

CURRICULAR DEVELOPMENT IN A POST-SECONDARY SCHOOL COMMERCIAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAM FOR ADULTS IN UKRAINE



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ABSTRACT

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The article discusses curricular development in a program designed for post-secondary school commercial teaching of English to adults. The teaching is organized in English language courses that function outside college/university language training programs. The curriculum structure and its components are discussed; the foundations of curricular development are analyzed, as well as the goals of teaching set in the program and the methods of teaching and learning used in it. The analysis of goal, content, organization, and other aspects of such curricula is conducted on the basis of theoretical assumptions and practical experience. That experience is of 25-year-long duration and based on the work of the Foreign Language Center (FLC) functioning on the premises and under the aegis of Alfred Nobel University in Dnipro, Ukraine. The spectrum of the courses offered is considered in the paper and it is demonstrated that it consists of: a) General English courses of different levels; b) courses preparing students for taking international (Cambridge) examinations in English; c) courses of English for Specific (Professional) Purposes (ESP). The communicative-analytic approach underlying all the courses in the developed program is discussed and the most important features of that approach are summarized. The ways of using learners' needs analysis for determining goals, selecting the content, and determining what methods of teaching/learning to use in every course in the program are outlined, as well as the means of organizing separate courses while ensuring their diversity, autonomy, and integrity in the framework of the entire language program.

Contribution/ Originality: This study is one of very few studies which have investigated post-secondary school commercial teaching of English to adults. The paper contributes the first logical analysis of English commercial courses' curricula, goals, methods of teaching, and learning content in them. The original curricular design for such courses is first discussed.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades learning English as a foreign language in Ukraine is becoming more and more spread exactly replicating the global tendencies in this respect. In that country, the English-learning "fever" has embraced not only (and not so much) young people, who receive their English language education at their schools,

colleges/universities but also adult people, often long past their years of school or university studies. Such people in most cases do their courses of English at different, as a rule, commercial language schools and centers mushrooming all over the country so that there may be more than one or two hundreds of them in every big city. Such language schools and centers often attract not only adult people but even school and college youth who at the same time are learning English as a mandatory subject at their secondary schools and universities where they do not pay for their English studies (unlike English courses at commercial language centers). The reasons for such preferences were outlined in the article published in the USA in 1996 (Tarnopolsky, 1996) and they are still remaining valid now. However, the repetition of discussion about those reasons is beyond the scope of this paper in which the great and growing popularity of commercial English language schools and centers in Ukraine is taken for granted, just as is taken for granted the fact that they are responsible for English language education of a very substantial part of the country's population. This makes it quite essential to research the fundamentals of efficiently organizing such education at those school and centers – the issue very little researched until now.

This issue is the topic of discussion and analysis in the following paper whose principal goal is laying the foundations for effectively developing and structuring the curricula for teaching English to Ukrainian adults learning it at courses offered by out-of-college (commercial) language schools and centers.

Everything that is discussed in this respect further below is based on 25-year-long experience of the Foreign Language Center (FLC) working on the premises and under the aegis of Alfred Nobel University, Dnipro, Ukraine. This FLC offers to all those who want them diverse programs in English language education, those programs being outside the scope of English language courses taught to students of the above-mentioned university.

2. THE COMPONENTS OF CURRICULA OF ENGLISH IN POST-SECONDARY SCHOOL OUT-OF-COLLEGE ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Such components for whatever language teaching curriculum were most clearly defined by White (1988) who emphasized that every curriculum is a plan of construction that includes the learning goals, its content, methods, and the system of evaluation (the last one is beyond the scope of this article, so it will not be discussed further). However, in defining the components of an English-language-teaching curriculum for a non-English-speaking country – especially such a country as Ukraine where, as it has been already said, a great number of people acquire the language and communication skills outside the official educational institutions – it is important to distinguish and define one more component. It is the organizational component or *organization*, i.e., how much time is planned for each of the language classes, how many classes are held per week, what the duration of the entire program and every course in it is, etc.

The significance of this component is due to the difference in situation in comparison with the English-speaking countries where foreign people who have specially come there for gaining command of English devote all their time to learning in the English program for which they have been enrolled. As different from that, those adults who are learning English in Ukraine in various out-of-college programs and courses (including the commercial ones) practically never interrupt for this their work or some other studies. Having enrolled themselves for a language program, they always combine studying in it with that work or those other studies. As a result, classes of English can be held only in evening time or at weekends. This is why clear criteria are required for determining and limiting the number of class hours per week, their duration, the duration of the entire program and separate courses in it so that potential learners could become real ones without facing the necessity of interrupting the fulfillment of their other obligations (like those in their jobs) for the period of their English studies.

There is one more component that must necessarily be taken into account in the situation under discussion. In the framework of the program being analyzed the differences of learners in what concerns their ages, occupations, life experiences, etc. are inevitable. As a result, the differences in learners' goals, needs, requirements when learning English, and the initial levels of their English command are equally inevitable. This is why the program and its

curricula should be designed in such a way as to take those differences into consideration. For instance, it may include a basic language course (General English) for all beginners with the following branching into different levels of General English courses and different kinds English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses (Robinson, 1991).

Diversity as a component of the curricula, their structural and form-setting characteristic feature should also give learners an opportunity of “leaping over” some courses in the program if they do not require them. For instance, those learners who join the program having a more or less advanced level of their command of English should be able to “leap over” the beginner’s, pre-intermediate, and even intermediate courses included in the program as a whole. ESP courses should not be mandatory for those who need General English only; reading and writing courses should not be taught to those who want only elementary English for oral communication when on a short trip abroad, etc. For ensuring an opportunity of this “leaping over” without damaging the final learning outcomes, the courses in the program and its curriculum need to be *autonomous*, i.e., self-sufficient. However, both the program and its curricula cannot simply embrace a set of courses that are totally independent of each other, i.e., not having any basic unity, logical sequence, and common goals. In this case, there can be no question of a single language-learning program and a unified curriculum for it. Therefore, means should be found for ensuring the *integrity* of the program and curricula, and that integrity may be regarded as one more of their components. On balance, it should be said that out-of-college post-secondary school curricula of teaching English to adults in Ukraine is supposed to include such components as means of ensuring its *integrity* and *diversity*, providing at the same time for the *autonomy* of separate courses in the program.

The components of the curricula named above will be the subject matter of all further discussion but before proceeding to that discussion, the foundation for designing such curricula is worthy of attention. This foundation is provided by today’s tendencies in developing curricula on the basis of *learners’ needs analysis* (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Nunan, 1988).

3. THE FOUNDATION FOR DEVELOPING A CURRICULUM FOR POST-SECONDARY SCHOOL OUT-OF-COLLEGE ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN UKRAINE

The experience has shown that when beginning to develop the language-learning program and its curriculum, it is not worthwhile to try and determine what potential learners really need through their interviewing. This often fails because potential learners are not always fully aware of their needs and requirements and even more often cannot clearly formulate them. It is much more efficient to begin by compiling a definite list of *possible* potential learners’ needs and requirements in their learning of English. This list (questionnaire) should be given to those who are planned to be taught with a request to make their choices by marking definite options. They should also be given an opportunity of making additions and changes in the list if they deem them necessary. However, whatever changes may be made by potential learners, still the first step in the analysis of their needs should be *the formulation by the curriculum developer of some assumptions and hypotheses as to what those needs might be*.

The analysis of learners’ needs for developing the teaching/learning program and its curriculum may be efficient only if it is made on a *representative* group of potential learners. When the program and its curriculum for out-of-college teaching of English to adults is being developed, it is most certainly elaborated not for one-time teaching of a specific group of learners but for a number of similar groups with similar needs and requirements. For creating such a long-term program and its curriculum, it is not sufficient to gather 100 or 200 potential learners-respondents for eliciting their ideas concerning their needs in learning English and then construct courses and their curricula on the basis of those ideas. Such ideas may not be grounded in potential learners’ *real* needs but, for instance, reflect some spread and popular errors as to foreign language teaching and learning. To reflect reality, the respondents’ ideas must result from their personal experience of being in situations where communicating in English is required but where they could not adequately react to such situations owing to their lack of that

language's command. Therefore, *to be representative, the group of respondents should mostly include such potential learners who in their life practice have already felt the actual need of communicating in English.*

However, designing a program and its curriculum cannot be based only on learners' needs analysis. For instance, programs and their curricula often have to be modified owing to the existing conditions and circumstances that cannot be changed. Besides, it is not always rational to rely on learners' desires and preferences only. This especially refers to methods of teaching and learning. For example, though the goals of those who are taught English are practically always communicative (to be able to communicate with native speakers, to read in English, etc.), it is well known that in the learning process learners not infrequently prefer formal language exercises as compared to communicative learning activities (Green, 1993). Such preferences should certainly be taken into account (see further), but they cannot become the foundation for designing the teaching/learning process as a series of formal grammatical and lexical exercises only. Therefore, *some well-known scientific facts, theories, and practical approaches that have proved their efficiency in language teaching* are no less entitled to underlie the program and its curriculum than learners' preferences.

Our program and its curriculum for teaching English to adults were developed on the basis of the above assumptions. Further on, the curriculum's separate components will be discussed: the goals, methods, content, organization, means for ensuring integrity and diversity while preserving the autonomy of separate courses.

4. TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS IN THE CURRICULA

Those goals were defined on the basis of learners' needs analysis. For clarifying such needs, from the beginning of program's functioning in the early 90s and all through the years of its existence until today learners have been questioned about their goals in English studies. For instance, as far back as 1991-1992, 300 potential learners were questioned in the city of Dnipro. Those were adult people who had demonstrated their interest in learning English on the commercial basis at out-of-college language schools and centers. They were people of different occupations: government employees, businesspeople, industrial workers, engineers, doctors, researchers, etc. with their ages varying from 18 to 50. The group of respondents was equalized as to their gender so that the male-female ratio was 1:1. Of all these respondents 100 were people who often made trips abroad and 97 other persons frequently found themselves in situations where they needed communication in English for professional or personal reasons. Thus, the group of respondents was sufficiently representative for determining needs, wants, and preferences of potential learners. It was on the basis of their questioning that our first conclusions concerning the design of the entire teaching/learning program and its curriculum were made. Questionings in all the following years (the last one was held in 2014) were organized totally identically.

The first question that required clarifying was whether the potential learners required all the four basic communication skills in English (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) or only some of them. It was discovered in 1991-1992 questioning that 59% of respondents were interested in speaking and listening skills only, considering reading and writing of secondary or of no importance. Out of 41% remaining people, all the respondents without exception believed speaking and listening skills to be of primary importance for them though they considered reading skills to be also important. As to the desire of mastering English writing skills, it was mentioned by 26% of respondents only.

Such results of our first questioning, that were later to a great degree confirmed by all the following questionings until today, were quite natural because in the conditions under discussion people are willing to learn English primarily for short trips abroad and oral contacts with people there. This is why written communication in English is not considered as a vital necessity of the first order, all the more so that learners hope to have no serious problems in acquiring English reading and writing skills after their oral skills have been developed. To many people, reading seems more important than writing because it can always be practiced while far from everyone needs writing in English for achieving professional or personal goals. However, even those who want to acquire

English reading and writing skills think it is rational to concentrate on acquiring speaking and listening skills first while, as they believe, reading and writing can wait. This was the reason for our developing the course of oral communication (speaking and listening) as the first and starting one in our program to make it more attractive for most potential learners.

In this way, the first curriculum in the program was designed for an oral English course. However, the teaching practice demonstrated that the majority of our actual (not potential) learners started feeling the need for English reading and writing skills as soon as they more or less mastered speaking and listening skills. If in 1991-1992 questioning only 41% of *potential* learners (from 38% to 45% in all the following questionings) were interested in courses on reading and writing, 75% and more of *actual* learners became interested in them – but only *after* finishing their oral communication course. This is why the curricula for all the other courses developed for our program after the first course of oral communication in English already included teaching reading and writing skills as no less important than speaking and listening ones. In those courses' curricula the goals in acquiring all the four basic communication skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) were formulated as being of equal importance.

The second question that was to be clarified in all questionings was the kind of English that the majority of learners believed to be the most useful for them: General English or some ESP. It was shown by all the questioning results in all years that on the average 70% of respondents indicated some ESP as their final goal in English studies. So, due to the diversity of ESP types (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987) it was essential to determine what particular ESP was required by the majority of learners. It was found to be Business English that from 55% to 65% (in different years of questioning) of respondents indicated as being the most essential for them. Therefore, it was necessary to develop a Business English course and its curriculum as additional ones to all courses and curricula in General English. It should be mentioned than in the last decade ESP courses for psychologists and lawyers have also become popular, so that we had to develop them and their curricula as well.

In this way, on the basis of learners needs analysis made for formulating in the curriculum the goals of teaching/learning English it was found that those goals must:

1. Include learners' acquisition of skills in all the four basic forms of communication (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) but with developing their speaking and listening skills first and adding the development of reading and writing skills only after they finish the first purely oral course for beginners;
2. Foresee the opportunity for learners of acquiring some kind of ESP for professional communication in English – primarily, Business English but not excluding other types of ESP courses (like an ESP course for psychologists or for lawyers);
3. Ensure a specific program and curricula's structures so that the above mentioned goals could be achieved in separate courses in the program, each of them being designed for achieving only one of the set goals.

5. METHODS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

When determining what methods of teaching and learning were to be used in program's courses and were to be reflected in their curricula, less attention was paid to the preferences of potential learners (for the reasons indicated above) and more to the well-developed procedures and theoretical assumptions that concerned the most efficient ways of teaching English and had proved that efficiency in practice.

When choosing the methods, the question to answer was not whether or not to follow the communicative approach. No other approach seemed to be possible because of purely communicative goals of teaching and learning which potential and actual learners indicated as their personal goals of English language acquisition in all questionings conducted for longer than 20 years. But the question to be answered was whether it was advisable to combine the communicative approach with language-form-focused exercises or the method should be totally communicative. The latter means that there is no purposeful teaching of grammar or vocabulary while the target

language communicative information given to learners is very voluminous and varied, or, in other words, while extremely voluminous and varied comprehensible input is supplied in the teaching/learning process (Fotos, 1994). In our preceding publications (Tarnopolsky, 1998;2015) it was already explained why the first way was chosen, i.e., combining a predominantly communicative method with some form-focusing exercises whilst the accelerated development of communicative skills remained the principal goal in every course, curriculum, and the program as a whole. The relevant argumentation will not be repeated in this article. It is enough to say that this argumentation follows from the basic assumption asserting the difference between teaching English as a foreign and a second language, that difference requiring "... a more grammatically oriented syllabus ... to be preferred in a context where English is a foreign language and where learners are unlikely to be exposed to it" (McDonough and Shaw, 1993). The reason is that in the context of learning a language as a foreign one the "natural" way of introducing language information is absent because learners are, as a rule, on the low level of language command and do not have "natural" contacts with native speakers (McDonough and Shaw, 1993).

For ensuring the combination of the predominantly communicative approach with language form-focusing, a specific communicative-analytic approach was elaborated. It will not be discussed in detail because such a detailed analysis has been made in the above-mentioned works (Tarnopolsky, 1998). However, it is worthwhile summarizing the most important features of this approach. They include:

1. The specific organization of learning units, each of them consisting of several classes. Every unit begins and ends with classes of communication in English while one to two classes in the middle are concentrated on form-focused learning activities/exercises. Those form-focused exercises link guided communication at the beginning of work on the unit with free unguided communication at its end, the latter becoming possible thanks to preceding purposeful training of language forms required for such communication.
2. Organization of form-focused exercises in such a way that some characteristics of communication are modeled in them (e.g., a communicative situation, communicative intentions in speech acts, etc.) for facilitating transition from those form-focused activities to communicative ones.
3. Designing teaching and learning with greater orientation at (comprehensible) speech output than (comprehensible) speech input. This is the consequence of inevitable lack of "natural" comprehensible input in the conditions of teaching English as a foreign language (see above). It is also the result of designing the program and its curriculum with a perspective of teaching Business English and other kinds of ESP after courses on General English because in Business English acquisition (just like in all the ESP courses) "... the amount of course time needed for input will be a small fraction of the whole. A much larger proportion of the course time will be needed for output" (Ellis and Johnson, 1994). In the process of teaching professional communication in English focusing on (comprehensible) speech output is extremely important because the goal is achieving the learner's ability to operate language means efficiently and actively for solving professional tasks (Ellis and Johnson, 1994).
4. Making all the learning activities intensive, interesting, and attractive to students, as well as making those activities model genuine communication as closely as possible. For achieving this: a) modern technologies are broadly used (computers, audio and video equipment, etc.) for training language forms, teaching listening, reading, and writing skills, and for supplying stimuli for speaking English; b) cooperative learning (Kessler, 1992) is introduced on a large scale so that learners' work in pairs and small groups becomes the principal form of doing learning activities in class; c) role plays and simulations, brainstorming and discussions, writing letters to real persons and such like kinds of learning activities become the leading ones; d) the free, calm, relaxed English language communication environment is created in classes with permanent attention being given to enhancing learners' motivation and overcoming their psychological barriers, their fear of making language mistakes and errors, and any other psychological discomforts and anxieties. This is achieved by using the means of creating such an environment recommended in relevant literature (see, for instance, Moscovitz

- (1978)) by establishing rapport with learners (Revell and Norman, 1997) by taking into account their primary representational systems (Revell and Norman, 1997) their personality, and type of intelligence (Gardner, 1993).
5. Ensuring gradual transition from the dominantly communicative approach with elements of focusing on language forms (the communicative-analytic approach as such) in the first courses in the program to the purely communicative approach with total absence of such focusing in advanced courses. All activities training separate language forms are concentrated in courses of General English that precede ESP courses. In the latter courses professional communication is taught in this communication only and by way of such communication only. As a result, those courses are totally content-based (Brinton *et al.*, 1989) and learners acquire English in the process of acquiring professional knowledge.

The introduction of the communicative-analytic approach in all courses of General English and some peculiarities of potential and actual learners' attitudes determined one more feature of the developed program and its curriculum. That feature was the inclusion into them of a preparatory course that does not "work" directly for achieving the set teaching/learning goals but is necessary for ensuring the efficiency of all the other courses. That course is a very short (16 two-hour classes) introductory pronunciation course.

The need in such a short course was mostly conditioned by psychological reasons. It has already been mentioned that many adult learners of English the world over believe that analytical learning activities aimed at training language forms is not less, if not more, efficient than communicative learning activities (Green, 1993). Our questionings have shown that such an attitude is very characteristic of adult students of English in Ukraine. To overcome this attitude, Nunan (1988) suggests beginning English studies with traditional form-focused learning activities, stage-by-stage moving learners to communicative ones and gradually convincing students in their greater efficiency. In the situation under analysis, a short preparatory (introductory) analytical course mostly devoted to developing the Standard English pronunciation is the best alternative. Ukrainian/Russian-speaking adult learners always believe the English pronunciation to be very difficult and, as our practical experience and all questionings have shown, impossible to be mastered without explanations by the teacher and form-focused training. In a short analytical (form-focused) pronunciation course the majority of students' pronunciation problems can be eliminated, thus saving much time and a lot of efforts in the following courses. What is even more important is the fact that in such a course the teacher has time and opportunities for negotiating with students the transition to more communicative learning activities.

As a result, our program and its curriculum as a whole include nine courses in such a sequence:

General English Courses:

1. A short preparatory introductory course of English pronunciation for total beginners. The course is also designed for learners to develop the most elementary communicative skills, such as greeting, apologizing, thanking, introducing oneself, etc.
2. The beginner's/elementary course of oral communication in English for meeting the requirements of those who go abroad for a short period of time (for instance, tourism). The aim of the course is to achieve learners' level of English A1+/A2 in speaking and listening according to the Council's of Europe *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe, 2001).
3. The course of speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English on the pre-intermediate level with the aim of learners' achieving the level B1 according to the Council's of Europe *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe, 2001).
4. The course of speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English on the intermediate level with the aim of learners' achieving the level B1+/B2 (Council of Europe, 2001).

Courses preparing students for taking international (Cambridge) examinations in English:

5. The course of training for Cambridge international examination of English FCE/English First (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) – the upper-intermediate level, or level B2+ (Council of Europe, 2001).
6. The course of training for Cambridge international examination of English CAE/English Advanced or/and IELTS (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) – the advanced level, or level C1 (Council of Europe, 2001).

ESP Courses:

7. The course of Business English (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) – the level from the intermediate to the advanced one, from B2 to C1.
8. The course of English for lawyers (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) – the level from the intermediate to the advanced one, from B2 to C1.
9. The course of English for psychologists (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) – the level from the intermediate to the advanced one, from B2 to C1.

6. SELECTION OF LEARNING CONTENT

This selection, when developing the program, separate courses inside it, and their curricula, was done mostly on the basis of learners' needs analysis – just like when formulating the learning goals. The procedure that was used may be illustrated on the example of content selection for two courses: the beginner's/elementary course of oral communication in English (the second one in the list above) and the course of Business English (the seventh one in the list above).

It is worthy of note that in all our questionings for determining learners' needs in some specific learning content we relied on the opinions of those respondents only who had often traveled abroad. Only their ideas were grounded in reality while all the others did not have any genuine experience for clearly formulating their needs.

For selecting and structuring the learning content, it was first necessary to clarify in what situations the Ukrainian people going abroad are in the greatest need of communicating in English and what the most spread and important topics of such communication are. On the basis of the selected situations and topics, it was possible to select and model typical samples of communication using authentic materials. From those samples the most important and the most frequently used grammar, vocabulary, and culturally relevant information for acquisition was taken. Finally, on the basis of all preceding selections, the learning materials to be used in the teaching/learning process (printed materials, video and audio materials, computer programs, etc.) were compiled and/or selected.

In our questionings concerning learning content, we were only asking the respondents to select from the list of suggested topics and situations of communication those that they deemed to be the most important for themselves (they could also add situations and topics which were not in the list if they wanted). All the other stages of selections were done by course/curriculum/program developers because those stages were technical and totally dependent on what communication topics and situations had been selected.

As a result, the following topics and situations of communication were selected for the beginner's/elementary course of oral communication in English:

1. Meeting people, obtaining information about them, and giving personal information.
2. Passing immigration and customs checks when entering or leaving a foreign country.
3. Finding a place in town by asking for directions.
4. Using public transport.
5. Checking in at a hotel and checking out; using hotel services.
6. Eating out.
7. Different kinds of shopping.

8. Sightseeing, museum-, theatre-, cinema-, concert-going, and other kinds of entertainment.
9. Traveling in and out of the country (purchasing tickets, getting information about the trip, etc.).

Similarly, the situations and topics of communication selected (according to the above-described procedure) for the course of Business English included:

1. Business interviewing – getting to know the structure of a company.
2. Business interviewing – getting information about running a company and the hierarchy of its managing and controlling bodies.
3. Business interviewing – getting information about the manufacturing processes in a company and the merchandise manufactured by it (specifications, etc.); touring a factory.
4. Business telephoning.
5. Business negotiations – starting business contacts and declaring one's intentions.
6. Business negotiations – obtaining and discussing business information.
7. Business negotiations – making and signing a contract/agreement, planning a joint venture.
8. Business discussion – discussing projects, budget, and finances.
9. Business discussion – discussing business strategies, the obtained results, the problems of competition.
10. Business discussion – discussing the sales results, and target figures for future sales.

After selecting all the topics and situations, typical samples of communication in those situations and on those topics were selected or modeled and then, the basic language and cultural materials for the given course were selected from those samples. For instance, 1,000 lexical units were chosen for the beginner's/elementary course of oral communication in English, together with the basic grammar for oral communication (this grammar also serving written communication if need be) and some fundamental cultural facts. In this way, language information was introduced together with cultural information.

Similarly, the vocabulary for the course of Business English identically selected from communication samples included 1,200 lexical units with 60% of them specific for business communication and the remaining part belonging to General English. There was no new grammar material in that course because all such material typical of business communication has been learned in the preceding courses.

The final stage of content selection process for the two courses under analysis (either the beginner's/elementary course of oral communication in English or the Business English course), as well as for all the others, was, as it is clear from the described procedure, the development of all learning materials necessary for organizing the actual teaching/learning process.

7. ORGANIZATION, DIVERSITY, AUTONOMY, AND INTEGRITY IN THE PROGRAM AND ITS CURRICULUM

The organizational component of the curriculum was developed on the basis of potential learners' opportunities for allocating time for their English studies (300 potential learners were interviewed on this issue in the early 1990s when our program was being initially elaborated). The analysis of those opportunities was conducted following the assumption that if there were less than 4-5 hours of classes per week, the learning outcomes could only be very low (Strevens, 1977). Taking into account the fact that one four-hour-long class per week also cannot be efficient because of a long interval between classes, it certainly meant that each of the courses might not have less than two two-hour-long classes per week. On the other hand, interviewing potential learners demonstrated that it was not acceptable for them to have more than two three-hour-long classes per week and they were ready to have such a number of class hours only at advanced stages of language training.

Following those assumptions and data, the first four of the developed courses (see above) were designed to have two-hour classes twice a week while the other five were designed for two three-hour-long classes per week. All the courses with the exception of the first two were developed to last during nine months – from the beginning of September until the end of May. The first preparatory (introductory) course was supposed to last during two months (September-October) and the immediately following beginner's/elementary course of oral communication in English during seven months (November-May) – also nine months for both entirely interdependent courses.

There is no need in detailed discussion of diversity and autonomy of courses, as well as the integrity of the program as a whole because these components are sufficiently explained by everything said above. Every course in the program is autonomous (with the exception of the first short introductory course that does not have its own autonomous learning goals – see above) because each of them is designed for learners with a fully determined level of communicative competence at the beginning of the course and a fully determined level of advance in the development of that level by the course end (in accordance with the requirements of the [Council of Europe \(2001\)](#)).

The autonomy and the great choice of courses in the program provide for its *diversity* and the *diversity* of its curricula. Every learner has an opportunity of choosing from which course to begin and after which course to interrupt their studies – depending on the personal initial level in the command of English and the personal learning goals. This diversity is accompanied by the *integrity* of all courses because each of them organically follows in its content and structure the preceding one and creates the basis for the course after it.

8. CONCLUSION

This article has discussed the theoretical and practical issues of structuring curricula for teaching English to adults in commercial post-secondary school courses that function outside college/university English language training programs. In developing our English language training program, the courses inside it, the curriculum for the program as a whole, and the curricula for separate courses we tried to take into account all the factors to make the program, courses, and curricula the most efficient and the most focused on the learners' needs in what concerns the teaching/learning goals, methods, and content. The attempt was also made to optimize the organization, diversity, autonomy, and integrity of the courses and their curricula. Our attempts have proved to be successful – the 25-year-long teaching practice, as well as the experimental checks made when teaching the program on the basis of the developed curriculum/a ([Tarnopolsky, 1998;1999;2015](#)) have shown very high and stable learning outcomes and high and stable students' learning motivation. This is why the suggested curriculum structure, program, and course design can be considered as efficient and effective. But most certainly, such curricula, programs, and courses for out-of-college adults' English-language education should be regularly revised, re-designed, and renovated with the view of their constant improvement for better adjustment to learners' changing needs, requirements, and preferences.

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