



## **INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY IN CONTENT BASED INSTRUCTION (CBI) FOR LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**

**Dr. Jyoti Patil**

Principal

Renuka College, Besa, Nagpur

440037 (MS) INDIA

### **Abstract**

This paper attempts to explore the nature, the challenges, and possible new technological solutions of the Content Based Instruction that the language teachers have to face during teaching of the content and the second language together. Content Based Instruction (CBI) effectively increases learners' English language proficiency & teaches them the skills necessary for the success in various professions. With CBI, learners gradually acquire greater control of the English language, enabling them to participate more fully in an increasingly complex academic & social environment. Content-based Instruction (CBI) is an important approach in language acquisition through content based learning as compared to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) which usually is for vocational or occupational needs or English for Academic Purposes (EAP). The word, content is used for the subject matter as a medium for second or foreign language acquisition. My endeavour here is to examine the purpose of CBI which is to train the students to acquire the language while using the context of any subject matter so that the students learn the language by using it within the specific context and how the new technology can help in language acquisition.

**Key words:** Audio-visual, Content-Based Instruction (CBI), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), grammar-translation.

### **Introduction**

Twenty-first century skills necessitate the implementation of instruction that allows students to apply course content, take ownership of their learning, use technology meaningfully, and collaborate. Content Based Information (CBI) is a powerful innovation in acquiring & enhancing





a language. In its best form, language lessons are blended with stimulating content. The students focus on the subject matter than the language learning process. Calculating students' success by engaging them in challenging & informative activity helps them learn complex skills.

The students learn language simultaneously with the content. Keeping the students motivated & interested in the language training is the unique feature of CBI. When students are interested & motivated in the material they are learning, they make greater connections to learning language without special efforts. (Grabe et al,1997).

In recent years content-based instruction has become increasingly popular as a means of developing linguistic ability. It has strong connections to project work, task-based learning and a holistic approach to language 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 favourite 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. The language is learnt within the context of a specific academic subject rather than learning it out of context.

#### **Traditional Approaches:**

As educators realized that in order to successfully complete an academic task, second language learners have to master both English as a language form e.g. 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 CBI classes.

##### **1. Sheltered instruction: A teacher-driven approach**

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 learning processes and the ability to assess cognitive, linguistic and social strategies that students use to assure content comprehension while promoting English academic development.

##### **2. Learning to learn: A student-centred approach**

Learning to learn is more of a student-centred approach that stresses the importance of having the learners share this responsibility with their teachers. Learning to learn emphasizes the significant role that learning strategies play in the process of learning.





### **Content Integration:**

Content-compatible objectives are drawn from three sources: (1) a second language scope and sequence that describes how students are expected to grow and develop in their second language skills; (2) the teacher's observation of student language skills and his or her analysis of their classroom needs; and (3) the anticipated linguistic demands of the content curriculum to be taught in future lessons.

By selecting content from the school/college's curriculum that is compatible with ESL objectives, teachers can use this content as a communicative and cognitively engaging means of developing language and also help to promote their students' mastery of content material. (Briton, 2003)

There are many ways to approach creating a CBI lesson. Here is one possible way.

#### **First step: Preparation**

- Choose a subject of interest to students.
- Find three or four suitable sources that deal with different aspects of the subject. These could be websites, blogs, podcasts, Power point presentation, reference books, audio or video of lectures or even real people.

#### **Second Step: Instruction to follow for the lesson**

- Divide the class into small groups and assign each group a small research task and a source of information to use to help them fulfil the task.
- Then once they have done their research they form new groups with students that used other information sources and share and compare their information.

#### **Third Step: Presentation**

- There should then be some product as the end result of this sharing of information which could take the form of a group report or presentation of some kind.
- The presentation can be in the target language, it may be a written report, a skit or a power-point presentation with commentary on the topic.

It is not enough to simply integrate content into the language classroom, it must be done effectively. Stoller (2002) lists eight practices that allow for natural content integration:

- Extended input, meaningful output, and feedback on language and grasp of content with the help of group blogs and podcasts
- Information gathering, processing, and reporting through video presentation and power point presentation
- Integrated skills (using reading, writing, speaking and listening in natural classroom activities with some fun-filled exercises)





- Task-based activities and project work, enhanced by cooperative learning principles
- Strategy training (to produce more meta-cognitively aware strategic learners)
- Visual support (i.e. Images, graphic organizers, language ladders etc.)
- Contextualized grammar instruction
- Culminating synthesis activities (knowledge is displayed in writing and orally)

### **Benefits of Content-Based Instruction:**

Content-Based Instruction is an approach to language teaching that focuses not only on the language itself, but rather on what is being taught through the language; that is, the language becomes the medium through which something new is learned. In the CBI approach the student learns the Target Language by using it to learn some other new content. Here are some potential benefits:

- 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.
- Students can also develop a much wider knowledge of the world through CBI which can feed back into improving and supporting their general educational needs.
- CBI is very popular among EAP (English for Academic Purposes) teachers as it helps students to develop valuable study skills such as note taking, summarising 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.” (Snow, 2001)
- Learners are exposed to a considerable amount of language through stimulating content. Learners explore interesting content & are engaged in appropriate language-dependant activities. Learning language becomes automatic.
- CBI supports contextualized learning; learners are taught useful language that is embedded within relevant discourse contexts rather than as isolated language fragments. Hence students make greater connections with the language & what they already know. This enhances the practical usability for the learners.
- Complex information is delivered through real life context for the students to grasp well & leads to intrinsic motivation.





- In CBI information is reiterated by strategically delivering information at right time & situation compelling the students to learn out of passion.
- Greater flexibility & adaptability in the curriculum can be deployed to suit students' interest. It gives hands on experience to the learner.

### Challenges of Content-Based Instruction:

- **Confusing:** Because CBI isn't explicitly focused on language learning, some students may feel confused or may even feel that they aren't improving their language skills. Dealing with this it is necessary to include some form of language focused follow-up exercises to help draw attention to linguistic features within the materials and consolidate any difficult vocabulary or grammar points.
- **Difficulty in Learning:** Particularly in monolingual classes, the overuse of the students' native language during parts of the lesson can be a problem. Because the lesson isn't explicitly focused on language practice students find it much easier and quicker to use their mother tongue. It becomes difficult sharing teacher's rationale with students to explain the benefits of using the target language rather than their mother tongue.
- **Challenging:** It can be hard to find information sources and the sharing of information in the target language may cause great difficulties. A possible way around this to use texts in the students' native language and then get them to use the target language for the sharing of information and end product, or to have texts in the target language, but allow the students to present the end product in their native language. These options may reduce the level of challenge.
- **Conflicting information:** Some students may copy directly from the source texts they use to get their information. This can be avoided 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.
- **Cognitive demand:** Students who are learning content in a new language have difficulty with cognitively demanding tasks in context-reduced situations. To allow students to acquire abstract concepts, teachers need to design instructional approaches that make the abstract concrete. By enabling students to match what they hear with what they see and experience, teachers can ensure that students have access to meaning. Experiential, hands-on activities make input comprehensible. "When students are motivated and interested in the material they are learning, they make greater connections between topics, elaborations with learning material and can recall information better." (Alexander, Kulikowich, & Jetton, 1994; Krapp, Hidi, & Renninger, 1992).





In short, when a student is intrinsically motivated the student achieves more. This in turn leads to a perception of success, of gaining positive attributes which will continue a circular learning pattern of success and interest. Because it falls under the more general rubric of communicative language teaching (CLT), the CBI classroom is learner rather than teacher centred.

In such classrooms, students learn through doing and are actively engaged in the learning process. They do not depend on the teacher to direct all learning or to be the source of all information. Central to CBI is the belief that learning occurs not only through exposure to the teacher's input, but also through peer input and interactions. (Snow, 2001).

### **Conclusion:**

With CBI, learners gradually acquire greater control of the English language, enabling them to participate more fully in an increasingly complex academic & social environment. While CBI can be both challenging and demanding for the teacher and the students, it can also be very stimulating and rewarding. The degree to which they adopt this approach may well depend on the willingness of the students, the institution in which a teacher works and the availability of resources within the environment. Involving other teachers within the institution, particularly teachers from other subjects is more motivating. This helps both in terms of finding sources of information and in having the support of others in helping a teacher to evaluate work. Lastly, involving the students to get them to decide what topics and subjects the lessons are based around and they will be the measure for success of the method.

Content-based classroom activities that use concrete experiences, manipulates, and hands-on materials can facilitate the acquisition of content-obligatory language and may provide students with a valuable advance organizer for lessons on the same topic taught in the mainstream classroom. (Met,1991)

Working collaboratively with grade-level teachers, second language teachers can identify the content-obligatory language needed for subject matter mastery in the mainstream classroom. This language may then become the primary focus of second language lessons. Indeed, the teacher may teach the content lesson, incorporating the needed language skills and using activities that make the lesson and language comprehensible to students. Content-based second language learning can be more effective with the use of new techniques such as class-blogs, pod-castings, webinars and various web-resources in providing students with the language of academics needed for successful content mastery. In bilingual or two-way immersion settings, teachers also need to identify content-obligatory language and plan conscientiously for the development of needed language skills in the course of content instruction.





## References:

Alexander, Kulikowich, & Jetton, (1994): Krapp, Hidi, & Renninger, (1992) Project-based Second and Foreign Language Education: Past, Present, and Future

[http://moodle2.karelia.fi/file.php/732/Verkkopedagogiikka/renninger\\_4\\_phase\\_model.pdf](http://moodle2.karelia.fi/file.php/732/Verkkopedagogiikka/renninger_4_phase_model.pdf)

[Retrieved on 15.05.2016]

Brinton, D. (2003). Content-based instruction. In D. Nunan (Ed.), Practical English Language Teaching (pp. 199–224). New York: McGraw Hill.

<http://www.aatk.org/www/html/conference2007/pdf/Donna%20Brinton.pdf> [Retrieved on 17.05.2016]

Grabe, W., & Stoller, F. L. (1997). Content-based instruction: Research foundations. In M. A. Snow, & D. M. Brinton (Eds.), The content-based classroom: Perspectives on integrating language and content (pp. 5–21). NY: Longman.

[http://carla.umn.edu/cobaltt/modules/principles/grabe\\_stoller1997/READING1/foundation.htm](http://carla.umn.edu/cobaltt/modules/principles/grabe_stoller1997/READING1/foundation.htm) [Retrieved on 15.05.2016]

Met, M. (1991). Learning language through content: Learning content through language. Foreign Language Annals, 24(4), 281-295.

Stoller, F.L. (2002). Content-Based Second Language Instruction: What is it? TESOL.

<http://www.carla.umn.edu/cobaltt/CBI.html> [Retrieved on 15.05.2016]

Snow, M.A.(2001). 'Content-based and immersion models for second and foreign language teaching'. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language (3rd ed.) (pp. 303–318). Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

