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CURRICULUM AND SYLLABUS DESIGN IN EFL TEACHING: FROM STRUCTURAL TO CEFR FRAMEWORK

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Abstract

While many studies discuss curriculum design or the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) separately, few have systematically mapped how different syllabus types correspond to CEFR proficiency levels. This conceptual review addresses that gap by synthesizing theoretical and empirical perspectives on curriculum and syllabus development in English language teaching. Employing a qualitative library research approach, the study integrates findings from key literature and policy documents to construct a framework that links syllabus types, structural, functional, situational, task-based, and content-based, to CEFR descriptors across proficiency levels (A1–C2). The analysis reveals that structural syllabi best support beginners, while functional, situational, and task-based models enhance intermediate to advanced communicative competence. The study contributes conceptually by clarifying the relationship between curriculum scope and syllabus function and practically by offering a reference for teachers to design level-appropriate instruction and for policymakers to adapt global standards to local educational contexts.

Keywords: Curriculum design, Syllabus design, Language teaching, Communicative approaches, CEFR framework

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INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, English has become a key medium for academic, professional, and intercultural communication. However, the success of English language teaching depends not solely on teacher performance or learner motivation, but also on the quality of curriculum and syllabus design that systematically shapes learning outcomes. The curriculum and syllabus form the backbone of language education, determining objectives, methods, materials, and assessments that guide learners toward measurable competence (Richards, 2015; Nation & Macalister, 2010). A well-designed curriculum provides strategic direction, while a coherent syllabus ensures operational clarity within each course. Together, they define what should be learned and how learning should progress effectively.

Over the past decades, language education has experienced major paradigm shifts from structural and grammatical approaches in the mid-20th century, to communicative and functional approaches, and finally to competency-based models grounded in international proficiency standards such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001; North & Piccardo, 2019). CEFR has gained wide recognition for providing transparent benchmarks to assess language ability across contexts, making it a valuable reference for curriculum planning, syllabus development, and assessment design. Nevertheless, while many studies have explored CEFR implementation or curriculum reform

independently (e.g., Puranen & Taalas, 2021; Latifa et al., 2023), few have explicitly examined how different syllabus types correspond to CEFR proficiency levels, particularly within Asian or EFL contexts. This lack of alignment creates a theoretical and practical gap between global proficiency frameworks and local syllabus design.

Addressing this gap, the present article seeks to synthesize theoretical perspectives on syllabus design and map their correspondence to CEFR proficiency levels (A1–C2). It particularly explores which types of syllabi are most appropriate for learners at different proficiency stages and how curriculum and syllabus can be integrated to align with international benchmarks while remaining responsive to local contexts. By clarifying these relationships, the study contributes to the theoretical understanding of curriculum–syllabus alignment and practical applications in English language teaching. This article, therefore, discusses how different syllabus types correspond to CEFR levels and the implications for curriculum design.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Evolution of Syllabus Types: From Structural to Communicative to Task-/Content-Based

Over time, the design of language syllabi in EFL education has moved through several distinct stages, each shaped by changing ideas about what counts as effective language learning. In the beginning, structural syllabi dominated. These focused on grammar rules, vocabulary sequencing, and repetitive drill features that helped beginners establish a foundation. However, such approaches paid little attention to meaning or honest communication, which later drew criticism for producing learners who could recite forms but struggled to use language naturally.

As dissatisfaction with purely structural teaching grew, communicative paradigms began to take hold. Models such as the communicative, notional-functional, and situational syllabi emphasized how language is used in context and encouraged learners to interact meaningfully (Graves, 2000; Nation & Macalister, 2010). Still, these approaches introduced new problems. Teachers often found it challenging to organize communicative functions logically or to decide how to balance fluency with grammatical accuracy. Assessing authentic communication also proved complex compared to testing discrete grammar points.

To address such gaps, attention gradually shifted to task-based and content-based syllabi. These approaches linked language learning with real-world performance, disciplinary knowledge, and critical thinking (Ellis, 2003; Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010). They were praised for boosting learner motivation and relevance, but also required more teacher expertise, institutional resources, and well-aligned assessments. In practice, many EFL institutions now combine different approaches. Structural elements are retained for lower levels, while communicative and task-based elements are added progressively as students advance (Nation & Macalister, 2010). This hybrid tendency reflects an effort to balance practicality with pedagogy.

Global Frameworks and CEFR Adoption

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has played a key role in unifying how language ability is defined and measured across contexts. Its six proficiency levels (A1–C2) and the "can-do" descriptors aim to provide transparent, learner-centered benchmarks (North & Piccardo, 2019). Fundamentally, the CEFR supports outcome-based education: educators first determine what learners should be able to do and then design teaching and assessment around those goals (Richards, 2015).

However, adopting the CEFR in non-European contexts, especially in ASEAN regions, has proven promising and complicated. Recent studies between 2022 and 2024 paint a nuanced picture. For instance, Miqawati, Wijayanti, and Ismailia (2023) found that using CEFR guidelines in Indonesian vocational higher education helped with curriculum and assessment

development. However, some adaptation to local conditions was still essential. Similarly, Novawan, Tosalem, Binarkaheni, and Mariana (2023) noted that many Indonesian teachers viewed CEFR mainly as a testing framework, not a teaching tool, limiting its pedagogical integration.

Fitria (2023) examined the *Sahabatku Indonesia* textbook for BIPA learners and discovered that although its content was mapped to CEFR descriptors, classroom implementation often lagged. Meanwhile, a review by Robbani et al. (2023) pointed out recurring challenges such as teacher preparedness, mismatched proficiency levels, and institutional barriers. These studies suggest that while CEFR alignment supports communicative and task-based learning, it is not always smoothly applied. In some cases, CEFR becomes more of a policy label than an active pedagogical framework, especially when global standards meet local constraints.

Local Adaptation Challenges

Despite the appeal of global frameworks and modern syllabus models, local realities in countries like Indonesia continue to limit their complete application. Factors such as large class sizes, restricted contact hours, and heavy curricular demands often hinder the adoption of communicative or task-based designs. Misalignments between textbook content, assessment methods, and CEFR levels are common. Even when textbooks claim to follow CEFR standards, the classroom tasks or evaluations may still reflect older, form-focused traditions seen in the *Sahabatku Indonesia* example.

Another persistent issue is teacher training. Many teachers have not received sufficient professional development related to CEFR, action-oriented learning, or task design, resulting in inconsistent classroom practice. Moreover, while national policies may mention CEFR alignment, the necessary support materials and assessment reforms often lag. Learner readiness is also an important factor; advanced communicative tasks can be overwhelming for many students, especially those with lower proficiency. For this reason, a balanced or hybrid approach that keeps structural accuracy but encourages communicative use remains the most realistic option for many Indonesian EFL classrooms.

The literature makes it clear: no universal language syllabus design model exists. Each approach contributes something different. Structural syllabi build essential linguistic accuracy, communicative and task-based designs foster authentic use, and the CEFR offers a global framework to connect learning outcomes. However, the success of CEFR-based or communicative reforms depends less on the framework itself and more on contextual adaptation, which is how teachers and institutions translate these ideas into daily practice.

Without a strong alignment between policy, pedagogy, materials, and assessment, CEFR implementation risks remain superficial. Labels and documentation change in many cases, but classroom routines remain the same. Thus, what seems most needed is a flexible, context-sensitive hybrid model that respects global standards but also fits local institutional, cultural, and resource conditions. Only through this balance can syllabus design truly enhance both communicative competence and learning relevance in EFL settings.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative library research design, emphasizing conceptual and theoretical exploration rather than empirical fieldwork. Such a design was considered appropriate since the research examined the theoretical connection between curriculum and syllabus design and their alignment with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The focus was placed on interpreting and synthesizing existing bodies of knowledge to build a coherent conceptual understanding. This aligns with the principles of

conceptual research proposed by Richards (2015) and Nation and Macalister (2010), prioritizing the critical integration of theories and pedagogical frameworks over statistical or experimental validation.

The data for this study were collected from 24 academic and institutional sources published between 2010 and 2024, comprising nine peer-reviewed journal articles, six academic books, four policy and curriculum documents, two international reports or companion volumes, and one undergraduate thesis (e.g., *North & Piccardo, 2019; Handayani & Zaim, 2023; MOET, 2018; Little, 2006; Zalza, 2024*).

To ensure the quality and relevance of the materials, three inclusion criteria were applied:

1. Relevance—Only sources explicitly addressing curriculum development, syllabus typology, or CEFR integration in language education were considered.
2. Credibility – The selection was limited to peer-reviewed publications, official policy documents, and reputable academic references.
3. Contextual focus – Priority was given to studies related to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, particularly those discussing CEFR adaptation within Southeast Asian settings such as Indonesia and Vietnam (e.g., *MOET, 2018; Latifa et al., 2023*).

The collected data were examined using two complementary qualitative techniques: comparative analysis and thematic coding. The comparative analysis explored conceptual similarities and distinctions between curriculum and syllabus design, focusing on their scope, pedagogical functions, and degree of alignment with CEFR descriptors. Meanwhile, thematic coding was used to identify recurring ideas and theoretical patterns concerning different syllabus types, such as structural, notional-functional, task-based, and content-based approaches, and their relationship with CEFR proficiency levels (A1–C2) as outlined by the Council of Europe (2020) and North and Piccardo (2019).

Both methods were grounded in theoretical perspectives drawn from Ellis (2003), Long and Crookes (1991), and Robinson (2001), ensuring that the analytical process remained anchored in established pedagogical and curriculum design theories.

The outcomes of the analyses were synthesized to develop a conceptual framework that illustrates the interrelationship between various syllabus types and CEFR-based learning objectives across the four macro-skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This synthesis integrates theoretical perspectives from CEFR-oriented research (e.g., *Puranen & Taalas, 2021; Little, 2006*) with contextual insights from curriculum studies in EFL settings (e.g., *Latifa et al., 2023; Handayani & Zaim, 2023*). The resulting framework provides pedagogical implications for curriculum designers, educators, and policymakers who aim to align national English curricula with internationally recognized proficiency benchmarks.

As a library-based conceptual study, this research is limited to secondary data and, therefore, cannot fully capture the complexity of classroom realities. The availability, quality, and scope of the reviewed literature constrain the findings and interpretations. To build upon this conceptual groundwork, future studies should include empirical validations, such as classroom observations, teacher interviews, or case studies, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how CEFR alignment is enacted within real EFL teaching contexts.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this conceptual review are derived from the synthesis of theoretical and empirical sources on curriculum and syllabus design. The following discussion outlines the main conceptual insights identified from the reviewed literature, organized according to key thematic categories.

CURRICULUM VS. SYLLABUS

Definition of Curriculum

The curriculum in the context of language learning has an extensive and comprehensive scope. The curriculum can be understood as a set of plans and arrangements regarding objectives, content, teaching materials, and methods to guide the learning process, so that specific educational goals can be achieved systematically. Tyler (1949) asserts that "The curriculum is an attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice" (Safrur Riza & Barrulwalidin, 2023, p. 123). Thus, the curriculum is not only an administrative document, but also serves as the main guideline that directs teaching and learning activities to be in line with predetermined objectives, covering aspects of learning objectives, competency standards, materials, teaching strategies, media, and comprehensive evaluation (Primanita Sholihah Rosmana et al., 2022: 120).

In language learning, the curriculum covers various fundamental components that interact with each other. First, learning objectives, which include long-term and short-term goals, competencies to be developed, and the vision and mission of the language program. These objectives serve as the primary foundation that guides the entire learning process. Second, the material or lesson content is designed according to the learners' needs, relevance, and characteristics to create a meaningful learning experience. Third, learning methods and strategies, which include pedagogical approaches, teaching techniques, and the flexible use of media, so that they can be adapted to the learning styles and conditions of students. Fourth, evaluation, which is not only in the form of learning assessment, but also includes feedback mechanisms, assessment rubrics, and measurement of the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process.

This view is further reinforced by educational scholars, such as Hamalik (2008), who emphasizes that the curriculum is "a set of plans and arrangements regarding the content and subject matter as well as the methods used as guidelines for conducting teaching and learning activities" (in Mauludani et al., 2025: 62). Meanwhile, Nasution (2006) views the curriculum as "a plan designed to facilitate the teaching and learning process under the guidance and responsibility of the school or educational institution and its teaching staff" (in Mauludani et al., 2025: 63).

Beyond its technical dimensions, the curriculum also covers the philosophical and theoretical aspects of language learning, such as the language acquisition theory adopted, the communicative or structural approach chosen, and the integration of language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing). This approach is in line with the principles of the English language curriculum, which emphasizes the development of students' communicative competence through integrating language skills. In addition, the curriculum considers contextual factors such as program duration, resource availability, student characteristics, and the specific needs of the institution or learning community. Thus, the language curriculum is technical and philosophical, as it is designed based on views about how language is acquired and used in real life (Hanoi, 2018: 4–5).

Definition of Syllabus

A syllabus differs from a curriculum because it emphasizes specific and operational aspects. A syllabus is a document that contains details of learning materials and the sequence in which they will be delivered within a specific period. In the context of language learning, a syllabus serves as a practical guide that translates the general objectives of the curriculum into concrete, systematic, and implementable learning plans.

To strengthen this point, findings by Mozes Kurniawan & Lanny Wijayaningsih (2024) highlight that the success of English language learning greatly depends on how the material, learning sequence, and teaching strategies are designed in the syllabus. The main components of the syllabus include specific learning materials, such as topics to be discussed, grammar structures to be learned, vocabulary to be mastered, and communicative functions to be practiced. The learning sequence is a crucial aspect of the syllabus, determining a logical and progressive sequence from simple to complex material, from basic to advanced skills. With a precise sequence, the syllabus can provide systematic direction for teachers in organizing learning activities, so that students can achieve language competence in a gradual and structured manner.

Furthermore, the syllabus also includes a detailed learning timeline, time allocation for each material, division of learning sessions, and an evaluation schedule. The assessment aspect of the syllabus is more concrete, covering the types of tests or assignments that will be given, specific assessment criteria, and evaluation weights for each learning component.

The Relationship Between Curriculum and Syllabus in Language Learning Planning

In language learning planning, the curriculum and syllabus are closely related and complement each other. The curriculum serves as a broad philosophical and strategic framework, covering long-term and short-term educational goals, theoretical foundations such as language acquisition theory, selected learning approaches, and macro components such as objectives, content, methods, and evaluation. It also considers contextual factors such as student characteristics, resource availability, and the specific needs of the institution or community. Thus, the curriculum provides overall direction and vision for language learning.

Meanwhile, the syllabus is a practical derivative of the curriculum that operationalizes broad objectives into more detailed, measurable learning plans. The syllabus contains specific learning materials, such as topics, grammatical structures, vocabulary, and communicative functions to be learned. In addition, the learning sequence is crucial, as it determines the logical progression from simple to more complex material, and from basic to advanced skills. Kurniawan & Wijayaningsih (2024: 475) emphasize that "a systematic sequence of material in the syllabus helps teachers organize learning from simple vocabulary to more complex sentence structures."

Therefore, curriculum and syllabus cannot be separated in language learning planning. The curriculum provides a philosophical foundation, vision, and general objectives, while the syllabus translates these directions into concrete steps in the classroom. If a curriculum without a syllabus is too abstract, then a syllabus without a curriculum will lose its direction and philosophical basis. Both must go hand in hand so that language learning is directed at achieving short-term goals and contributes to the formation of holistic language competencies in line with the vision of education.

The relationship between curriculum and syllabus has long been debated in language education. While both are essential components of instructional planning, their scope, focus, and application level differ significantly. According to Tyler (1949), the curriculum represents an organized plan that outlines educational goals, content, and strategies to achieve them.

Nunan (1988) defines a syllabus as a more specific and operational document that translates curriculum goals into teachable units. Similarly, Richards (2015) and Nation & Macalister (2010) emphasize that the curriculum operates at the macro level, determining *what and why to teach*, while the syllabus functions at the micro level, focusing on *how and when to teach*.

From a theoretical perspective, the curriculum provides a philosophical foundation that integrates institutional aims, learning theories, and policy frameworks. In contrast, the syllabus serves as the practical implementation of those philosophies in classroom settings. Ornstein and Hunkins (2017) describe the curriculum as "a structured plan that embodies the institution's educational philosophy and vision," while the syllabus is "the teacher's operational interpretation of that plan." Thus, a curriculum without a syllabus is abstract, whereas a syllabus without a curriculum lacks direction.

Both concepts must operate harmoniously: the curriculum provides the vision and general direction, and the syllabus ensures such visions are realized through concrete, sequenced learning experiences. This mutual relationship ensures language teaching achieves long-term educational purposes and measurable communicative competence. Hamalik (2008) further notes that the success of English instruction depends not only on the teacher's role but also on how the curriculum and syllabus are systematically aligned to guide learners toward achieving linguistic and communicative goals.

Table 1 summarizes the main distinctions between curriculum and syllabus according to several educational theorists to make this comparison more straightforward.

Table 1 Comparison between Curriculum and Syllabus in Language Teaching

Aspect	Curriculum	Syllabus	Key Experts
Scope	A broad educational framework that defines goals, competencies, and teaching philosophy	Specific document detailing learning content and sequencing	Richards (2015); Nation & Macalister (2010)
Focus	Concerned with *what* and *why* to teach	Concerned with *how* and *when* to teach	Nunan (1988); Tyler (1949)
Decision Level	Institutional or national policy level	Classroom or course level	Richards (2015); Taba (1962)
Components	Objectives, content, pedagogy, evaluation, philosophy	Topics, grammar, tasks, activities, assessment plan	Krahnke (1987); Hamalik (2008)
Function	Provides theoretical and strategic direction	Provides operational implementation and classroom structure	Ornstein & Hunkins (2017)
Outcome	Holistic educational competence and long-term learning	Specific linguistic or communicative outcomes	Nation & Macalister (2010)

TYPES OF SYLLABUS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

In language teaching, various types of syllabi are developed according to language theory, learning theory, and learners' needs. Sabbah (2018) explains that the development of syllabus models has changed in line with innovations in language teaching methodology. This has resulted in several main types of syllabi, such as structural syllabi, notional-functional syllabi, lexical syllabi, topic-based syllabi, task-based syllabi, and communicative syllabi. Each type has a different focus and use according to the learning paradigm adopted.

According to several scholars, such as Krahnke (1987), Nunan (1988), Dubin and Olshtain (1986), Richards and Rodgers (2001), Brown (1995), and Hakim & Bambang (n.d.), syllabi in language teaching can be classified into six main types. Each type serves different learning goals and language proficiency levels.:

1. Structural syllabus: emphasizes the progressive teaching of grammatical forms (nouns, verbs, tenses, phrases, etc.) from simple to complicated. Beginner learners (A1–A2) who require a strong foundation in language structure before gaining communicative competence can benefit from this category. This method, which is the most conventional, stresses the mastery of linguistic forms as the cornerstone of language acquisition, according to Krahnke (1987).
2. Notional/Functional syllabus: This syllabus focuses on concepts of meaning (size, color, time, comparison) and linguistic functions (such as apologizing, providing information, agreeing, and denying). As Nunan (1988) states, this curriculum aids students at the intermediate level (A2–B1) in developing the capacity to utilize language for certain communicative goals. It closes the gap between communicative performance and grammatical proficiency.
3. Situational syllabus: based on actual or imagined scenarios, including "going to the market to shop," "making new friends," or "placing an order at a restaurant." According to Dubin and Olshtain (1986), this syllabus type works well for students (A2–B2) who want to utilize English in everyday or professional contexts, like English for Specific Purposes (ESP). It links classroom material to real-world applications, creating meaningful learning experiences.
4. Skill-based syllabus: emphasizes the following language skills: speaking, writing, listening, and reading. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), this method is appropriate for upper-intermediate students (B1–B2) who must improve specific abilities like professional speaking or academic writing. This curriculum encourages the development of well-rounded skills and can be modified to suit the needs of each student.
5. Task-based syllabus: focuses on practical communication tasks, including conducting interviews, participating in group discussions, preparing reports, or finishing projects. According to Nunan (1988), this curriculum promotes meaningful language use in academic or professional settings for students (B1–C1). Instead of only rehearsing forms, it emphasizes using language to accomplish goals.
6. Content-based syllabus: This method combines language instruction with academic subjects, including social studies, science, and history. It is frequently employed in CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) or bilingual programs. Richards and Rodgers (2001) claim that it enables learners (B2–C1) to gain both linguistic competence and discipline knowledge. Fusing academic content with language encourages authentic learning.

Brown (1995) and Hakim & Bambang (n.d.) observe that curricula are rarely isolated in practice. The most successful language programs integrate two or more types to guarantee

thorough learning outcomes. An introductory English course, for instance, might start with a structural syllabus (A1–A2) to reinforce grammatical foundations before switching to a task-based syllabus (B1–B2) to improve communicative fluency in everyday contexts.

History and Purpose of CEFR

The Council of Europe developed the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in the late 1990s to unify and standardize language learning, teaching, and assessment across Europe. Its central aim was to create "a common basis for elaborating language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe" (Council of Europe, 2001, as cited in Robinson, 2001, p. 287). CEFR provides transparent benchmarks for describing communicative competence, enabling learners, teachers, institutions, and employers to share a common understanding of language proficiency.

Although initially intended for the European context, it has become a global reference in language education, curriculum development, teacher training, and international assessment (North, 2000; Trim, 2010). As Little (2006) points out, CEFR functions not only as a descriptive scale but also as a practical tool. It helps teachers and institutions align learning objectives, materials, and assessment with learners' communicative outcomes. Thus, CEFR plays a dual role: it is both a conceptual framework for language policy and a pedagogical instrument in the classroom.

CEFR Levels (A1–C2)

The CEFR divides language proficiency into six levels grouped under three broad categories: Basic User (A1–A2), Independent User (B1–B2), and Proficient User (C1–C2).

1. A1 (Breakthrough): Learners can understand and use everyday expressions for basic needs.
2. A2 (Waystage): Learners can communicate in simple, routine tasks requiring direct information exchange.
3. B1 (Threshold): Learners can deal with most situations in daily life and understand the main points of clear standard input.
4. B2 (Vantage): Learners can interact fluently in social and professional contexts and understand more complex texts.
5. C1 (Effective Operational Proficiency): Learners can use the language flexibly and effectively for academic and professional purposes.
6. C2 (Mastery): Learners possess near-native proficiency, able to understand almost everything they hear or read (Trim, 2010).

According to Long and Crookes (1991), this level-based system is crucial because it provides curriculum designers with realistic and progressive targets for each stage of instruction (p. 25).

Description of Skills at Each Level

At the C1 level, learners can comprehend extended and complex speech even when it is not clearly structured or when relationships are only implied. Their spoken language is fluent, spontaneous, and flexible, allowing them to express ideas precisely for academic or professional purposes. Reading competence at this level includes processing abstract, technical, or literary texts, while writing involves producing coherent, detailed, and well-organized compositions. As North & Piccardo (2019) emphasize, this level reflects the ability to adapt language use across contexts with minimal effort and high communicative effectiveness.

At the C2 level, learners demonstrate near-native proficiency across all four skills. They can understand virtually everything they hear or read, summarize information from diverse spoken and written sources, and reconstruct arguments in coherently. Speaking and writing are characterized by precision, sophistication, and stylistic control suitable for advanced academic and professional communication (Council of Europe, 2020).

These advanced-level descriptors reaffirm that CEFR is not a static or abstract scale but a dynamic pedagogical framework that supports teachers, curriculum developers, and institutions in aligning instruction, assessment, and learning outcomes. As Little (2006) and Trim (2010) note, CEFR's can-do statements function as an educational roadmap, enabling educators to translate proficiency descriptors into concrete learning objectives, assessment rubrics, and teaching practices. Thus, CEFR operates simultaneously as a conceptual foundation for language policy and a practical tool for effective curriculum implementation.

Linking Syllabus Types with CEFR Levels

Syllabus types in English language teaching have evolved from structural and functional orientations to communicative and task-based paradigms. Each syllabus type aligns with different **CEFR proficiency levels (A1–C2)**, ensuring progressive development from accuracy to fluency and proficiency. This correspondence between syllabus models and CEFR levels allows teachers and curriculum designers to plan learning outcomes that are pedagogically coherent and internationally standardized.

At **A1–A2**, structural syllabi remain most appropriate because beginners require a strong grammatical foundation and controlled vocabulary exposure (Long & Crookes, 1991). At **B1–B2**, functional or situational syllabi become more effective as learners perform communicative acts, such as requesting, suggesting, or describing (Nunan, 1988; Robinson, 2001). At **B2–C1**, a task-based syllabus is recommended since learners at this stage benefit from authentic, problem-solving activities (Ellis, 2003; Sahragard & Ansaripour, 2014). Finally, at **C1–C2**, content-based syllabi best support advanced learners, enabling them to integrate language use with academic and professional content areas (Cowling, 2007; Coyle et al., 2010).

Table 2: Mapping Syllabus Types to CEFR Proficiency Levels

CEFR Level	Syllabus Type	Pedagogical Focus	Supporting Experts
A1-A2	Structural	Grammar accuracy, basic vocabulary, controlled practice	Long & Crookes (1991); Richards (2015)
B1-B2	Notional-Functional / Situational	Functional communication, context-based use	Nunan (1988); Robinson (2001)
B2-C1	Task-Based	Real-world language performance, problem-solving, and collaboration	Ellis (2003); Sahragard & Ansaripour (2014)
C1-C2	Content-Based	Integration of language with academic or professional content	Cowling (2007); Coyle, Hood & Marsh (2010)

Robinson (2001) emphasizes that syllabus design should integrate linguistic content with communicative needs, in line with CEFR descriptors (p. 289). Each syllabus type can therefore be mapped onto particular CEFR levels.

1. The structural syllabus is most appropriate at A1–A2 (Basic User). Beginners require systematic exposure to grammar and vocabulary. As Long and Crookes (1991) argue, structural sequencing provides scaffolding at the early stages (p. 7).
2. The notional-functional syllabus fits best at B1–B2 (Independent User) since learners at this stage must perform communicative functions such as requesting, suggesting, or narrating, which corresponds to CEFR's focus on independent interaction.
3. At B2–C1 levels, the task-based syllabus is highly effective. Robinson (2001) explains that pedagogic tasks resemble real-world target activities such as academic discussions or negotiations (p. 289), aligning with CEFR's communicative approach.
4. 4. The content–based syllabus most suits C1–C2 (proficient user). Cowling (2007, cited in Robinson, 2001) illustrates this with examples of Business English courses focusing on meetings, telephoning, and presentations, which align with CEFR descriptors for proficient users managing specialized discourse.

This mapping creates a coherent progression: structural syllabuses support beginners, notional-functional syllabuses suit intermediates, task-based syllabuses benefit upper-intermediate to advanced learners, and content-based syllabuses serve highly proficient learners. CEFR therefore bridges theoretical models of syllabus design with practical classroom implementation worldwide.

CONCLUSION

This study synthesizes how curriculum and syllabus design function as technical plans and conceptual frameworks that shape the quality and direction of language learning. The analysis shows that the structural approach is important for beginner learners, while functional, situational, task-based, and content-based syllabi provide a more meaningful and communicative learning path for intermediate to advanced learners. Integrating these various designs with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) creates a coherent and transparent learning progression, guiding learners from basic skills to advanced proficiency.

This article's novelty or main contribution lies in the conceptual integration of various types of syllabi with CEFR levels, resulting in a practical model that links theoretical principles of language teaching with measurable international standards. This synthesis makes a scientific contribution by emphasizing that the CEFR functions as an assessment tool and a reference in curriculum planning and learning design. From a practical standpoint, the proposed mapping can assist teachers in designing learning activities that are appropriate for students' ability levels, help curriculum developers adapt the CEFR to the national educational context, and serve as a reference for policymakers in implementing a hybrid syllabus model that balances structural and communicative elements.

For further research, empirical studies in the classroom are recommended to examine how this mapping is applied in practice and how the CEFR framework can be effectively adapted in diverse cultural and institutional contexts. In addition, exploring the integration of digital syllabi and multimodal learning resources could be a new direction for applying the CEFR in language education. Continually refining the relationship between curriculum, syllabus, and global frameworks will ensure that language teaching remains contextually relevant, pedagogically robust, and globally competitive.

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