



# **Designing the English Language Syllabus for the Iranian Technical / Vocational Schools**

MA Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching  
English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)

English Language Department  
Faculty of Humanities  
Tarbiat Modares University

By:  
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July, 2013


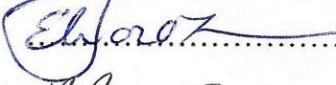
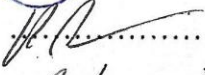


*In the Name of God*  
*The Compassionate the Merciful*

We Recommend This Thesis by **Mohsen Ghorbanpoor** Entitled

**Designing the English Language Syllabus for the Iranian  
Technical/Vocational Schools**

Be accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL).

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## آیین‌نامه حق مالکیت مادی و معنوی در مورد نتایج پژوهش‌های علمی دانشگاه تربیت مدرس

مقدمه: با عنایت به سیاست‌های پژوهشی و فناوری دانشگاه در راستای تحقق عدالت و کرامت انسانها که لازمه شکوفایی علمی و فنی است و رعایت حقوق مادی و معنوی دانشگاه و پژوهشگران، لازم است اعضای هیأت علمی، دانشجویان، دانش‌آموختگان و دیگر همکاران طرح، در مورد نتایج پژوهش‌های علمی که تحت عناوین پایان‌نامه، رساله و طرح‌های تحقیقاتی با هماهنگی دانشگاه انجام شده است، موارد زیر را رعایت نمایند:

ماده ۱- حق نشر و تکثیر پایان‌نامه/ رساله و درآمدهای حاصل از آنها متعلق به دانشگاه می باشد ولی حقوق معنوی پدید آورندگان محفوظ خواهد بود.

ماده ۲- انتشار مقاله یا مقالات مستخرج از پایان‌نامه/ رساله به صورت چاپ در نشریات علمی و یا ارائه در مجامع علمی باید به نام دانشگاه بوده و با تایید استاد راهنمای اصلی، یکی از اساتید راهنما، مشاور و یا دانشجو مسئول مکاتبات مقاله باشد. ولی مسئولیت علمی مقاله مستخرج از پایان‌نامه و رساله به عهده اساتید راهنما و دانشجو می باشد.

تبصره: در مقالاتی که پس از دانش‌آموختگی بصورت ترکیبی از اطلاعات جدید و نتایج حاصل از پایان‌نامه/ رساله نیز منتشر می‌شود نیز باید نام دانشگاه درج شود.

ماده ۳- انتشار کتاب، نرم افزار و یا آثار ویژه (اثری هنری مانند فیلم، عکس، نقاشی و نمایشنامه) حاصل از نتایج پایان‌نامه/ رساله و تمامی طرح‌های تحقیقاتی کلیه واحدهای دانشگاه اعم از دانشکده ها، مراکز تحقیقاتی، پژوهشکده ها، پارک علم و فناوری و دیگر واحدها باید با مجوز کتبی صادره از معاونت پژوهشی دانشگاه و براساس آئین‌نامه‌های مصوب انجام شود.

ماده ۴- ثبت اختراع و تدوین دانش فنی و یا ارائه یافته‌ها در جشنواره‌های ملی، منطقه‌ای و بین‌المللی که حاصل نتایج مستخرج از پایان‌نامه/ رساله و تمامی طرح‌های تحقیقاتی دانشگاه باید با هماهنگی استاد راهنما یا مجری طرح از طریق معاونت پژوهشی دانشگاه انجام گیرد.

ماده ۵- این آیین‌نامه در ۵ ماده و یک تبصره در تاریخ ۸/۴/۸۷ در شورای پژوهشی و در تاریخ ۲۳/۴/۸۷ در هیأت رئیسه دانشگاه به تایید رسید و در جلسه مورخ ۱۵/۷/۸۷ شورای دانشگاه به تصویب رسیده و از تاریخ تصویب در شورای دانشگاه لازم‌الاجرا است.

«اینجانب..... دانشجوی رشته..... آموزش زبان انگلیسی و ورودی سال تحصیلی..... ۱۳۸۹ مقطع..... کارشناسی ارشد..... دانشکده..... علوم انسانی..... متعهد می شوم کلیه نکات مندرج در آئین‌نامه حق مالکیت مادی و معنوی در مورد نتایج پژوهش‌های علمی دانشگاه تربیت مدرس را در انتشار یافته‌های علمی مستخرج از پایان‌نامه / رساله تحصیلی خود رعایت نمایم. در صورت تخلف از مفاد آئین‌نامه فوق‌الاشعار به دانشگاه وکالت و نمایندگی می‌دهم که از طرف اینجانب نسبت به لغو امتیاز اختراع بنام بنده و یا هر گونه امتیاز دیگر و تغییر آن به نام دانشگاه اقدام نماید. ضمناً نسبت به جبران فوری ضرر و زیان حاصله بر اساس برآورد دانشگاه اقدام خواهم نمود و بدینوسیله حق هر گونه اعتراض را از خود سلب نمودم»

امضا:.....

تاریخ: ۱۸/۹/۸۷

### آیین نامه چاپ پایان نامه (رساله) های دانشجویان دانشگاه تربیت مدرس

نظر به اینکه چاپ و انتشار پایان نامه (رساله) های تحصیلی دانشجویان دانشگاه تربیت مدرس، مبین بخشی از فعالیتهای علمی - پژوهشی دانشگاه است بنابراین به منظور آگاهی و رعایت حقوق دانشگاه، دانش آموختگان این دانشگاه نسبت به رعایت موارد ذیل متعهد می شوند:

ماده ۱: در صورت اقدام به چاپ پایان نامه (رساله)ی خود، مراتب را قبلاً به طور کتبی به «دفتر نشر آثار علمی» دانشگاه اطلاع دهد.

ماده ۲: در صفحه سوم کتاب (پس از برگ شناسنامه) عبارت ذیل را چاپ کند:

«کتاب حاضر، حاصل پایان نامه کارشناسی ارشد/ رساله دکتری نگارنده در رشته

سال در دانشکده

سرکار خانم/جناب آقای دکتر ، مشاوره سرکار خانم/جناب آقای دکتر

و مشاوره سرکار خانم/جناب آقای دکتر از آن دفاع شده است.»

ماده ۳: به منظور جبران بخشی از هزینه های انتشارات دانشگاه، تعداد یک درصد شمارگان کتاب (در هر نوبت چاپ) را به «دفتر نشر آثار علمی» دانشگاه اهدا کند. دانشگاه می تواند مازاد نیاز خود را به نفع مرکز نشر در معرض فروش قرار دهد.

ماده ۴: در صورت عدم رعایت ماده ۳، ۵۰٪ بهای شمارگان چاپ شده را به عنوان خسارت به دانشگاه تربیت مدرس، تأدیه کند.

ماده ۵: دانشجو تعهد و قبول می کند در صورت خودداری از پرداخت بهای خسارت، دانشگاه می تواند خسارت مذکور را از طریق مراجع قضایی مطالبه و وصول کند؛ به علاوه به دانشگاه حق می دهد به منظور استیفای حقوق خود، از طریق دادگاه، معادل وجه مذکور در ماده ۴ را از محل توقیف کتابهای عرضه شده نگارنده برای فروش، تامین نماید.

ماده ۶: اینجانب **حسن قربان مهر** دانشجوی رشته **آموزش زبان انگلیسی مقطع کارشناسی ارشد** تعهد فوق و ضمانت اجرایی آن را قبول کرده، به آن ملتزم می شوم.

نام و نام خانوادگی: **حسن قربان مهر**

تاریخ و امضا: **۹۳/۶/۲۸**



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July, 2013

*This work is dedicated to  
my wife,  
whose patience was a source of encouragement for me.*

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## Abstract

Instructional materials such as textbooks largely form the basis for much of the language input learners receive along with the language practice that happens in the classroom in an EFL context like Iran. This study is based on the belief that the needs, wants, and aims of the students in the two contexts of public high schools and public Technical / Vocational (T/V) Schools of Iran are quite different. However, both groups of students study the same set of textbooks (in grade one and two). Therefore, the focus of this study is to identify the needs and purposes of T/V students, and also to identify the approach of some very important national documents towards English language education and consequently design a syllabus for an extensive, assessed, broad-focus English course which addresses delayed needs of heterogeneous groups of learners. This course will cover common core content with a focus on general technical / vocational (T/V) carrier content (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998). To this end, a comprehensive review of official documents and published articles related to issues in English education was carried out. In addition, the needs analysis questionnaire survey was administered to three groups of audience: The T/V students (n=294), T/V content teachers (n=40), and English teachers teaching in T/V schools (n=37) and some were interviewed (T/V students=36, T/V teachers=15, English teachers=3). Also the Head of the English Department at the Curriculum Development Center (CDC) was interviewed to explore the ideas of politically important figures. The data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS version 17, and frequency tables were prepared to represent a clearer pattern of ideas.

The results of this study showed an inclination toward more communicative approaches among all respondents. Although all participants agree that English education should include all the language skills, 'Reading' was recognized as more important than the other skills. Also, the majority of all participant groups unanimously asked for the introduction of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) besides English for General Purposes (EGP). After the identification of optimal learning targets for T/V students and the orientations of all stakeholders, it was concluded that there should be separate English books specifically designed to meet the needs and wants of the T/V students. Therefore, three syllabi were designed to cover these needs, desires, and wants. Each syllabus is intended to be taught in one year and considering the short time allotted to language education in the Iranian high schools and the fact that this short time is stretched out over a number of years, the proportional syllabus model was found appropriate (Yalden, 1987).

**Keywords:** Syllabus design, Needs analysis, Curriculum development, Technical / Vocational schools, English Language Teaching (ELT)

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## List of Symbols and Abbreviations

EFL .....	English as a Foreign Language
ESL .....	English as a Second Language
ELT .....	English Language Teaching
F .....	Frequency
FPH .....	First Period of High School
L&L .....	Labor and Learning
P .....	Percentage
R .....	Rank
SPH .....	Second Period of High School
T/V .....	Technical / Vocational

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**



## 1.1. Introduction

Textbooks are a key component in most language programs. Hutchinson and Torres (1994) regard textbooks as an almost universal element of teaching in general and English language teaching in particular. They argue that every teaching-learning situation to be completed needs its relevant textbook.<sup>1</sup> Along the same lines, Cunningsworth (1995) considers textbooks as an effective resource for (a) self-directed learning, (b) ideas and activities, (c), presentation of materials by teachers and also (d) a reference for students, (e) a syllabus presenting pre-determined learning objectives, and (f) a support for less experienced and less confident teachers<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, the body responsible for the English language education should exercise great care and attention when it distributes only *one* set of textbooks nationwide with no alternatives.

Because course books are limited in terms of space, selectivity of content becomes a central issue for teachers and course designers. Their content selection reveals significant information about their view of the nature of language and what is important in language learning (Basturkmen, 2006). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) made the same point because they considered content specification as value laden, and believed that it shows the practitioners' understanding of what language is and how it is learned.

In order to have a relevant textbook for a particular group of learners all courses must be due to some sort of perceived need which is most of the times identifiable. The English books taught in Iranian high schools and Technical / Vocational (T/V) Schools are lacking in what Hutchinson & Waters (1987) believe should be the basis for any course, i.e., analysis of learner needs. To fill this gap, there is a need for a needs analysis which refers to a set of procedures to obtain the required information about learners. Lack of an

1. cited in Riazi & Mosalanejad, 2010

2. cited in Rahimpoor & Hashemi, 2011

English textbook that suits the needs of T/V students in a developing country like Iran that depicts itself as holding the first ranking in a lot of national enterprises such as economy and education in near future became an incentive to attempt to develop a syllabus for a textbook which could partially fill this gap.

In addition to the results of the needs analysis, an analysis of the related national documents and educational policies will form the basis for developing the desired learning goals and purposes for the Iranian T/V students.

There were three issues to overcome in order for this research to bear fruit and turn into a viable source for refreshing curriculum standards. First, identification of a model that could be used in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the forthcoming curriculum. Second, in order to assess the needs of the stakeholders accurately in the research, there is a call for valid questionnaires for large-scale data collection. Although some questionnaires that have been used in isolated studies are available, no questionnaires adjusted to the Iranian T/V school settings are available. Therefore, the questionnaires needed to be developed as part of the study. The third issue is the accurate identification of the needs of a variety of stakeholders who are involved in the development, implementation and success of a feasible English Language Program although the concern of the present researcher lies only with the development of a new syllabus. It goes without saying that failure to the inclusion of these stakeholders would turn decision-making into a unilateral and subjective enterprise that is based on the ideas of only a few individuals who are in charge of developing the high school English courses. Thus, to discover ways to identify possibly differing needs and wants, and to compromise the sheer variety of them into a workable syllabus is the ultimate aim of this study.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

The development of more complex theories of language and language learning followed by recognition of the diversity of learners' needs, wants, and interests, have influenced the concept of the syllabus for second language teaching dramatically, and made it more important. Consequently, "it has been examined at length, particularly in the context of

English for specific purposes programs, but also more and more in general planning for language teaching.” (Yalden, 1987, p. 85) Despite the new reforms in the educational system of Iran in general, and English Language Teaching (ELT) in particular, a clear and well-defined syllabus which takes into consideration the required steps to develop an all-inclusive syllabus is still missing. These changes show an understanding of the need to equip Iranian students with more knowledge and skills in order to prepare them for a competitive country which can obtain the position of a pivotal country in its intranational and international affairs. Although this is promising, yet some of these desired changes are only on paper and have not been put into practice.

The National Curriculum claims that the purpose of each and every educational activity in each learning area should be determined based on the detailed goals and objectives of education, different ‘needs’ and requirements for diverse learning areas and students, available facilities, and ‘regional and local’ requirements (p.34). All these guidelines are part of preparing a curriculum i.e. needs analysis, means analysis, situational analysis, and goal articulation. However, it seems to the researchers that the claims and guidelines published in such significant national documents as The National Curriculum are simply ignored to a great extent. Off course, the MOE officials have begun a fundamental reform to change junior high school English textbooks. Hopefully, the design and implementation of the next phase, i.e. senior high school English textbooks, will follow shortly. Yet, there is no English language teaching curriculum at work in Iranian educational system, a curriculum that goes through all the required processes of developing a self-healing and adapting system, the one which includes assessing needs, articulating beliefs, defining context, formulating goals and objectives, developing materials, implementing the results, developing an assessment plan, giving feedback to the whole process and organizing the course again if necessary (Graves, 2000).

Additionally, despite the National Curriculum Document’s inclination for ESP education in the second period of high school, there is no movement of any sort with that regard. Curriculum development as described above is beyond the scope of this study; however, the identification of the needs of a specific population of high schools, i.e. T/V students, and developing a new English syllabus is reasonable.

Thus, the present study is concerned with ELT in the Iranian Technical/Vocational (T/V) schools. The logical starting point for the development of a language program which is responsive to the learner and learning needs is needs analysis (Finney, 2002), an indispensable process that is overlooked in the development of the Iranian high school general English textbooks. Therefore, the needs, wants, and aspirations of students are completely under-explored and they are only determined by the policy makers. Although some differences between Technical / Vocational (T/V) students and high school students are undeniable, these have never been given any credit or addressed properly. And yet T/V students share the same English book (only in the second grade) with high school students.

In addition, the currently used English books in high schools and T/V schools are not based on the new developments in the field of applied linguistics and do not follow the goals of the new National Curriculum document. Even worse is the fact that the ideas of the policy makers which are translated into the current English textbooks in the Iranian high schools belong to many years ago and yet after more than thirty years of practice and a plethora of research that prove their relative inefficiency (Rahimpour & Hashemi, 2011; Abdollahi-Guilani, Subakir, & Kim Hua., 2011; Rahimi & Hassani, 2012; Riazi and Aryasholouh, 2007; Aliakbari, 2004; Soori, Kafipour, and Soury, 2011; Safarnavadeh, Aliasgari, Mosapour, and Ananisarab, 2009; Rahimi and Nabiloo, 2008), they are still in use and the educational system is really slow in putting their own approved reforms into practice. As mentioned previously, the English textbooks of the first period of high school are being designed at the moment. However, still no action is undertaken for the second period of high school or T/V school.

Learners' needs, aims, and wants, along with the aims and purposes assigned in the related national documents have a significant role in the selection of the language input students will receive. The current research is an attempt to find them out and design the desired English language syllabus of the Iranian T/V schools and submit it to all interested parties.