an ever improving ability to use English
- to establish and maintain relationships - to exchange ideas and get information - to get things done	- to provide or find out, interpret and use information - to explore, express and apply ideas - to solve problems	- to respond and give expression to real and imaginary experience

The following is an extract from the learning targets from the Interpersonal Dimension for the End of Key Stage 1, i.e roughly in the third or fourth year.

KEY STAGE 1

- a. to develop an awareness and an enjoyment of the basic sound patterns of English in imaginative texts through activities such as participating in action rhymes, songs and choral speaking
- b. to respond to characters and events in simple imaginative and other narrative texts through oral, written and performative means such as:
 - making predictions
 - making simple evaluative remarks
 - drawing pictures, making simple models or objects
 - creating captions
 - describing one's related experiences
 - participating in the telling of stories
- c. to give expression to imaginative ideas through oral, written and performative means such as:
 - supplying captions to and/or describing sequence of pictures that tell a story
 - supplying captions to and/or describing pictures that depict a scene, object or character
 - experimenting with simple sound and word patterns in creating rhymes and poems based on given models
- d. to give expression to one's experience through activities such as making illustrations of selected events and describing and/or providing captions for them.

Verbs are used to indicate the interactive and purposeful activities that pupils are involved in to produce measurable outcomes. A high priority is placed on tasks that challenge present knowledge, e.g. reasoning-gap and problem-solving tasks.

The process of learning involves apprenticeship, i.e. a process of learning in the company (either personal or removed contact through media) of those (be it teachers, peers or other adults) who have already mastered certain tasks. Constant reflection upon the learning task is advocated (Clark, Scarino & Brownell, 1994:15-19). The product adds to his knowledge if the pupil makes use of his existing knowledge to learn.

Task-types are:

- inquiring, interpreting and presenting;
- problem-solving;
- performing;
- creating/designing/composing, and
- judging/evaluating/responding (Clark, Scarino & Brownell, 1994:42).

All tasks should promote these activities. The TOC recognises the particular constraints (such as teacher proficiency) of most ESL classrooms. The concretisation of experiences is emphasised and examples are provided of how everyday learning targets and objectives can be utilised in the classroom.

Tasks in the TOC are described in terms of:

- dimension targets;
- task procedures (methodological indicators);
- text-types;
- language items;
- communicative functions;
- skills, and
- attitudes.

As many of the teachers are ESL speakers themselves, explicit guidance is provided in terms of linguistic items that may be covered and examples are provided, such as the following (TOC, 1994:89):

Language Items and Communicative Functions

Adjectives

Examples

Use adjectives to

- describe people, animals, events, things and conditions

My father is kind.
 Giraffes are tall.
 Christmas is exciting.
 The sky is blue.
 I am hungry.

- show quantities

I put some sugar in my tea.
 I don't have any money.
 I have three kittens.

- show position/order

Tom was first in the race.

- describe weather

It is windy.

- show possession

This is Ann's ruler.
 Show me your book.

Modules, units and tasks are presented in a teacher-friendly format and teachers can quickly look up any aspect of planning or lesson execution (such as text-types or language use) in one document.

Clark, Scarino and Brownell (1994:41) suggest a framework (presented in Figure 3) for the process of carrying out a learning task.

Learning is never decontextualised from the situational, thematic, interactive, real or imaginary circumstances in which the task is performed (Clark, Scarino & Brownell, 1994:40).

The selection of any task departs from knowledge the pupil already possesses. Clark (1995:4) points out that no learning is possible if the existing framework of knowledge of the pupil and the expected task do not meet at some point. Topics with which the young learner is familiar, such as the family, gradually expand to include the school, community situations and finally work situations in the secondary school. Pupils sometimes direct tasks through negotiation (e.g. suggesting options), depending on their interests and knowledge.

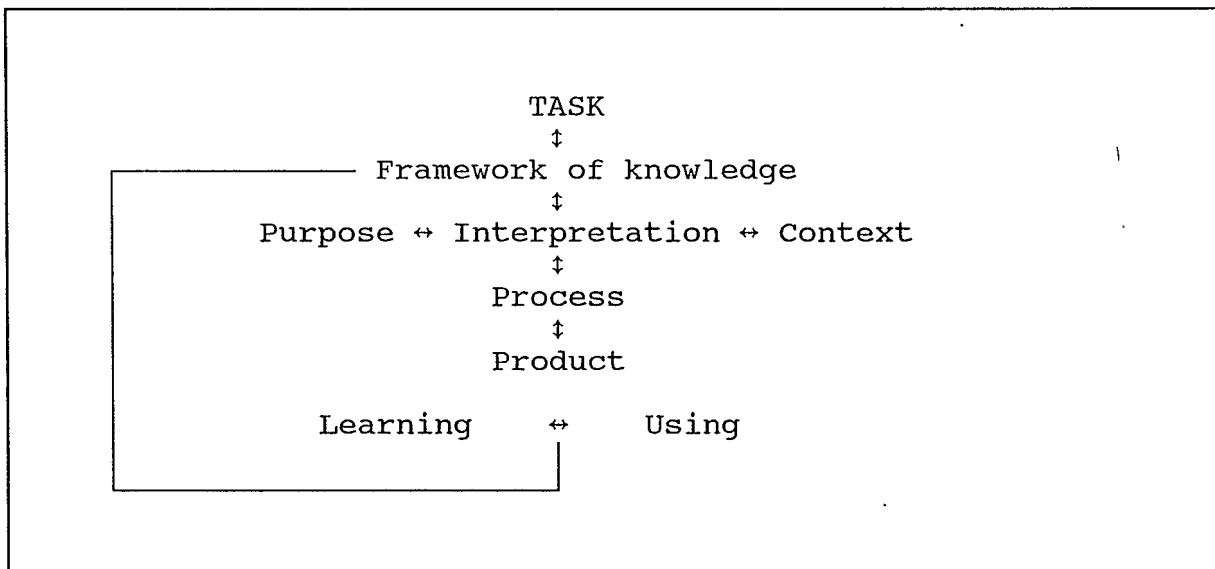


Figure 3: The TOC process of carrying out a learning task

Clark (1996:258) states that tasks should frequently be recycled to facilitate cognitive restructuring. Learning is not a singular or linear action, but a complex process and 'what has been learnt is at different levels of depth in the mind and has to be recycled to be kept alive'.

Tasks that challenge pupils' resources are selected, and task-banks provide comprehensive lists of task components. The sequencing of tasks takes place according to levels, called Bands of Performance in the TOC to reach stages of performance (cf. GLAFL and ALL). The 'Bands of Performance' (BoPs) reflect the broad parameters of typical pupil performance as it progresses up the learning continuum. Individual performance may be matched against the BoPs as best one can. The Stages are related to chronological age (unlike GLAFL), e.g. Stage 1 is for lower Primary pupils.

Assessment comprises summative as well as formative assessment. Techniques within the eight BoPs are described for the hierarchy for ESL across the entire school career. In short the BoPs describe 'what students are able to do, and to what extent in

what contexts; how and how well they do it' (Clark, Scarino & Brownell, 1994:60). Pupils use self-, peer- and teacher assessment and ideally present themselves for end-of-task assessment.

The TOC (1994:76) shows teachers how assessment within a target dimension is related to expected performance and task-specific criteria. Assessment strategies include formative assessment forms that are kept by pupils and teachers to 'help learners to improve their ways of learning, and help teachers to improve their teaching plans and strategies' (TOC, 1994:58). These forms may, for example, indicate whether pupils are able to work independently, ask questions or respond in English. Pupil performance is marked against the criteria of 'seldom', 'sometimes' or 'always'. Summative assessment provides a comprehensive summary of learners' achievements during the period and learners' performance at a particular point in time. It also serves as a checklist for the teacher to ensure that the major aspects of the dimension targets have been covered. Teachers indicate performance (e.g. reading - stating main idea) against the criteria of 'very capable', 'capable' or 'needs support'. Scores are avoided, because assessment should be based on descriptors in the BoPs. Exemplar assessment tasks include guidelines for the use of scores if teachers and parents insist on using them. There is an expectation that an ever-wider span of BoPs are necessary to which pupil performance as it progresses through the Key Stages at school, since the range of performances that are typically achieved varies ever-more widely at each Stage. It is emphasised, though that assessment descriptors and criteria should not be viewed as absolute but should be treated as a holistic instrument, not to be treated in isolation. An example of the target descriptions for the first five BoPs (spanning the first two Key Stages and part of the third) for the dimensions of language use is included in Addendum 4 of this study. An example of an assessment task is included in Addendum 5 of this study.

Clark (1995:9) stresses that 'teachers have to engage in knowledge-using tasks with their students and they themselves must be expert practitioners in their field'. If the teacher lacks expertise, he may not be able to judge whether the completed task is something extraordinarily creative, innovative, new or simply erroneous.

The TOC framework is a prime example of a task-based syllabus for ESL. A detailed example of planning for a week is given in the form of a scheme of work, and an overview of modules, units and tasks supports the implementation of the syllabus by teachers. The most valuable contribution of the TOC framework is, however, that it shows how all the complex components of a task-based language syllabus can be brought together in a short and concise format that teachers can easily understand. Examples are also given of how day-to-day teaching takes place. Teachers can see how to integrate the variables in a teaching cycle. An example of a task is given in Table 8.

An analysis of the TOC reveals that the development of tasks takes into account the following components:

- dimension targets;
- descriptions of lesson procedure;
- text-types;
- vocabulary;
- language items and their functions;
- communicative functions;
- skill outcomes;
- strategies, and
- attitudes related to the learning task.

TASK : Rules and Behaviour in School

Subject Target

To develop an ever-improving capability to use English

to think and communicate

to acquire, develop and apply knowledge

to respond and give expression to experience;

and within these contexts, to develop and apply an ever-increasing understanding of how language is organized, used and learned.

Targets for Key Stage 2

Knowledge Dimension

To develop an ever-improving capability to use English to find out, organize and present information on familiar topics (K.D.a)

To develop an ever-improving capability to use English to recognize and solve simple problems in given situations, and describe the solutions. (K.D.d)

Task: Rules and Behaviour in school

Learners are shown pictures of classrooms or school situations where rules have been broken (e.g. He has been running on the stairs). They are asked to identify the problems. They then point out various items or people in their school that remind them of their school rules (e.g. a line painted in the playground where learners have to queue up, the prefects etc.). With teacher help they make simple statements of what rules these items are related to (e.g. We must line up in the playground, etc.). Learners then design signs with labels to remind themselves of the dos and don'ts in the school. The signs are displayed in their own classroom and around the school.

Objectives

Text types	Vocabulary	Language Items & Communicative Functions	Skills	Attitudes
-Pictures showing various classrooms or school situations	- some action verbs - names of various places at school	- use present continuous tense to describe an action place at the time of speaking, e.g. He is <u>running</u> - use imperative to express inhibition, e.g. <u>Don't run</u> on the stairs - use modals to express obligation and prohibition, e.g. We <u>must</u> line up in the playground	Listening Recognize the stress in words and in connected speech e.g. We should not talk in the library. Speaking Use appropriate intonation and stress to convey intended meanings Apply syntactic rules, such as subject-verb agreement correctly e.g. He is pushing him down the stairs. Writing Gather and share information, ideas and language by using strategies such as brainstorming, listing Develop written texts by using appropriate format and conventions when writing non-narrative texts.	- Develop confidence in using English - Develop sensitivity towards language use in the process of communication

TABLE 8: An example of a TOC task

The selection and grading of tasks is motivated and teachers are assisted through banks or lists which indicate suitable text-types, themes and topics, language items and communicative functions, skills and attitudes that are suitable for certain stages. Examples (such as the one in Table 8) indicate **how** the teacher can integrate these components in planning. Examples of tasks are provided in the task banks through modules (that are composed of units with a similar theme that are linked by similar tasks), e.g.

Module	-	<u>Relationships</u>
Units	-	Families
		Friends
		The wider community
Tasks	-	Describing, categorising etc.

Tasks are graded in terms of increasing difficulty. Modules, for example, move from content familiar to the pupil ('Relationships', 'My neighbourhood', 'Food and drink'), to content further removed ('Hong Kong and its neighbours'), to increasingly abstract material ('Change', 'Natural Elements'), and to evaluative units such as 'Beauty' (TOC, 1994:36).

Assessment schemes are based on the formative and summative assessment principles established in GLAFL and ALL. The use of scores is discouraged (TOC, 1994:66) and a profile of performance is used to report to authorities and parents, indicating what the pupil can do.

The contribution of the TOC to task-based language syllabus design can be summarised as follows:

- the specified, structured and motivated aims, objectives, task banks, levels of performance and assessment guidelines support teachers in implementing the TOC;
- learners benefit from an integrated and focused teaching approach;

- language for other text-types as well as language for other subject areas is included for the benefit of pupils in English MOI schools;
- assessment schemes are clear and unequivocal and teachers and learners alike know what they are working towards, and
- proficiency levels are specified and standardisation is promoted.

According to Clark (1987) and Clark, Scarino and Brownell (1994) the following may prove to be obstacles in the implementation of similar syllabuses:

- much time and dedication from teachers are prerequisites to the successful implementation of the approach, not only in terms of improving their own proficiency but also their teaching capabilities;
- some teachers and pupils may be uncomfortable with what they experience as a radical break from known practice;
- INSET programmes and template materials are necessary to motivate and mobilise the teacher corps;
- for effective implementation a national, or at least provincial strategy is needed in order to promote standardisation, development of materials and techniques and exploit all the possibilities of the approach;
- creative teachers may feel inhibited and less able teachers may feel over-burdened by the sheer amount of material they are expected to work through;
- financial assistance is needed as the implementation of the approach is an extended programme, and
- liaison among all participants is necessary, but it is not always easy to establish.

Task banks in the TOC may be made more comprehensive by:

- the inclusion of specific vocabulary and conceptual items required by MOI pupils. This can be based on consultation with teachers of other subjects;

- the inclusion of assessment in each task.

In conclusion, the TOC language programme successfully condenses the comprehensive materials of, for example ALL, into a document that teachers can utilise almost immediately (after some INSET assistance) in daily teaching. The theoretical criteria are clear, concise and easy to follow. Examples of how these can be implemented and integrated to guide the teaching of tasks, units and modules are provided. The programme can be implemented in countries where resources are strained and the needs of teachers and pupils are varied and complex (such as pupils who learn English as subject and those who need English as gateway for MOI classes).

5.8 CONCLUSION

The survey shows that there is a clear trend towards task-based syllabuses.

The aim of this chapter was to examine to what extent the syllabuses that have been discussed are task-based and what they specify. All these syllabuses can be regarded as task-based. They give an indication of expected learning outcomes and the means by which to achieve these through 'events', 'activities' or 'tasks'. Not all syllabuses are clear, however, about what constitutes a task, and not all of them provide guidance as to the integration of the various components of the syllabus.

Although the aims of language learning are described in all syllabuses, the Australian Language Level Project and the Target Oriented Curriculums do so in terms of the purposes of pupils' language use. All syllabuses describe objectives in terms of expected learning outcomes, but the levels of support provided for teachers differ significantly. Although the syllabuses satisfy most of the criteria for a task, there are many differences regarding the selection and grading of tasks, and assessment of pupil performance.

The way tasks are selected and graded in these syllabuses is summarised in Table 9. Assessment is summarised in Table 10. A '✓' mark indicates that the syllabus is seen as addressing the particular aspect, and the absence of such a mark indicates that the syllabus is seen as not addressing it.

	Tasks banks or task-types are given	Theoretical criteria for task selection are given	Examples of task selection (in stages) are given	Theoretical criteria for task grading are given	Examples of graded tasks are given	Examples are given of task integration in modules/stages
GLAFL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Alabama syllabus			✓		✓	
Alaska syllabus			✓		✓ (broad stages)	
Dutch syllabus			✓			
Botswana			✓		✓ (broad stages)	
ALL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
TOC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 9: A summary of task selection and grading

As can be seen from Table 9, three syllabuses are regarded as good examples of how syllabus content should be selected and graded in task-based language syllabuses, namely Graded Levels of Achievement in Foreign Language Learning (GLAFL), Australian Language Levels Projects (ALL) and Target Oriented Curriculum (TOC) in Hong Kong. Only two syllabuses provide examples of how the various syllabus components can be integrated into modules, units and lessons, namely Australian Language Levels Projects (ALL) and Target Oriented Curriculum (TOC) in Hong Kong.

	Formative and summative assessment are separated	Criteria for the assessment of pupil performance are given	Examples of an assessment paper are given	Examples of assessment reports are given
GLAFL	✓	✓		✓
Alabama syllabus				
Alaska syllabus				
Dutch syllabus				
Botswana				
ALL	✓	✓		✓
TOC	✓	✓	✓	✓

TABLE 10: A summary of the assessment of pupil performance of seven syllabuses

As can be seen in Table 10, three syllabuses address formative and summative assessment as well as criteria for pupil performance. These are Graded Levels of Achievement in Foreign Language Learning (GLAFL), Australian Language Levels Projects (ALL) and Target Oriented Curriculum (TOC) in Hong Kong. Only TOC provides examples of how assessment is implemented and how assessment criteria are integrated into examination or test papers.

The ALL project is the most comprehensive and thorough programme and addresses most variables involved in language learning and teaching in detail. The comprehensiveness of the materials and the level of sophistication of the ALL project may, however, prove to be too cumbersome in implementation. This problem is overcome by the TOC of Hong Kong. Here the teacher is provided with an integrated document, and it addresses most of the issues encountered in day-to-day teaching.

Graded Levels of Achievement in Foreign Language Learning (GLAFL), Australian Language Levels Projects (ALL) and Target Oriented Curriculum (TOC) in Hong Kong are the most comprehensive examples of task-based syllabuses. Whereas GLAFL emphasises objectives for language learning, ALL and TOC

emphasise a holistic approach to language learning. The TOC model is the most suitable for South African circumstances, because it provides comprehensive support regarding all aspects of the syllabus, i.e. the aims, objectives, content selection, teaching-learning opportunities and assessment. Criteria for the selection and grading of tasks as well as assessment of pupil performance are provided, and examples of how these may be implemented are also provided.

The situation in South African primary schools is examined in Chapter 6.