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THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF CONTENT BASED APPROACH IN TEACHING ESP GROUPS

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ABSTRACT

The focus of a CBI lesson is on the topic or subject matter. During the lesson students are focused on learning about something. This could be anything that interests them from a serious science subject to their favorite pop star or even a topical news story or film. They learn about this subject using the language they are trying to learn, rather than their native language, as a tool for developing knowledge and so they develop their linguistic ability in the target language. This is thought to be a more natural way of developing language ability and one that corresponds more to the way we originally learn our first language. Content-based instruction is designed to provide second-language learners instruction in content and language.

Keywords: importance, content-based, approach, teaching, ESP, English.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years content-based instruction has become increasingly popular as a means of developing linguistic ability. What is content-based instruction? The focus of a CBI lesson is on the topic or subject matter. During the lesson students are focused on learning about something. This could be anything that interests them from a serious science subject to their favorite pop star or even a topical news story or film. They learn about this subject using the language they are trying to learn, rather than their native language, as a tool for developing knowledge and so they develop their linguistic ability in the target language. This is thought to be a more natural way of developing language ability and one that corresponds more to the way we originally learn our first language. Content-based instruction is designed to provide second-language learners instruction in content and language.

METHODOLOGY

Historically, the word content has changed its meaning in second language teaching. Content used to refer to the methods of grammar–translation, audio-lingual methodology and vocabulary or sound patterns in dialog form. Recently, content is

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interpreted as the use of subject matter as a vehicle for second or foreign language teaching learning. The Content-based instruction approach is comparable to English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which usually is for vocational or occupational needs or English for Academic Purposes (EAP). The goal of Content-based instruction is to prepare students to acquire the languages while using the context of any subject matter so that students learn the language by using it within the specific context.

Rather than learning a language out of context, it is learned within the context of a specific academic subject. As educators realized that in order to successfully complete an academic task, second language (L2) learners have to master both English as a language form (grammar, vocabulary etc.) and how English is used in core content classes, they started to implement various approaches such as Sheltered instruction and learning to learn in Content-based instruction classes.

Sheltered instruction is more of a teacher-driven approach that puts the responsibility on the teachers' shoulders. This is the case by stressing several pedagogical needs to help learners achieve their goals, such as teachers having knowledge of the subject matter, knowledge of instructional strategies to comprehensible and accessible content, knowledge of L2 learning processes and the ability to assess cognitive, linguistic and social strategies that students use to assure content comprehension while promoting English academic development. Learning to learn is more of a student-centered approach that stresses the importance of having the learners shares this responsibility with their teachers. Learning to learn emphasizes the significant role that learning strategies play in the process of learning. There are textbooks that can be used for theme based CBI classes which usually contain a variety of readings followed by vocabulary and comprehension exercises.

These can then be supplemented with additional information from the Internet, newspapers and other sources. However, another approach is to use specially constructed source books which contain collections of authentic materials or simplified versions. These can be about a particular theme such as drug use or care of the elderly, or about more general topics. It’s possible to create some really interesting classroom materials as long as the need for comprehensibility is not forgotten. What are the advantages of content-based instruction? It can make learning a language more interesting and motivating. Students can use the language to fulfil a real purpose, which can make students both more independent and confident.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students can also develop a much wider knowledge of the world through Content-based instruction which can feed back into improving and supporting their general educational needs. Content-based instruction is very popular among EAP (English for Academic Purposes) teachers as it helps students to develop valuable study skills such as note taking, summarizing and extracting key information from texts. Taking information from different sources, re-evaluating and restructuring that information can help students to develop very valuable thinking skills that can then be transferred to other subjects. The inclusion of a group work element within the framework given above can also help students to develop their collaborative skills, which can have great social value. Some students may copy directly from the source texts they use to get their information. Avoid this by designing tasks that demand students evaluate the information in some way, to draw conclusions or actually to put it to some practical use. Having information sources that have conflicting information can also be helpful as students have to decide which information they agree with or most believe. Content-based instruction is an effective method of combining language and content learning. Theme based Content-based instruction works well in EFL contexts, and I believe its use will increase as teachers continue to design new syllabi in response to student needs and interests.

The degree to which you adopt this approach may well depend on the willingness of your students, the institution in which you work and the availability of resources within your environment. It could be something that your school wants to consider introducing across the curriculum or something that you experiment with just for one or two lessons. Whichever you choose to do I would advise that you try to involve other teachers within your school, particularly teachers from other subjects. This could help you both in terms of finding sources of information and in having the support of others in helping you to evaluate your work.

Lastly, try to involve your students. Get them to help you decide what topics and subjects the lessons are based around and find out how they feel this kind of lessons compares to your usual lessons. In the end they will be the measure of your success.

CONCLUSION

As it’s mentioned at the beginning, I believe that learner motivation increases when students are learning about something, rather than just studying language.

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While Content-based instruction can be both challenging and demanding for the teacher and the students, it can also be very stimulating and rewarding.

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