

*Modulo di riferimento*

modulo 1 - The “new” European teacher of languages: a profile

*Nucleo di riferimento*

nucleo 2 - Il contesto nel quale opera il docente di lingue

## SYLLABUS DESIGN AND COURSE PLANNING

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## **DESCRIPTION**

### ***Aims***

The module aims to:

- increase teaching knowledge and ability in the classroom focusing on syllabus design and course planning
- increase personal reflection and self evaluation of course planning
- create a platform and resources for future syllabus design.

### ***Objectives for the teachers***

- To develop awareness of different types of syllabus design for the language classroom
- To explore what to do in the classroom and why we do it to increase student achievement
- To plan a 12 hour syllabus for one of their classes by focusing on the students learning styles
- To evaluate the process of the unit
- To give a short presentation at the end of the unit

### ***Final Competences***

By the end of this unit teachers will be able to design a syllabus to accommodate their students' learning styles and increase student participation and production through the language content and skills focus in the material they have chosen.

## ***Methodology***

The unit follows a three step process which will raise the teachers awareness of the who they are teaching and what is involved in creating a course for the specific learners. Teachers will have the opportunity to reflect on their own experience in syllabus design before they look at approaches used in the language classroom. There is a focus on the learner and what we need to know about them to create an effective syllabus. It will also focus on the content of a course and what tools we can use to make a syllabus more motivating for the learner. They will bring what they have learnt together by creating a 12 hour course for one of their classes before evaluating it and giving a short presentation to their colleagues about the experience.

## ***Teaching strategies***

- Individual work
- Pairwork
- Action research
- Reflection
- Evaluation

## **ACTIVITY: STEPS**

### **Step 1**

- 1.1 Reflection
- 1.2 Which type of language syllabus
- 1.3 Getting started, what questions do I have to ask myself?

### **Step 2**

- 2.1 Knowing you learners
- 2.2 Knowing your course book
- 2.3 What to put into a syllabus

### **Step 3**

- 3.1 Planning a syllabus – part one
- 3.2 The course – part 2
- 3.3 Evaluation and presentation

### ***Step 1***

#### **Task 1.1. Reflection**

Designing a syllabus can be a daunting task for teachers, however, nowadays we have numerous resources and technology to help us with the planning and the presentation of courses. So why is it such an intimidating job? As with other challenging tasks we need a starting point. We must understand who we are teaching, how they learn best and the activities that will motivate them in the classroom.

A successful syllabus will be reflected in what the students have achieved over a certain period of time. Each stage needs careful planning, as a result the teacher and the students should be able to reach the aims set out at the beginning of the course.

## Questionnaire - personal experience

**Read** and **answer** the questions about your personal experience.  
**Compare** with a colleague on the forum when you have finished.

1. How do you plan what you are going to do with your class?
2. Do you plan in advance for your classes? If yes, how far in advance do you plan? If not, why not
3. What factors do you take into account before you plan a course/ syllabus?
4. What percentage of your lessons do you base around the course book?
5. Do you use other material (text books, websites, authentic material) in your class?  
If so, what?  
If not, Why not?
6. Do you think of your students when you are planning a syllabus?  
If so, how?  
If not, why not?
7. How do you assess your students' progress?
8. How do you cater for weaker and stronger students in your classes?
9. Think about one of your classes. What types of learners are they? How do they like to learn? What type of activities do they like best? Give examples
10. How do you evaluate the success of your syllabus

### Task 1.2. Which type of language syllabus?

There are various types of syllabuses for language teaching. Each type may suit a certain type of learner or course. So, how do we know which approach to use with our students? is one better than another?

Two approaches to syllabuses are 'traditional' and 'holistic'. In traditional syllabuses **linguistic content** is the main focus whereas, 'holistic' syllabuses place great emphasis on **communication** through **tasks** and **topics**.

Look at the table below and try to complete the missing information. Do you think it is more 'traditional' or more 'holistic'?

- *Focus on language as a sequence of grammatical patterns. (example)*
- Selects on the basis of what language items the learner needs to know
- Focus is on communication.
- Selects language items on basis of complexity of linguistic criteria
- Genuine everyday language is emphasised.
- Language used tends to be more formal and bookish
- Aim is to have students produce formally correct sentences
- Reading and writing are emphasised.
- Aim is to have students communicate effectively in order to complete the task.
- Speaking is given at least as much time as reading and writing.
- Tends to be student-centred
- Resembles the natural language learning process by concentrating on the content / meaning of the expression rather than the form.
- Reading and writing are emphasised
- Tends to be teacher-centred
- Focus is on the form of expression rather than the content.

<b>Traditional</b>	<b>Holistic</b>
Focus on language as a sequence of grammatical patterns.	

Read the articles and check your answers:

[attach-1.docx]

### Question

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of a traditional or holistic syllabus?
- Which approach would work best with your students? Give reasons for your answer

Take notes and post your answers on the forum/ compare with a colleague...

Look at the other types of syllabuses. Which do you find in your course books?

[attach-2.docx]

### **Task 1.3. Getting started, What questions do I have to ask myself?**

Before planning a syllabus we have to consider a number of points which will help us understand the direction we should take with our classes and where we would like to get to.

**Graves** (1996, p.13) gives a useful framework of the course development process as questions to clarify its meaning:

- 1. Needs Assessment:** *What are my students' needs? How can I assess them so that I can address them?*
- 2. Determining Goals and Objectives:** *What are the purposes and the intended outcomes of the course? What will my students need to do or learn to achieve these goals?*
- 3. Conceptualising Content:** *What will be the backbone of what I teach? What will I include in my syllabus?*

- 4. Selecting and Developing materials and Activities:** *How and with what will I teach the course? What is my role? What are my students' roles?*
- 5. Organisation of Content and Activities:** *How will I organise the content and the activities? What systems will I develop?*
- 6. Evaluation:** *How will I assess what the students have learned? How will I assess the effectiveness of the course?*
- 7. Consideration of Resources and Constraints:** *What are the givens of my situation?*

With Graves' framework in mind, think of a class you taught last term and answer the questions below.

1. What were your students' needs?
2. What were the aims of your course? What did your students need to learn?
3. What was the backbone of what you taught? What did you include in your syllabus? (grammar, lexis, skills)
4. What and how did you select your materials, activities?
5. How did you organise the content? Which systems (language focus) did you develop?
6. How did you assess your students? How did you assess the course?

Compare with a colleague and identify similarities and differences in your answers.



## **Step 2**

### **Task 2.1. Knowing your learners**

Students are the most important factor in designing a syllabus. If we do not understand our students as learners, we may not be able to reach our objectives as teachers. Understanding every student however, is a huge task for the teacher, but it is the basis of where we need to start. Each student is different from the other, they have their own different backgrounds, interests and their own likes and dislikes, which makes each learner unique in their own way. So, what information do we need from them to get us started? We need to understand how our students learn best and which type of activities or tasks help them in the learning process. They may not be able to tell you themselves but we can identify their learning styles in the classroom.

Read the article and answer the question:

[attach-3.docx]

Which type of learning styles do your students have?

Do you plan activities to suit your students learning styles?

What could you do to accommodate your students learning style?

Do you know what your learning style is?

Do you think knowing your students' learning style is important? Why? Why not?

Write your answers on the forum

## **Mixed abilities**

As teachers we face the uphill struggle of having classes with various levels all mixed together. Some students may be good B1 level others may be complete beginners. It can make your job extremely difficult

### **Reflection:**

Think of a class you have taught with mixed abilities, what did you do to balance the imbalance of your class? For example: Activities, groupings, tests, etc

Ask a colleague what they do with mixed ability classes and compare.

Read the 3 articles below and make notes of the strategies and activities you could use in the classroom.

Try some strategies with your students and post how successful they were on the forum.

### **Teaching mixed ability classes 1**

[attach-4.docx]

### **Teaching mixed ability classes 2**

[attach-5.docx]

### **Adapting materials for mixed ability classes**

[attach-6.docx]

### **Your students' needs**

As Graves states (1996:14) 'Different students have different needs, and the information gathered through needs assessment can help a teacher make choices as to what to teach and how to teach it'.

Ask yourself these questions

1. What do my students need to learn at this point in their education?

E.g. exposure to English, 'CEF can do statements' (I can write a letter to my friend, exams, language for a school trip abroad etc

2. What will they need in the real world? E.g. on holiday /school trip

3. Do you cater for their needs in the classroom?

### **Task 2.2. Knowing your course book**

To create a syllabus without a backbone would be asking too much of a teacher, however, we can sometimes over use it or even use it wrongly. The teacher must know how the coursebook works and what extra materials it has such as a vocabulary bank or a website. The methodology used in creating the course book will be explained at the beginning of the teacher's book. By reading the 'How the coursebook works' section, teachers will understand the 'why' and 'how' of the methodology.

#### **Subtask 1:**

Look at one of your student's books and teachers books. Read the section on 'how the book works' then answer the questions.

Is there anything you have learnt that you didn't know before? If so, what?

Will it change the way you teach from the book now? If so, how?

Post what you have learnt on the forum.

#### **Subtask 2:**

Over using the coursebook can become extremely boring for the student. The topics can be dull and the grammar and vocabulary ac-

tivities can sometimes be repetitive. By adapting the course book or teaching without it, we can give students a break from the old routine. They see it as something different and they will become more interested in the lesson.

## Reflection

Do you adapt the course book?

If so, how?

If not, why not?

Where do you find different materials for your class?

Look at a lesson you have taught from your course book recently.

What did you do?

Did it go well?

Were your students involved?

How could you have made it more student-centered?

Compare with a colleague and post your answers on the forum.

## Teaching without a course book

[attach-7.docx]

## How to adapt materials?

Look at the ideas below for adapting materials. If you have time, try at least two with your class.

<http://prezi.com/obwlifslldwlh/adapting-your-coursebook/>

## Task 2.3. What to put into a syllabus

“Ideally, what is needed for course development is to combine forms, notions, functions, lexis and language skills”. (Dubin and Olshtain 1986:107)

Do you feel you have a good balance between language and skills practice?

Look at the list below and write a percentage next to each.

Example: Grammar 50%

Grammar	_____
Vocabulary	_____
Pronunciation	_____
Speaking	_____
Listening	_____
Reading	_____
Writing	_____
Error correction	_____

Look at your results, can you justify your answers?

Should certain language areas have more focus? If so, why?

As a language teacher, what do you want your students to achieve?

Compare your answers with a colleague / post your answers on the forum

### **Step 3**

#### **Task 3.1. Planning a syllabus**

In this stage of the module you will plan a 12 hour course for one of your classes.

Look at the two examples of a course plan. They are both good examples of how to plan a course.

[attach-8.docx]

What is your opinion of these examples?

What similarities and differences are there between the way you plan your syllabuses?

Write your answers on the forum.

#### **Task: pre-course, gathering the information**

Refer back to Graves framework in 1.3. you will now choose a class you are teaching and complete the table below.

Class profile		
Class:	Number of students:	Ages:
Background: who your students are, where they come from, social factors that effect learning		
Levels:		
Learning styles:		
Course objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are you going to do and why?</li> <li>• What will your students do and what will they achieve by the end of the course?</li> <li>• Learner needs</li> </ul>	By the end of the course the students will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	
Content:  What will you include in your syllabus? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the backbone of your syllabus (which coursebook will you use)</li> <li>• Language: grammar, lexis, functions</li> <li>• Skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening</li> <li>• Pronunciation e.g. silent /r/</li> <li>• Topics e.g. hobbies, holidays</li> <li>• assessment</li> <li>• revision</li> </ul>	(this is not the course outline but a brief summery of <b>what</b> you will do and <b>why</b> ?)	

### Task 3.2. Stage the course

Write your course. Remember there should be some sort of link between the lessons e.g. topic, grammar and revision should be included.

Each lesson should be one hour

### Task 3.3. Evaluation and presentation

#### Evaluate your course planning?

What went well?

What difficulties did you have?

What would you do different next time?

What have you learnt from the module?

#### Presentation

Prepare a short presentation to present your course outline to your colleagues and what you have learnt on this unit.

If you teach the course, evaluate it and feed back to your group. What went well? What would you change and why?

#### Teacher evaluation

	<b>I can do this. Comments?</b>	<b>What do I need to improve on?</b>
I am aware of different syllabus types		
I am able to identify traditional or holistic syllabuses		
I am able to identify my students learning styles		
I am aware of activities and learning strategies for mixed ability classes		
I am able to design a course for my students based on learning styles		
I am able to evaluate the process of course planning		
I can adapt materials to suit my students learning styles and interests		
I have compared notes and ideas with colleagues		



after tasks and planning activities e.g. language and skills focus		
I am more aware of what should be involved in my course planning		
I have tried out some strategies for teaching mixed abilities		

## RESOURCES

### *Bibliography*

- Graves, k (1996). *Teachers as Course Developers*. Cambridge University Press.
- Frida Dubin and Elite Olshtain (1986). *Course Design*. Cambridge Language Teaching Library.
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- Candlin, C.N. (1984). 'General English Syllabus Design' (ELT documents 118).
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### **Websites**

- [www.teachingenglish.org.uk/articles/which-syllabus-traditional-holistic-syllabus](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/articles/which-syllabus-traditional-holistic-syllabus)
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- [www.teachingenglish.org.uk/articles/teaching-without-a-coursebook](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/articles/teaching-without-a-coursebook)
- <http://prezi.com/obwlfslldwlh/adapting-your-coursebook/>

## ***Sintesi in italiano***

La *European Recommendation on key competences for life long learning* (2006) sottolinea l'importanza di un uso funzionale della lingua come strumento per esprimere bisogni, desideri, comportamenti e stati d'animo. Gli insegnanti sono pertanto invitati a presentare ai propri studenti la lingua in uso, e ad assegnare loro attività e compiti linguistici realistici.

L'unità è progettata per fornire agli insegnanti le conoscenze e gli strumenti adatti allo sviluppo di piani di studio personalizzati per i loro studenti. Le attività sono state scelte in modo che gli insegnanti possano riflettere, praticare e valutare il lavoro che fanno.

### **Metodologia**

L'unità segue un processo in tre fasi che consentiranno di accrescere la conoscenza degli studenti a cui insegnano e la consapevolezza nella creazione di uno specifico corso per studenti. Gli insegnanti hanno la possibilità di riflettere sulla propria esperienza nella progettazione prima di guardare agli approcci utilizzati negli insegnamenti di lingua. Il focus verte sullo studente e su quello che c'è da sapere su di loro per creare un programma efficace. Ci si concentrerà anche sul contenuto di un corso e sugli strumenti adatti a rendere il programma di studio più coinvolgente per lo studente. Si partirà da ciò che hanno imparato insieme creando un corso di 12 ore per una delle loro classi, per poi passare alla valutazione e a una breve presentazione da esporre ai colleghi.

### **Obiettivi**

Alla fine di questa unità gli insegnanti saranno in grado di progettare un programma di studio per accogliere i differenti stili di apprendimento dei loro studenti, per aumentare il loro coinvolgimento e per incrementare la produzione di contenuti attraverso il linguaggio e le competenze che hanno scelto.

**Step uno.** Nella prima fase, gli insegnanti rifletteranno sulla loro precedente esperienza con la pianificazione dei corsi per poi concentrarsi su diversi tipi di piani di studio che possono essere utilizzati in classe. Infine, verrà presentato un framework da utilizzare durante la creazione di un programma di studio.

**Step due.** La seconda fase si concentra sugli studenti. Saranno affrontati gli stili di apprendimento, le classi di abilità miste e il materiale didattico. Infine si passerà a ciò che reputano importante inserire in un programma, per poi passare al confronto con un collega.

**Step tre.** La terza fase è dedicata alla progettazione di un corso. Dalla pianificazione pre-corso (raccolta di informazioni), alla scrittura del corso e, infine, alla valutazione di quello che hanno fatto. Infine è prevista una breve presentazione di fine modulo.