

DESIGN OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING
MATERIALS

Grado en Estudios Ingleses

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Academic year: 2014/15

September, 2015

ABSTRACT

Throughout history foreign language teaching and learning has always been relevant. Nowadays, English is the world's most widely studied foreign language. Therefore, if we look at the existing coursebooks and syllabuses used for language teaching we will have a variety of approaches that can be adopted by teachers.

This paper discusses the design and the application of language teaching materials. It shows the difficult decisions a teacher or materials writer has to make before designing a course; depending on the decisions taken the result will be a satisfactory course for both sides or not.

The criteria by which teachers and materials writers decide or choose what materials and which approaches to teaching they will use are going to be discussed. Designing what to teach is a challenge for teachers and course designers. Consequently, the different ways in which a course can be structured reflect the different ways of looking at the objectives of language teaching and learning. A focus of attention will be the English Studies degree and the English language subjects in which the coursebooks *Outcomes* Intermediate and Upper-Intermediate are used.

Key words: Language teaching materials design – Syllabus design – English language teaching – Coursebook evaluation

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1. INTRODUCTION

Harmer begins his introduction to English language teaching, *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, by stating:

Although English is not the language with the largest number of native or 'first language speakers, it has become a lingua franca. A lingua franca can be defined as a language widely adopted for communication between two speakers whose native language are different from each others' and where one or both speakers are using it as a 'second' language. (p.1)

For this reason, I would like to give my future students the ability to communicate in a foreign language that will give them the capacity of looking beyond their language and culture. Moreover, speaking English will open doors to the students who will be able to speak to people whose native languages are different from theirs.

I have chosen language teaching materials design as the topic of my Final Degree Project. I have made this choice because I have decided that my vocation is being a teacher because I see my future as involving helping students. I have reached the conclusion that I would like to set up a language school or a private lessons school and my role would be guiding them in order to reinforce the subjects they found difficult to pass and improve their English.

Therefore, I think that my final decision of choosing this topic will help me to organise the lessons that I will give in the future. Moreover, it will help me to design a syllabus; a guide for the teacher but also for the learner of what is going to be taught and learnt step-by-step.

Up until the early 1980s many decisions on what to teach, which vocabulary or grammar to teach, were apparently taken on a more or less subjective basis. Nevertheless with changes in theories of language and theories of learning new syllabuses begin to emerge in which "the control of vocabulary and of grammatical structures go hand-in-hand" (Wilkins, 1985, p.3).

To date, a number of studies have discussed the term 'communicative competence'. Embark, S (2013) describes communicative competence in relation to linguistics as follows: "Linguistically, it refers to the speaker's ability to use the appropriate language in the right

context for the right purpose”(p.101). This author shows what communicating effectively means and the importance it has:

Communicating effectively in a language requires the speaker’s good understanding of linguistic, sociolinguistic and socio-cultural aspects of that language. This understanding will enable him to use the right language in the right context for the right purpose and then he can be referred to as communicatively competent. (102)

Consequently, the teaching materials chosen for a course need to help teachers and learners achieve the ability to communicate effectively. “The good command of any language requires reaching sufficient understanding of all the language skills”. (Embark, S 2013, p.105). In short, it is better for a language learner to know when, where and how to use language and not just concentrate on mastering grammar.

In this paper the different approaches and designs that could be adopted for language teaching will be discussed in order to decide whether Dellar and Walkley *Outcomes*, which are used in *Técnicas de expresión en un idioma moderno*, *Usos de inglés*, *Lengua inglesa I* and *Lengua inglesa II*, are suitable for the English language subjects and the English Studies Degree.

2. SELECTING WHAT TO TEACH AND HOW TO TEACH IT.

2.1. Coursebooks

A coursebook is a written or printed work that will be used by students in a program of instruction. Whether to use a course book or not for English language courses is an interesting dilemma that is going to be discussed throughout this section.

Choosing a specific coursebook is a challenge because before choosing it, this book has to be assessed and evaluated. However, Harmer (2001) suggests that “a problem with such assessments is that however good they are, they may still fail to predict what actually happens when the material is used” (p.301).

Coursebooks have benefits and drawbacks. On one hand, if a coursebook is good it is the best companion for teachers and learners as Harmer (2001) explains: “Good coursebooks are carefully prepared to offer a coherent syllabus, satisfactory language control, motivating texts, tapes and other accessories such as videotapes, CD-ROMs, extra resource material, and

useful web links.” (p.304). We must take into account that Harmer wrote these words more than a decade ago and the technology was not as advanced as it is nowadays. Today, tapes are obsolete and CD-ROMs are beginning to be replaced by virtual media.

In addition, coursebooks tend to be attractively presented, which leads the students to be drawn into the book's content. When using coursebooks, students can actually see their progress as they move forward. Furthermore, having a coursebook gives students the opportunity to review or strengthen the knowledge after the lesson. A coursebook can be a teacher's greatest ally when they need to prepare a lesson without much time.

On the other hand, some disadvantages appear when dealing with coursebooks. The vast majority of these kinds of books are organised in this way: presentation, practice and production; which makes students lose enthusiasm. Although in the recent years some new alternatives have appeared to the 'classic' coursebook the majority of these books still have the typical organisation. It is worth mentioning that some coursebooks even if they are of different levels seem identical. Coursebooks with recurring themes and appearance end up with unmotivated teachers and students.

Harmer (2001) gives a solution to the drawbacks some coursebooks may have: this solution is a 'do-it-yourself' approach. He explains it as follows:

Such an approach is extremely attractive. It can offer students a dynamic and varied programme. If we can see its relevance to their own needs, it will greatly enhance their motivation and their trust in what they are being asked to do. It allows teachers to respond on a lesson-by-lesson basis to what is happening in the class. Finally for the teacher, it means an exciting and creative involvement with texts and tasks. (p.305)

In my own experience as a teacher, most of the time I enjoyed using the coursebooks but I have to say that I always complemented the coursebook with a video, a song a role-play or an interactive activity. Coursebooks can help a lot specially if you are a novice teacher, but using them all the time may lead to the risk that students feel that all their English language lessons are the same. As a student, my perception of coursebooks is the antithesis of the one I had as a teacher. I felt that every English language book was exactly the same in every level and I found that many teachers do not break way from the established outline.

Re-ordering a coursebook as you like, might be an alternative in order to create an appealing teaching guide. Teachers can omit, replace or rewrite some materials of the

coursebook that they feel inadequate as long as the result is coherent. Harmer (2001), concludes with some benefits and hazards of DIY (do-it-yourself) approaches:

This not only makes preparing lessons a very-time consuming business, but also runs the risk that students will end up with an incoherent collection of bits and pieces of material. However, where there is time for the proper planning and organisation o DIY teaching, students may well get exceptional programmes of study which are responsive to their needs, and varied in a way that does not abandon coherence. (P.305)

Coursebooks have their detractors often because it is suggested that the learners themselves should be involved in the creation of the syllabus. One such approach of this kind is known as the borrowing the name of the Dogme 95 film-making collective and it was translating the philosophy to the classroom. As the movement's founder Scott Thornbury puts it; "The point is to restore teaching to its pre-method "state of grace" - when all there was was a room with a few chairs, a blackboard, a teacher and some students, and where learning was jointly constructed out of the talk that evolved in that simplest, and most prototypical of situations" (Thornbury, 2000)

Thornbury (2000) explains how a class in which Dogme approach to teaching takes place would be:

Teaching should be done using only the resources that teachers and students bring to the classroom-i.e. Themselves- and whatever happens to be in the classroom. If a particular piece of material is necessary for the lesson, a location must be chosen where that material is to be found (e.g. library, resource centre, bar, student's club...)

Dogme also proscribes music being played that is not actually occurring where the scene is being shot. Nor is artificial lighting allowed. Nor optical work or filters. Nor tripods. In teaching terms the rigorous rejection of the non-authentic might mean, for example that .

Though coursebooks have many advantages and disadvantages we have to highlight the fact that "ELT coursebooks evoke a range of responses, but are frequently seen by teachers as necessary evils." (Sheldon, 1988, p. 237) In other words, although coursebooks have deficiencies a large number of teachers use them because they believe they are necessary.

Sheldon (1988) concludes as follows:

But the fact is that coursebooks are here, and are even exploited in traditional environments as a method of controlling large classes of learners. Such pedagogical experiences generate expectations about what a coursebook should contain, what it should look like, and how it should be used. These perceptions are frequently carried over into environments where more freedom and choice are in reality possible.

2.2. Approaches to teaching

A method constitutes elements and sub-elements that should be described before explaining the different methods of teaching. Richards and Rogers (1999) explain the hierarchical arrangement of method:

Approach is the level at which assumptions and beliefs about language and language learning are specified; method is the level at which theory is put into practice and at which choices are made about the particular skills to be taught, the content to be taught, and the order in which the content will be presented; technique is the level at which classroom procedures are described. (p. 15)

The following sections will be devoted to explaining different methods to second and foreign language teaching. In these sections theories concerning how languages are learned and how the knowledge of language is organized, presented and structured will be explained.

2.2.1. Grammar-translation method

According to Richards and Rogers (1999):

Grammar translation is a way of studying a language that approaches the language first through detailed analysis of its grammar rules, followed by application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences and texts into and out of, the target language. It hence views language learning as consisting little more than memorizing rules and facts in order to understand and manipulate the morphology and syntax of the foreign language. (p.3)

This method focuses in reading and writing more than on speaking and listening. Vocabulary is taught through bilingual word lists, memorization and studying the dictionary. Grammar is taught deductively and students usually translate sentences into and out of the target language.

The Grammar-translation method and courses based on this approach have been criticised by Richards and Rogers. (1999):

This resulted in the type of Grammar- Translation courses remembered with distaste by thousands of school learners, for whom foreign language learning meant a tedious experience of memorizing endless lists of unusable grammar rules and vocabulary and attempting to produce perfect translations of stilted or literary prose. (p.4)

Though this method created frustration nowadays, we still find evidence of it in courses where the main focus is the understanding literary texts.

2.2.2. *Direct method*

The Direct Method was one of the attempts to base a method on how children learn language; this method is more like first language learning and is therefore sometimes referred to as Natural method. This method followed the following principles and procedures that Richards and Rogers (1999) point out:

1. Classroom instruction was conducted exclusively in the target language.
2. Only everyday vocabulary and sentences were taught.
3. Oral communication skills were built up in a carefully graded progression organized around question-and-answer exchanges between teachers and students in small, intensive classes.
4. Grammar was taught inductively.
5. New teaching points were introduced orally
6. Concrete vocabulary was taught through demonstration, objects, and pictures; abstract vocabulary was taught by association of ideas.
7. Both speech and listening comprehension were taught.
8. Correct pronunciation and grammar were emphasized. (p.10-11)

In contrast with the Grammar-Translation method, the Direct Method is taught without using the native tongue of the learner. In addition, in the Direct Method meaning is taught through demonstration and action, in order to do that the foreign language is used spontaneously in the classroom.

This method was difficult to apply, because in order to apply it well it demanded teachers who were native speakers or were really fluent in the language they were teaching. Not all teachers who teach English as a foreign language have the capacity to apply this method.

2.2.3. *Audio-lingual method*

The Audio-lingual method is an oral approach used in language teaching. This method brings together aspects of linguistic theory and behavioral psychology. According to *The Free Dictionary* behaviourism is “a school of psychology that confines itself to the study of observable and quantifiable aspects of behavior and excludes subjective phenomena, such as emotions or motives.”

In this method there is little explanation of grammar; listening and speaking skills prevail. Harmer (2001) states that “Audio-lingual methodology owed its existence to the behaviourist models of learning. Using the Stimulus-Response-Reinforcement, it attempted,

through a continuous process of such positive reinforcement, engender good habits in language learners” (p.79).

In an Audio-lingual lesson dialogues and drills are the key points of the learning process. For as Richards and Rogers (1999) report:

Dialogues provide the means of contextualizing key structures and illustrate situations in which structures might be used as well as some cultural aspects of the target language. Dialogues are used for repetition and memorization. Correct pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation are emphasized. After a dialogue has been presented and memorized, specific grammatical patterns in the dialogue are selected and become the focus of various kinds of drill and pattern practice exercises. (p.53)

Harmer (2001) maintains that in the Audio-lingual method “language is de-contextualised and carries little communicative function. Second, by doing its best to banish mistakes, so that students only use correct language, such teaching runs counter to a belief among many theorists that making (and learning) from errors is a key part of the process of acquisition” (p.80) Although not all elements in this method are favourable, habit-forming drills are still used in the classrooms.

2.2.4. *Community language learning*

Community Language Learning involves cognitive and affective learning. It is used in introductory conversation courses in a foreign language. The goal of Community Language Learning is the mastery of the language. This method is divided into five stages that are compared to the biological development of a child Richards and Rogers (1999) point out:

In the first, "birth" stage, feelings of security and belonging are established. In the second, as the learner's abilities improve, the learner, as child, begins to achieve a measure of independence from the parent. By the third, the learner "speaks independently" and may need to assert his or her own identity, often rejecting unasked-for advice. The fourth stage sees the learner as secure enough to take criticism, and by the last stage, the learner merely works upon improving style and knowledge of linguistic appropriateness. By the end of the process, the child has become adult, the learner knows everything the teacher knows and becomes knower for a new learner. (p.119)

During Community language learning classes activities include: translation, group work, recordings, analysis, transcriptions, reflection and observation, listening and free conversation. The teacher's function also includes acting as a 'counselor': they must answer in a calm way, they cannot judge the students and they must help and support in order to lead students to an understanding of their problems.

The typical class performed using the Community language learning method is described by Harmer (2001):

In the classic form of Community Language Learning (CLL) students sit in a circle. It is up to them to decide what they want to talk about. A counselor or a “knower” stands outside the circle. The knower provides or corrects target language statements so that if, for instance, a student says something in their own language, the knower can then give them the English equivalent for them to use. A student says what he or she wants to say either in English or in his or her first language. In the latter case the knower translates it into English, in effect “teaching” the student how to make the utterance. The student can now say what he or she wants to the circle. Later, when students are more confident with the language, they can be put in lines facing each other for pairwork discussion. (p. 88)

2.2.5. *The silent way*

In another of the so-called humanistic approaches, the Silent Way students are the ones who are responsible of the production, learning and correction of the target language. The teacher is silent; he or she only uses gestures and expressions. Richards and Rogers (1999, p.99) describe the method as follows:

1. Learning is facilitated if the learner discovers or creates rather than re- members and repeats what is to be learned
2. Learning is facilitated by accompanying (mediating) physical objects.
3. Learning is facilitated by problem solving involving the material to be learned.

Teachers will use gestures, expressions, and objects. It is important to highlight the use of *Cuisinaire rods*, “small blocks of wood of different lengths. Each length is a different colour. The rods are featureless, and are only differentiated by their size and colour. Simple they may be, but they are useful for a wide range of activities”. (Harmer, 2001, p. 141)

The first part of a *silent way lesson* focuses on pronunciation. “At the beginning stage, the teacher will model the appropriate sound after pointing to a symbol on the chart. Later, the teacher will silently point individual symbols and combinations of symbols, and monitor students utterances” (Richards and Rogers. 1999, p.109-10)

In the second part of this kind of lesson sentence patterns, structure, and vocabulary are practiced. The teacher presents information to the student by creating a visual representation. If the student does not understand it, either the teacher will try to reshape it or another student will expose it. When the new knowledge is acquired, students are moved to the next level: the practice.

2.2.6. *Total physical response (TPR)*

This language teaching method uses the connection between speech and action. In this method students are taught language through physical activities. Richards and Rogers (1999) state that “the general objectives of Total Physical Response are to teach oral proficiency at the beginning level. Comprehension is a means to an end, and the ultimate aim is to teach basic speaking skills.” In addition, Harmer (2001) states that the originator of TPR, James Asher “worked from the premise that adult second language learning could have similar developmental patterns to that of child language acquisition. If children learn much of their language from speech directed at them in the form of commands to perform actions, then adults will learn best in that way too” (p.90). In other words, in this language teaching method second language teaching and learning reflects the natural process of first language learning.

In Total Physical Response the classroom activity practiced more regularly is the imperative drill. Harmer (2001) shows how a normal TPR class is performed: “A typical TPR class might involve the teacher telling students to ‘pick up the triangle from the table and give it to me’ or ‘walk quickly to the door and hit it’ (Asher 1977: 54-56). When students respond to the commands correctly, one of them can then start giving instruction to other classmates.” (p.90)

2.2.7. *Suggestopaedia*

The most relevant characteristics of Suggestopaedia are the arrangement of the classroom (including decoration and furniture), the use of music and the authoritative way of behaving on the part of the teacher. Suggestopaedia gives a huge importance to the classroom in order to make students feel happy, relaxed and self-reliant, which is crucial to foster learning.

Music plays an important role in Suggestopaedia. For, as Richards and Rogers (1999) state: “A most conspicuous feature of Suggestopedia is the centrality of music and musical rhythm to learning, Suggestopedia thus has a kinship with other functional uses of music, particularly therapy”. In other words, music helps students not only to learn, but also to heal inner problems. Music acts in some way as a therapy.

In Suggestopaedia lessons the teachers and the students act as if they were parents and sons or daughters, in order to do that students are assigned new names. Harmer (2001) goes so far as to call it “infantilisation” due to the parent-child-like relation Suggestopaedia involves.

For this reason, errors are permitted, relaxing music is played and traumatic topics are avoided. The idea is to encourage a good reception and retention of the language by the students. The typical lesson is divided in three parts as Harmer (2001) explains:

A Suggestopaedia lesson has three main parts. There is an oral review section in which previously learnt material is used for discussion. This is followed by the presentation and discussion of new dialogue material and its native language equivalent. Finally, in the ‘séance’ or ‘concert’ session, students listen to relaxing music (slow movements from the Baroque period at about six minutes per period are preferred) while the teacher reads the new dialogue material in a way which synchronises with the taped music. During this phase there are also ‘several minutes of solemn silence’ and the students leave the room silently (p.90).

Elements of these approaches to language learning can be found in many language courses. Aside from adopting a position in relation to learning, a teacher or materials designer also needs to make decisions about the content of the programme or syllabus. The following section concerns these questions of design.

3. DESIGNING TEACHING

3.1. Types of syllabuses

First of all, it is important to describe what a syllabus is. For as Hutchinson and Waters (1991) point out, “A syllabus is a document which says what will (or at least what should) be learnt...it can be seen as a statement of projected routes, so that the teacher and learner not only have an idea of where they are going, but how they might get there”(p.80). We might also add the definition of the perfect syllabus used by Kearsley and Lynch (1996):

A syllabus outlines the goals and objectives of a course, prerequisites, the grading/evaluation scheme, materials to be used (textbooks, software), topics to be covered, a schedule, and a bibliography. Each of these components defines the nature of the learning experience. Goals and objectives identify the expected outcomes and scope of the course as determined by the instructor or course designer, restricting the domain of knowledge for the learner.

Having a syllabus is a necessity because as Hutchinson and Waters state: “Language is a complex entity and we have to have some way of breaking down the complex into

manageable units” This “gives moral support to the teacher and learner” (Hutchinson & Waters 1991, p.83). The knowledge that is going to be exposed to the students has to be organised and sequenced. Harmer (2001) reminds us that “syllabus design concerns the selection of items to be learnt and the grading of those items into an appropriate sequence.” (p. 295). Learnability, coverage, usefulness and frequency play an important role when selecting a syllabus.

However, we have to take into account that sometimes a syllabus cannot fulfil all the goals that it was created for, and cannot ensure that everything will be learnt. As Hutchinson and Waters (1991) point out, “a syllabus can only constitute an approximate statement of what will be taught. In particular we need to recognise its ideal nature and, therefore, its limitations as an indicator of learning.” (p.84). To this, we must add the difficulty of choosing among the different type of syllabuses, which will be explained in detail in the following sections.

3.1.1. The grammar syllabus

Well known is the fact that the learning of a language at least in part is related with “acquiring mastery of its grammatical system” (Wilkins, 1985, p.1) that is why many courses in the past and even today have a primarily grammatical organisation. Even when other ways of structuring and presenting content are used we still see grammar is presented, either implicitly or explicitly, in every unit.

But how is the grammatical content of a syllabus presented? Wilkins (1985) suggests two possible approaches synthetic and analytic. In synthetic language teaching the different elements are presented to the students gradually. In some ways this approach places fewer demands on learners, due to the fact that their role is simply to put together the small pieces of the language puzzle that have been previously taught. In contrast in the analytic approach, the linguistic forms are taken apart in order to “focus on the important aspects of the language structure” (Wilkins, 1985, p.2).

In many foreign language-learning syllabuses it is the synthetic approach that dominates, particularly and this way of presenting grammar provides the structure of the course.

Some difficulties are faced when deciding what grammatical content and structures are to be taught. Teachers have to take into account the level or the stage at which the learners are, among other things. Firstly, deciding if a grammatical structure is easier than another is particularly challenging, so the usual approach takes usefulness and frequency as the main criteria when selecting grammatical structures to be taught in the early stages.

In contrast to the notion of usefulness and frequency another criteria used to select grammatical content is contrastive difficulty. Contrastive analysis is the study of two languages in order to identify their structural similarities and differences. It is usually used when students find problems in mastering some structures in a language that is not their 'mother language'. Accordingly, the elements that have more similarities between the mother tongue of the learner and the new language that it is learning will be easier to understand. Using this method a teacher can predict some of the difficulties that the students are going to face. This type of syllabus, which is primarily grammatical in terms of organisation, was the most common for many years. Nowadays some alternatives have been proposed to it.

Aside from grammar, another conventional element in the content of a language-learning syllabus is vocabulary. A yardstick is needed by which the most useful vocabulary is selected in order to be included in the course. According to Wilkins (1985) "the criteria to establishing the relative usefulness of the words is: frequency, range, coverage, availability and familiarity." (p.4) On this basis, the teacher or materials designer needs to classify and evaluate the vocabulary that is going to be taught to the learners in terms of the criteria Wilkins (1985) suggests. This process of selection has to be made with a view to the duration of the course and also keeping in mind that it inevitably only a section of the whole lexicon that is going to be taught. Hence important additional criteria are appropriateness and teachability.

3.1.2. The lexical syllabus

Sometimes lexis is in fact the organizing principle. The lexical syllabus arranged according to levels. The purpose of this type of syllabus is that students are taught how to understand and produce lexical phrases.

In a lexical syllabus words are the unit of analysis and content. This kind of syllabus works with the frequency of occurrence so; fixed expressions that occur in dialogues are present.

Harmer (2001) suggests this kind of syllabus is complex and complicated and raises a number of questions:

Another problem with lexical syllabuses is the relationship between lexis grammar should phrasal verbs be taught as simple multi-word lexical items as they occur, or as grammatical class? At what stage is the study of word formation appropriate, and when will it be useful to include fixed and semi-fixed expressions? When grammar should be included with new words, and how should it be selected and graded? (p.297)

Nevertheless, although creating this type of syllabus has its clear difficulties, it is obviously the case that “lexis in all its forms does appear in wider syllabuses plans” (Harmer, 2001, p. 297)

3.1.3. *The functional syllabus*

In a Notional-Functional Syllabus materials are selected according to ‘communicative functions’. In his book *Notional Syllabuses* Wilkins (1976) states that the notional syllabus “takes the desired communicative capacity as the starting-point...we are then able to organize language teaching in terms of the content rather than the form of the language.” (p.18)

The Notional-Functional syllabus not only takes into consideration communicative facts but it also pays attention to grammar and ‘situational factors’.

In conclusion, as Richards and Rogers (1999) put it: “A notional syllabus would include not only elements of grammar and lexis but also specify the topics, notions, and concepts the learner needs to communicate about” (p.17).

3.1.4. *The situational syllabus*

A Situational Syllabus is organized around the different real life situations that the student can face. Thus, situational needs are emphasised instead of grammatical units. This syllabus is particularly appropriate for students that are learning a language for specific needs or purposes. Harmer (1999, p.298) provides an example of what a Situational Syllabus might look like:

1. At the bank
2. At the supermarket
3. At the travel Agent
4. At the restaurant

Needless to say, if students are to communicate in these kinds of situations some vocabulary and grammar has to be pre-taught. Dialogues and conversations play a key role in Situational Syllabuses.

3.1.5. *The topic-based syllabus*

In this type of syllabus the content of language learning is defined in terms of topics. The learner explores a certain topic and the language that is related to it. This kind of syllabus might include exercises related to grammar, vocabulary, reading, listening etc. A selection of topics has to be made and, as we know, every selection entails some risks as Harmer (2001) tells us:

Topics provide a welcome organising principle in that they can be based on what students will be interested in. It may also be possible to identify what topics are most relevant to students' communicative needs (their usefulness)- though this may differ from what they want. Yet marrying topics to the concepts of *learnability*, *frequency*, and coverage is once again problematic since they will still be subdivided into the language and lexis which they generate. (p.298)

3.1.6. *The task-based syllabus*

This kind of syllabus encourages using the language communicatively in order to achieve a purpose or complete a final task; it consists in the preparation of the language necessary for students to carry out tasks and activities using the target language. A designer of a syllabus of this type does an analysis of in order to select the tasks which have more possibility of occurring in the 'real world'.

It would seem that this type of syllabus has not achieved a high degree of acceptance on by teachers as Harmer (2001) points out:

A task-based syllabus may well satisfy the desire to provide meaning-based learning but until there is a way of deciding which tasks should go where, such a syllabus remains tantalisingly 'ad hoc', and fails to command sufficiently widespread support amongst teachers and methodologists for it to become universally accepted. (p. 299)

3.1.7. *The multi-syllabus syllabus*

Since every type of syllabus has its advantages and disadvantages and some language courses may need more than one type of syllabus the multi-syllabus syllabus proves to be arguably the most appropriate. Syllabus designers either create a multi-syllabus or they adopt a different type of syllabus for the different stages of a course or program. Harmer (2001) demonstrates that the multi-syllabus syllabus is an option for the teachers and syllabus designers who are not completely satisfied with a specific type of syllabus:

A common solution to the competing claims of the different syllabus types we have looked at is the 'multi-syllabus'. Instead of a program based exclusively on grammatical or lexical categories, for example, the syllabus now shows any combination of items from grammar, lexis, language functions, situations, topics, tasks, different language skill tasks or pronunciations issues. (p. 299)

During the English Studies Degree we in fact had the opportunity of working with a Multi-syllabus through the coursebook, *Outcomes* (Dellar & Walkley, 2010), a critical appraisal of which is presented below.

Whatever principle is used to design the syllabus, coursebook writers and course designers have to decide how authentic the language included in the book should be, the language varieties or variety the book will present, the activities they are going to add, etc. Finally, the different topics that are to be included in the coursebook should be chosen. This selection needs to follow certain criteria. According to Harmer (2001):

This will be based on perceptions of what students find engaging, what research shows in this area, and on the potential for interesting exploitation of the topics they might select. It will also be necessary to consider what kind of culture the material should be reflected or encourage, and to ensure some kind of appropriate balance in terms of gender and the representation of different groups in society, racial, ethnic and socioeconomic. (p. 295)

3.2. *Aids and Applications for teaching*

3.2.1. *Types of aids*

3.2.1.1. *Visual aids*

As the saying goes, "seeing is believing" so, these kinds of aids add a visual aspect to the lessons. What is more, teachers can use actual objects, overhead projectors, whiteboards, pictures, flashcard etc.

White/black boards play an important role inside the visual aids. Boards have some advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, you have to make sure you have the appropriate markers and erasers for the kind of board you are going to use. If a teacher has bad handwriting it would be difficult for the students to understand what the teacher has written.

On the other hand, we have to emphasise the fact that this is the best aid if you want to highlight an important point or summarize something when explaining something to a student. White/black boards let teachers express themselves fluently and spontaneously without much preparation beforehand. In cases that the electric power fails, white/black boards are definitely the best alternative that will never break down.

Apart from the board we can use projectors as teaching aids. Teachers can download Pdf or Word documents, or even create them, and project these documents on the white boards. Students can use markers for solving the projected exercises or add the information they wish. This way, teachers make the students be involved with the lesson.

Projectors can also be used to show the students a PPT (PowerPoint) explaining a certain topic. PPTs are great visual aids that help teachers to explain, reinforce or highlight knowledge. Graphics, charts, images or charts can be added to the slides in order to catch the student's attention.

3.2.1.2. *Audio aids*

Audio aids use the sense of hearing. These types of aids, together with the audio-visual aids, are propitious for teaching languages. In the same way, audio aids can be useful for studying history because students can hear recorded historical events such as political speeches in an English History lesson. Students in order to improve their knowledge can listen to the radio, CDs etc.

In addition, audio aids would perfectly suit for English language learning exercise; students can hear, from CDs or audios recorded on Internet, different varieties of English. Listening exercises allow students to hear a variety of voices and not just their own teacher's voice.

Music can be played during the lessons and it will enrich students as Harmer (2001) wisely states:

Music is a powerful stimulus for student engagement precisely because it speaks directly to or emotions while still allowing us to use our brains to analyse it and its effects if we so wish. A piece of music can change the atmosphere in a classroom or prepare students for a new activity. It can amuse and entertain the world of leisure and the world of learning. (p.242)

Nevertheless, if a classroom has bad acoustics it is difficult to ensure that all the students can hear equally well. The fact that not everyone hears at the same speed has to be added. It is difficult for learners to control the speed of delivery since the recordings themselves dictate the speed.

3.2.1.3. *Audio-visual aids*

Audio-visual aids involve the senses of vision and hearing. Using recorded videos or reproducing videotapes or DVDs during lessons adds a new dimension to the classes and helps students to visualise what they are learning.

With audio-visual aids, students do not just hear language they see it too and this helps them to comprehend what they are learning. Videos can increase students' comprehension since they can see facial expressions and paralinguistic features.

Students are given a chance to see language in use as well as hearing it. This helps with understanding and interpreting the texts as a whole.

Videos can 'take students to another place' beyond their classroom, because they can see other cultures, other places, other people etc. Consequently, students are motivated and their level of interest for learning increases.

According to Harmer (2001) there are some videos which are really useful for teaching among them: "off-air-programmes, real-world videos and language learning videos" (p.284). In other words, we have many types of videos that can make a useful addition to lessons. Teachers can either make use of these pre-recorded videos in part of the lesson or can even teach a whole lesson with a video.

Teachers, can also encourage students to create a video themselves as a classroom activity. Creating videos students can practice the communicative uses of the foreign language they want to master.

Audio-visual aids have many advantages but the disadvantages must also be mentioned. There can also be video problems such as: poorly filmed videos, poor viewing conditions and the length of the extracts (if they are too short or too long) among others.

Bearing the above in mind, teachers have to decide whether to choose audio-visual aids or not. If the final decision is to use them, the next step is deciding with which frequency.

4. A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF *OUTCOMES* (DELLAR & WALKLEY, 2010).

As was stated earlier, for my final degree project I decided to study in depth Dellar and Walkley's *Outcomes*, in both the intermediate and upper intermediate levels, which we used in the English language subjects during this degree. I will concentrate on this coursebook because I believe that coursebooks on many occasions represent the heart of the English Language course.

In order to do this critical appraisal I have applied the theory that I have outlined in the first sections: Selecting what to teach and how to teach it and Designing teaching. I have examined the different elements that can be included in a language teaching and learning syllabus and the attitudes to language and language learning.

In the next section I will analyse the elements inside the syllabus that underpin the Outcomes. In addition, how effectively this syllabus addresses the needs of students in the EEII degree will be discussed. I choose this thematic area because I believe that the books that the students work with in the English language subjects and some of the tasks given are not as specific as they should be.

Hence, one question that needs to be asked, however, is whether the tasks given in the English language subjects in the Degree in English Studies are quite specific for the degree or not?

So, the key or the guiding point is: "tell me what you need English for and I will tell you the English you need" (Hutchinson & Waters 1991, p.8). But there is a conflict between what to teach that is specific to this degree but at the same time is suitable for an English language subject.

Outcomes, in both the intermediate and upper intermediate levels, break down the mass of knowledge into topic areas though as was noted above like many published courses they bring together various syllabuses at the same time. In this case, the division into topics is the most obvious organising feature. We can see that even though at the end of each unit some tasks are suggested, this is not strictly speaking task-based syllabus, as the underlying principle is not the task.

We can find grammar in every unit of *Outcomes* and a selection of vocabulary depending on the topic. Reading, listening and grammar are accessible for the students in these books. We can also find the main categories that Wilkins, (1985) states: *semantic-grammatical*, *modal meaning* and the *communicative function*.

On one hand, if we take into account the physical appearance of the *Outcomes* series, we can find a huge similarity between them and the books that are used in the secondary school system. This may contribute to an initial negative impression on the part of students.

Moreover, if we pay attention to the illustrations that we can find inside Dellar and Walkley's *Outcomes*, upper intermediate and intermediate, they may not be the most adequate for university students or adults. There are some illustrations that convey a "childish" image. Examples can be found on pages 13, 28 and 39 among others of the Intermediate level of the book. The Upper-intermediate level also has some problematic images on pages: 15 and 82 (in the bottom of the page) and on page 41.

Overall, these illustrations contribute to a potentially negative effect on the learner. The appearance of a book and also the way the syllabus is organised play a vital role in the way students embrace the learning materials that they will work with. As Hutchinson and Waters (1991) comment: "These [syllabuses] can all have their effect on whether and how well something is learnt. For example, if certain vocabulary items are presented in texts which appeal to the learners, they are more likely to be remembered, because the learner's attention will be more involved." (p. 81)

We have to bear in mind that some skills such as how to hold a discussion in class or how the different speech functions work are crucial. Therefore, we can see that these kinds of skills are not practiced as much as they should be in the *Outcomes* and perhaps these are the most serious disadvantages. These skills mentioned above are essential for students; they would be necessary in the subjects that they take in this degree and specially because these

skills have a particular relevance in real life, and they ought to be included in the syllabus.

It is important to note that the difficulties students encounter in the degree are not solely to do with the choice of coursebook. For example, it is clearly that the Outcomes series were not designed for use in very large classes like those that the English Studies Degree has had in the first years of the degree recently. Other contextual factors also contribute as Hutchinson and Water (1991) suggest:

The lesson planned is like a planned route, but like a planned route it can be affected by all sorts of conditions along the way...The classroom, too, creates conditions that will affect the nature of a planned lesson...or they might come from the learners as a group: perhaps they are tired after a long day....(p.82)

On the other hand, we have to praise some tasks that the Outcomes include, in all the different levels that we studied.

The effectiveness of the cross-cultural understanding in Outcomes has to be underlined. Outcomes deal with themes such as gender, race, social class and nationality adequately. The importance of cross-cultural understanding and awareness is emphasised in a report by *Quappe and Cantatore (2007)*:

Cultural awareness becomes central when we have to interact with people from other cultures. People see, interpret and evaluate things in a different ways. What is considered an appropriate behaviour in one culture is frequently inappropriate in another one. Misunderstandings arise when I use my meanings to make sense of your reality.

4.1. Correlation between the tasks given in The English language subjects and the English Studies Degree.

The different needs and interests of a student influence the motivation to learn and improve. If they are interested they learn better and faster. A student who is enrolled in an English Studies Degree would have different interest to one who is enrolled in a Science Degree. There has to be relevance to the learners needs but as we can see in the English language courses vocabulary related to literature or how to write a fruitful essay is not present.

In this context the importance of having a syllabus that gives preference to the language forms that the students would face during the degree should be emphasized. Additionally, some priority has to be given to the language forms that the students would face in their future insertion to the working environment. In the English language subjects we have few tasks

related to the working environment, if we take into account the huge amount of tasks that we undertake in a subject taught over a four-month period. In the subject called English language III, for example, we were taught how to write a covering letter .I think that more activities of this type should be introduced.

Given these constraints and circumstances, *Outcomes* cannot stand on their own in this specific university degree. Teachers will inevitably need to add more specialized materials in order to make them workable for the degree.

The tasks given in The English language subjects and the English Studies Degree are not as complete as they should be. All the subjects in The English Studies Degree, including the English language subjects, must encompass topics that stretch over multiple disciplines that a student enrolled in this career must learn.

Skills such as creativity and imagination should be practiced during the degree in order to produce good writing. The students of this degree should be able to understand different cultures, civilizations, and literary styles from different time periods.

The English language subjects must help the students to analyse and comment about poetry, drama, literature or films. The purpose of this degree is to acquire skills in literary analysis and rhetoric therefore; the language subjects of the career must help the students with it. This degree requires special skills such as expressing thoughts orally and in a written way.

All English language subjects should help the students improve writing, listening, and the spoken production and interaction. These skills should never be excluded from any Language course design.

Furthermore, all the categories related to the communicative functions should be practiced. As Wilkins (1985) puts it:

Language learning has concentrated much more on the use of language to report and describe than on doing things through language. This is because the learning of lexical labels (command threat, warning, surprise...) has been substituted for the learning of how the acts themselves are performed and because grammatical categories have too often been taken as categories of communication too. (p.42)

Wilkins emphasizes the importance of reporting and describing for a learner of a foreign language. Reporting and describing can be performed having a good knowledge of the semantico-grammatical categories. “What people want to do through language is more

important than the mastery of the language as an unapplied system” (Wilkins, 1985, p. 42). *Outcomes* include exercises in which the student has to describe something, a painting for example.

Speech acts are crucial for the learners of the English Studies Degree, students also need to be concerned with the illocutionary forces and perlocutionary acts. According to Wilkins (1985) speech acts “include some categories needed to handle cases where there is no one-to-one relation between grammatical category and communicative function and others involving expressions of the speaker’s intention and views.” (p.42)

In some English language lessons the audio-lingual method, previously explained, has been put into practice. *Outcomes* teacher’s book encourages the teacher to use dialogues for repetition and memorization. In order to do so, the students were grouped and had to memorize a dialogue in order to perform it in front of the class. I consider that this method is appealing for the students in that it helps them hem with their speaking skills. Elements of the old Grammar-translation method can also be found as teachers asked the students to translate some vocabulary or phrases in order to understand the concepts better.

Inside every *Outcomes* we can find a section called “Developing Conversation” planned for speaking. The problem is that in this kind of exercises you are only given a sample sentence to use in order to start a conversation and as Wilkins (1985) rightly states that amount of knowledge is not enough:

However, often, exact interpretation of an utterance will be impossible without knowledge of the situational and broader linguistic context. Intonation too plays a very important role in indicating the function of an utterance. Finally there are occasions when no linguistic means at all are used to indicate what is being communicated. (p.44)

Wilkins, in his book *Notional Syllabuses* names six types of communicative functions *Judgment and evaluation, Argument, Concession, Emotional relations, Suasion and Rational enquiry and exposition*. I believe that every English language-teaching course should teach them:

- *Judgment and evaluation*: it deals with assessments and the expression of those assessments.
- *Argument*: it is related to changing information and views, normally differing points of view.
- *Concession*: this is the category in which the act of conceding something, such as an argument is performed.
- *Emotional relations*: “these are largely phatic utterances expressing as they do various relationships with the person addressed” (Wilkins, 1985, p.54)
- *Suasion*: this category shows utterances that attempt to persuade.

- *Rational enquiry and exposition: “this category relates to the rational organisation of thought and speech.” (Wilkins, 1985, p.52)*

Consequently, I must admit that many of those types of communicative functions are practiced in the English Language subjects inside this degree. That is why I will mention some exercises inside Dellar and Walkley's *Outcomes. Upper Intermediate*.

- Disagreeing politely
- Responding to complains
- Apologising and offering explanations
- Checking what you hear

In conclusion, we have to bear in mind that the purpose of every subject in the English Studies degree should “enable the students to function adequately in a target situation, that is, the situation in which the learners will use the language they are learning” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1991, p.12)

4.2. Assessment of Outcomes

According to Sheldon (1988): “It is clear that coursebook assessment is fundamentally a subjective, rule-of-thumb activity, and that no neat formula, grid, or system will ever provide a definitive yardstick.” (p.245)

Hence, in order to judge *Outcomes* well, used in the English Studies Degree, I decided to interview Victoria Jorge Álvarez, who is currently studying this degree and had the opportunity to learn with these books in all its levels. As Jorge (2015) states *Outcomes* is not as specialized for the English Studies Degree as it should be. In addition, Jorge highlights the fact that the *Outcomes* series is very much like the coursebooks used in Compulsory Secondary Education and high school.

5. CONCLUSION

The main goal of the current study was to determine whether to use *Outcomes* or not in the English Studies Degree. As we have seen in the previous sections, selecting language-teaching materials is a challenge since making a good or a bad choice will determine student's acceptance of the course.

Though the *Outcomes* series have some disadvantages, having a course book like *Outcomes* allows students to review, during and after classes; it also helps them to have a sense of progress when they finish a unit. This coursebook helps the students with the business of everyday life and with the understanding of other cultures. Moreover, *Outcomes* is a valuable help for students because they show them how to exchange information, communicate their thoughts and feelings.

Dellar and Walkley's *Outcomes* allow teachers to work better with mixed level classes in the first year of the degree. Using a coursebook allows teachers to prepare easy and quickly the lessons and it can help the teacher to motivate the students. Speaking is top priority in English language courses and *Outcomes* offers a range of speaking tasks with various topics for multiple tastes. The *Outcomes* series have many texts based on authentic sources that the students can find interesting, funny or even moving.

Nevertheless, deciding which syllabus fits better for a specific type of student is a challenge because there are many possibilities as has been previously explained. Additionally, just one type of syllabus may not be adequate and creating your own syllabus may be a potential chaos considering that students could end up with 'bits and pieces' of the foreign language. Choosing the correct syllabus is complicated and troublesome since making a wrong decision could result in a poorly designed and poorly received English language course. These arguments suggest that teachers and course designers "have to be realistic in their expectations and aims when they design language courses and or plan learning programmes" (Embark, 2013, p. 107)

I would like to conclude with a quote from *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* written by Richards and Rodgers: “The goal of foreign language study is to learn a language in order to read its literature or in order to benefit from the mental discipline and intellectual development that result from foreign-language study.” (p.3) Therefore, this is exactly what is expected of students in the English Studies Degree.

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7. APPENDIX I

Interviewer	-Are the pages inside the <i>Outcomes</i> book uncluttered?
Interviewed	Ok, let's see...as far as <i>Outcomes</i> is concerned, I find the pages uncluttered. There is a mix of text and photos in almost every page in order to make it more enjoyable.
Interviewer	-Do you think that the instructions in <i>Outcomes</i> are easy to read? Are the lesson sequences easy to follow?
Interviewed	In my opinion, the lessons and the instructions are easy to follow.
Interviewer	-Do you find the illustrations attractive and appropriate for the age group?
Interviewed	I don't think that the illustrations are appropriate for the age that the book is designed for. I believe that it is too childish for students with an intermediate or upper intermediate level of English.
Interviewer	Quite simply, is the coursebook cost-effective in terms of money?
Interviewed	Well...in my opinion, the price of the student's book is ok, neither too cheap nor too expensive as it is the book with which you learn. But, the workbook it's a little bit expensive...it costs the same as the students' book, and it is only for doing exercises that you can find also in the other one.
Interviewer	Is it easy to obtain the book?
Interviewed	Well, in the Canary Islands everything takes longer to arrive. During the second year in the university, for example, I reserved <i>Outcomes</i> in the bookstore in advance but there were some

	students that didn't have the book until 2 months after the course started. Bookstores don't bring too much <i>Outcomes</i> books because there is not too much demand.
Interviewer	What is your opinion about the methodology used in <i>Outcomes</i>?
Interviewed	I think it's basically the same methodology that is used by Compulsory Secondary Education and high school students. So, I don't see it very suitable for a specialized university studies.
Interviewer	Do you think that this kind of syllabus is useful? Is it the best for this degree? What do you think about the topics presented in <i>Outcomes</i>?
Interviewed	This syllabus is similar to the ones used in high school. Ok, it is useful for a student who is learning English as a curiosity/hobby but it isn't for a person who is studying the English Studies degree. Ok, I think some of the topics such as travel, adverse weather conditions etc., are fine and could be useful in daily life. But, there are others that seem filling topics such as plants.
Interviewer	Finally, do you think <i>Outcomes</i> encompasses knowledge, awareness and acceptance of other cultures?
Interviewed	I think <i>Outcomes</i> does not offend or damage any culture.