A DISCUSSION OF
THE NOTIONAL-FUNCTIONAL SYLLABUS

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Introduction

In this paper I present a discussion of the notional-functional syllabus, including its origins and influences, its strengths and weaknesses, and the appropriateness of adopting it in a variety of teaching situations as defined by applicable variables.

In the first part, I define what is meant by "syllabus" (1.1) and consequently "notional-functional syllabus" (1.2). I show how the notional-functional syllabus was brought about and influenced by both theories of language (1.3.1) and language learning (1.3.2).

In the second part, I comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the notional-functional syllabus, particularly with regard to the type of syllabus it was designed to replace.

In the third part, I enumerate the applicable variables which have both the power to define teaching situations, and a bearing on the propitiousness of adopting a notional-functional syllabus in such situations. I comment on the suitability of the notional-functional syllabus in relation to the teaching situations defined by such variables.

In the fourth and final part, I outline the argument for adopting a notional-functional syllabus in English language teaching (4.1), talk about the problem of mixed situations (4.2) and discuss two of my own teaching situations in light of all the foregoing considerations (4.3).

1. The notional-functional syllabus

1.1 What is a syllabus?

"Syllabus" is defined by Richards (2001, p.2) as "a specification of the content of a course of instruction [which] lists what will be taught and tested". White (1988, p.3), citing Brumfit (1984) further notes that a syllabus "can only specify what is taught; it cannot organize what is learnt."

Such an assertion reflects the sentiment echoed by the likes of Brown (2007, p.297) who states "it is important to distinguish between input and intake. The latter is the subset of all input that actually gets assigned to our long-term memory store."

A syllabus may hope to form the vast majority of a learner's intake, but cannot hope to specify precisely what is actually learnt or acquired by any given student in any particular course.

1.2 What is a notional-functional syllabus?

1.2.1 Notions and functions

White (1988, p.75) explains how the notional-functional syllabus is based on two important elements: a notional aspect and a functional aspect. The former is concerned with concepts such as "time, space, movement, cause and effect" while the latter describes and classifies "the intentional or purposive use of language."

A notional-functional syllabus, therefore, is one where the course content is comprised of notions, such as the ones mentioned by White (1988, p.75) and functions, such as those provided in the Council of Europe's *Threshold Level* (Ek and Trim 1990) (*Appendix 1*).

The most significant proponent of such a syllabus was D. A. Wilkins (1976), who attempted a comprehensive explanation and endorsement of the notional-functional syllabus. He stated that a notional-functional syllabus should comprise three categories of meaning: semantico-grammatical meaning (including time and quantity), modal meaning (including an indication of the certainty and attitude of the speaker) and communicative function (including requests, complaints, and compliments, among a vast array of others) (Richards 2001, p.37)

1.2.2 An analytic approach?

Wilkins (1976) attempted to frame his syllabus within an analytic approach to language learning, as opposed to a synthetic approach. In the latter, he argued, components of language were seen as "building blocks which have to be carefully accumulated" where there was "careful linguistic control of the learning environment". In the former, he suggested, there was no such gradual accumulation or linguistic control.

Richards (2001, p.38) asserts, however, that the alignment of the notional-functional syllabus with an analytic approach was merely "semantic sleight of hand" and in fact all the notional-functional syllabus actually did was restate traditional structural grammar rules as functions. It did not remove the need for linguistic control or gradual accumulation of forms.

1.2.3 Needs analysis

As White states (1988, p.17), there were two important outcomes of Wilkin's (1976) *Notional Syllabuses* and the Council of Europe's subsequent *Threshold Level* (Ek and Trim 1990) specification. One was to make meaning paramount; something which will be discussed below (1.3.1) in relation to theories of language. The other was the development and promotion of needs analysis.

With regard needs analysis White (1988, p.84) states "the teacher or planner investigates the language required for performing a given role or roles" and that "needs analysis specifies the ends which a learner hopes to achieve", but not "the means by which the ends will be reached."

Wilkins (1981, p.84) provides: "starting from an awareness of the learners and their needs, it is proposed that from the total set those categories should be selected that are relevant to the particular population of learners."

Notional-functional syllabuses are therefore intended to be built around the needs of the learners, which are derived by needs analysis questionnaires and interviews.

1.3 How and why was the notional-functional syllabus brought about?

1.3.1 Theories of language

Richards and Rodgers (2001, p.20) identify a structural view of language, which posits that "language is a system of structurally related elements for the coding of meaning". They also identify a functional view, which provides that "language is a vehicle for the expression of functional meaning." (Richards and Rodgers 2001, p.21)

The notional-functional syllabus was influenced by the functional view of language, which itself was partly a reaction against and partly an evolution of the structural view of language. Hedge (2000, p.246) highlights how the 'communicative revolution' in the 1970s urged educators to go beyond structural analyses of language provided by linguists and start to consider what 'communicative ability' in a language entailed. It became apparent that developing such an ability required a different view of language.

The functional view of language went beyond the sentential level, and highlighted the importance of discourse in context (Malinowski 1923). The importance of context in defining the illocutionary force of any utterance was acknowledged, and it was stressed that a knowledge of the structure of written or spoken texts was more useful to language learners than isolated, albeit grammatically correct, sentences.

The functional view of language also has an intimate relationship with the view expressed by the likes of Hymes (1972), i.e. "linguistic theory needed to be seen as part of a more general theory incorporating communication and culture" (Richards and Rodgers 2001, p.159) and Halliday (1970), i.e. "Linguistics... is concerned... with the description of speech acts or texts, since only through the study of language in use are all the functions of language, and therefore all components of meaning, brought into focus" (Halliday (1970), cited in Richards and Rodgers (2001, p.159)).

We can see, then, how the notional-functional syllabus's focus on the meanings and functions of language was strongly influenced by functional and communicative views of language.

1.3.2 Theories of learning

Richards and Rodgers (2001) also distinguish between two basic types of learning theories: process-oriented theories which "build on learning processes, such as habit formation, induction, inferencing, hypothesis testing, and generalization" and condition-oriented theories, which "emphasize the nature of the human and physical context in which language learning takes place". (Richards and Rodgers 2001, p.22)

Educators who subscribed to the structural view of language inevitably adopted a process-oriented, behaviorist approach to learning, because "[b]ehaviorism, like structural linguistics, [was] another

antimentalist, empirically based approach to the study of human behavior" (Richards and Rodgers 2001, p.56)

Although it is true that in theory it would have been possible to teach notions and functions using behaviorist techniques – as Widdowson (1990, p.128) notes, teachers were "not bound to interpret the syllabus in line with its intentions" – in practice there came to be a strong alliance between the functional view of language represented by the notional-functional syllabus, and a condition-oriented, communicative approach to learning.

This fact is propounded by the likes of Richards and Rodgers (2001, p.163), who state "one of the first syllabus models to be proposed [for communicative teaching] was described as *a notional syllabus*" and the progenitor of the notional syllabuses himself, Wilkins (1981, p.83), who submits "it is [the] acknowledgement of the communicative purposes of language learning that links the notional approach to the wider communicative movement in language teaching."

As White (1988, p.17) notes, "the 1970s were characterized by a concern with meaning." The notional-functional syllabus was one answer to the question of what kind of course content should be utilized in order for learners to acquire the ability to convey communicative meaning through language.

2. Strengths and weakness of the notional-functional syllabus

2.1.1 Analytic or synthetic?

Wilkins (1976) attempted to align the notional-functional syllabus with an analytic approach (exposure to raw language and subsequent induction of forms) as opposed to a synthetic approach (exposure to graded language and gradual accumulation of forms). However, such claims have been dismissed as dubious by the likes of Richards (2001, p.38), noted above (1.2.2). The notional-functional syllabus therefore shares the structural syllabus's perceived weakness of being a synthetic one.

2.1.2 Product or process based?

If we criticize the structural syllabus for being product based - that is, focussing on *what* language is learnt, as opposed to process based, focussing on *how* language is learnt - then it seems that notional-functional syllabuses must also bear the brunt of this criticism, as it is comprised of a list of items to be learnt, rather than a specification of how they are to be learnt.

2.1.3 Pragmatic considerations

Hedge (2000, p.346) claims that structural syllabuses are amenable to planning, provide systematicity and make learners feel secure. To the extent that structural syllabuses converge with notional-functional ones, i.e. they are both product-based, synthetic syllabuses, such praise is also applicable to the latter.

She also states that "if a structural syllabus and related course units make explicit use of grammatical concepts and categories, it enables learners to use formal strategies for acquiring language, such as analyzing the tense system." (Hedge 2000, p.346)

However, because in a notional-functional syllabus, content is not arranged by structure but function, such formal strategies may not be so useful, as it is more difficult to generalize from functions or use them to create new sentences.

2.1.4 Grading

A further problem for notional-functional syllabuses was presented with regard to grading. Structural syllabuses had traditionally been graded according to frequency of occurrence, linguistic complexity, and natural order of acquisition. White (1988, p.82), however notes that there was "a dearth of evidence for the frequency of functions" and that when selecting which forms should be used to realize functions, textbook writers had to "depend on intuition".

White also notes that the small amount of empirical evidence regarding the natural order of acquisition of functions by children was not directly applicable to adult language learning (White 1988, p.82)

This problem was exacerbated by the fact that linguistically complex forms could appear in more basic and essential functions, such as requesting (e.g. "Would you mind closing the window?").

2.1.5 Needs analysis

The definition of needs analysis given by Wilkins (1981) (above, 1.2.3) may seem sensible and straightforward, but two of the key terms it contains, "learners" and "needs" have since been questioned and dissected.

Richards (2001, p.54) notes that "the term 'needs' is not as straightforward as it might appear" and suggests that "what is identified as a need is dependent on judgment, and reflects the interests and values of those making such a judgment." (Richards 2001, p.54)

Wilkins (1976) has also been criticized on his failure to acknowledge the different stakeholders who "have a particular interest or involvement in the issues or programs that are being examined" (Richards 2001, p.56) Such stakeholders might include, in addition to the learners themselves: policy makers, ministry of education officials, teachers, academics, employers, and parents, among others (Richards 2001, p.57)

Therefore, while the notional-functional syllabus may be praised for encouraging analysis of learner needs (which the structural syllabus failed to acknowledge) it can also be criticized for its failure to examine the needs of other stakeholders, which may also be relevant in determining the content of language courses.

3. Teaching situations and implications for the notional-functional syllabus

3.1 How do we define teaching situations?

In order to narrow down our field of enquiry, we will assume the language being taught is English. We will also assume that the teacher is a native speaker of English. Finally, we will only consider variables which have both the power to define teaching situations and also a bearing on the decision of whether or not to adopt a notional-functional syllabus. Having narrowed our field down thusly, we are able to produce an analysis of English language teaching situations as presented in *Figure 1*.

3.2 Institutional variables

The formal teaching of English necessitates an educational environment in which such teaching can take place. For the majority of learners, it is submitted that the following variables both define the institutional context in which English is learnt, and are also applicable to the appropriateness of adopting a notional-functional syllabus.

3.2.1 Class size

Notional-functional syllabuses purport to target those needs "relevant to the particular population of learners" (Wilkins 1981, p.84). However, in doing so, they ignore the fact that the individual students, who make up the population, have individual needs. It may be possible to generalize needs to some extent, or even to adopt some kind of democratic or utilitarian system of selection in determining which of the various needs identified should be given the highest priority. However, any such generalization or utilitarian compromise is bound to neglect some of the specific needs of individual members. A large class – particularly a diverse one – may not be a suitable target for a notional-functional syllabus.

3.2.2 Assessment

Notional-functional syllabuses work best either where there is no formal assessment, or where formal assessment recognizes the goals of a notional-functional syllabus. Where, however, there is assessment based on grammatical forms, or some other linguistic content beyond the remit of notions and functions, the notional-functional syllabus will be redundant to the extent that success in such assessment does not depend on the ability to express notions and functions but on some other area of linguistic or communicative ability.

3.2.3 Status

Status refers to whether an institution is a private "for profit" institution or a public "not for profit" institution. The former category might include private language schools or freelance English teachers; the latter might include state-run elementary schools, high schools and universities.

Where the institution is public, there will usually be Ministry of Education guidelines to follow with regard to curriculum and syllabus, and as such, implementing a notional-functional syllabus may be rendered impossible or only partially possible. Where the institution is private, more freedom may be afforded, as long as the syllabus is commercially viable and attractive to potential students. In such situations, the *appearance* that a syllabus is an effective one, and the presence of the pragmatic advantages mentioned by Hedge (above, 2.1.3), are very important.

In commercial teaching situations, the notional-functional syllabus's theoretical weaknesses, such as its product-based, synthetic nature, may actually be perceived as its practical strengths. Students might feel that they benefit from language being broken down into manageable chunks. As long as a syllabus appears effective *to the student* in this way, many commercial institutions are unconcerned with the verifiable effect, or lack thereof, investigated or propounded by researchers and language theorists.

Conversely, many universities have the academic freedom and inclination to be more concerned with such investigations and propositions, rather than the opinion of the consumer-student. They therefore may wish to adopt one of the less commercially appealing, yet more theoretically sound, syllabuses developed or proposed subsequent to the notional-functional syllabus, such as the task-based syllabus.

3.3 Socio-cultural variables

The four categories here are taken from research conducted by Hofstede (1986) cited in Brown (2007, p.201). Hofstede's research allocated the cultural norms of fifty different countries into four categories of "individualism", "power distance", "uncertainty avoidance" and "masculinity". In *Figure 1* "masculine" is contrasted with "feminine" in the category "gender bias".

3.3.1 Individualism

In *Figure 1* the label of "individualism" has been used to represent a spectrum which ranges from an "individualist" culture to a "collectivist" culture. Some of the implications of either kind of culture are discussed by Hofstede (1986, p.312) cited in Brown (2007, p.203)

In collectivist cultures, learners are more interested in traditional methods of learning which culminate in formal assessment and lead to certificates of competence. In individualist cultures, learners are more open to new methods which focus on exposure to authentic language and the negotiation of meaning leading to demonstrable communicative competence. Notional-functional syllabuses would therefore seem more suited to individualist cultures.

3.3.2 Power-distance

Hofstede (1986) uses this term to describe "the extent to which the less powerful persons in a society accept inequality in power and consider it as normal" (Brown 2007, p.201) In *Figure 1* it has been used as a label to represent a spectrum of approaches to teaching and learning English which ranges from "facilitative" to "authoritative" (Harmer 2001).

Communicative approaches employing notional-functional syllabuses often emphasize the notion of the teacher as "facilitator". This would seem to suit cultures where power-distance is low, and a more equal, reciprocal or cooperative relationship is recognized between teachers and students.

3.3.3 Uncertainty avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance is a term which represents a spectrum ranging from tolerance to intolerance of uncertainty. When confronted with uncertainty the members of an intolerant culture are "active, aggressive, emotional, compulsive, [and] security seeking" whereas members of tolerant culture are "contemplative, less aggressive, unemotional, relaxed, [and] accepting of personal risks". (Brown 2007, p.201).

Notions and functions are not linguistically concrete, that is, many different forms can be utilized to express the same function, and there is particular sensitivity to context and speaker status. This characteristic may present difficulties for uncertainty intolerant cultures, and be more easily dealt with by members of uncertainty tolerant cultures.

3.3.4 Gender bias

Gender bias represents a spectrum which ranges from masculine to feminine perspectives on norms of behavior. Brown (2007, p.201), analyzing Hofstede (1986), explains how masculine cultures "strive for a maximum distinction between what men are expected to do and what women are expected to do" whereas feminine cultures "define relatively overlapping social roles for the sexes."

A notional-functional syllabus which introduced the functions of "negotiating", "interrupting" or "ordering", for example, would present particular difficulties with respect to the inegalitarian roles assigned to women and men in masculine cultures. A female member of such a culture may not be socially or culturally permitted to "interrupt", "order" or "negotiate with" her male counterparts. A feminine culture would therefore seem more amenable to a notional-functional syllabus.

3.4 Learner variables

3.4.1 Language level

Language level refers to the level of language ability demonstrated by a particular learner, usually classified in TEFL terms as ranging from beginner, through elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate, and upper-intermediate to advanced.

The language level of students has implications for both the language and methodology employed in the classroom (Harmer 2001, p.45). In terms of language, a 'real beginner' may need to focus on core vocabulary before learning how to express functional meaning in sentences.

Conversely, an advanced learner may already be competent in expressing the vast majority of functions to be found in such syllabus specifications as the *Threshold Level* (Ek and Trim 1990), and prefer to focus on idioms, phrasal verbs or other linguistic peculiarities which continue to perplex even advanced level English learners. The linguistic equivocality associated with the notional-functional syllabus may also present problems for beginners.

3.4.2 Learner styles

Of the four styles identified by Willing (1987) (cited in Harmer (2001, p.43)), "convergers" and "conformists" would appear to be the least appropriately suited learners to a notional-functional

syllabus realized by a communicative teaching approach, as convergers "prefer to avoid groups" and conformists "emphasize learning 'about language' over learning to use it." (Harmer 2001, p.43)

"Concrete" or "communicative" learners appear to be much more amenable to a notional-functional syllaus in the respect that concrete learners "are interested in language use and language as communication" and communicative learners are "interested in social interaction with other speakers of the language" (Harmer 2001, p.43).

3.4.3 Motivation

Hedge (2000, p.23) notes two major categories of motivation: instrumental and integrative. The former implies "needing a language as an instrument to achieve other purposes such as doing a job effectively or studying successfully at an English-speaking institution" and the latter suggests "wishing to integrate into the activities or culture of another group of people."

Motivation is of paramount importance in deciding whether to adopt a notional-functional syllabus, and it is intimately linked with needs analysis. Proponents of the notional-functional syllabus emphasize the necessity of needs analysis in determining which functions will be required for the future roles in which learners are expected to use the target language. In the presence of integrative or instrumental motivation, it seems that the functional language content offered by a notional-functional syllabus would be invaluable to such learners.

But what of situations where a needs analysis reveals neither kind of motivation? Abbott (1981) suggests that this is not a minority case, but in fact applies to the majority of the world's English learners: schoolchildren. These schoolchildren, he claims,

> "are too young or too distant from any real communication in English to have any identifiable 'needs' in terms of instrumental or sentimental motivation. Their teachers are engaged in what I have for some years called TENOR: the Teaching of English for No Obvious Reason—no reason obvious to the learner, that is."

> (Abbott 1981, p.228)

Richards (2001), however, replies to this observation thusly:

> "even though the students may not have any immediate perceptions of needs... their needs have been decided for them by those concerned with their long-term welfare. Needs analysis thus includes the study of perceived and present needs *as well as potential and unrecognized needs*" (emphasis added)
>
> (Richards 2001, p.53)

It seems, therefore, that if a notional-functional syllabus is to be adopted where learners *per se* have only potential or unrecognized needs, a wider range of stakeholders must undergo needs analysis.

3.5 Status of English in locality

A final consideration presented in *Figure 1* is the status of English in the locality where it is being taught. This includes localities where English is the native language; localities where English is an official language; and localities where English is a foreign language.

It is submitted that where an English learner resides in a country the native language of which is English, he or she will benefit the most from the functional language provided by a notional-functional syllabus. Substantial benefit may also be derived by those learners residing in countries where English is an official language.

However, the efficacy of a notional-functional syllabus begins to be questioned when the learner resides in a country where English is a *foreign* language. Such concerns are expressed by Sohn (2007), who notes that "It is often observed in our countries [Korea and Japan] that internationally well-known English teaching techniques fail to work. That is, a lot of methods that work quite well in ESL countries are found not to work in EFL situations." Sohn offers several reasons for this phenomenon, including:

- Lack of opportunity for practicing English outside the classroom
- Students' low motivation for learning English
- The class size tends to be large

- No 'English through English'

- Teaching tends to be grammar-oriented because of the 'College Qualification Exams'

(Sohn 2007)

Where the classroom is the only legitimate context for English language communication, the scant opportunity such a context affords may be further diminished if the class is comprised entirely of learners who share a homogenous first language. As Abbott (1981) states:

> "*In a monolingual group, the greater the wish to communicate orally, the greater the urge to abandon English and use the mother tongue.* This is only to be expected, of course, since the mother tongue is the child's usual medium of communication" (original emphasis)
>
> (Abbott 1981, p.229)

In such situations, a notional-functional syllabus is arguably not the best approach to take in teaching English, and alternative means of organizing and delivering course content may need to be sought out.

4. The argument for choosing a notional-functional syllabus

4.1 Suitable and unsuitable situations

From the foregoing considerations, we are able to paint a picture of the kind of situation where a notional-functional syllabus delivered through a communicative teaching approach would be suitable for and beneficial to the learners. We are also able to specify the kind of situation where the adoption of a notional-functional syllabus, often administered with communicative techniques, would be unsuitable or possibly even harmful to the learners' development of language. These two situations are summarized in *Table 1*.

4.2 Mixed situations

Of course, there may be some situations where there are a mixture of both variables which create situations conductive to a notional-functional syllabus, and those which tend to create situations where the adoption of a notional-functional syllabus would be ill-advised.

A situation comprised of such mixed variables would be a private ESL school (conducive to the notional-functional syllabus) in England (conducive) with large classes (unconducive) of beginners (unconducive) from all over the world (conducive).

The teacher would have to evaluate whether, on balance, a notional-functional syllabus would generally promote or diminish the acquisition of English as a second language. He or she may also wish to consider only partially adopting a notional-functional syllabus, by tempering it with some form of more traditional, e.g. structural, or more contemporary, e.g. task-based, syllabus.

4.3 English teaching in Japan: Two scenarios

I teach English in Japan at both a commercial, one-to-one English school with students of a wide range of abilities, and a state-run university with large, L1-homogenous classes of beginners. In the former situation, the commercial appeal of the syllabus is very important. In the latter, the lack of opportunities to use English is more significant.

In the commercial English school, each chapter in the text book has been given a functional title, e.g. "asking for directions", "expressing opinions" or "checking information". Language activities focus very much on how different speaker roles, contexts and statuses affect the kind of language which is suitable to express the specified function. In this situation, a notional-functional syllabus appears to be effective.

In the university, the prescribed textbook includes chapters functionally titled, for example, "getting to know you". However, it also has a range of other content, such as more traditional, structurally inspired "language check" and task-based learning inspired "ensemble" activities, where learners have to complete information gap exercises. In this situation, a notional-functional syllabus is partially adopted, but has been complemented by other kinds of syllabus.

<u>Conclusion</u>

There are clear benefits associated with the notional-functional syllabus coupled with a communicative teaching approach, and although plenty of criticisms exist, no combination of content and content delivery is perfect, and until a more attractive alternative is proposed, the notional-functional syllabus coupled with a communicative teaching approach will, for better or worse, continue to be utilized in a wide range of teaching situations across the world.

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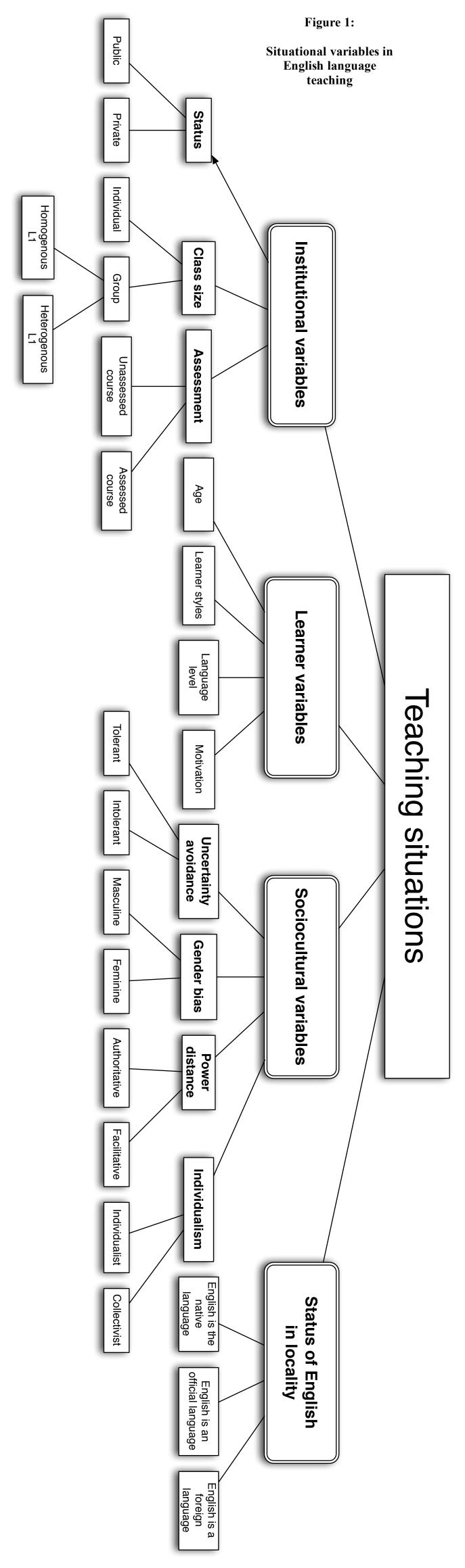
Teaching situations

Institutional variables

- **Status**
  - Public
  - Private
- **Class size**
  - Individual
  - Group
    - Homogenous L1
    - Heterogenous L1
- **Assessment**
  - Unassessed course
  - Assessed course

Learner variables

- Age
- Learner styles
- Language level
- Motivation

Sociocultural variables

- **Uncertainty avoidance**
  - Tolerant
  - Intolerant
- **Gender bias**
  - Masculine
  - Feminine
- **Power distance**
  - Authoritative
  - Facilitative
- **Individualism**
  - Individualist
  - Collectivist

Status of English in locality

- English is the native language
- English is an official language
- English is a foreign language

	Suitable	**Unsuitable**
Institutional variables		
Class size	One-to-one lesson, or small homogenous group	Large, heterogenous group
Assessment	No assessment, or informal assessment which recognizes the communicative goals of a notional-functional syllabus	Formal assessment focussing on rules of structural linguistics or other areas of language ability or knowledge
Status	Private institution, focussing on ostensible efficacy and commercial appeal of syllabus and method of delivery	Public institution focussing on verifiable efficacy and educational benefit of syllabus and method of delivery
Socio-cultural variables		
Individualism	Individualist culture	Collectivist culture
Power-distance	Weak power-distance configuration	Strong power-distance configuration
Uncertainty avoidance	Tolerance of uncertainty	Intolerance of uncertainty
Gender bias	Feminine culture	Masculine culture
Learner variables		
Language level	Intermediate	Complete beginner or very advanced
Learner styles	Communicative and concrete learners	Convergers and conformists
Motivation	Instrumental or integrative	Unidentified or potential
Status of English in teaching locality		
	Native or official language	Foreign language

Table 1

Situations for the adoption of a notional-functional syllabus administered through a communicative teaching approach

Threshold level syllabus
From Threshold 1990 (Ek and Trim 1990)

Language functions for threshold level

1 Imparting and seeking factual information

1.1 reporting (describing and narrating)
1.2 correcting
1.3 asking
1.4 answering questions

2 Expressing and finding out attitudes

2.1 expressing agreement with a statement
2.2 expressing disagreement with a statement
2.3 enquiring about agreement and disagreement
2.4 denying statements
2.5 stating whether one knows or does not know a person, thing or fact
2.6 enquiring whether someone knows or does not know a person, thing or fact
2.7 stating whether one remembers or has forgotten a person, thing or fact or action
2.8 enquiring whether someone remembers a person, thing or fact or action
2.9 expressing degrees of probability
2.10 enquiring as to degrees of probability
2.11 expressing or denying necessity (including logical deduction)
2.12 enquiring as to necessity (including logical deduction)
2.13 expressing degrees of certainty
2.14 enquiring about degrees of certainty
2.15 expressing obligation
2.16 enquiring about obligation
2.17 expressing ability/inability to do something
2.18 enquiring about ability/inability to do something
2.19 expressing that something is or is not permitted, or permissible
2.20 enquiring whether something is or is not permitted, or permissible
2.21 granting permission
2.22 withholding permission
2.23 expressing wants/desires
2.24 enquiring about wants/desires
2.25 expressing intentions
2.26 enquiring about intentions
2.27 expressing preference

2.28 inquiring about preference
2.29 expressing pleasure, happiness
2.30 expressing displeasure, unhappiness
2.31 enquiring about pleasure/displeasure/happiness/unhappiness
2.32 expressing liking
2.33 expressing dislike
2.34 enquiring about likes and dislikes
2.35 expressing satisfaction
2.36 expressing dissatisfaction
2.37 enquiring about satisfaction/dissatisfaction
2.38 expressing interest
2.39 expressing lack of interest
2.40 enquiring about interest or lack of interest
2.41 expressing surprise
2.42 expressing lack of surprise
2.43 enquiring about surprise
2.44 expressing hope
2.45 expressing disappointment
2.46 expressing fear
2.47 giving reassurance
2.48 enquiring about fear/worries
2.49 expressing gratitude
2.50 reacting to an expression of gratitude
2.51 offering an apology
2.52 accepting an apology
2.53 expressing moral obligation
2.54 expressing approval
2.55 expressing disapproval
2.56 enquiring about approval/disapproval
2.57 expressing regret/sympathy

3 Deciding on courses of action

3.1 suggesting a course of action
3.2 agreeing to a course of action
3.3 requesting someone to do something
3.4 advising someone to do something
3.5 warning others to do something or refrain from something
3.6 encouraging someone to do something
3.7 instructing or directing someone to do something
3.8 requesting assistance
3.9 offering assistance
3.10 inviting someone something

3.1 accepting an offer invitation
3.12 declining an offer or invitation
3.13 enquiring whether an offer or invitation is accepted or declined
3.14 asking someone for something

4 Socialising

4.1 attracting attention
4.2 greeting people
4.3 when meeting a friend or acquaintance
4.4 replying to a greeting from a friend or acquaintance
4.5 addressing a friend or acquaintance
4.6 addressing a stranger
4.7 addressing a customer or a member of the general public
4.8 introducing someone to someone else
4.9 being introduced someone, or when when someone is being introduced to you
4.10 congratulating someone
4.11 proposing a toast
4.12 taking leave

5 Structuring discourse

5.1 opening
5.2 hesitating
5.3 correcting oneself
5.4 introducing a theme
5.5 expressing an opinion
5.6 enumerating
5.7 exemplifying
5.8 emphasising
5.9 summarising
5.10 changing the theme
5.11 asking someone to change the theme
5.12 asking someones opinion
5.13 showing that one is following a persons discourse
5.14 interrupting
5.15 asking someone to be silent
5.16 giving the floor over
5.17 indicating a wish to continue
5.18 encouraging someone to continue
5.19 indicating that one is coming to an end
5.20 closing
5.21 telephone opening

5.22 asking for [someone]
5.23 asking someone to wait
5.24 asking whether you are heard and understood
5.25 giving signals that you are hearing and understanding
5.26 announcing new call
5.27 opening [letter]
5.28 closing [letter]
6 Communication repair
6.1 signalling non-understanding
6.2 asking for repetition of sentence
6.3 asking for repetition of a word or phrase
6.4 asking for confirmation of text
6.5 asking for confirmation or understanding
6.6 asking for clarification
6.7 asking someone to spell something
6.8 asking for something to be written down
6.9 expressing ignorance of a word or expression
6.10 appealing for assistance
6.11 asking someone to speak more slowly
6.12 paraphrasing
6.13 repeating what one has said
6.14 asking if you have been understood
6.15 spelling out a word or expression
6.16 supplying a word or expression