What is The Rationale for Content-Based Second Language Courses, or Bridge Classes?

Jody A. Friberg

　海外で英語を勉強する大学生のために，35年にわたって教員および研究者により，様々な研究が行われてきました。これまでIntensive English Program（IEP；集中英語プログラム）において，学部レベルの英語の勉強と大学の科目を合わせることに困難を伴っています。学生が受講を望むもの，学部の方針，管理体制に基づく既存の言語カリキュラムにcontent-based approaches（内容に基づく教授方法）を合わせるにあたって問題を抱えていました（Brinton et al., 1992; Stoller 1999; Dantas-Whitney & Dimmitt 2002）。このため，IEPを用いるために，内容に基づく教授方法を最適化し，内容教育と言語教授法を合わせる必要があるものと考えます。

Introduction

Largely, the rationale for content-based second language courses, or bridge classes, and integrating these with language instruction, derives from the call of teachers/researchers for curriculum that appeals directly to the content needs of ESL students, as those needs apply to the undergraduate courses many ESL students will be taking after they finish ESL (Johns 1988; Brinton et al., 1992; Bosher, 1992; Pally 1994). Though teacher/researchers over the last 35 years have made tremendous efforts, to prepare students for content as it may be experienced by an ESL student new to undergraduate studies in the L2, it was not always the case, as some university-based intensive English programs (IEPs) struggled to integrate content-based approaches into their already existing language curricula based on student acceptance, faculty indecision, and administrative policies (Brinton et al., 1992; Stoller 1999; Dantas-Whitney & Dimmitt 2002). Rationalizing content-based programs therefore became a necessary part of convincing IEPs, and their constituents to integrate content approaches and language instruction.

In their advocacy for integrated content-based programs, teacher/researchers have either through practice or pure hypothesis, created rationale for content instruction that continues to drive it into either thought or action, in contexts that range across several facets of ESL education and curriculum. Believing the benefits of content instruction to far outweigh any shortcomings it may have, some teacher/researchers, such as Brinton et al., (1992), Stoller (1999), Pally (1999), Wiesen (2000), and others, have clearly defined them in the books and articles they have written addressing the subject. Brinton et al., (1992), in their advocacy for content instruction, brought to bare 5 reasons for strongly considering the integration of language instruction and content. These were 1) The eventual use the language learner will make of the target language, 2) Learning, and subsequent motivation which occurs from authentic material relevant to the students content objectives 3) It builds on previously acquired knowledge of subject matter, language, and academic environment, 4) "The learner will become aware of the larger discourse level features and the social interaction patterns which are essential to effective language use and correct grammatical conventions through contextualized use, rather

than fragmented sentence-level usage" (p. 3), 5) New elements from the language are acquired and processed, forming an ever increasing stock of formal, functional, and semantic elements viewed as necessary towards achieving a high level of proficiency in listening and reading (Brinton et al., 1992).

(Brinton et al., 1992), claim that "a second language is learned most effectively when used as the medium to convey informational content of interest and relevance to the learner" (p. vii), and that it is this, the need for curriculum addressing content of interest and relevance to the L2 learner, that drives rationale for courses appealing expressly to content[1].

(Stoller 1999), contends that "Whichever content-based approach is adopted by an EAP program, the benefits are many and include" 1) A degree of reality and purpose is added to the classroom when the artificial separation that has been created between language and content is eliminated, 2) Students learn content through the process of developing both L2 and academic skills simultaneously, 3) Through integration of language skills development and mainstream classroom content, the mainstream classroom environment is closely, and naturally emulated, 4) "Thematically organized materials, which are typical of content-based classrooms, are easier to remember and learn" (Anderson, 1990; Singer, 1990; cited in Stoller, 1999, p. 10), 5) Expertise in a topic area develops to new heights as knowledge is acquired, processed, and then reconstituted in progressively more difficult tasks.

Stoller notes, "students have well-defined academic aspirations and an urgent need to prepare for the content-learning demands of mainstream courses. However, many IEP's continue to endorse the discrete-skills approaches that came into vogue in the 1970's" (p. 10). Stoller furthermore made clear, the potential to deprive students, especially as they near the end of their language program, of the "valuable experience they could derive from a content-based course that integrates skills instruction and holds students accountable for sustained content learning" (p. 10).

Stoller acknowledges the progress that has been made in integrating content instruction in IEP's, when she includes that despite the outdated views of some EAP programs, others are moving towards new approaches that embrace both skills instruction and content instruction, to "meet student's academic content-learning and language-skills needs" (p. 9). Wiesen, (December 2000/January 2001), further supports this notion.

Highlighting Stoller's notion that new approaches are being developed, is her interpretation of an idea she came across at a 1994 TESOL convention, called the "Hybrid Curriculum," in which language and content are fully integrated, and which will be discussed further in this work.

Pally (1999) makes a strong case for content/sustained-content instruction, in which she, citing the work of Merril Swain, James Cummins (1981), Leki & Carson (1997), Loretta Kasper (1997) and others, points to several reasons why content/sustained content instruction best serves the language and academic content needs of L2 students. Namely 1) Students are able to form a coherent argument, broadly defined as "a coherent series of statements leading from a premise to a conclusion, and the act or process of forming reasons and drawing conclusions, and applying them to a case in discussion" (Websters, 1989; cited in Pally, 1999, p. 3)). 2) Sustained content instruction helps all students "who want to understand the factors that affect their lives, from students loans to health insurance, especially to students who did not learn Western protocols of power at home" Pally (1999, p. 7). 3) By prolonged, mandatory exposure to data collection, the contents of which are drawn out through discourse, presentation, or writing, students "become familiar with the argumentation and rhetorical conventions of a discipline" (Pally, 1999, p. 8). Students acquire "content area expertise" (p. 8), and contextual as well as linguistic subject area sophistication, 4) Increased motivation.

It is very important to note that Loretta Kasper, (1997), cited by Pally, (1999), "found that students who

had been in sustained content courses had higher pass rates into mainstream English and higher graduation records" (Pally, 1999, p. 12).

Sustained content instruction as defined by Pally (1999), is the practice of studying "one subject area", alongside language and its various parts, including writing, listening, speaking, reading, and grammatical forms, over a sustained period of time, "often for a semester." The content "may center on one text or it may rely on many texts (book chapter, periodical literature, Internet sources etc.), with each one illuminating one aspect of a central subject" (p. 2). Grasping content is key, and students in effect are learning the language skills they need to grasp content. Sustained content classes are somewhat different from content classes in that unlike many content approaches, where the language class is connected in some fashion to a content class, the sustained content class is a language class taught like a university course without the linkages characteristic of the content class.

Though I tend to agree strongly with Pally's logic on content and sustained content, and the possibilities that lie within this approach to develop, relevant to academia, student's skills of argumentation, empowerment, rhetorical convention, synthesis, presentation of information autonomously, and motivation, as well as hurdle the rigors of academia, I disagree with her assessment on content classes and the mandatory linkages that purportedly are a compulsory part of the content schema. I have discovered 2 instances, one at the University of Southern Florida and the other at Oregon State University, where bridge classes, also known as content classes, were created and taught using curriculum that had no connection to content courses outside the English Language Center (ELC), to mirror university level course parameters and objectives[2].

Though the content courses that were created ranged from greatly to marginally successful, due to the impact additional tuition fees, lack of administrative support, or issues related to substandard curriculum due to staff with little or no experience integrating language and content can have, the content classes as viewed by staff and students were by and large successful, with both parties feeling that the content courses added greatly to the authenticity of the IEP (Dantas-Whitney & Dimmitt 2002).

Blossom Wiesen, an EAP teacher and coordinator for the English for Academic Purposes Forum at Oranim, School of Education of the Kibbutz Movement, Israel, for the last 24 years, addresses the importance of inspiring and sustaining motivation to learn English at the school, emphasizing that before the students graduating the school with degrees in math, science, psychology, teaching, and so on can do so, they must first graduate from the EAP Program. Complicating matters however, is the fact that despite graduating the EAP Program, many, if not all of the students will go on to work or teach in content areas where the content language is not English, but Hebrew. Wiesen describes the task of inspiring and sustaining motivation in such a situation as daunting, yet welcomes the challenge, describing it as stimulating. One way Wiesen accomplishes this task, is by teaching to content. She rationalizes the efficacy of doing so in the following ways. 1) Teaching to content increases student motivation. This is "considered by teachers as their top priority for achievement", according to the U.S. National Reading Research Center (Guthrie, Alao, & Rinehart, 1997; cited by Wiesen, December 2000/ January 2001, p. 373)). 2) Reading and language skills are most effective when they are used to help student acquire needed content information, rather than when they are taught and learned segregated from content (Wiesen, December 2000/January 2001). 3) Learning through content, learning strategies for content areas are acquired. Wiesen remarks this type of ESL acquisition is different from that acquired in regular ESL courses in that in addition to discrete skills instruction, students are learning the rhetorical conventions, vocabulary, academic register, and formal academic style most likely to be associated with real academic or professional content after ESL/EFL. 4) Teaching in the context of integrated language and content curricula, language/

study skills are combined in a "highly realistic learning environment" (Fredrickson et al., 1991, pp. 200-201; cited by Wiesen, B. December 2000/January 2001, p. 373)). 5) Through what Wiesen (December 2000/January 2001) calls (CBUL), or Content Based Unit Learning, which is consistent with the theme-based approach, students develop through "conceptual themes" and "real world observations", skills vital to success in specific content areas, including education, psychology, and related fields. The skills developed are "self-directed learning, self-expression, social collaboration, and coherence in the curriculum" (Wiesen, December 2000/ January 2001). 6) CBUL "serves to access in-depth knowledge, maintain interest in subject matter, and increase learner confidence" (Wiesen, December 2000/January 2001, p. 378), increasing motivation and participation. 7) Students, through extended content instruction, learn constructs that develop critical and analytical awareness, helping them to differentiate between relevant and irrelevant material (Wiesen, December 2000/January 2001). 8) The CBUL approach heightens student awareness in specific content areas thorough prolonged, in-depth study, in addition to expanding language competency when taught within a multi-skill communicative framework. Students' informational base is further developed through utilization of multiple resources and activities related to content.

Content/discrete skills integrated courses undoubtedly have the potential to help enrolled or matriculating ESL students' transition from an IEP or EAP program to undergraduate level academic courses much easier than would otherwise be expected. As we have seen, they serve the purpose of not only serving the reading, writing, speaking/listening, grammar skills afforded in discrete skills instruction, but also provide acclimatization to the content community through acculturation, socialization, task based rather than form focused, or functional instruction, exposure to relevant rhetorical conventions, and formal academic style. Content/discrete skills integrated courses also imply different approaches to curriculum design, materials development, staff development, and program administration (Briton et al., 1992).

The Hybrid Curriculum lends itself easily to a content/discrete skills integrated approach, in that by its design, which is somewhat similar to the Theme-based approach, different topics can be explored, while concurrently, through the convergence of a core class and thematic units, discrete skills are also developed. The Hybrid model may also be found useful in institutions where there are no content course offerings, such as may be required when using a Sheltered or Adjunct approach. Examples might include adult schools or language institutes. Content for this type of curriculum can be provided and supported entirely by one or two ESL instructors working full time, or as adjuncts, from within a pre-existing IEP or EAP program. Making it even more attractive is the fact that it holds the potential to involve minimal changes in an already existing institutional structure.

Drawbacks might include instructor(s) ultimately having some knowledge of the content area under instruction (Dudley-Evans & St. John 1998). This may inevitably involve the ESL teacher(s) putting in a lot of additional hours to get to know, and thereby properly scaffold and teach the content. Thematic units must be authentic, for example magazines, newspapers, video, and television, and adapted for language teaching purposes. The use of such materials, should they not already be adapted for language teaching, must be adapted for use by the ESL instructor, and strongly linked to the core class so as to properly exploit the language/ content link, involving more time and effort. Having a content area specialist co-teaching with an ESL instructor properly invested in the idea would be ideal. This also however involves additional staffing, which leads to further commitment of funds and resources (Harklau 1994). Also, the content area specialist would need to be sensitized to the needs and abilities of second language learners. Another potential drawback may be the level, and homogenous nature of the curriculum.

No English Language program would be fully complete without a discrete skills component. But it must also be said in light of the developments underway in modern English Language programs today, that motivation among students is difficult to sustain, as is rationalizing sustained English Language study without content concurrently taught alongside discrete skills, to give traction to the idea that English will be useful to students after graduating from language studies.

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[1] See also Hutchinson and Waters 1987 and Song 2006 for material relevant to Content-Based Learning in ESL/EFL contexts.

[2] Nicholas Dimmit & Maria Dantas-Whitney in their book *Intensive English Programs in Postsecondary settings (2002)* highlight instances at USF and OSU where *bridge classes,* otherwise known as *content classes,* were used in USF and OSU IEPs successfully without being connected to a university content class either in or outside the ELC.

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