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CONTENT BASED APPROACH

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Abstract: Content-based learning is one of the most widely studied areas today. This article presents facts and opinions about the advantages and disadvantages of a content-based approach.

Key words:CBA, digital space, website, social networks, email newsletters, EAP, texts, videos, podcasts, infographics ESL/EFL,

A content based approach is a strategy that focuses on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and quality content to attract and retain an audience. Instead of direct advertising, the emphasis is on being useful, informative, and interesting to the audience.

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), CBA is based on two relevant principles:

1. People learn a second language more successfully when they use the language as a means of acquiring information, rather than as an end in itself.
2. CBA better reflects learners' needs for learning a second language.[1]

A content based approach plays a key role in today's digital space – especially in marketing, education and user experience. A content based approach can create an expert image and increases trust in a brand, specialist or product.

A CBA curriculum is based on a subject matter core, uses authentic language and texts, and is guided by learner needs. This means that the curriculum is based on a certain subject matter and communicative competence is acquired in the context of learning about certain topics in that subject area.[2]

A content based approach is created taking into account the interests, needs, and problems of the target audience. 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.

A content based approach as the basis of communication: all communication channels (website, social networks, email newsletters) are subject to a common content strategy.

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[1] Richards, J. & Rodgers, T. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching.* Second Edition. NY: Cambridge University Press.
[2] Stryker, Stephen B., ed. Leaver, Betty Lou, ed. (1997). *Content-based instruction in foreign language education : models and methods*. Georgetown University Press. ISBN 087840659X.

There are many ways to approach creating a CBA lesson. This is one possible way.

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, reference books, audio or video of lectures or even real people.

During 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 fulfill 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.
- 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.

A content based approach can effect long time: instead of immediate benefits, sustainable trust and expertise are built. It can make learning a language more interesting and motivating. Students can use the language to fulfill a real purpose, which can make students both more independent and confident. Moreover, Students can also develop a much wider knowledge of the world through CBA which can feed back into improving and supporting their general educational needs. In addition, 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. What is more, CBA 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. Lastly, 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.

CBA is "...an approach to language instruction that integrates the presentation of topics or tasks from subject matter classes (e.g., math, social studies) within the context of teaching a second or foreign language".[3]

The forms of content based approach different formats are used - texts, videos, podcasts, infographics, etc.

However, content based approach has some drawbacks. Because CBA isn't explicitly focused on language learning, some students may feel confused or may even feel that they aren't improving their language skills. Deal with this by including some form of language

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[3] Crandall, J., & Tucker, G. R. (1990). Content-based instruction in second and foreign languages. In A. Padilla, H. H. Fairchild, & C. Valadez (Eds.), *Foreign language education: Issues and strategies.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

focused follow-up exercises to help draw attention to linguistic features within the materials and consolidate any difficult vocabulary or grammar points. Also, 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. Try sharing your rationale with students and explain the benefits of using the target language rather than their mother tongue.

It can be hard to find information sources and texts that lower levels can understand. Also the sharing of information in the target language may cause great difficulties. A possible way around this at lower levels is either 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 should reduce the level of challenge.

Some students may copy directly from the source texts they use to get their information. Avoid this 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.

To sum up, while CBI can be both challenging and demanding for the teacher and the students, it can also be very stimulating and rewarding. Based on this quotation we know that a CBI model makes use of a language and a subject matter component. Regarding the subject matter component it has been mentioned throughout the paper that some disciplines such as literature lend themselves better to content-based instruction. Moreover, literature roles in ESL/EFL classrooms are undeniably important in language pedagogy. According to Sagliano and Greenfield (1998), the use of collaborative content-based literature teaching can improve EFL students' motivation and comprehension.[4]

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