

Curriculum Development Principles

In formal education, a curriculum is the set of courses, course work, and content offered at an educational establishment. Curriculum has two aspects: the range of courses and specific learning programs. In the latter case, the curriculum describes the teaching, learning, and assessment materials available for each specific course of study.

Curricula are developed at CD systematically, using classic principles of instructional design. Instructional design includes specific teaching methods, materials, and assessment procedures. Curricula are developed collectively, ensuring communication among management, curriculum developers, editors, production coordinators, etc. The work of Merrill, Kolb, and Bloom influences CD's approach to instructional design. Below, Merrill's Principles of Instruction:

- Activation of prior experience
- Demonstration
- Application of parts and whole in practice
- Integration in real-world and field applications

Kolb's theory of experiential learning posits that knowledge is continuously gained through both personal and environmental experiences where certain abilities are required. The learner must:

- Be willing to be actively involved in the experience
- Be able to reflect on the experience
- Possess and use analytical skills to conceptualize the experience
- Possess decision-making and problem-solving skills to use the new ideas gained from the experience

Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive domains that appear to correlate with the ILR proficiency levels is taken into account by course developers when creating activities.

While principled Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) that incorporates both direct, explicit grammar instruction and task-based instruction into CLT is the underlying methodology that informs curriculum development in CD, the Division practices an eclectic approach to instructional design in order to promote maximum creativity among course developers. Special emphasis is placed on personalized and creative activities that teachers can adapt according to learners' different learning styles. Developing a degree of automaticity during the achievement stage of learning via repetition, substitution, transformation, and expansion is critical to proficiency growth.

The course materials produced in CD promote development of both general proficiency and the Performance Final Learning Objectives (FLOs). The FLO content areas are: 1) Military and Security; 2) Economics and Politics; 3) Science and Technology; 4) Culture and Society; and 5) Geography – Physical, Political, and Economic. Ancillary FLOs, which include dictionary use, manner or tenor, colloquial usage, text processing, transliteration, etc., are emphasized according to user requirements.

Concerning assessment procedures, CD develops Lesson Evaluations in the form of student self-assessments and Unit Tests. Unit Tests require development, piloting, data gathering and analysis, and a final revision before delivery. These assessments are achievement through mid-semester 1, prochievement or proficiency based¹ through the end of Semester 1, prochievement or proficiency based in Semester 2, and proficiency in Semester 3.

Authentic materials, which are indispensable to CD's work, are subject to copyright rules. Given that many faculty members use these materials throughout Basic and Post-Basic Courses, the "fair use" regulation in copyright law is not applicable. Consequently, CD has set up a special department to deal with copyright issues. Currently, copyright release is obtained and documented for authentic materials used by CD.

Regarding production of curricula, CD engages in systematic, energetic efforts to involve the users of its products, who are the many faculty and students in the DLIFLC schools, in different phases of development and production. The faculty are asked to participate in the selection of the initial development team, the design of the Scope and Sequence, and the design and field testing of the course components, including lessons, homework, quizzes, Unit Tests, etc. CD also works closely with the Faculty Development Division to augment its own training program.

To address the critical aspect of technology utilization, CD works closely with the Technology Integration Division (TI) in LST and with contractors. Specifically, CD interfaces with the TI Departments of Instructional Design, Programming (both Flash and JavaScript), Recording and Editing, and Graphics and Multimedia. CD also collaborates closely with the Information Technology Officers so that server and network support are properly addressed by taking into account production parameters and ARMY security regulations. Contractor support is needed at two critical steps in the production process: English editing and text/graphic layout (utilizing the professional page layout program Adobe InDesign). Contractors are fully integrated into all the CD production teams.

In conclusion, CD, as an integral part of the LST Directorate, will continue to improve processes as it fulfills its charter to support the DLI's mission to provide culturally-based foreign language education, training, evaluation, and sustainment to DOD personnel.

¹ The terms "prochievement test," "proficiency-based achievement test," and "proficiency-based test" have been used synonymously in the language learning field to refer to a test tied to a course or syllabus that is centered on a theory of proficiency. Currently, due to the national standards movement, the term "standards-based performance assessment" is the most common reference.