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## Criteria for Language Course Design involving the Hetero-balancing Approach to Curriculum Planning

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper endeavours to envisage the criteria for designing any language course involving the Hetero-balancing Approach to curriculum planning*

### **Introduction**

The researcher proposes to classify the approaches to curriculum planning and course design in to two fundamental varieties, namely the **Generic and Non-generic**. Non-generic genre can be sub-classified into **patho-specific and Hetero-balancing approaches**. Indian classrooms, for that matter of all the third world countries, are known for their heterogeneity. The scale of difference depends on different aspects, namely Socio-economic, political, psychological etc. India was reeling under imperialism for about two centuries and like some other countries in the world, learning was esoteric with scores of communities being orchestrated. In addition to the above, Education has been placed under Concurrent list of items in independent India which enables both the Union Government and state Governments to prepare and execute academic policies and programmes. This phenomenon gave rise to a lot of inconsistencies.

Rural population in India is enormous, i.e. more than 70%. The teaching –learning process in the rural areas continues to be a teacher-centred process with structural approach and Grammar-Translation method dominating the scenario. The vocabulary range of most of the students happens to be very limited rather confined to the prescribed textbook. It is more astonishing to learn that even the textual expressions also are not properly learnt since the parameters that govern the linguistic item are not properly discussed in the class. Language learning is nothing but mimicry-memorising the explanatory note that is either dictated by the teacher or copied from ready reference materials prepared for commercial purposes. Communicative tasks and authentic situations are not taken up. Stilted structures are taught mostly. In other words, language learning is neither natural nor functional. The low self image of many of the regional medium background students of rural and semi-urban origin, and the over confidence of many of the English medium background students of urban origin who are reasonably and relatively fluent but without respectable levels of accuracy create a very subtle situation for the teacher in the classroom.

### **Rationale for the criteria**

The researcher attempts at advocating that the process of curriculum planning and execution should be a Hetero-balancing one taking into account the phenomenon of heterogeneity.

### **Tasks related to linguistic encoding:**

The realization of language use as verbal forms manifested through orthographic, morphological, syntactic, semantic and phonological aspects, the parameters which govern the way a linguistic item behaves in any communicative situation, is taken up as the first criterion. Since every word operates subject to the parameters stated, it is incumbent on the part of the language learners to realize the conceptual framework to the extent of

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utilizing in various contexts in such a manner that the usage turns out to be authentic, comprehensive and comprehensible. On the other hand, the researcher very much realizes the fact that one need not learn all the principles of automobile engineering to learn driving a car. Hence, the criterion gets administered with a communicative perspective keeping in view the aspects stated above.

### **Socio-cultural orientation:**

Contextual appropriacy i.e. sensitivity to register and day-to-day communicative needs is accorded a pride of place. In order to train the prospective professional to conduct his or her operations successfully in the highly variegated role set of society, the proposed model envisages an integration process. Since linguistic communication operates in a societal setting and since every individual is a product of one's culture, the model takes into reckoning the socio-cultural orientation in order not to make the learners get alienated. On other hand, one cannot shed his or her whims and fancies resulted in by the socio-cultural aspects of brought up in a given society over night, such things have to be neutralized with certain balancing elements failing which those whims and fancies turn into frailties and proclivities. The ultimate aim of any academic endeavour is to produce global citizens with a holistic perspective overcoming the social barriers for which a balancing mechanism shall spring from the language curriculum because of its humanistic nature.

### **Understanding in Domain-specific discourse:**

Realizing the fact that this world, to a large extent, is a techno-economic one, the tasks acquire greatest significance in any professional environment. In addition to developing the logic of the linguistic programming and presentation in generic situations, it is incumbent on the part of a learner to develop domain-specific requirements. For example, an engineer should be able to compile a technical report which not only involves the ability to construct sentences but also the domain relevant employment of vocabulary, structure and style. 'I maintained the temperature at 60<sup>0</sup> C' is not an acceptable sentence where a passive construction 'The temperature is maintained at 60<sup>0</sup> C' is better suited. Not only the vocabulary but also the way sentences get constructed has its significance in any professional environment. The exposure to technical discourse forms an influential component of the process. Without proper training in compilation skills, one may not be able to differentiate between the general, literary presentations and technical presentations.

### **Pragmatic Competence:**

Linguistic and conceptual resourcefulness in the use of vocabulary and in ensuring cohesion are of utmost significance in any technical presentation. The researcher takes into cognizance the academic discussions related to the grammatical competence and pragmatic competence and identifies the issues of discussion like competence- performance, competence and competence constellation. The researcher humbly submits that all those items of discussion have taken many prominent stand points into account in their intellectual endeavours beyond any shadow of doubt. But, in a multi-lingual set up with heterogeneity resulted in by many a phenomena, students in rural and semi-urban settings have little opportunities to develop interactive skills, and interaction brings out the pragmatic abilities of any individual. But, such students may not lack in their intrinsic abilities of learning and hence, creating opportunities to develop pragmatic competence has been taken up as a criterion.

### **Strategic competence:**

Aspects of functionality, including problem assessment and solving skills with special reference to Group Dynamics has been one of the important criteria for the mechanisms of any specific purpose course design. An individual is expected not only to equip himself/herself with theoretical orientation with numerical and computational understanding but also to possess strategic competence. Keeping the policy driven, project driven, market driven challenges of modern day professional environments, the individuals that get trained have to develop the skills related to prioritizing, selection, sequencing, gradation, piloting and all the skills of

contingency management. In addition to the above in the modern world of optimization and rationalization, mere theory of any technical operation does not result in the professional success. Relational ability as a phenomenon helps one acquire the strategic competence, since it makes one assimilate the circumstances in which one is placed at a quicker pace and with a better clarity in order that the individual perceives the developments with a conscious eye to mould those developments to his/her advantage. Strategic competence not only points to one's abilities of functionality but also to an integration of knowledge through academic investigations and the intrinsic abilities brought out with improvement by exposure.

### **Negotiable and Non-negotiable Soft Skills:**

Thought structuring and Value-based instruction for a human face to engineering have been considered the hallmark of successful curriculum planning. Whether intentionally or not the curriculum planners at different levels focused on hard skills by incorporating itemized sets of instruction leading the learners on to learning and mastering many a formulae through textbooks, course books, lab manuals and such other instructional materials presented in the classroom presentations, laboratory demonstrations etc. Recently i.e. during late 90's and this decade the academia have realized the importance soft skills as a part of the curriculum. It is observed by the researcher that the syllabus drafts of different institutions have been reflecting phenomena related to the soft skills. But the researcher would like to focus upon the element that in addition to negotiable or tangible soft skills like argumentation abilities etc., non-negotiable soft skills sets like adaptability etc shall also be incorporated into the curriculum. The syllabus should incorporate the items that develop scientific temper.

### **Conclusion:**

The curriculum should consider the heterogeneity of the learners in an environment and should have flexibility to get subjected to academic metamorphosis with emergent methodological framework developed by the teacher in the classroom. The submission of the researcher is to consider the multiple cognitive behaviours of the learners not just based on the formative evaluation but by the reflective abilities of the students in their day to day activities culminating in the display of their grasp and relational ability. To a large extent, memory based mechanism has been ruling the roost. Memory is significant beyond any shadow of doubt, but the criteria for course design should be comprehensive enough.

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