



Designing Language Courses: A Guide for Teachers, Kathleen Graves, HEINLE & HEINLE PUBL Incorporated, 2000, 083847909X, 9780838479094, 308 pages. Designing Language Courses: A Guide for Teachers is a clear and comprehensive overview of course design. This text provides a practical guide to designing language courses by encouraging teachers to explore ways of planning and organizing content, and evaluating materials..

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Reading, Writing and Learning in ESL A Resource Book for Teaching K-12 English Learners, Suzanne F. Peregoy, Owen Boyle, Feb 1, 2008, , 459 pages. Rev. ed. of: Reading, writing and learning in ESL. 4th ed. 2005..

Second Language Needs Analysis , Michael H. Long, Nov 3, 2005, Foreign Language Study, 374 pages. No language teaching program should be designed without a thorough analysis of the students' needs. The studies in this volume explore Needs Analysis in the public, vocational

Teachers as Course Developers , Kathleen Graves, Feb 23, 1996, Education, 213 pages. This is a book about how language teachers themselves rather than curriculum specialists develop and implement their own courses. The paperback edition illuminates the process

Language learning strategies what every teacher should know, Rebecca L. Oxford, 1990, , 342 pages. .

Beyond Training Perspectives on Language Teacher Education, Jack C. Richards, Feb 13, 1998, Education, 208 pages. Beyond Training examines the nature of second language teacher development and how teachers' practices are influenced by their beliefs and principles. It seeks to move

Communities of Practice Learning, Meaning, and Identity, Etienne Wenger, 1998, Psychology, 318 pages. Presents a broad conceptual framework for thinking about learning as a process of social participation..

Course Design & Development , Cat Sharpe (Editor), 1997, Employees, 16 pages. .

Textos en contexto literatura hispanoamericana en multimedia, Aguilar, Nov 1, 1999, , 86 pages. Uses an innovative approach to teach seven pieces of literature. Balanced between the print textbook and an interactive multimedia CD-ROM, it allows the learner not only to

Language Testing and Validation An Evidence-based Approach, Cyril J. Weir, Mar 2, 2005, Language Arts & Disciplines, 301 pages. Tests for the measurement of language abilities must be constructed according to a coherent validity framework based on the latest developments in theory and practice. This

The Elements of Language Curriculum A Systematic Approach to Program Development, JAMES D BROWN, 1995, , 262 pages. This text provides a practical, comprehensive overview of the different phases and activities involved in developing and implementing a sound, rational, and effective language

Course Design Developing Programs and Materials for Language Learning, Fraida Dubin, Elite Olshtain, 1986, Foreign Language Study, 194 pages. Course planning and development, in the context of current theories of language learning..

Designing Language Courses comprises 10 chapters on various aspects of course design, including areas such as "Assessing Needs," "Formulating Goals and Objectives," "Developing Materials," and "Adapting a Textbook," as well as the perhaps less predictable topic of "Articulating Beliefs" (i.e., the teacher's own beliefs about language teaching and learning). While the chapters appear in an order which, with a couple of exceptions, reflects a fairly conventional sequence of processes of course design, the writer points out in her first chapter that she thinks in terms of a "systems approach" to the activity; she regards the various elements of course design as an interrelated and systematic whole, what she calls a "framework" for course design, where "as a course designer, you can begin anywhere in the framework, as long as it makes sense to you to begin where you do" (p. 3). Graves feels that conventional writing on course design views the process as a highly organized, linear one, in contrast to the "messy, multi-faceted, two-steps-forward one-step-back process" (p. 2) which she herself experienced in designing courses and which she feels is the reality for the majority of teachers.

So this is no do-it-by-numbers instruction manual in course design; rather it is a book where the writer expresses her thoughts on course design--sometimes at considerable length, as the page count indicates--and where comments and materials from other teachers also frequently appear. It is intended to be thought-provoking, to get teachers to assess the ideas presented and compare these interactively with their own ideas, which may change and develop as a result. In the words of the preface by Donald Freeman, the editor of the TeacherSource series, of which this book is a part:[1]

As a reader, you will find this book has a personality; it is not anonymous. It comes as a story, not as a directive, and it is meant to create a relationship with you rather than assume your attention. As a practitioner, its point of view can help you in your own work by providing a sounding board for your ideas and a metric for your own thinking. It can suggest courses of action and explain why these make sense to the author. And you can take from it what you will, and do with it what you can. This book will not tell you what to think; it is meant to help you make sense of what you do. (pp. ix-x)

All of this sounds very positive. It also, perhaps, sounds very pedagogical, and it may come as no surprise by now to discover that the book is based largely on courses which the author has given on course design, as well as on her own experience as teacher and text-book writer. Furthermore, it is intended to be used by teachers working in groups: "I . . . strongly recommend that you work with a partner or in a group of three or four" (p. 11). The book contains recurring features which are very training-course-like:

Each chapter includes three elements . . . frameworks, teachers' voices, and investigations. The frameworks provide information and guidelines about what I think is important for teachers to know about each of the processes of course design. The teachers' voices provide reflections on how they carried out the processes, the dilemmas they faced, the decisions they made. . . . The investigations are a combination of reflective tasks which require thinking and responding to a question, a framework or a curriculum product; problem-solving tasks which require you to arrive at a solution that makes sense to you; and product tasks which ask you to design a curriculum product. [-1-]

In short, this book is probably best viewed as a teacher training course for groups rather than a resource book for individual teachers. It is probably most suitable for teachers with some experience; teachers with no classroom teaching behind them might find that they had too little basis for providing their own input. On the other hand, teachers with substantial experience might

find the lengthy discovery learning approach somewhat frustrating for what they got out of it.

The course instructor who selects this book will have to live with the strong (though ever friendly and reasonable) voice of Kathleen Graves. The book is not designed explicitly for use with a course instructor; Graves is the instructor. Clearly there is a possible role for a course leader in running the discussion elements of the course, and perhaps also in re-presenting and sometimes adding to the materials in each chapter; but it is likely to be a more limited role than some instructors will be used to. That said, the course could save the instructor quite a bit of work, since it not only contains plenty of materials for group discussion, but also provides ready-made course organisation and content. (The irony of letting someone else design much of your course on course design may worry some . . .)

Materials development takes place on a continuum of decision-making and creativity which ranges from being given a textbook and a timetable in which to "cover it"--least responsibility and decision-making--to developing all the materials you will use in class "from scratch"--most responsibility and creativity. Neither extreme is desirable. When teachers are required to strictly adhere to a textbook and timetable there is little room for them to make decisions and to put to use what they have learned from experience, which, in effect, "deskills" the teacher. . . . On the other hand, the majority of teachers are not paid or do not have the time in their schedules to develop all the materials for every course they teach. (p. 149)

Surely few in the mainstream of teaching would disagree here that "neither extreme is desirable," and while some might incline to preferences at one end of the continuum or the other, all would find their views covered to some extent in the chapters on developing materials and adapting a textbook. Graves herself appears to favour more rather than less teacher input (perhaps this is only natural in someone writing a book for teachers on course design!), and I can find little recognition that materials developed by teachers, while they may gain by fitting in more closely to what the teacher thinks the students need, may also lose through being poorly and over-hastily worked out. But that is a point that could easily come up in the discussion prompted by this chapter, and no-one could accuse Graves of being extreme in her stated or implied views. [-2-]

If Graves is unlikely to offend by being too controversial, she may occasionally be open to the accusation of being rather bland. Her language is easy to understand, but sometimes I found it quite hard to concentrate on the longer discursive sections in the book. I cannot quote a lengthy passage to make my point, but consider this brief extract, which comes at the conclusion of a short section defining exercises (more controlled output) and activities (more open-ended output):

When developing materials it is important to have a balance of activities and exercises. Too many exercises and too few activities will impede development of the ability to communicate in the real world, while too many activities and not enough exercises will deny students the opportunity to develop the language and skills they need to communicate effectively. (p. 157)

It's a perfectly reasonable point, of course, but it's not exactly expressed in a way that gets the pulse racing, nor yet in a way that really encourages the reader to ask, "Is the balance of exercises and activities right in the courses I'm teaching/designing?" I actually feel that this particular point, like others in the book, is in considerable need of expansion, while other sections could be substantially trimmed. But this is where a good course leader may come in, promoting further discussion of relevant points in relation to individuals' teaching situations. And in fairness, it cannot be expected that the book will cover everything in depth; after all, the general subject of course design links to virtually any topic you care to mention in the field of language learning and teaching.

So there are some parts of the book that it can be quite hard to plod through. But I have to admit that in many cases it's worth the effort. There were definitely times as I read when I thought, "Do I do this sort of planning as much as I should?" or, "How would doing this help in teaching my current groups?" The wealth of materials provided for discussion, many of them teachers' attempts at aspects of course design, do provoke thought and comment. Take the chapter on "Designing an Assessment Plan," for example. It begins by stressing that assessment "plays three interrelated and

overlapping roles in course design: . . . assessing needs, . . . assessing students' learning, and . . . evaluating the course itself" (p. 207). Assessing needs is considered mainly in a separate chapter; this particular chapter relates to assessment of what students have learned or are learning, and to course evaluation. The fact that these two types of assessment are considered together means that we do not lose sight of the fact that the success of a course is judged by what students learn, and what they feel they have learned. It is an approach that contrasts with the more traditional division into "testing" and "course evaluation." Examples of teachers' assessment plans for actual courses, while often lengthy, introduce forms of assessment that may be new to some readers, in particular forms which involve the students in assessing their own progress. The ways in which assessment is to be presented to students also forms an interesting topic for discussion. Descriptions of problems which actually came up in the implementation of the assessment plans prevent the material from being of the "look, this is how to do it" type. More conventional forms of assessment are not scorned, though the reader who is looking for instructions on how to create multiple choice tests will need to go elsewhere. [-3-]

There is no index to the book, and that is a problem for anyone who wishes to use the book for reference. I've found it frustratingly difficult trying to look up "what does Graves have to say about X?" for this review, and there would be other occasions where one would want to find something in the book quickly and easily. I appreciate that to some extent "it's not that sort of book," but nevertheless I feel that books for teachers shouldn't be designed in such a way that you have to re-read large sections to search for specific bits of information.

If you're a teacher educator who will be running a series of seminars on course design, have a good look at this book, and consider getting your students to buy it if you like the style and approach. If you're fairly new to teaching and want a step-by-step manual on designing courses, or systematic lists and examples of different exercise types and their advantages and disadvantages, you're probably best off looking elsewhere. If you're an experienced teacher looking for some quick and interesting inspiration, this may be too much of a mouthful, with too much that is already familiar territory. If you are a teacher who doesn't want to sign up for a full-time in-service course in curriculum development, but who would like a structured framework within which to discuss teaching issues regularly with like-minded colleagues, and who is prepared to devote time to some serious reading and thinking in preparation for your discussion sessions, you could be exactly the type of person this book was designed for. Am I being over-cynical in thinking that the last might be a rather small category? It would be nice to think I am.

I have been teaching English for close to four years now and also have teaching for special purposes experience. However, I have just been offered a new challenge, to design a 40-hour Environmental English course for Environmental experts. Where do I start? The same place any teacher should start, with this book!

This book makes very interesting reading. I found it both inspiring and informed. It challenges you to start constructing your course straight away and to compare various teachers approaches. It makes you articulate your own teaching beliefs and covers everything from defining the context to assessment plans. After reading this book I am not only clear on what information I need from the school in order to get started, but I am also aware that my syllabus needs to be fluid and flexible, not set in stone.

I purchased the book to have solid background and understanding of curriculum design. However, I was in for a disappointment. The book seems to be more about the narratives and experiences of the different teachers and their justifications for selecting and designing curricula in a certain way. What I expected to see more of was the theoretical foundations and references to other works. In short, if you are working on a thesis or dissertation and looking for definitions then this book is not for you. Those who work within the EFL/ ESL/ TESOL field may benefit from other books such as Nation, I.S.P., & Macalister, J. (2010). Language curriculum design.

This book by Kathleen Graves is one of the best for teachers of foreign languages that I have ever read. This gives a wonderful guideline for each step of the curriculum creation process. You'll get

lots of advice on how to assess you students' needs, how to focus on their needs, and how to adapt textbooks to serve their learning need more effectively. I recommend this for every beginning language teacher if you haven't read this in your training already. I didn't read this until I was eight years into my career, and I wish I had been able to read it earlier.

The book has a clear organisation that is easily followed and takes you through a process that is clear and succinct. With a description of the framework Graves uses at the start, the rest of the book forms a logical and consistent whole with it. The chapters take you right through the whole gamut of course design from getting to your beliefs about teaching right up to evaluation. Each section is detailed, though not so much that it overloads you with it.

A real positive in this book is the use of sections Graves calls "Teachers' Voices". These are little sections within the chapters, (well, some are not so "little"), where working teachers give their experiences and thoughts on the aspect of course design at hand. These teachers come from a variety of professional and working backgrounds, and they provide rich input and insight. I found these to be especially valuable.

One previous reviewer said they found it an unfriendly book for the user, and I have to disagree. I thought it was an immensely useful and easy to access book. I loved it and found it very interesting and very useful. I would even go so far as to say that anyone looking at course design should look at this book. Graves has done an excellent job.

I bought this book as a requirement for my Masters Program...TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) and I was expecting to find another uninteresting textbook. The book was great! This book is truly designed with the teacher in mind. The information was clear, easy to understand, and helpful. The book stresses the importance of how teachers need to take a students' needs into consideration in order to get the most out of your curriculum! If you are a student in a teacher preparation program...don't throw, give, or sell this book. It would be wise to keep this in your reference library!

When i had to design a language course as part of my DELTA Module 3 Extended Assignment, I read a number of books on course design but in my opinion this one was by far the most helpful. Graves guides you through the process with testimonies from real teachers who explain how they went about it and the difficulties they encountered, all with commentary by Graves. I knew nothing about course design when i started my course so I bought 3 others (second hand from Amazon) but i now see I really needn't have bothered.

This is a really good book, of course I needed it for a class and my school totally was overcharging for the book. Why? There are not a lot of pages. Anyway, the book gives pointers on how to create proper and efficient lesson for adult learners of English. It appears to be helpful so far with lesson planning and advice on teaching adults English.