The *Teacher's Guide for an EAP Course in Business Administration:* Curriculum Design as a Problem Solving Activity

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This paper presents a case study in curriculum development: the preparation of a program for Chinese learners coming to Canada to study Business Administration. Constraints imposed by the project administration resulted in a teacher's guide for writing materials, rather than student materials. However, this solution is not presented as a compromise. On the contrary, the administration's requirements forced us to recognize the novel and dynamic nature of every curriculum development project which must integrate student needs within a program that is consistent with ESL specialists' ideas about language teaching. The teacher's guide for writing materials is a solution which extends the notion of the dynamic nature of curriculum development by making teachers an integral part of the curriculum development process. This has advantages for the students and for the teachers.

CHINA-CIDA PROJECT

The EAP (English for Academic Purposes) guide was written[1] as part of a language training program for Chinese professionals coming to study or to do on-the-job training in Canada. The language and professional training program, part of a larger Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) project, dealing with a range of areas including business administration, forest fire fighting and artificial insemination, has three phases. Phase I, a six-month course, is given in China by the China Project of St. Mary's University (Halifax) in co-operation with the Beijing Institute of Foreign Trade. Phase II is administered by regional China centres which are located in Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver. This phase consists of a six-week orientation program and specialized language training. Phase III is the professional training component.

CONSIDERATIONS IN CURRICULUM DESIGN

The *Teacher's Guide for an EAP Course in Business Administration* was written for Phase II for Chinese professionals who will be coming to study Business Management in Canadian universities. In this paper I will dis-

cuss this case as an example of curriculum design as a problem solving activity. The problem illustrated here, which curriculum planners and materials writers face in any project is:

(a) to fulfill requirements determined by project administrators;
(b) to respond to student needs;
(c) to develop a program that is consistent with the theoretical and pedagogical principles the curriculum designers subscribe to.

The Administration's Requirements

Constraints imposed by the administration in any project usually involve time, money, location, and the length of the course. In the China Project, both time and money were extremely limited. The materials were to be written in approximately a month. The budget was less than ten thousand dollars. It had also been decided that the course would be given in the five regional centres. An additional consideration was that the administrator representing the China Project felt that what was really needed was a teacher's guide rather than student materials. (Most curriculum development projects in ESL presuppose student materials.) His idea was that the teacher's guide would provide a common core of teaching materials which could be supplemented in the regional centres to meet more specialized needs. In addition, he hoped that the guide for Business Administration would serve as a prototype for the development of language teaching materials for other professional areas. These kinds of constraints are typical of any situation, and while there may be some room for negotiation, curriculum developers often have little control over such variables.

Student Needs

A primary concern of curriculum developers is what students will use English for when they complete formal language training. In the case of our project the learners need English for academic purposes. The ultimate aim is not to use English for management in China, but to use English in order to learn about Business Management while they are in Canada. Another consideration is the level of proficiency students have when they enter the program. The Chinese learners taking the specialized language course will have completed language training at the school in Beijing (Peking). However, the classes in Beijing are not separated according to professions; the course there concentrates on developing more general language skills. This means that the students will not have received training specially related to Business Administration studies. A third consideration is that it is unlikely that the learners will have been exposed

to anything but a traditional teacher-centred classroom (except in the language training program they have just completed). Our needs analysis, which included consultation with Chinese students already in Business Administration programs in Canada and their professors, indicated that the procedures and objectives in Business Administration courses often did not match student expectations. The difficulties extended beyond purely linguistic factors. The methodology requires students to manage their time, lead and participate in discussions of case studies, and argue their own points of view. The problem appeared to us to be not just one of developing language skills but also of familiarizing students with the procedures typical of Business Administration courses in Canada.

Theoretical and Pedagogical Principles

A third major consideration is the orientation of the curriculum developers in terms of approach, design and procedure (Richards & Rodgers, 1981). We would describe the approach we advocate as "communicative." For us this means that the terminal objective for the students is communicative competence (grammmatical, sociolinguistic, discoursal and strategic; Canale, 1983) in the areas in which they will need to function in English. These needs affect the content of the course. However, in a communicative approach, methodology is considered as important, if not more important, than course content. Students must have opportunities in the classroom for authentic communication (Long, in press). Communicative language use is characterized by purposefulness (i.e., it does not have simply language practice as its aim; language is used as a means not as an end) and unpredictability (Johnson, 1982). Communicative activities are seen as distinct from realistic language practice such as "meaningful" drills and memorized dialogues. In one sense the objective of all language used in the ESL classroom is language practice. However, most situational and even most functional courses use language in predictable exchanges where there is no communicative purpose. Realistic language practice resembles authentic communication superficially. It does not focus on developing the basic integrated abilities underlying communicative competence which Breen and Candlin (1980) call expression, interpretation and negotiation (explicit or implicit negotiation of meaning in the specific context).

In terms of Krashen's theory (Krashen, 1982), communicative activities provide opportunities for "acquisition" to take place in the classroom. Krashen distinguishes between acquisition (the unconscious knowledge of linguistic rules) and learning (conscious knowledge). He puts a higher value on acquisition since he claims learning can only be applied as a "monitor," editing the output of the acquired system when there is

sufficient time (e.g., a paper and pencil task). While we accept this distinction as a valuable insight for ESL teaching, we differ from Krashen in two areas. First, our interpretation of the communicative approach includes learning (not just acquisition) as an important component in an ESL program. However, for us, what is to be learned is not restricted to grammar. Adults can use their analytical skills to learn about other aspects of communicative competence such as sociolinguistic, non-verbal, and strategic characteristics of communication. The objective of such learner training is to produce a sophisticated learner who can fully exploit the English-speaking environment outside the ESL classroom for language acquisition. The second point on which we resist Krashen's Monitor Theory relates to the dichotomy between acquisition and learning. Long (1983) points out evidence which challenges this dichotomy. However, his proposal to redefine learning to include metalinguistic awareness, is an attempt to account for the data without rejecting Krashen's model. As teachers, we would like to go farther. We hope that programs such as ours which provide opportunities for acquisition and learning (using the extended definition) will produce counterevidence for the dichotomy. We would like to show that a conscious awareness of discourse, appropriateness, strategies, and linguistic rules affects the learner's perceptions, motivation, and ultimately, acquisition.

These three major factors: the administration's requirements, the students' needs and the theoretical and pedagogic principles advocated by the developers form the basis of any curriculum design. How these are integrated into a syllabus and materials is a problem solving activity. In the next section of the paper I will discuss the solution we arrived at.

THE SOLUTION: A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR WRITING MATERIALS

Trying to deal with the administration's request for a guide for teachers rather than materials for students had opened up some other interesting possibilities. It turned out that although there was limited money for curriculum developers, there was a larger and potentially more flexible budget for teachers. If our role became to prepare a teacher's guide for writing materials and the teacher's role was expanded to include materials writing, student materials, which we considered essential, could be produced. Another advantage was that this solution provided an effective form of in-service training. Materials writing offers one of the most successful methods of familiarizing teachers with the communicative approach. If teachers were hired one to two months before the course

began, they would have an opportunity to become familiar with the objectives and work with the problem of developing activities that are consistent with the approach.

Since this solution meant providing materials for students and training for teachers, it was interesting from our point of view. In addition, writing a teacher's guide for materials writing appeared to satisfy the administration's requirements. It meant that the developer's work could be completed within the given time and budget. It also meant that there would be a common core for the program in the different centres but that there was room for regional variation.

In terms of student needs, having teachers prepare the materials offers a more dynamic format for the course.[2] If teachers function throughout the program as teacher/materials writers, both students and teachers can continue to provide input as the course proceeds. Involving teachers in curriculum develpment as an on-going process, rather than providing them with a ready-made product should result in a program that is sensitive to students' changing needs.

CONTENTS OF THE TEACHER'S GUIDE

The next problem to consider was what to include in the Guide. We wanted to provide information to assist the teachers in the preparation of materials and guidelines to assure some consistency in the program in the six regional centres. Our decisions are outlined in the Table of Contents below:

Introduction
I.   Description of Business Administration programs
II. Description of English language teaching in China and the Chinese language learner
III. Syllabus: Three components:
      (a) Performance objectives
      (b) Subskills
      (c) Topics in Business Administration
IV. Models for integrated skills activities
V.   Sample materials
VI. Sources of authentic materials for activities and materials development
Appendix A
Bibliography

The Introduction presents our interpretation of the communicative approach under the headings: principles, the role of the teacher, the role of

the student, the role of materials and assessment.

Sections I and II of the guide respond to information obtained in the needs analysis. Section I, which describes Business Administration programs in Canada, and Section II, which describes the Chinese learner, provide background information to help teachers understand where the students are coming from and where they are going.

Section III of the guide contains the syllabus, which is divided into three components: performance objectives, subskills, and topics in Business Administration. This organization reflects our interpretation of the communicative approach. The performance objectives represent what the students should be able to do when they complete the course. These are intended to be viewed as terminal objectives and to be used for assessment. Under the performance objective the underlying skill is identified. Then the performance objective is broken down into learning objectives which teachers can use for ideas when designing classroom materials. An example of a performance objective with related learning objectives is given below:

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE
To skim assigned readings to get the general impression of the text in order to select areas of high priority for careful reading.

SKILL
Skimming—getting the gist of the reading and the placement of information within the text.

1.1   identifying features of layout (headings, numbered sections, table of contents, abstracts) and evaluating these sources according to the amount and types of information they provide
1.2   identifying organization of the text (topic sentence, introduction, conclusion)
1.3   identifying different discourse types (textbook, academic paper, case study)
1.4   predicting where information will be found in a text using features of layout and organization and knowledge of discourse types
1.5   recognizing the function of the text (description of processes, presentation of theories)

The performance objectives provide the organizing principle for the course. The next section of the syllabus is entitled "Subskills." These subskills are intended to be woven throughout the program. They are:

1. *Linguistic subskills* - grammatical, lexical, phonological and mechanical (e.g., spelling, punctuation);
2. *Strategies* - interaction, compensatory (e.g., paraphrasing, asking for clarification) and language learning strategies;

3. *Sociolinguistic sensitization* - framework for observing and evaluating appropriateness.

In the third section of the syllabus the core courses offered in Business Administration (Organizational Behaviour, Marketing, Financial Accounting, Microeconomics, Statistics Finance) are broken down into subtopics. Sources of authentic materials for each course are listed to guide the teacher/materials writer in the selection of appropriate texts.

Other sources of authentic materials are presented in the final section of the "Teacher's Guide." They include textbooks, journals, financial reports, and audio and video materials prepared for Business Administration courses. As well, there are some audio materials (lectures, case study discussions) prepared specifically for this EAP course.

The section on authentic materials also includes sources that provide general background information on business related topics, for example, *Far Eastern Economic Review* and *The China Reporter*, published by the Canada-China Trade Council. While this is not the kind of material used in Business Administration courses, it may be suitable for some classroom activities and is certainly useful for familiarizing teachers with business topics of relevance to Chinese students. A bibliography of books and articles related to the communicative approach and relevant ESP (English for Specific Purposes) topics is also included in the guide.

Sections IV, V and Appendix A of the guide give examples of how the syllabus can be realized in classroom activities and materials. For teachers who have had experience in preparing their own materials and are familiar with the communicative approach, the guide would provide specific information about student needs and objectives as well as examples of classroom activities so that they could develop the course to be given at their centre. If less experienced teachers were being hired, the preparation phase would have to be somewhat longer. In this case the guide could serve as an in-service training manual to be used with the assistance of a coordinator/teacher trainer.

ADVANTAGES OF THE SOLUTION

The "Teacher's Guide" was the solution that best enabled us to meet the requirements in our particular situation. Having teachers write materials has some additional benefits. First, it is more consistent with a process rather than a product model of curriculum development. It can more readily accommodate differences in context, students, teachers, and changes in needs. Second, having teachers write the materials is one of the

most practical ways to produce a tailor-made course for the target group. Another benefit is that it provides an effective form of in-service training. This is particularly important when trying to implement an innovative program. Finally, teachers have a special commitment to a program when they are teaching their own materials. This is not only good for the program, but as well, is more satisfying for the teachers.

CONCLUSION

Redefining teachers as teacher/materials writers not only had the above advantages, it was also the most viable way of dealing with the distribution of funding for the project. Our role, then, became to prepare a document which would assist the teachers in their job as materials writers and which would establish consistent objectives for the programs to be given in the six China Region Centres in Canada.

Of course, neither having teachers prepare materials, nor having curriculum developers produce a teacher's guide is necessarily the best solution in other contexts. However, looking at curriculum development as a problem solving activity where the factors to be considered (the requirements determined by the administration, student needs, and the approach advocated by the designers) will almost always be different, may mean that old solutions will not always be the most appropriate ones. A new context may suggest an innovative solution which not only responds to that particular situation, but also expands the repertoire of possibilities for curriculum development projects.

FOOTNOTES
1. The Teacher's Guide was written for the China Project, St. Mary's University, by Mary Ellen Belfiore, Judy Hunter and Wendy Allen.
2. The object is not to have the first group of teachers produce materials that will be used in subsequent courses. While some materials will likely be used in the future, we would like to see teacher/materials writers as a continuing aspect of the program.

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