

ED 520B – Curriculum Design, Dr. Peter Shaw  
Unit, Lesson Plan, and Materials Design: May 11, 2004

The purpose of this assignment was to design a macro-level planning strategy and micro-level lesson plans for a content-based instruction (CBI) course with multicultural English for Academic and Professional Purposes (EAPP) students. The assignment lasted the entire 15 weeks of the semester and required extensive group work two to twelve classmates. There were several phases to the assembly of the finished product, an eight-unit curriculum on cultural awareness. Those phases were: needs assessment, research, syllabus organization, and unit component assembly.

We began our curriculum design project with an elaborate needs assessment timeline. This phase included research on interviewing, questionnaire writing, and categorizing responses. Based on the results of the needs assessment, we brainstormed goals and objectives and then voted on the ten most important for our curriculum. Then, pairs selected the unit that they would like to develop. My colleague, Nicole Stern, and I chose the topic of environment because we both had experience teaching that subject before. Ideally, content-based instruction courses should have instructors who are experts in the content and language of instruction.

At first Nicole and I had very different views about how we should approach teaching Environment and Culture. We compromised and chose to investigate the cultural values behind different nations' policies towards the Kyoto Protocol. Our unit plan contained a lot of technical information and demanding homework for the students. We provided language-scaffolding exercises in the form of worksheets for reading newspaper articles, simulation games, and discussions for difficult words or grammar points. The end product of our unit was an academic paper that could be an integral

part of the student portfolio. At the end of the semester, all 35 students in the course participated in a trade fair where each unit design team displayed its final products. Nicole and I selected two activities in the unit that were interactive for the booth visitors to marvel at and learn from: a game that simulates the economy of carbon emissions trading and a schema activating film, “Koyaanisquatsi”.

Nicole and I learned that the United Nations is a rich subject for investigation in an EAPP content-based instruction course because of the depth and breadth of information available. The UN has its own secretariat to publicize efforts like the Kyoto Protocol, and most official publications from the UN are available in its six official languages: English, Spanish, French, Chinese, Russian, and Arabic.

As a result of this project, I learned that a curriculum design is like an iceberg: while it may seem like an impressive structure on the surface, the buoyant material supporting it from underneath cannot be seen. I suppressed my desire to control every aspect of a project; I trusted my fellow classmates to fill their niche and produce highly creative materials. I know that group projects that involve over four people require the participants to communicate clearly and frequently. They must also follow through with the task that they have been assigned, even though that task may not produce a complete product upon completion. In the future, I hope that I will be able to use the unit plan that I have designed and develop new skills in curriculum design – modifying an existing curriculum for a different audience than the one for whom it was originally intended. All effective teachers recycle work that they have previously produced because they recognize that curriculum design is a cyclical process – it is always renewing itself with new content and audience members.