

Reviews

Curriculum Development in Language Teaching. Jack C. Richards. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. xiv + 321 pp.

Reviewed by
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Most readers of the JALT Journal are familiar with Jack Richards through one or more of his many publications, which range from methodology to textbooks for English learners. His co-authored *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (2001) is in its second edition, and his *New Interchange* (1998) series is one of the biggest selling language textbook series in Japan.

Curriculum Development in Language Teaching is part of the Cambridge Language Education series edited by Richards. In this book, Richards has set out to provide in-service teachers with a resource and teachers in training with a review of language program planning, implementation, and evaluation approaches. Overall, he has achieved this goal and has accomplished the difficult task of writing a text that is informative and balanced in terms of scope and utility.

Richards gives a rather narrow definition of the term “syllabus,” restricting it to the content of a course while the term “curriculum” is seen as encompassing syllabus and other elements such as needs analysis, teaching, and evaluation. His discussion of curriculum development deals predominantly with planning and implementing a language course rather than with the broader issues of planning and developing a set of related courses within a program.

The book is organized into nine chapters covering language teaching history, methods, needs analysis, situation analysis, goals and outcomes, course design, the teaching and learning process, materials design, and evaluation. Each chapter ends with discussion questions and activities, an appendix, and chapter references. The chapters follow a chronological sequence that matches the development of a typical curriculum, which progresses from an initial needs analysis ultimately to program evaluation. Aspects that receive the most attention are needs analysis,

learning outcomes, and syllabus frameworks. There are also short descriptions of the more common philosophies of teaching, learning, and language. The useful index of authors and subjects at the end of the book and the clarity and style of the layout, especially the table of contents and indices, make finding information quick and easy.

At more than eighty pages, the appendices form the largest portion of the book. Vocabulary, function and grammar lists, needs analyses, proficiency descriptors, evaluation forms, and samples from Richards' own texts are included. Some of the appendices could have been omitted, particularly the sample of a word frequency list and grammar list of personal and possessive pronouns. The appendix on questionnaire design offers some useful tips but lacks any explanation of data analysis or interpretation, limiting its usefulness for those wanting to administer their own surveys. Two lengthy questionnaires (co-written by Richards) are given as samples in appendices, but there is little discussion of their design or effectiveness. The majority of the appendices, however, complement the text well. For example, the discussion of the pros and cons of skills-based, task-based, process, and product syllabi, among others, highlights the issues that Richards considers important in syllabus design. The different types of syllabi in the appendices in Chapter 8 should provoke thought and discussion among teachers in training or readers new to curriculum design. The proficiency descriptors and teacher evaluation forms that Richards has taken from a variety of sources may be useful for those interested in evaluation issues.

Most of the book is easy to understand and only rarely becomes overly simplistic, as in the description on p. 161 of a task-based syllabus: "Tasks are activities that drive the second language acquisition process." While axiomatic definitions such as this are present, they are infrequent and do little to detract from Richards' efforts "to acquaint language teachers and teachers-in-training with fundamental issues" (p. xi). *Curriculum Development in Language Teaching* presents lists, forms, and brief descriptions that provides an understandable, albeit limited, background to the issues involved in course design, as well as offering some related resources.

References

- Richards, J., & Rodgers, T. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching: A description and analysis* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. (1998). *New interchange: English for international communication*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.