PECULIARITIES OF CONTENT-BASED IN THE PRE-INTERMEDIATE CLASSES

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Annotation: Information on ways to teach English and develop vocabulary to children with an intermediate level of reading is presented.

Key words: lexeme, vocabulary, word difference, language learning ability, difficulty

Regardless of program design, the following eight attributes are characteristic of a content-based instructional program. Instructional objectives are drawn from language, academic content, and thinking or study skills, usually at the intersection of these. A language teacher might focus on the ways in which addition is used in instruction or figure word problems-for example, through and, increased by, or in addition to help students to use this language in paired, small group, or cooperative learning activities which promote interaction in that language. The English teacher, on the other hand, might focus on strategies for setting up and solving these problems, while noting the special language in which these problems are embedded. Both would directly or indirectly involve thinking skills of analysis and classification. Crandall for a fuller discussion of lexical and semantic, syntactic, and discourse features of vocabulary and grammar which pose difficulty to both linguistically different and English-speaking students in language problem solving.

Background knowledge must be developed in the language. This is usually accomplished through oral language activities, which precede extensive reading and writing activities, although it is possible to use writing especially interactive writing such as dialogue journals or computer networking as a means of developing and activating schema at the same time as academic language is being developed. Using top-down processing, general knowledge is developed before details are addressed. Both content-obligatory and content-compatible language can be included. That is, while the teaching of magnetism necessarily includes teaching such terms as to attract, to repel, magnetic properties, magnetic fields and classification language and skills, it also provides an opportunity, among others, for developing vocabulary of a variety of items which can be evaluated as to their magnetic properties, as well as descriptive language and rhetorical skills concerning the patterns iron filings make on paper when magnets are used.

Paired and small group interaction are used to develop and to demonstrate proficiency in the academic language. Cooperative or collaborative learning and peer-

tutoring may be employed. Activities are specifically developed to encourage student interaction with the content material and negotiation of meaning. When possible, class size and conditions permitting, the teacher's role may shift to facilitator of learning, rather than direct presenter or lecturer of information. Although direct presentation is still necessary, teachers may spend more time interacting with small groups of students when they need redirection or clarification or other explanations.

A wide range of materials is used in the classroom. Traditionally, language classes focused on two kinds of texts: extended discourse, such as that found in textbook or novels, and dialogues, such as those found in plays sadly, only in other language textbooks. However, broader and deeper issues of the language require that students be able to interact with and produce a variety of texts: maps, charts, graphs, tables, lists, lab reports, diagrams, timelines, and other forms and documents.

Authentic materials, drawn directly from the content area, can be used, although it is often necessary to adapt the information to make it more accessible to students with less developed language proficiency. This does not mean that the material is «watered down» or somehow less rich in concepts it does require, however, that the information be restructured so that relationships between ideas become clearer and new vocabulary is adequately contextualized in the early presentations while schema are being developed in that language. Ironically, the restructuring of large amounts of connected discourse often results in the presentation of that information in other kinds of texts such as flow charts or tables, exactly the kinds of texts which students need to master anyway. For example, in a lesson dealing with the various branches of government, it may be more effective to draw a chart which reflects the specific roles and responsibilities of each branch, clarifying the concepts while developing the language needed to discuss this topic.

If appropriate, students may be asked to read a long passage in which these ideas are presented as a later activity. Multiple media and a variety of presentation techniques are used in the classes to reduce the reliance on language as the sole means of conveying information or demonstrating meaning. Thus, content-based language programs or language-sensitive content programs use demonstrations, a wide variety of audio visuals, authentic materials, objects, and even guest speakers. For example, an elementary science class on animal classification might benefit from a visit by a veterinarian or zookeeper who brings animals to the class and points to differences and similarities, allowing students close observation and perhaps even touch as a means of really understanding the classification system.

Although oral and written languages are employed, they are supported by many other sources of information for the students. Experiential, discovery, and hands-on learning are also used to encourage students to develop concepts and interact with each other, placing the language learning into relevant, meaningful frames. Experiments and

research projects are particularly appropriate, as are the use of games, role plays, and simulations.

When students can work together, cooperatively, in doing experiments and presenting results, the important academic language is learned as are the concepts. Writing is included both as a means of thinking and learning and as a means of helping students to demonstrate what they are learning.

Language experience stories, students as authors, dialogue journals, learning logs, and other writing activities are used. Even asking students to draw the pictures or diagrams and labeling. These can be developing story sequences which reflect activities in which students have been engaged. Both provide opportunities for students to develop sequencing skills at the same time as language skills. Of particular interest is the practice of having students write their own word or story problems, since in doing so they are demonstrating mastery of the special language in which word problems are embedded as well as their understanding of theoretical or scientific formulas such as that of distance rate times to time. Writing activities can also serve as models for those which are required in the content area: for example, lab reports, essays, and research papers may all be introduced in the language class. Some sample strategy sheets or lesson plans, describing lessons for students at various levels of language proficiency, are provided in as well as in several other texts and papers listed in the references stated Canton-Harvey, Mohan [8, p 34].

When teachers and researchers reflect on the variables that most strongly influence the successful teaching and learning of a target language (TL), they find that those related to the context and the nature of language instruction are decisive. The effect and value of the language used for classroom instruction is of paramount importance.

Abundant research and theory have been produced in connection with this issue, and several directions, techniques and strategies have been recommended in order to create the best conditions for language teaching and learning. Some key issues are: - Instructed foreign language learning (FLL) techniques versus naturalistic second language acquisition (SLA) strategies. – Crosslingual versus intralingual techniques – Analytic versus integral methods – Code versus content-based programms.

These dichotomies argue about two polemic opposed views of L2/TL teaching and learning:

a) The degree to which a TL is best learnt through natural development and exposure to it in meaningful contexts

b) In a structured, formalistic environment in a classroom setting. Close to the value of second language instruction is the nature of instruction offered in different learning contexts.

THE LIST OF USED LITERATURE

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