

Approaches to Curriculum Development

Gareth Williams

This workshop is an exploration of a variety of approaches to curriculum development. All teachers have (often unarticulated) beliefs about the optimum method for developing their lessons. It is therefore easy for teachers to become accustomed to a single method of lesson design. Time and resource constraints are other influencing factors that can lead a teacher to make “default” decisions while lesson planning. For these reasons, Aviation English teachers should be aware of the variety of design approaches they have at their disposal.

In this workshop basic terms (curriculum, syllabus and methodology) are defined. Other aspects of curriculum design that may be considered include choice of materials: analytic (some would say “authentic”) or synthetic. Other decisions involve whether to choose grammar and vocabulary before each lesson (focus on forms) or to respond to student needs as they arise through the course of a lesson (focus on form). Alternatively, students may be empowered to make these decisions for themselves (an example of a negotiated syllabus).

Task Based Language Teaching is another method that takes a different approach. The basic premise of this approach is to simulate the tasks that the students will require in the target domain. This represents a competencies focus where the teacher assesses whether the students have learned enough language to complete a given task.

During the workshop, the participants use the concepts above to measure what aspects of curriculum development are present in 15 activity descriptions. The participants are organised into small groups with the focus of the workshop being on negotiation and discourse

Essential to this exercise are “Subject Matter Experts.” In order to identify analytic materials and genuine target domain tasks, the opinion of SMEs will need to be sought. The importance of SMEs to the Aviation English curriculum design process is thus emphasized by the facilitator and demonstrated by the workshop exercise.