By language skills: What kind of language can we expect from beginners during their first month in a program? By the third month? By the ninth month? Using a language skills-based curriculum, similar to the one presented in the previous section, is most typically found in schools and can be a useful curriculum for assessing the acquisition of various language skills.

By language function: What are ways to introduce oneself? To ask questions? To make requests? To instruct others? What language is appropriate for different contexts? Many language textbooks are organized according to these language functions, sometimes referred to as the "functional approach" to language curriculum.

What are some other ways that we can organize and sequence our curriculum units? We need to share ideas with people on our curriculum team, and with learners, teachers, and parents before we decide on the best sequence. And, as always, we need to refer to our educational goals and our curriculum philosophy to be sure they are all aligned.

**Stating Unit Objectives**

Once we have our units identified and sequenced in a meaningful way, we need to decide what we expect our learners to be able to understand (receptive skills such as listening and reading) as well as what we want them to be able to produce (productive skills such as speaking and writing) by the end of the unit. In addition, we need to think about the cultural and cognitive concepts that will be taught in and through the language.

Being as specific as we can be makes it easier for us to determine in the end whether or not we have met our goals. For example, look at the following unit objective that we believe will guide us in accomplishing the program goals for a total immersion program:

**Unit Objective A:** By the end of the unit, children in the immersion class will be able to understand their teachers.

**Unit Objective B:** By the end of unit on Family, children in the immersion class will (1) demonstrate comprehension of simple statements about Family members; (2) convey in simple phrases information about themselves and their families; and (3) demonstrate knowledge of basic cultural rules in the language through appropriate behavior.

Which of these statements gives us a good idea not only of what we want our learners to accomplish, but also what our final assessment should include? Goal statements such as "B" provide a clearer statement of the goal, and this is possible when we have a better understanding of the language objectives.
The title of the document is "Teaching Language". The text discusses the importance of teaching language in a meaningful way, emphasizing the role of the teacher in facilitating learning. The document outlines strategies for integrating language teaching into the curriculum, highlighting the need for active engagement and meaningful interaction. It suggests that effective language teaching involves creating a supportive and inclusive environment where students can practice and develop their skills. The text also touches on the role of technology in language learning and the importance of continuous professional development for teachers. Overall, the document aims to provide guidance for educators on how to make language teaching more effective and engaging for students.
Notice how some topics are more developed than others, and how some topics are less related to the unit theme, Weather, than others. It is the job of the curriculum team to now decide which parts of the idea web to keep, and which parts to reserve for other units. Our decision, as always, will be based on what we know about our learners, on our goals and objectives, and our curriculum philosophy.

Once we have decided which topics to keep, we can fill in our curriculum. The topics that the Hualalai use in their child-centered approach rounds out their circle in this way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level: Pre-Advanced</th>
<th>Skill:</th>
<th>Learner can:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding (Comprehension,</td>
<td>1. Understand spoken language that incorporates more advanced vocabulary and language structure, including idioms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>2. Comprehend the main idea and supporting ideas of spoken stories, personal histories, including recordings, videos, and radio.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presentational (Public Performance)</td>
<td>3. Comprehend the main idea and supporting ideas of written stories and personal histories, including historical texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>4. Respond appropriately to compound instructions, directions, and commands.</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>1. Initiate, sustain, and conclude communication on a variety of personal and cultural topics.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Ask and answer a variety of questions that require follow-up questions and responses for more information.</td>
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<td>3. Support personal preferences, needs, and opinions with more complete explanations.</td>
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<td>4. Explain why something is done the way it is or should be done a certain way.</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>1. Give a presentation on a topic of personal interest that will require learning some specialized vocabulary or language structure.</td>
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<td>2. Recount an event or tell a joke with substantive description or detail.</td>
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<td>3. Tell a traditional story.</td>
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<td>4. Give a series of directions to someone, coaching the person in order to complete the task.</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>1. Write a topic of personal interest, that will require learning some specialized vocabulary or language structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Write a formal letter to a tribal leader, grandparent, or important person.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3. Keep a daily journal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Create literature such as stories, poems, skits, plays, and movies for use in the community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Besides these skills, it is helpful to know some very general characteristics of learners’ abilities at different levels in their language learning. A few of these characteristics are provided below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginning Level:</th>
<th>Intermediate Level:</th>
<th>Pre-Advanced Level:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Relies heavily on personal background, repetition, gestures, and context for understanding.</td>
<td>• Understands a story line with cultural perspective similar to own.</td>
<td>• Uses connected sentences when communicating on a variety of topics in familiar areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Uses much imitation, memorized phrases, and short sentences.</td>
<td>• Identifies main idea and some specific information on limited number of topics in selected content areas.</td>
<td>• Interacts with others in more complicated or unfamiliar contexts one-on-one or in familiar contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Verbal and non-verbal models the teacher’s.</td>
<td>• Uses background knowledge to comprehend simple stories.</td>
<td>• Interacts with others on learned information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understood mainly by very fluent people or people accustomed to the speech of learners.</td>
<td>• Begins to use culturally appropriate vocabulary and own non-verbal behavior.</td>
<td>• Uses connected sentences and/or paragraphs on familiar topics, using transitions words and phrases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relies heavily on visual aid, gestures, and repetition to enhance understandability.</td>
<td>• Makes occasional use of paraphrasing and finds other ways to express an idea to avoid breakdown of communication.</td>
<td>• Uses language more confidently with fewer pauses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Comprehends written and spoken text when content has been previously presented and practiced.</td>
<td>• Makes efforts at self-correction.</td>
<td>• Can be understood by native speakers unaccustomed to learners.</td>
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<td>• May mispronounce word in new contexts or on first exposure.</td>
<td>• Listens and understands main ideas, and significant details.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Understandd by most people familiar with their speech.</td>
<td>• Can deduce meaning in unfamiliar language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Gives a string of short sentences on a familiar topic.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How could these same skills look at a pre-school level?

Below is an overview of how these skills could be integrated into a pre-school curriculum.

**Skills**
- Communication
- Language
- Fine Motor Skills
- Gross Motor Skills
- Problem Solving
- Collaboration
- Creativity
- Self-Regulation
- Emotional Regulation
- Social Skills

**Performance Indicators**
- **Social Skills**
  - Captivates audience
  - Effective listener
  - Takes turns
  - Responsive to feedback
  - Good at collaboration
  - Shows empathy

- **Communication**
  - Conversationalist
  - Clear and expressive
  - Active listener
  - Listens to others

- **Language**
  - Vocabulary
  - Sentence structure
  - Pronunciation
  - Non-verbal communication

- **Fine Motor Skills**
  - Precision
  - Endurance
  - Coordination

- **Gross Motor Skills**
  - Balance
  - Strength
  - Speed

- **Problem Solving**
  - Logical reasoning
  - Creative thinking
  - Critical thinking

- **Collaboration**
  - Team player
  - Conflict resolution
  - Leadership

- **Creativity**
  - Imagination
  - Innovation
  - Artistic expression

- **Self-Regulation**
  - Emotion regulation
  - Stress management
  - Self-motivation

- **Emotional Regulation**
  - Self-awareness
  - Self-control
  - Empathy

**Performance Indicators (continued)**
- **Social Skills (continued)**
  - Leadership
  - Conflict resolution
  - Collaboration

- **Communication (continued)**
  - Non-verbal communication
  - Comprehension
  - Expression

- **Language (continued)**
  - Pronunciation
  - Vocabulary
  - Sentence structure

- **Fine Motor Skills (continued)**
  - Precision
  - Endurance
  - Coordination

- **Gross Motor Skills (continued)**
  - Balance
  - Strength
  - Speed

- **Problem Solving (continued)**
  - Critical thinking
  - Logical reasoning
  - Creative thinking

- **Collaboration (continued)**
  - Team player
  - Conflict resolution
  - Leadership

- **Creativity (continued)**
  - Artistic expression
  - Innovation
  - Imagination

- **Self-Regulation (continued)**
  - Emotion regulation
  - Stress management
  - Self-motivation

- **Emotional Regulation (continued)**
  - Self-awareness
  - Self-control
  - Empathy

**Performance Indicators (final)**
- **Social Skills (final)**
  - Leadership
  - Conflict resolution
  - Collaboration

- **Communication (final)**
  - Comprehension
  - Expression

- **Language (final)**
  - Pronunciation
  - Vocabulary
  - Sentence structure

- **Fine Motor Skills (final)**
  - Precision
  - Endurance
  - Coordination

- **Gross Motor Skills (final)**
  - Balance
  - Strength
  - Speed
The next stage is to decide on a meaningful way to sequence the topics and to develop the topics into fun and interesting lessons for our learners.

**HOW DOES OUR CURRICULUM GUIDE LESSON PLANNING?**

After we have webbed lesson topics from our unit themes, we should look for ways to sequence them to help order the topics in a meaningful way. This sequence should show the relationship of the topics to each other and to the unit theme. With a sequence in mind, we are now ready to make a plan to teach these topics to our learners.

The plan that we use for the actual class itself is called a *lesson plan*. For fun and effective classes, each lesson should have a clear focus with a beginning and an end. Some language teachers make detailed plans for each class, including the lesson objectives, how many minutes each activity should take, and a plan for evaluation. Whether or not they are this detailed, a written plan helps us to keep our goals, philosophy, and learners in mind. It also helps us to ensure that one topic flows into the other in a smooth and continuous way.

What should we include in a lesson plan? Some of this answer depends on the length of time we have for our lesson: 20 minutes, 50 minutes, or 90 minutes. Whatever time we have, most effective lesson plans include:

- clear language objectives that include both receptive and productive skills;
- presentation of new material that relates to and builds on previously learned material;
- activities or presentation that draw the students into the subject;
- plenty of practice for the students to use the language;
- a way for students and teachers to see how much they have learned and what they need to practice more;
- follow-up activities that allow the students to use the language outside of class.

**Creating Language Objectives**

Language objectives are what we want our learners to learn of the language in the context of the unit theme and the lesson topic. Objectives are based on the teacher’s knowledge of the vocabulary and language structures that learners need to communicate about the lesson topic.

We may have other program goals as well, such as getting more parents involved, getting more community involvement, or keeping people to attend the program from beginning to end. These are concerns that are vital to all programs. Yet, these kinds of goals are not directly addressed by the curriculum but are part of the organizational scheme of our planning. Our Language Teams that support the classes should work actively to help teachers address these concerns and goals.

**Understanding Language Skills and Levels**

Since our ultimate goal is to produce new speakers of our languages, we need to understand the skills that people acquire and use in learning a language. What are language skills? Simply put, they include comprehension skills such as listening and reading, and production skills such as speaking and writing. To many of us, speaking skills include an aspect of public performance such as story telling or ceremonial speaking, which is highly valued and vital to our cultures. To produce fluent speakers, our goals need to stress as many of these skills as possible while keeping in mind the age and levels of our learners.

How do we learn about language skills? Many colleges and universities provide courses on teaching language skills. We can also learn about these skills from existing language revitalization programs, as well. State departments of education often have language guidelines, and these can be a great place to start. Like many states and language programs, The Oklahoma State Department of Education has put together a set of guidelines for laying out language skills appropriate for different learner levels. The following examples are reduced and modified from their guidelines:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level: Beginner</th>
<th>Learner can:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding (Comprehension)</strong></td>
<td>1. Comprehend simple daily communications on familiar topics, including classroom procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Comprehend the main idea of short, age appropriate stories, songs, and personal histories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Comprehend the main idea of spoken and written materials that use familiar vocabulary and language structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Respond to simple commands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speaking</strong></td>
<td>1. Initiate greetings, introductions, and leaving-taking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Ask and answer simple questions about food and mealtime activities, family members, location of people and objects, seasons and weather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Express-personal needs, preferences, and feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Initiate simple commands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presentational (Public Performance)</strong></td>
<td>1. Describe basic information such as self, family, cultural objects, holidays and events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Make a request of another person or group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Relate a simple story using familiar vocabulary and language structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td>1. Write basic information such as self, family, cultural objects, holidays and events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Begin keeping a personal journal.</td>
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</table>
How do we present new material using Communicative Input?

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Language Objectives
Should Include:
- new vocabulary
- the functions, such as questions, commands, requests, invitations that are needed to communicate the topic
- the new structure, such as prefixes or suffixes, or word order, that the students will be exposed to

1. Questions that call for a "yes" or "no" answer (Is this a hat?)
2. "Either/or" questions (Is this a hat or a shirt?)
3. "WH-questions" that ask for short responses (What is this? What am I doing?)

When we weave language into culturally appropriate and fun activities, the students will not even realize that they are learning new grammatical structures. We, the teachers, know what our language goals are, but this does not mean that we have to be grammar teachers.

Once we decide on the language that is most appropriate for our students' level—that is, comprehensible input—we should choose specific outcomes (i.e. objectives) that students will be able to demonstrate in the short term, or by the end of each lesson. That is why many objectives begin with the phrase:

"By the end of this lesson, the students will be able to..."

...followed by action verbs that describe the students' expected achievement. We should use verbs such as demonstrate, identify, express, evaluate, compare, contrast, extract, reconstruct, discuss, present, name, show, because these outcomes can be assessed more easily than those such as know, or understand. For example:

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to identify five animals that are seen in the community by drawing pictures of those animals as they are told and explaining orally what they are.

By focusing on objectives that students can visibly achieve, our curriculum becomes "learner-centered." This means that it is based on what our learners can do—both in terms of comprehension and production—and that our learners are the focus of our planning, our teaching, and our evaluation.

An example of a "learner-centered" curriculum comes from the Absentee Shawnee. For their program, the teachers have developed thirteen graded lessons, beginning with the sounds and alphabet and increasing in difficulty with words and phrases. To make the lessons more relevant and enjoyable for the students, the teachers encourage students to come to class with topics or materials to work on for a particular lesson. This appears to be a successful strategy for them in that the students not only get language practice at home while they prepare the materials, but these materials can then be used with the whole class.

An effective curriculum should provide the basis for indicating whether or not our teaching is helping learners meet the expected objectives.

A curriculum that includes all of the above features and considerations is an important element in a successful language revitalization program. The next section will tell us how to go about developing one.

**WHAT ARE SOME BASIC STEPS IN EARLY CURRICULUM PLANNING?**

While there is no one right way to develop a curriculum, there are basic steps that successful curriculum planners can take to ensure that their curriculum is something meaningful to the people who use them, whether the program is a once-a-week adult language class or five-day-a-week total immersion preschool program. These steps include:

هى  **Forming a Curriculum Team**

It takes just one person to get things moving toward reversing language shift, but it is always important to have a team of mutually supporting individuals who can share in the decisions and work load. Developing a curriculum takes more than one hand and more than one talent, especially in developing a curriculum that reflects the outlook and needs of the community.

For more examples on developing language teams, see the "What Works?" Section of ILI Handbook 1 Awakening Our Languages: An Introduction.

هى  **Revisiting Our Overall Educational Goal**

The ultimate goal of a language revitalization program is to revitalize, maintain, and fortify our language. We should always keep this in mind. We want members of our community to become bilingual in our Native language and English. We want our children to be able to use our Native language in everyday interactions both orally and in writing so that, as Hastings Shade (Cherokee Nation, Oklahoma) says, "We will be able to talk with the sky, the wind, the sun, plants, and all elements of the universe in our language."

In order to achieve this goal, we must revisit it constantly as we develop and implement our curriculum. If we begin to see that certain aspects of our curriculum do not relate to our larger educational goal, we need to examine why not and then decide: Does our ultimate goal need to be revised or do we need to redirect our curriculum planning? More than likely it will be the latter.
success as readers.
To focus on how successful students are at reading, we turn to the question, are students reading books and other materials that are appropriate to their level?

The purpose of setting the stage is to show our students how reading and writing are connected. We must explore the connection between these two skills in order to help our students understand their importance.

The connection between reading and writing is a complex one. It is not simply about being able to decode words and sentences, but also about understanding the meaning and structure of language. In order for students to develop strong reading and writing skills, they need to have experiences that allow them to explore these connections in depth.

To provide a picture of what this looks like in the classroom, we will take a closer look at a specific lesson that was designed to help students make connections between reading and writing.

The lesson plan for this particular lesson included the following steps:

1. Introduce the lesson to the students and explain the objectives.
2. Read aloud a story that is appropriate for the students' reading level.
3. Discuss the story and ask students to identify key elements, such as plot, characters, and setting.
4. Provide opportunities for students to write about the story, either individually or in small groups.
5. Conclude the lesson by summarizing the main points and checking for understanding.

Throughout the lesson, the teacher made connections between the reading and writing, helping students see the importance of both skills.

To extend the lesson, students were given the opportunity to write their own stories, based on the models that they had seen in the lesson. This allowed them to apply what they had learned in a more independent setting.

In summary, reading and writing are closely related skills. In order for students to become successful readers and writers, they need to have opportunities to explore the connections between these two skills. By designing lessons that make these connections clear, we can help our students develop the skills they need to succeed as readers and writers.
Step 2: Guided Practice

The purpose of guided practice is to provide structured activities that help students to absorb new material. Some things to keep in mind during this stage of the lesson are:

- activities should be done in a meaningful context;
- practice must reinforce the new concepts and structures being taught;
- practice should involve both receptive (listening, reading) and productive (speaking, writing) skills;
- frequent checks for comprehension and accuracy give teachers and learners feedback about how well they are doing.

Examples: Use games such as relays, lotto, hot potato and telephone; reading/listening exercises; paragraph slot fill-ins; patterned writing, crossword puzzles; matching text to story pictures; dialog practice with substitutions, etc.

Step 3: Independent Practice

The purpose of independent practice is to provide further opportunities for learners to use what they have learned to generate their own language. Independent practice can also take place outside of the classroom as “homework.” Activities in this step should meet at least some of the following:

- Have personal significance
- Be culturally authentic
- Encourage spontaneity
- Fill a missing gap in the student’s information
- Have a meaningful purpose
- Be fun

Examples: Role-playing in context, discussions, debates, summarizing, skills, original written work, interviews, cooperative activities, games that use language, etc.

Step 4: Assessment

The purpose of assessment is to measure the extent to which the learners were able to meet the lesson objectives. The best kind of assessment is contextualized; in other words, it is part of both the guided and independent activities, not a paper-and-pencil test. A good assessment allows the student to demonstrate learning. It also:

- focuses on the whole lesson; involves
each and every learner; and
- checks learners’ comprehension and communication ability.

Now that we have looked at what a curriculum is, why do we need one?

A curriculum helps us to build on what our learners have previously learned one gradual step at a time, and gives us a better sense of how we can tie our materials and classroom activities into one seamless whole. In a way, a curriculum is like a road map. If we know where we are now, and have a good idea of where we want to go, a road map will give us several options of how we might get there. Some routes are quicker than others; some have more points of interest along the way. We may find road construction en route and have to take a detour. And some routes, if we do not plan well, may result in a dead end entirely! A curriculum, then, guides us in getting where we want to go.

Other important reasons to consider developing a curriculum include:

- To maximize the benefits of our available resources.
  When we plan a language program, we often do not have abundant resources or time. We may have to begin the language program with only one or two teachers. We may not have any language materials ready to be widely used by teachers and students. We may have only one hour for two nights a week for six months as a part of a community program, or 45 minutes, five days a week for the entire school year as a part of the school curriculum. Whatever the case, unless we are reinforcing our language 24 hours everyday at home, we need to have a plan for using the limited resources to the fullest extent.

- To better personalize our teaching to the needs of the learners.
  The process of developing a curriculum forces us to think carefully about our learners, their learning styles, their interests, and their needs regarding the use of the language. Unfortunately, we do not have unlimited time and energy to develop a different curriculum for each individual. So, we must group our learners in some way: age groups such as preschoolers, kindergarteners, fifth graders, young adults, or adults. Or we may group our learners in terms of their experience with the language: beginners, semi-speakers who understand what people are saying but cannot express what they want to say, good speakers, etc. Especially in planning for language camps, teachers have found it useful to group participants according to gender, and sometimes by family groups or clans.

This means that for each language class, we will need a different curriculum. A one-size-fits-all approach is not likely to be a very effective way of teaching the language to a wide group of learners.
Assessment:

1. Output go back to our plan and review our objectives. Are we meeting our objectives? Are we meeting the objectives of our assessments? How do we know enough time to meet our objectives?

2. Do we have enough time to meet our objectives?

3. Are we meeting our objectives for any reason?

4. If we were to achieve the objectives of our assessments, we would need to:
   - Focus on our strengths.
   - Focus on our weaknesses.
   - Focus on our knowledge.

5. If we were to achieve the objectives of our assessments, we would need to:
   - Focus on our strengths.
   - Focus on our weaknesses.
   - Focus on our knowledge.

6. Are we meeting the objectives of our assessments?

Are we considering these questions?

Most common errors when designing lesson plans are:

- Not understanding the objectives.
- Not understanding the strategies.
- Not understanding the process.
- Not understanding the evaluation.

There are many kinds of lesson plans, and the CEL-5-2 is just one.

The holistic view of these questions needs to be rethought. How do we consider the objectives of the curriculum? How do we consider the objectives of the curriculum? How do we consider the objectives of the curriculum? How do we consider the objectives of the curriculum? How do we consider the objectives of the curriculum?
Classroom Activities that Emphasize Skills

When our classes are centered on daily activities or culturally significant activities, then lessons almost plan themselves. Still, we need to keep in mind that lessons on “banning hides” or “making fry bread” need to include more than just passive learning or just listening skills. Even these lessons need to have language objectives and have practice time for the students. Language-skill oriented activities that include speaking and perhaps writing and reading skills can and should be developed around these longer cultural activities.

More difficult, perhaps, are those lessons or programs that are situated inside of a classroom. Then we must try to re-create the real world inside of the classroom. This often means lugging with us a lot of props (the term is generally called “realia” in teacher talk) and spending hours planning how to make the class interesting, fun, and more natural.

Keeping in mind the language skills of listening, speaking, performing, reading, and writing, we can still make creative, fun, and culturally-centered classrooms. With input from the Oklahoma State Board of Education, guidelines and the ILI field linguists site visits, here are just a few of the thousands of ideas for each skill at a beginning level. They are presented by skill, but each of these activities could be developed for guided practice, independent practice, assessment, or follow-up.

Beginning Level

Listening Skills

- Listen to the teacher tell you to place certain items around the room, and respond accordingly.
- Listen to a simple story several times and then draw a picture of what happened.
- Respond to cues from a traditional tune or a song individually, with one other person, in a group, etc.
- Listen to a “patient” explaining his/her illness to the “doctor,” including various body parts. Take simple notes listening what problems the patient is having.
- Pretend to do the wash, listening to the teacher’s directions for sorting wash according to color or use.
- Listen to a pretend weather report for the local area and fill out a map with the appropriate weather symbols.
- Listen to a short, simple conversation on a familiar topic. Answer comprehension questions.

A CURRICULUM MAKES EVERYTHING RUN SMOOTHLY...

According to the dictionary, the word curriculum comes from Latin, meaning “course.”

The Latin “course” comes from /corris/, meaning “to run,” and related to current “A steady, smooth course toward movement.”

The plural forms of curriculum are:

- curriculum, the newer plural form.
- curricula, the older plural form.

WHAT IS A CURRICULUM AND WHY DO WE NEED ONE?

Simply stated, a curriculum is a long-range teaching plan we develop to meet a certain goal. But curriculum may mean something different to people in differing contexts. For some, a curriculum is a formal set of instructions that specify the goals, the content, and even the way lessons should be taught. For others, a curriculum is a set of guidelines that offers ideas for teachers in the preparation of their teaching content, materials, and activities.

What is interesting and, at the same time, challenging about curriculum is that it can be anything we want it to be. For it to be useful for teachers, however, it will most likely include some, if not all, of the following components:

- Characteristics of the community: The “community” may be the whole nation, a smaller and immediate community where a language program will be established, or a school. No matter what “community” we are going to deal with, a curriculum must have a good description of the major characteristics of our learners’ and teachers’ community.

- Educational goals: The goals will be based on questions such as “Why are we establishing a language program, and for whom?” and “What do we want our learners to be able to do when they complete the program?” One of these goals may be to provide learners with social, cultural, and linguistic skills to function effectively as contributing members of their immediate community, as well as members of the larger society.

- Curriculum philosophy: The philosophy of the curriculum is the underlying reason for the chosen approach to teaching the language. The philosophy may reflect a core worldview, a set of values, or an orientation toward life, like a life cycle or a life line. A clear philosophy from the outset can give our curriculum planners a common ground to work on.

- Program goals: In order to achieve sometimes very long-range educational goals, program planners must decide how to break them down into realistic steps. These steps must be clearly identified as program goals that will lead us to the broader educational goals and function as short-term milestones.

- Organizational scheme: This will include two different kinds of organizations. One is the organization of the language program itself, both internal and external. How does it relate to the tribal government and to the community? Who are the ones that make decisions about both the long-term goals and the every day operations of the program? Who is responsible
Emphasizing Evaluation Once More

Finally, through what kind of assessment will students demonstrate their achievement of your objectives? Your end product should have a clear plan as to how you will assess what the students have learned. This does not have to be in the form of a paper and pencil test; informal assessments can often be better ways of determining whether or not students have met the established goals of the curriculum. A positive spin on evaluation is to think of it not necessarily as an assessment of what learners can and cannot do, but more as a way to give value to their performance and progress, or, if there were a word, to evaluate them.

We should also encourage our teachers to evaluate one another, to allow observers to the class for the purpose of evaluation, and to use self-evaluation for each of their own lessons. Participants in the Oklahoma Native Languages Association seminars helped format their 5-Step Lesson plans into an effective feedback tool when they watched each other practice teach. They evaluated each other on each step and used the questions on the following page as guidelines for their feedback. These questions can be adapted for team teaching and self-evaluation as well. They help us step-by-step look at our lessons and teaching and see where we can improve the next time we teach this lesson or any other lesson.

Need more ideas? Networking with other Native language teachers can help us tremendously with sharing our successful in-class strategies and getting fresh ideas on getting the stage, directed practice and independent practice ideas.
DESIGNING CURRICULUM
Handbook 8

An ILL Handbook Series
Awakening Our Languages
Spiral of Native American words for "The People"
by Rosie Simpson (Santa Clara Pueblo, then age 14)

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