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Content Based Instruction

Content based instruction (CBI) is a teaching approach that focuses on learning *language* through learning *about something.*Although CBI is not new, there has been an increased interest in it because it has proven very effective in ESL and EFL programs around the world.

Content-Based Instruction (CBI) is "an approach to second language teaching in which teaching is organized around the content or information that students will acquire, rather than around a linguistic or other type of syllabus" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.204). In other words, CBI involves integrating the learning of language with the learning of content simultaneously; here, content typically means academic subject matter such as math, science, or social studies. In CBI, the language is utilized as the medium for teaching subject content (Mohan, 1986). The language learning objectives are achieved through content learning. The syllabi in most CBI courses are derived from content areas, and vary widely in detail and format. In a word, CBI is a method of teaching language and content in tandem.

CBI requires better language teachers. Language teachers must be knowledgeable in content areas and be able to elicit knowledge from students. In addition, language teachers have such responsibility as to keep context and comprehensibility foremost in their instruction, to select and adapt authentic materials for use in class, to provide scaffolding for students' linguistic content learning, and to create learner-centered classrooms (Stryker & Leaver, 1993).

CBI requires better learners as well. Students are hypothesized to become autonomous and independent in CBI, so that they are conscious of their own learning process and can take charge of their learning. Furthermore, students are expected to support each other in collaborative modes of learning. Finally, students need to make commitment to this new approach to language learning (Stryker & Leaver, 1993). Typically, the materials in CBI are used with the subject matter of the content course. It is recommended that "authentic" materials are identified and utilized. There are two implications of authenticity. One implication is that the materials are similar to those used in native-language instruction; the other relates to the use of newspaper and magazine articles and any other media materials "that were not originally produced for language teaching purposes" (Brinton et al., 1989). Some realia such as tourist guidebooks, technical journals, railway timetables, newspaper ads, or TV broadcasts are also recommended by many CBI practitioners (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

CBI in language teaching has been widely used in a variety of different settings since 1980s such as English as Specific Purpose (ESP) Programs for Students with limited English Proficiency (SLEP), Language for

Specific Purposes (LSP), immersion programs, and ESL/EFL Language Programs. Since CBI refers to an approach rather than a method, no specific techniques or activities are associated with it. At the level of procedure, teaching materials and activities are selected according to the extent to which they match the type of program. Finally, CBI provides the opportunity for teachers to match students' interests and needs with interesting, comprehensible, and meaningful content (Brinton et al., 1989).

What is Content based Instruction?

Content-based teaching differs from traditional language classes because language comes second to the content. In other words, the teacher runs a course on current affairs, or American history, or fiction writing, through which students also learn English. It's important to note that English ends up as subordinate to the material, although the teacher must recognize and be prepared to help students with language skills.

Types of content based instruction:

- The Sheltered Model: It is used at university where the goal of teachers is to enable their ESL students to study the same content material as regular English L1 students. Sheltered CBI is called "sheltered" because learners are given special assistance to help them understand regular classes.
- The Adjunct Model: Undertaken by ESL teachers. The aim of Adjunct classes is to prepare students for "mainstream" classes where they will join English L1 learners.
- The Theme Based Model: These classes can be taught by EFL teachers who create content material based on the needs and interests of the students.

Other types of teaching may fall within the realm of CBI. English for Specific Purposes and Task based instruction are both examples of CBI.

Content based lesson:

Because of the nature of the content, all four skills get integrated. It's important to note that the content continues through the whole course, not just a handful of lessons. A course on shopping one day, using the bank on another day, and making hotel reservations in English at a different class session is an example of a CBI class.

An example of CBI lesson can be approached following these steps:

- Preparation
    - A subject of interest is chosen.
    - Finding suitable sources that deal with different aspects of the subject. These could be websites, reference books, audio or video of lectures or even real people.
- The lesson

- Using small groups
- Assigning each group a small research task and a source of information in the target language to use to help them fulfil the task.
- groups sharing and comparing information.
- A result in the form of an end product such as a report or presentation of some kind.

Advantages

- Language learning becomes more interesting and motivating.
- CBI offer a wide educational knowledge to learners in the form of the different topics instructed.
- It helps students develop valuable study skills such as note taking, summarizing and extracting key information from texts.
- Developing collaborative skills, especially when using group work, which can have great social value.

Disadvantages

- CBI implicit language instruction can confuse learners and may give them the impression that they are not **actually** learning language.
- Overuse of native language can be a problem in some parts of the lesson.
- Finding information sources and texts that lower levels can understand can be difficult.

In a nutshell, although CBI is a challenging approach for both teachers and students, the outcome of its implementation can be rewarding and motivating.