

## **Memo 'Pimp my Product'**

### **A task based lesson series for VMBO gemengde leerweg, class 3**

Designing a series of lessons as a group assignment requires the group members to agree on the common goal, a way of collaborating, some agreement on and respect for the different teaching styles and having great communication skills. Our group, consisting of Bao-Nhi, Jolanda, Jolly and Réka did just that. We agreed to work together on this lesson series knowing each other's strengths and how to use them, but also with the confidence that we could give each other feedback that would be appreciated and improve the final product.

For the needs analysis we strongly depended on Bao-Nhi's and Jolly's expertise, as they already teach the target group. For the main theme we tried to brainstorm together and Jolanda came up with an idea for altering products, something similar to a lesson she remembered doing as a student. The basic idea for pimping gadgets, similar to the MTV series 'Pimp My Ride', was born. It took Jolly about two minutes to create an outline for the lesson series, like a skeleton, that only needed to be filled to become a living creature. We took this outline for the curriculum and the needs analysis and tried to think of appropriate, authentic language based, interesting and motivating tasks that would fit in our theme. Luckily, we had loads of ideas ranging from listening tasks the students would have to do while watching a video online to an inductive grammar lesson on using the future tense. From that point onward, it was a matter of agreeing on an approach, dividing the tasks, creating the lessons based on the theories, creating the website, creating the Facebook page, writing a memo and checking and double checking everything. It was certainly an obtainable feat, for such a structured group of people.

When dividing the tasks, Bao-Nhi was awarded the digital parts and 4 lessons, Jolly got most of the creative lessons which came to 6 lessons in total, Jolanda got 4 lessons and the final editing and Réka got 4 lessons and the memo. As mentioned before, all the group members got what they are best at: Bao-Nhi is a digital genius, Jolly is very creative, Jolanda has the best English skills and Réka is good with things that have to be finished last. All the material was checked and double checked by the other members of the group; we gave each other feedback, tips, comments but also a lot of positive feedback and compliments. Finally, we had a lesson series we could all be proud of.

For this curriculum we designed a lesson series in which students pimp their own favourite product, report on the process and present their final pimped product. The choice of this theme was based on the extensive needs analysis as well as our wish to create the most challenging, task based, creative, versatile, well-rounded curriculum we could think of. We incorporated all the skills and knowledge our students want to master and use it in a task they would enjoy doing. Even though the instructions were clear that we were to base the lesson series on the ideal school and students, we made sure the curriculum could easily be altered to be implemented in less than perfect situations as well.

The theme of altering or improving gadgets and objects is something we know the students enjoy very much. Most of our students have a lot of knowledge concerning electronic devices and all kinds of gadgets. The students might already have an idea of how to alter or improve something they already use, or perhaps a new idea will be triggered by this lesson series. The fact remains that this theme appeals to students of multiple intelligences. For example, a student with a strongly developed musical intelligence might have different ideas for pimping a product (both the product itself and the pimping process) than a student with a strongly developed logical-mathematical

intelligence. This lesson series provides the students with ample opportunities to practise what they are good at and learn the things they haven't mastered yet, while they complete the task and learn the language during the entire process.

We used Westhoff's penta pie as a guideline and built our curriculum accordingly. During the lesson series ***Pimp my product*** students are exposed to lots of input in the form of video fragments, articles they can find on internet and materials provided by the teacher. Students use the content of this input mainly to do the task they set out to do, but the tasks are designed in such a way that the students also receive (inductive) instruction on the form (i.e. use of future tense). In this process the students are guided by the teacher to ensure the use and awareness of strategies both for input and output. In the final presentation of the product the students can demonstrate what they have learned in a fun and competitive way as they show their mastery of skills like speaking in public, but also the mastery of the appropriate vocabulary and grammatical forms. This lesson series is thus designed to cover all parts of the penta pie.

The curriculum in itself is Task Based Learning; students are confronted with and use authentic language (as much as possible) in doing a task. There is a clear case of immersion. The main task is the pimping and presenting of their product, but the individual lessons are also designed to meet the requirements for TBL. The student task guides provide task based information for the student, so that they know what is expected of them and what they must achieve at the end of the lesson. The task guides also help the students to achieve these goals, with the use of 'tips'. At the same time, all the lessons have a task guide indicating the level of the Common European Framework of Reference and the can-do statements for the students. As the lessons are content based, they are related to the students' world and the input is authentic, the curriculum also meets the requirements for CLIL.

In our lesson series we let the students work in groups, as collaboration enhances learning effect. Our curriculum has its own website, [www.pimpmyproduct.weebly.com](http://www.pimpmyproduct.weebly.com). This website has its own QR code, which students can scan and save in their smartphones in order to be able to access the website at all times. The accessibility of all lesson materials means that students have the choice of place and time as far as the work outside the classroom is concerned. Students are guided in the process of setting up a Facebook page for their group. The function of this Facebook page is twofold; the students collaborate on this page and access and upload materials and the teacher can monitor the progress of the groups, as well as the individuals. Students love using social media for all kinds of purposes, but that does not mean that they are aware of all the possibilities it offers. By incorporating it into the curriculum, we help students acquire the skill of collaborating successfully online and creating a place where they can actually show their progress (by uploading their tasks) and be proud of it.

The website also contains all the lesson plans (for the teacher) and student task guides available for the users. To provide input, we linked a number of video fragments and reading texts to this website. This is to help inspire them when their creativity runs dry. The curriculum is extremely user friendly as all material is available both for the students and the teacher just by accessing the website.

Based on the needs analysis, our students need to learn about the future tense and the conditionals in order to be able to market the final pimped product. We used inductive grammar teaching theory to achieve this goal and tried to hide the terminology as much as we could. Even the 'grammar lessons' make use of authentic material for scaffolding and provide opportunity for practising before the students are actually required to use the future tense and conditionals in the final product.

Throughout the lessons we implemented communicative language teaching by creating assignments that the students could only finish by using the English language. We provided lots of authentic input and made sure that all the skills are represented. The things the students need to know for the final presentations are repeated throughout the lesson, for example the vocabulary list the students make for themselves can be used in the following lessons as well.

Naturally, we used English as the only language of communication in our lessons (doeltaal = voertaal). For this level we found that this could be done without any difficulties, especially as the students work in groups and the grammar is dealt with inductively. By using English as the language of instruction we increase the amount of input and hopefully also make it easier and more natural for the students to use the English language instead of their native Dutch. This kind of immersion (as the students experience an English lesson where only English is spoken) enhances the students' sense of achievement as they feel successful in learning English and becoming more confident in using it.

Throughout the lesson series the students' progress is easily monitored by the teacher as the students upload new material to their Facebook page almost every lesson. Group work is easier to monitor than individual work, as the group members give and receive peer feedback from each other and help each other reflect throughout the curriculum. The teacher provides the coaching and feedback the groups need in order to progress. For the final presentation (of both the pimped product and the Facebook page) we designed a clear rubric and put it on the website for the students to use as a guide. Students can also use the rubric (before the presentation) as a checklist to make sure they are prepared for the final presentations.

In this curriculum the final presentations take place in the last lesson. It is possible to have the presentations in class, one group presenting and the other groups giving feedback. It is also possible to let the groups all present at the same time, in a speed date set-up. Another very attractive option is to have the presentations in the school assembly hall and invite parents and maybe even people from the neighbourhood businesses for the presentations. The possibilities are numerous, depending on the school's wishes and needs.

This curriculum can be adapted to meet the needs of different levels of students by minor adjustments to the student tasks. The lessons do not require the teacher to be a wizard with things online or a real product designer. We've even ensured that the teacher is offered alternatives to fit their needs and that of their class. The tasks are clear and so are the requirements for the final product. The series as a whole appeals to students whether they are extremely creative or not, as there are always tasks that students prefer doing and tasks they would rather not do. The students' collaboration also teaches them to communicate about these issues and reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses, a skill they definitely need later in life. In short, the perfect lesson series: 'Pimp my Product'.