

# A Contemporary Perspective on the Benefits of Teaching an Integrated Content/ESL course Specific to a Discipline

Jody A. FRIBERG

ジョディ フライバーグ. 内容 統合学習における利点についての一考察. *Studies in International Relations* Vol.36, No.2. February 2016. pp.39 – 46.

ESLやEFLの教室において、学術的な内容を教えるアイデアは新しい概念ではなく、実際には増えてきている (Braine, 2001) が、ESLやEFLのカリキュラムにおいては、未だに非常に重要なものである。しかしながら、英語の読み書き、会話、また理解をする際、こうしたテキストで扱われている内容の多くは、英語母語話者の様に話したいという学生の要求を満たしているとは思えない。また、多くの学生がESLやEFLのコースで学んでいる内容では実務の世界に対応しきれない現状がある。こうした背景から、本論文では、ESLやEFLとして英語を学ぶ学生が、卒業後に英語圏の学部や大学院のプログラムによりスムーズに進むことを可能にする教授内容、またその方法を提起する。

## Introduction

Though the idea of teaching to academic content in the ESL or EFL classroom is not a new concept, and in fact in some places is on the rise (Braine, 2001), it remains an issue of great importance in English language programs that have yet to consider or implement academic content in their ESL or EFL curriculum. It can be argued that learning to read, write, speak and understand the English language via contexts derived from any number of highly pragmatic English language learning texts has its place in English language education. Especially for true or false beginners, those with little exposure to the language, or those students transitioning between levels intermediate to advanced. However, lessons derived from such texts used repeatedly throughout a student's language development fail to fulfill the needs of those students planning to matriculate into native English speaking undergraduate courses or postgraduate courses. Courses where language and concepts learned for the general articulation of English prove less than adequate where the reading, writing, speaking and listening skills necessary to communicate language specific to the discourse community are concerned. (Pally, 2001). This paper suggests that ESL or EFL students will be far more likely to grasp the terms and concepts of the ESL or EFL student's chosen undergraduate or postgraduate discourse community (as well as meet the rigors of undergraduate or graduate studies) if subjected to them prior to graduation from ESL or EFL. It presents content approaches used both presently and in the past and serves to support the idea that content education prior to graduation from ESL or EFL is a viable approach to helping students matriculate more smoothly into native English speaking undergraduate or postgraduate programs.

There has existed for decades now amongst teacher/researchers within the field of TESOL (Teaching English as a Second Language), a question of lingering concern that has effected not only the methods used to encourage L2 growth in the ESL student, but how these methods will likely transfer over into an ESL student's undergraduate, or mainstream courses, encouraging growth there as well (Harklau 1994). That is

the question of how to integrate content learning specific to an ESL student's undergraduate or graduate goals, without ignoring language-teaching aims (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1992).

Prompting this question is a long history full of research that serves not only to justify the question, but through exploration and practice, develop methods that meet student's ESL, as well as content needs after ESL equitably. This paper aims to support the underlying assumption that ESL students will be far more likely to grasp the terms and concepts of a chosen discourse community, as well as meet the rigors of undergraduate or graduate studies, if subjected to a content curriculum prior to graduation from ESL.

History shows that for many students English, and the elements that embody it, reading, writing, speaking, and listening, exists only as a means to an end. The end being whatever the student intends to use English for once it has been determined they have achieved a specified level of fluency. Therefore, students tend to place less priority on the means, than on the objective the language is to be used for (Johns, 2002). Content then, as it is viewed as more of a need, becomes a priority for the student, and it is this need that teacher/researchers have sought to meet that brings us to the whole point of prioritizing content at all. Teaching to content cannot surpass the need for structure, proper syntax, spelling, etc., too however. There must be rules to ensure an equal balance of content and integrated skills instruction (Brinton et al., 1989). So, how is this accomplished? Though there is no single template that works best for content-based instruction (Stoller, 1999), teacher/researchers have experimented, and continue to experiment with 6.

Teacher/researchers in an attempt to find an approach capable of sustaining content learning across curricula, pedagogies, and borders, while promoting language learning also, started with 3 approaches that 1) would support language learning and content learning concurrently, as language and content, inextricably woven together, were shared between content and language instructors in an attempt to help students reach their full academic potential, 2) would serve to unequivocally address students' academic and professional needs by teaching expressly to their content needs, and 3) would seek to meet students' academic needs through total immersion in the target language. These approaches respectively were language-across-the-curriculum (LAC), language for specific purposes (LSP), and immersion education. These three approaches would eventually give way to theme-based, sheltered, and adjunct instruction, as teacher/researchers endeavored to find ways of teaching content and language to University ESL students. These will be touched on following a brief synopsis of LAC, LSP, and immersion education.

LAC was put into action by "a committee commissioned by the British government in 1975, to consider all aspects of teaching the use of English, including reading, writing, and speech" (Brinton et al., 1992, p. 5). In LAC, a need was recognized to integrate subject matter, or content, and language, in order that native English speaking students might benefit more abundantly in the educational process from the reciprocal relationship seen to be taking place between content courses and language classes. Students in a language across the curriculum environment are obliged to learn to read and learn to write, but are also encouraged to read to learn and write to learn. In learning across the curriculum the collegial bonds between content teacher and the language teacher must be strong in order that the student benefit fully from the writing and reading problems administered by the language instructor, and the supplementary work used by the content instructor to reinforce the work given by the language instructor (Brinton et al., 1992). Since first making its mark in 1975 with the help of the British government, the language across the curriculum movement has benefited both teacher training and materials development in the U.S. and the U.K. Evident in publications detailing "strategies for cross-curricular teaching at the secondary and post-secondary levels dealing with such issues as designing effective writing assignments and essay questions, improving the writing process, and evaluating

student work” (Anderson et al., 1983; Simmons, 1983, cited in Brinton et al., 1992, p. 6)

LSP evolved from a need, as seen by both commercial and academic language teaching programs, to address the English language demand of adult students either in an occupational, or post-secondary setting, needing English specific to their particular circumstances. Typically, LSP embraced the “what” of second language education, rather than the “how”, as learning the language elements synonymous with academic and professional reading, writing, speaking and listening were viewed as secondary to the more immediate language issues of the target discipline or occupation (Brinton et al., 1992). LSP exists to serve the specific needs of a group intent on acquiring the language necessary for their specific goals, and can therefore be viewed as a homogeneous content-based language approach. Those utilizing this approach understand that the study of content alone does not typically lead to competency at every level of language learning. It is understood however, that the use of authentic content, examples, and careful attention to the needs of the language learner parallel “methodology similar to that of other content-based models in which a major component is experiential language learning in context” (Brinton et al., 1992, p. 7; see also Lenker & Rhodes 2007).

Immersion education gained notoriety largely across Canada and the U.S., with the emergence first of the French immersion project in 1965 in St. Lambert, Quebec, and then in the U.S. in 1971, with the establishment of a Spanish Immersion Program in Culver City, California (Brinton et al., 1992; Lenker & Rhodes 2007). Immersion programs presently exist in one of two forms, those being either 1) total immersion, with all subjects in the lower grades being taught in the target language, or 2) partial immersion, in which only half of the instruction provided is in the target language (Lenker & Rhodes, 2007).

Immersion education has the distinct advantage, unlike LAC and LSP, through constant input and output of the target language, of developing in the student total fluency. Moreover, it has been shown to enhance student achievement in content classes, as well as “enhance a sense of global awareness, linguistic confidence, and learning strategies useful in many aspects of life” (Lenker & Rhodes 2007, p. 4)

The Center for Applied Linguistics 2006 directory, or simply CAL directory, showed that as of that year, more languages were being offered through immersion than ever before, 18 in fact, which was double the number offered in 1995. The most commonly taught languages in immersion programs as of 2006 were, “Spanish (42.6%), French (29%), Hawaiian (8.4%), Japanese (7.1%), Mandarin (3.9%), and German (3.2%).” The states boasting the highest numbers of schools offering language immersion programs were “Louisiana (30), Oregon (25), Minnesota (24), and Virginia (24).” Among these, “56% labeled themselves partial immersion, with the other 44% labeling themselves total immersion (Lenker, A. & Rhodes, N., 2007, p. 3).

Students in total immersion education receive instruction from language instructors entirely in the second language, with the language instructor using various strategies to get students to understand the use of the L2 (Lenker & Rhodes 2007). Typically after several years in an immersion program, “students achieve a high level of functional ability in the L2, with near native proficiency in receptive skills by the time they graduate from an elementary school immersion program or a late immersion high school program” (Brinton et al., 1992, p. 9). Though in immersion programs students’ reading and writing skills fall short of those of their native speaking peers early on during primary education, students who remain in immersion education are known to match the reading and writing skills of their peers as early as secondary school. Moreover, according to research conducted by Lenker and Rhodes (2007) and Brinton et al., (1992) students enrolled in or completing immersion programs far surpass the foreign language abilities of those students pursuing L2 interests post primary or secondary school.

Kindergarten and elementary school children have largely been the focus of immersion education; though

its applications can certainly be applied to adult education as well (Brinton et al., 1992; Lenker & Rhodes 2007).

Stoller (1999) explains that as language instruction continues to evolve and change in the face of changing student needs and education, various approaches are introduced, experimented with, and utilized, as teacher/researchers attempt to find methods of instruction that serve student's academic needs best. History, as exhibited in research conducted by Rubin (1975), Munby (1978), Johns, A. (1988), Brinton et al., (1992), and others shows this to be the case. LAC, LSP, and immersion education have each emerged after years of research and practice, to share a significant part in the evolution of language education, and each continues to play a part, however significant as the field continues to change, in content instruction and preparing student for life after ESL. Preparing students for life after ESL in that LAC, LSP, and immersion education pedagogy according to Evers (2007), create a bridge between what students are learning and experiencing in their language courses, and what they are or will be experiencing academically or professionally after the language course.

LAC, LSP, and immersion education all presuppose substantial language growth through an extended, more intense relationship with the language of the content community. Three other approaches I will discuss now that share a similar notion, yet differ from LAC, LSP, and immersion education in that they were developed for use by college level ESL students, are the Theme-based approach, Sheltered approach, and Adjunct approach. Research conducted by Brinton et al., (1992), Stoller (1999), Flowerdew & Peacock (2001) and Evers (2007), explains that these approaches are similar to LAC, LSP, and immersion education in that together with a strong language component, they attempt to expand content knowledge relevant to passion, purpose, and culture. Also similar, is the idea of bridging the language and content gap that all too often exists between language courses and the content they are intended for (Stoller 1999).

They are different from LAC, LSP, and immersion education however, in that they were created mainly to target tertiary level language students intent on taking academic courses in Community College, or a 4-year University. They are more contemporary, and furthermore, are generally adapted for use in college level ESL courses, otherwise known as English for Academic Purposes courses (Stoller 1999).

Content as it relates to a specific theme or topic is generally collected and read. Vocabulary and grammar are acquired, processed, and then regenerated through writing, speaking and listening, and further reading. Lending to further scaffold the theme or topic are authentic video or audio materials related to the content that provide a visual reference and listening tool, corroborating the theme or topic, vocabulary, or grammar under scrutiny, as well as eliciting further discussion. Student writing, presentations, tests and quizzes confirm synthesis of materials relevant to the theme or topic. This approach forms the basis for the Theme-based approach to language teaching. Among Theme-based, Sheltered, and Adjunct approaches, Theme-based is the most widely spread according to Brinton et al., (1992), and proves unlike other more traditional language teaching approaches in 3 ways. 1) More traditional approaches may limit language support to a single activity, such as reading or writing. 2) The variety of activities offered by the Theme-based approach are substantial enough to provide context, and support content, and 3) the theme or topic, as well as all of its components, including text types, formats, and activities, are typically engineered by the language instructor from some outside source, rather than taken from a course textbook. This has the advantage, given the unusual amount of exposure the student receives to the language in multiple forms, of developing in the student superior language processing skills as they analyze and compare information, separate fact from opinion, and learn to constructively criticize their work and the work of others (Brinton et al., 1992).

Another approach to the Theme-based model, is a topic based curriculum characterized by Brinton et al.,

(1992), Dantas and Larson (1996), Stoller (1999), Pally (1999), and others as a course in which the curriculum revolves around one topic or theme, called perhaps the core topic/theme, surrounded by other smaller topics which support the core topic/theme. It is designed to simulate a university course in that explicit instruction in language and academic skills are taught over a sustained period of time. An advantage to this approach is that through constant coverage of one topic over an extended period, “topic-related vocabulary and concepts are continuously recycled through various materials, and students become increasingly able to communicate their ideas on the topic(s) fluently” (Brinton et al., 1992; p. 15; See also Pally, 1999).

This topic based model also developed out of concern posited by Pally (2001) and Evers (2007), that L2 students may not be developing the critical and analytical skills needed to properly address in discourse or writing, profound issues raised in university level reading and discussion in the second language. Research conducted by the likes of Brinton et al., (1992), Stoller (1999), Pally (1999), Evers (2007), and others, has long asserted that learning language in a sustained way best mimicked the attributes of a real university course, and that L2 student would better be able to manage the complexities of critical and analytical thinking, reading, writing, and discussion in the language of their content courses if support for sustained content learning could be achieved and maintained.

Brinton et al., (1992), and Dantas-Whitney & Larson (1996) point out that the Sheltered-approach to language teaching is different from the Theme-based approach, or the topic/sustained-content model, in that rather than the course being built around a theme or topic, using outside sources somehow specific to the context of the theme or topic to help students develop L2 competence within specific topic areas, L2 students master content material with the help of a content area specialist that either teaches or visits the language class regularly. Segregated from the Native English speaking students, L2 students learn area content without the pressure of the native speaking element. This in effect, as reported by Krashen,

Places all second language learners in the same linguistic boat, thereby enabling them it is believed, to benefit from the adjustments and simplifications made by native speakers in communication with the second language learners, and from low-anxiety situations. Cited in Brinton et al., (1992, p. 16)

Sheltered language classes it is believed in a similar fashion to immersion education, give L2 students an edge in their eventual contents courses through ample exposure to the target language (Brinton et al., 1992; Evers 2007). Sheltered language classes, through providing ample exposure to the L2, may be somewhat simplified to accommodate less than proficient L2 readers, speakers, writers and listeners (Brinton et al., 1992). Those institutions wishing to implement a sheltered approach might find they are somewhat constrained by the lack of content area specialists to teach or lecture, should they be other than an institution without both language and content courses to offer, such as a language school or an adult learning center.

The Adjunct language approach is even farther distanced from the Theme-based and Sheltered approaches, in that the language course and the content course are taught collaboratively. That is, the language and content instructors work cooperatively to develop curriculum that can be shared across the two disciplines. Typically, students are sheltered in the language course, but share equally in all facets of the content course, in that the lectures they listen to, the homework assignments they are given, tests, quizzes, etc., complement those of their native speaking peers. The Adjunct model is probably the hardest to implement of the 3 currently under discussion, as a great deal of investigation, collaboration, and coordination must take place between the content instructor and language instructors. Dantas-Whitney & Demit (2002), and Brinton et al., (1992) champion the



belief that should content and language instructors agree to institute such a model, especially for academic credit, the institution harboring the two disciplines must be involved and supportive. Finally there are curriculum changes that both departments will have to consider if the two disciplines are to complement each other. This is key if students, faculty, and administrators, all equally significant participants in implementing the Adjunct model successfully, are to stand behind the idea.

The Adjunct approach maintained by Dantas-Whitney & Larson (1996) most closely imitates the content course in that unlike the Theme-based and Sheltered approaches, the students in this type of approach are actually enrolled in content courses alongside their language courses. Much as in the Sheltered approach, students conceivably through prolonged, ample exposure directly to the L2, will acquire overtly as well as implicitly the vocabulary, grammar, speaking and listening skills necessary for success in all their university courses. Furthermore, colloquialisms, as well as social, and cultural norms, all quite necessary for a smooth transition into the university community, will be acquired (Dantas-Whitney & Dimmitt 2002).

Despite the differences or similarities in content approaches used, they all share 3 distinguishing features, which are 1) “The common underlying assumption that successful language learning occurs when student are presented with target language material in a meaningful, contextualized form with the primary focus on acquiring information” (Brinton et al., 1992, p. 17). 2) Authentic tasks and materials which accurately mirror the demands placed on students in tertiary education are used to acculturate ESL students to the native speaking university or professional environment, and meet students’ needs (Bosher 1992). Authentic materials are called ‘authentic’ in that they are or were not originally designed for language courses. Instructors must use strategies as they adapt such material for the language course, that help their students understand and use the material to their benefit. 3) As teachers help students through reading, writing, and discourse to process content material, it is assumed student needs are being met to some degree through “increased redundancy and exemplification, use of advance organizers, frequent comprehension checks, and straightforward, frequent assignments and assessment procedures” (Brinton et al., 1992, p. 18).

As we have seen, content approaches appeal by design to either students’ professional or academic needs by heightening student awareness of the materials and methods used in content areas of interest or necessity. L2 students plausibly need information specific either for work or academia that will be most beneficial to success in their chosen area. That is not to say that integrated skills instruction does not share an equal, if not essential part in the metamorphosis of the language students’ communication ability at all levels of the target society. Rather that students, made clear by authors including Brinton et al., (1992), Fox (1994), Stoller (1999) Flowerdew & Peacock (2001), and others, need the language skills and the information to coexist in equal measure to be most effective in content areas after life as a language student.

Though there are other content approaches, historically, the 6 mentioned here have dominated ESL pedagogy since the 1970’s, as teacher/researchers persistently looked for ways to get language students more involved in content. To prepare students more suitably for academia in a new culture, using the L2, to focus on, interpret, and translate situations and context. They have impacted ESL programs throughout the world, including the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States, as well as many non-native English speaking countries including post-colonial Hong Kong, Taiwan, and India (Flowerdew & Peacock 2001). Some more contemporary methods and the pedagogy that define them, like the theme, sheltered, and the adjunct approaches continue to guide and transform ESL instruction, influencing how we perceive and use content to help ESL students achieve their professional and academic objectives. Whichever pedagogy or methodology we perceive to be best for our English language students, we must not neglect the fact that many

of them will choose to move on after ESL to pursue other academic endeavors. Endeavors that are sure to prove as challenging academically as they are linguistically. Research has shown that one sure way to prepare them is by exposing them to content they will engage in as undergraduate or postgraduate students. Likely for which they will be unprepared to meet head on in a language environment that far outmatches what they experienced as ESL students. It is our responsibility to prepare them not only academically, but also linguistically for the rigors of university life after English language training.

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