“To Put Language into Their Souls”
A Look at Traditional Language - Based Methods and Content – Based Instruction in Teaching English

Brynhildur Veigarsdóttir
270770-5259

University of Iceland
School of Education
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Abstract

The focus of this thesis is to take a look at traditional language - based methods and content-based instruction in teaching English. To get a better picture of how the content-based language instruction works, I observed an English teacher at a middle school in Cincinnati, Ohio. The teacher teaches language arts and modified social studies to students who have English as their second language. My research question is “How is traditional language-based teaching different from content-based instruction?“ My research points out that traditional-based methods are focused on teaching the foreign language through linguistic aspects while content-based instruction teaches the language through content matter such as math, science, social studies and language arts and it integrates all four language skills where as the traditional methods teach the skills through isolated activities.
Table of contents

1. Introduction ................................................................. 4

2. English Language Learners ............................................. 4
   2.1 Types of English Learners and Models of English Instruction ....  5
           2.1.1 The EFL model .................................................. 6
           2.1.2 The ESL Model .................................................. 7

3. Second Language Acquisition ......................................... 8
   3.1 The Comprehensible Input ........................................... 9

4. Traditional Language – Based Teaching Methods .............. 10
   4.1 The Grammar-Translation Method .................................. 10
   4.2 The Direct Method .................................................... 12
   4.3 The Audio – Lingual Method ....................................... 13

5. Content – Based Language Instruction ............................. 14
   5.1 Content-Based Teaching Models ................................... 16
   5.2 The Three Goals/Objectives of Integrated Instruction .......... 17

6. Field Data and Analysis ................................................... 18
   6.1 The Classes .......................................................... 18
           6.1.1 ESL Language Arts for 5th Graders ....................... 19
           6.1.2 ESL Language Arts for 6th Graders ....................... 20
           6.1.3 Modified Social Studies for 6th Grade ESL Students ... 21

7. Data Analysis ............................................................. 23
   7.1 General Characteristics ............................................. 23
   7.2 Objectives/Goals ..................................................... 25
   7.3 Teaching Models ..................................................... 26
   7.4 Teaching Methods and Approaches ................................ 26

8. Conclusion ..................................................................... 28

9. References ..................................................................... 29
1. Introduction

The main focus of this B. Ed. thesis is on traditional language-based teaching and content-based language instruction in English. My research question is “How is content-based language instruction different from traditional language-based teaching?” The thesis discusses the Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct Method, the Audio – Lingual Method and an approach called Content-Based Instruction (CBI). The three methods represent traditional ways of teaching and are mainly based on the linguistic aspects of language while CBI, which is a more recent addition to the field of language teaching, builds on the idea that teaching language through content matter like math, language arts, social studies, and science is a more effective way to learn a new language. Special attention is on CBI and to get a better idea about the approach, I observed a teacher at an intermediate school in Ohio who uses CBI in her classroom. The teacher teaches classes to students who do not speak English as their first language. The objective of the observation was to see which characteristics of CBI were being applied in the classroom.

In addition to my main research focus, I look at types of English language learners and how teaching English as a second language is different from teaching English as a foreign language. I also discuss second language acquisition (SLA) to see how it has influenced methods and approaches in the field.

The research paper is organized the following way: the second chapter discusses English language learners. The third one deals with theories of second language acquisition. Chapter four describes traditional language – based methods in language teaching while chapter five gives an overview of content-based instruction. Chapter six has my field data and chapter seven focuses on the analyses of the classes. The thesis ends with a conclusion where I provide my thoughts in relation to my research question.

2. English Language Learners

Every culture in the world has developed an oral language. Most people go through the process of acquiring their first language in an informal setting and it does not require any specific instruction. A baby born in the United States will acquire English naturally if that is the native language of its caretakers. Many people also learn a second
language in addition to their native one. The process of learning a second language can take place the same way as with the first language. Second language acquisition can happen naturally as the person is living in a country where the second language is spoken or it can be learned in a school and/or through a language program. The way people learn a second language depends on the situation they are in. Often people need to learn a second language because they have relocated to another country for some reason while others stay in their native homes and learn foreign languages in settings like public schools. Whatever the situation, it is a fact that millions of people around the world learn English as a second or a foreign language.

Children around the world are learning English earlier. Traditionally, in many countries around the world adolescents start studying English at lower-secondary level between the ages of eleven and twelve. This, however, is changing as many schools have moved English down to the primary level and children as young as five and six, and even younger, are learning it. English learners tend to be defined in terms of the purpose they are studying English. Some people learn English to use it primarily as a language of international communication while others need to learn it because they are living in a new country. When it comes to the formal study of English there are strong traditional models of teaching English which have dominated language teaching in the second half of the 20th century. There is an ongoing debate about the methods and approaches used in teaching English, but most of the debate is concentrated on two models: the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) and the teaching of English as a second language (ESL) (Graddol, 2006).

2.1. Types of English Learners and Models of English Instruction

There are three groups of English language speakers: those who speak it as a first language, those who acquire it as a second language, and those who learn it as a foreign language. English is the first language of about 400 million people and over 50 million children and adults study English as a second language while 800 million study it as a foreign language (Graddol, 2006).

There exists great diversity in English language learners. The term English Language Learner (ELL) is used for a person who does not speak English as his or her
first language. English language learners in the United States are those who normally do not speak English at home as a primary language. English learners are not all at the same proficiency levels and some speak better English than others. Those who are beginners to intermediate in English are often referred to as having limited English proficiency (LEP). That term is used in federal legislation and other official documents in the United States. The term *English as a Second Language* (ESL) and *English for Speakers of Other Languages* (ESOL) are normally used to refer to a person who is acquiring English as a second language (Peregoy and Boyle, 2005). The term EFL is used for people or students who are learning English as a foreign language often in their native countries.

2.1.1. *The EFL Model*

The term EFL refers to students whose native language is not English. In an EFL situation, English is not the native language of the student and learning of English usually takes place in the student’s home country within the public school system, in a private school, a private language program, or with an English tutor. The goal of EFL is to prepare students to learn the language so they can use it in communication outside the classroom or for further study.

Modern EFL is for the most part a 19th century phenomenon with firm roots in the teaching of the classical languages. This model points out the importance of learning about the culture and the society of the language people are studying. Its methodology is focused on effective learning and it places emphasis on the importance of learners being able to speak and write English like a native speaker. EFL students are for the most part viewed as outsiders because they are foreigners struggling to learn the language. When EFLs are compared to native speakers, few will ever speak the foreign language perfectly (Graddol, 2006). The modern debate is about teaching methods and approaches used in EFL and how they have been set up for failure as students rarely reach a level of fluency which puts them in a group with native speakers.
2.1.2. The ESL Model

English as a second language is used for people who do not have English as their first language. The term is most often used in countries like Australia, Canada and the United States where English is the primary language. These countries have a large number of people who come from all over the world to live, study and work. English becomes the secondary language for them. ESL, unlike EFL, sees the importance of English in the society in which it is taught as it is important for people to become proficient users of the language in order to adapt quicker to the new society they are living in. In EFL classes, people are not dealing with the second language outside the classroom like in ESL classes. In countries that have ESL programs the language is used both in classes as well as outside of the classroom as it is the native language of those countries.

ESL, like EFL dates back to the 19th century and goes back to the time when the British Empire needed to teach the local people in their colonies English so they could conduct their administration there. This lead to English often being the second language of the educated middle classes in the colonies and it was surrounded by complex, cultural politics. The history of ESL in countries like USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, is different from the British one. Those countries had, and still have large population of immigrants that need to be assimilated and given a new identity and the English language is one part of that identity. These countries teach ESL to their immigrants and an important part is to teach translation and interpretation as these are important skills for ESL students (Graddol, 2006).

In England the situation is different from the one in North America and Australia as the role of the classroom is to extend students’ knowledge of the language and the tradition is to teach them the formal and standard form of English as many students have been exposed to a local vernacular type of English which is the result of English coming into contact with local languages during colonization of countries such as India. Many children learn a vernacular while growing up, often switching from English to their native language (Graddol, 2006).

One of the objectives of ESL is to teach individuals enough English to function within the society so he or she can get a job or attend a school if applicable in the new country. Another goal is to teach students the type of English they can use in their studies as it
differs from the English which is used for communicative purposes. Cummins was one of the first researchers to define the term Academic Language. He noticed that ESL students were often placed in special education classes in Canada because they scored badly on tests. These students had the communicative abilities but they had a hard time understanding their textbooks and writing papers. It was assumed that because the students scored so poorly on tests that something must be wrong with them developmentally. Cummins showed that the students were not developmentally impaired. Their poor scores reflected a lack of academic English. Cummins made a distinction between conversational English and academic English (Freeman and Freeman, 2007).

Both EFL and ESL have roots in 19th century classical languages and are hosted within the wider term of ELT. Although these two models represent the most common approaches and methods used in English instruction today, new models, which are significantly different from these two, are seeing the light of day like Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) which will be described later in the paper.

3. Second Language Acquisition

The systematic study of Second Language Acquisition has developed significantly in the past 40 to 45 years. The term SLA refers to a person who is in the process of learning a language other than his or her own (Ellis, 1997). In other words, SLA is the study of the acquisition of a language beyond the primary language and about how people can make a new language system when they have had very little exposure with the second language (Gass and Selinker, 2001).

The development of SLA in the United States traces its roots to the behavioral psychology of Skinner and linguistic structuralism of the 1950s and early 1960s. The behaviorist view goes back to the American writers of the 1930s who claimed that all behavior is learned and language acquisition is only another form of behavior (Wyse and Jones, 2001). According to this theory, language learning takes place through repetitive grammatical drills and memorization. The main criticism of this theory is that it fails to take into consideration notions about social, functional, and cultural aspects of language acquisition. Gersten and Hudelson talk about the language being
‘decontextualized’ (2005) meaning the language is taught in grammatical isolation where it is cut apart from its cultural and social functions. This means that the language is taught from a linguistic standpoint without much consideration to the above mentioned factors.

The 1960s and 1970s saw a new paradigm emerge in the field of SLA when the theory of innate acquisition was presented by an American linguist named Noam Chomsky. His theory was very influential in the field of linguistics as it questioned the behaviorist model. Chomsky claimed the behaviorist perspective failed to look at the logical problem of language acquisition, namely the fact that children learn more of the language than they are exposed to. The language children are exposed to on daily bases includes false starts, incomplete sentences, and grammatical mistakes. Still, children manage to learn the difference between what is correct and what is incorrect. According to Chomsky, children are born with the specific ability to learn on their own the underlying rules of a language system they are exposed to (Freeman and Freeman, 2007). Chomsky’s theories are valuable for educators in terms of how he spoke against the behaviorist model. He pointed out that the child is an active learner and not a parrot that repeats everything it hears. However, Chomsky did not take into consideration factors like culture and social interaction. Furthermore, he did not look at language in terms of its purposes or functions and the way it can be different depending on context and intention (Gersten and Hudelson, 2005).

3.1. Comprehensible Input

A linguist named Stephen Krashen claims that the same process that enables a child to acquire a first language applies to a child or an adult learning a second language (Freeman and Freeman, 2007). According to him, many students who study a foreign language inside a classroom do not reach a high level of competency and quickly lose their ability to speak the language if they are not being exposed to it in the environment they live in. However, people who live in a foreign country seem to be able to acquire the language naturally and retain it. The difference between the two, according to Krashen, is that second language is learned when it is taught in a classroom and acquired when a person picks it up naturally in the foreign country he or she is living in.
(ibid). Krashen has written extensively on second language acquisition and his most influential contribution to the field of SLA is his theory of *Comprehensible Input* (CI).

The CI theory has been very influential in shaping prominent modern theories in second language acquisition. According to Krashen, the theory is meant to answer the most important question in language education which is “How does language acquisition occur?” The theory basically states that in order for a person to acquire a language it has to take place in a natural succession, or levels. A language acquirer who is at level “I” must get a comprehensible input that is at that level “+ 1”. The formula “I +1” involves the idea that we only acquire language when it goes a little beyond our current knowledge of the language as the letter “I” stands for our current linguistic knowledge, extra linguistic knowledge as well as our knowledge about the world. The “+1” represent new knowledge or language structures that we are in the process of acquiring. Krashen believes that there is only one possible way for people to acquire a language. Language acquisition only happens when people understand messages or receive ‘comprehensible input’. In other words, people acquire language when they understand what they hear and read (Krashen, 1992).

4. Traditional Language - Based Teaching Methods

This chapter is about methods considered by scholars to be traditional and conservative in their nature like the Grammar- Translation Method, the Direct- Method and the Audio-Lingual Method. A method can be defined as a single set of procedure teachers follow in their teaching and are usually based on a set of beliefs about the nature of language and learning (Nunan, 2003).

4.1. The Grammar-Translation Method

This method dominated language teaching for much of the last century. It has had many different names and is also known as the classical method because it was first used in the teaching of the classical languages like Latin and Greek. This method focuses on grammar and vocabulary. In the twentieth century, the term *English* was used to
indicate only grammar, and reading and writing were not even a part of it (Wyse and Jones, 2001). This fact influenced the teaching of English at that time and is a contributing factor in the development of the method.

In a class where the teacher applies the Grammar-Translation Method, students receive vocabulary lists often accompanied by translation equivalents and grammatical rules. The main objective of this method is to assist students in reading literature written in the target language rather than develop fluency in the spoken one. A typical activity includes a line by line reading of a text in the target language followed by a translation to the native language. The teacher asks questions to check comprehension and students ask questions about vocabulary (Lightbrown and Spada, 2006). The main characteristics of this method are:

- Literary language is superior to the spoken language. Students learn only about the target culture through literature and fine arts.
- It is important for students to learn how to translate from one language into another successfully.
- It is not important to be able to communicate in the target language.
- Main skills to be learned are reading and writing. Little attention is paid to speaking and listening and pronunciation is not important.
- Students have to listen to the teacher as he is the authority in the classroom. It is very important to get correct answers.
- There exist matching words in all languages.
- The focus is on the similarity between the native and target languages.
- It is important to study grammar rules and know the form of the target language.
- Grammar is taught deductively. Students use rules they have learned in their work.
- Memorization of grammar rules is considered good mental exercise and students are expected to use rules they have learned in their work in their language learning.
- The emphasis is on parrot learning, and memorizing of language aspects such as the conjugation of verbs and other elements of grammar.

(Larsen-Freeman, 2000)
Linguists started to turn away from the principles of the Grammar-Translation Method around 1880s to 1890s and a reform took place which rejected the teaching of modern languages through a grammatical paradigm (McArthur, 1992). The Grammar-Translation Method was considered to be deficient in preparing students to communicate in the language orally. A new method based on speech, rather than grammar became popular

4.2. The Direct – Method

In the late 1800s, researchers became interested in using a model that built on how children learn their first language and it became popular to teach the language by using actions and oral presentations of the new language where the teacher makes statements and carries out actions to demonstrate what he or she is talking about (Helgesen, 2003). The Direct -Method places importance on listening and the language is taught orally. No translation is allowed and the teacher uses various props and other regalia to make students understand because meaning is to be conveyed directly in the target language. The main characteristics of the Direct- Method are:

- Reading is developed through speaking. Language is first and foremost based on speech.
- The culture is more than fine art and literature. It consists of things like geography, local customs, people and etc.
- Teachers should use realia and props to help students understand.
- Using the native language in the classroom is not allowed.
- The teacher needs to use props to demonstrate his point and not explain or translate.
- Vocabulary is acquired naturally by speaking the language. Students need to learn how to think in the target language.
- Communication is the most important part of language.
- Students should learn the right pronunciation from the beginning.
- Every lesson should give students an opportunity to practice the language in real situation.
- Grammar is taught inductively in activities like fill in the blanks.
- The teacher gives dictations because it is important to be able to write in the language.
- The lessons are developed around topics. Not linguistic structures.
- It is important that students learn about the culture of the target language.

(Larsen-Freeman, 2000)

4.3. The Audio-Lingual Method

Like the Direct Method, the Audio-Lingual Method is based on oral approach. However, it is very different from the Direct Method because instead of learning language through exposure to situations, the Audio-Lingual Method focuses on grammar patterns. Although the method emphasizes speaking, it rarely allows beginning students to speak freely because they can make mistakes which can become habit forming (Lightbrown and Spada, 2006). The main characteristics of this method are:

- The native language and the target language have separate systems and they should be kept apart.
- The teacher is the model of the target language and shows students how things are supposed to sound.
- Language learning is a matter of developing a set of habits through drilling of grammar.
- It is important to avoid errors as they can become habit forming.
- The emphasis is on the communicative part of the language.
- Emphasis is on inductive grammar exercises like ‘fill in the blank’ exercises.
- The teacher gives students feedback to reinforce correct habits.
- The most important thing is to learn structural patterns. Vocabulary comes second.
- Language is learned as habits and students can overcome habits of their native language and acquire new habits for the foreign language.
- The teacher has to teach about the culture of the foreign language.

(Larsen - Freeman, 2000).
5. Content-Based Language Instruction

Content-based language instruction surfaced in the mid 1980s. Over the last few decades, there has been a change in attitude towards how languages can and should be taught. Recent developments in ESL and EFL have seen a change in methodology and instead of using the term ‘methods’, linguists prefer to use the term ‘approaches’ (McArthur, 1992). Approaches contrast methods because they are more general, philosophical orientations that can have various procedures (Nunan, 2003).

According to Brinton, Snow and Wesche content-based instruction is “...the integration of a particular content with language-teaching aims…” (2003,p.2). Content-based instruction is based on the theory of second language acquisition that claims we acquire a new language rather than learn it. An important element of CBI is to integrate the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. The classes are often organized around certain topics or themed based units and the lesson planning includes different activities (ibid). Content-based instruction focuses on teaching the foreign language across the curriculum instead of isolating it by only focusing on grammar rules and vocabulary and other linguistic elements. By integrating subjects and modifying them, teachers are providing both English and academic content instruction at the same time (Freeman and Freeman, 2007). One very important feature of content-based instruction is to teach language through meaningful content and to “contextualize” the lesson. This basically means that teachers who use this approach need to consider teaching English within its own context by using authentic texts which are relevant to students’ second language needs as the trend has been for language teachers to use a written or oral text that has been especially prepared for language teaching like textbooks (Brinton, Snow, and Wesche, 2003). In content-based instruction, teachers have to let the content dictate the selection of teaching material to be taught and they are asked to look at their instruction in a new way, or from the perspective of truly contextualizing their lessons by using content as their reference point (Ibid).

Content-based instruction is not a new approach. It has been known for quite some time that academic subjects provide natural content for language instruction. The main characteristics of this approach are the following:
The approach teaches through content matter like literature, geography, math, and social studies.

The teacher builds on student’s previous knowledge.

Students are motivated to learn when they realize the language they are learning has a meaning for them.

The teacher scaffolds the linguistic content.

It is easier for students to acquire vocabulary when they are given contextual clues that help them understand the meaning of what they are learning.

Speaking is about more than just using the language in conversations. It also has to do with the ability to read, discuss and write about content from other areas.

Students work with meaningful and cognitively demanding language and content that is based on authentic material and activities.

The teacher uses visual support and realia to support understanding as well as examples when demonstrating a complicated matter.

Material is often organized in thematic units about certain subjects like the body parts, weather, illness and animals.

One of the main goals of content-based instruction is to help students acquire academic language.

(Larsen-Freeman, 2000)

Content-based instruction belongs in a group with other content integrating learning approaches like CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). This approach has become increasingly popular in Europe. It brings together curriculum content such as social studies and math and connects it with English where the two are taught together. The students do not have to have a high level of proficiency in English to learn content as they are supported through the process. This approach shares many of the same characteristics as CBI and is currently being used in secondary schools. In this approach, teachers have to work closely with the subject teachers to make certain that language development goes hand in hand with the content matter (Graddol, 2006)
5.1. Content-Based Teaching Models
There are three kinds of content-based teaching models: theme-based instruction, sheltered instruction and adjunct language instruction.

Theme-based instruction is organized around a certain topic or a theme like family, animals, the Civil War and etc. The teacher decides on the length of the topic which can span a large scale of themes. This format is very different from traditional language teaching methods that normally focus on only one activity as theme-based instruction can center on many within the same unit. The main purpose of this model is to help students develop second language competence within certain topic areas. Sheltered instruction helps students become proficient in content material. The content courses are taught in the second language to a segregated group of students by a content area specialist who is also bilingual, meaning the teacher also knows the native language of his students. This type of model is different from the theme-based one because they have to take place in an institutional framework like high school, community college, or a university. Adjunct Language Instruction is when students are enrolled in two linked courses where one is a language course and the other one a content course. The idea behind this model is the two courses share the content base and complement each other in relations to coordinated assignments. The students are sheltered in the language course and integrated in the content course where both native and non-native students attend the same class. The adjunct model helps students to master content material and introduces them to second language academic discourse and it helps them to develop academic skills they can transfer (Brinton, Snow and Wesche, 2003).

The three models have numerous things in common like presenting students with target language material that is both meaningful and contextualized. Another feature is the emphasis on using authentic tasks and material. The three formats differ however when it comes to the instructional part as the amount of integration between language and content varies. In the theme-based model, the language has content orientation while the sheltered model focuses primarily on content. The adjunct model links content and language. In a simpler term: theme-based model is an ESL course while sheltered is a content course and adjunct has aspects of both. In theme-based classes, the teacher is responsible for the language and content and in the sheltered
model he or she is responsible for content and incidental language. In the adjunct model there are two different teachers where one is in charge of content instruction and the other teaches language (ibid).

5.2. The Three Goals of Integrated Instruction

There are three major categories of goals that are important for ESL students so they may be successful with their academics: content goals, language goals, and general skills goals. Content goals focus on knowledge and skills. They are made for conceptual learning in a specific content area. Local, state, and national standards are developed for each subject area which shape content goals. This means that the teacher must use material which is appropriate for the cognitive level of the student and it has to account into things like prior knowledge, experiences, beliefs, and values of the student. This should all be a part of the lesson planning. Language goals include linguistic goals like grammar and vocabulary, and communicative goals like stating one’s opinion. This goal also has content-obligatory language and content-compatible language. These two are important for understanding and communicating about certain topics like insects. It also has technical vocabulary and helps students to develop certain skills to inform, define and analyze a story or some other topic. Language goals help students participate in content-focused activities. General skill goals focus on acquisition, practice and study skills, research skills, learning strategies, and social skills. These goals concentrate on teaching students how to skim, scan, outline, summarize, to listen carefully for meaning, taking notes, writing reports, and giving presentations. All of these are important study skills necessary to succeed in school and can be taught in integrated content instruction (Richard-Amato and Snow, 2005). It is important for teachers using approaches like CBI to create classrooms that build on these categories of goals as they are the foundation of academic literacy.
6. Field Data

In March and April of 2009, I observed two different ESL classes and one modified social studies class at an intermediate school in Cincinnati, Ohio. The school is for fifth and sixth graders and is located in a neighborhood that has one of the largest groups of people who do not speak English as a first language. This results in a substantially large group of ESL students. Most of the ESL students come from Japan, South Korea and other Asian countries. The rest is from countries in South America, Africa and Europe.

   The research method used for collecting data was in the form of qualitative study where I observed students and the teacher in action. This method is used to gather information and has been used in ethnographic field studies for a long time. In ethnographic observations the researcher spends an extended period of time in the setting. This is done so the observer can see a natural behavior of the phenomenon he or she is studying (McMillan, 2004). Ethnographic observers write down the things they are observing and it becomes *field notes*. Field notes are detailed written description of the thing being observed (ibid). I was a complete observer meaning I was detached from the participants. I had very little interaction with the students. I sat in an obscure part of the classroom and tried to make my presence interrupt as little as I could. My observation was not as consistent and long term as most ethnographic studies are. My field data is the combination of field notes, material used in classes like the worksheets, workbooks, textbooks and conversations with the teacher.

6.1. Description of the Classes

I observed three different classes. One class had seven students and was a 5th grade jump start language arts acquisition class. The other two were 6th grade modified social studies and 6th grade ESL language arts. The 6th grade modified social studies class had 13 students and the 6th grade language art had 14 students (the same students as in the language arts class except for one).
6.1.1. ESL Language Arts for 5th Graders

This is a language arts class for ESL students in 5th grade who are at the beginner to intermediate level. The teacher had just begun working with students on the book *Revolutionary War on Wednesday* by Mary Pope Osborne from the Magic Tree House series. In the book the main heroes, Anny and Jack, who are kids, are transported back to the Revolutionary War in their tree house which works like a time machine. They meet George Washington, the leader of the Continental Army, and help him defeat the British army at Yorktown. Although Anny and Jack are fictional characters, the book is based on actual events.

The teacher had prepared a packet with information about the American Revolution for her students. She put the packet together with material she had and used different sources in order to give her students a comprehensive idea about the war and the historical time it took place in. She wanted students to learn how America was at that particular time in history and be aware of things like how people dressed, the jobs they did, and how they lived (teacher’s comment). The reason she chose this subject at this point in the school year was because these students were about to start learning about the American Revolution and government in their social studies class in their mainstream classroom and she wanted to prepare them in the ESL class to give them some kind of pre-knowledge about the subject. In addition to the Magic Tree House book, the teacher used the *Revolutionary War Research Guide #11* by Natalie Pope Boyce which is a non-fiction companion to the book. The research guide sticks to the facts and uses language which is easy to understand and accessible for children. In the research guide there are pictures and explanations of concepts like colony, slaves, soldier as well as many others. The packet of material the teacher prepared included worksheets for the students as part of the activities planned for this topic.

In the classes I observed, the first activity of the day was normally that the teacher read a few chapters of the book aloud to students because she did not want language to interfere with reading (teacher’s comment). She told me that she usually reads aloud to the students because she wants them to hear the correct pronunciation and also the story would be in ‘bites’ rather than a fluent, coherent text if she let students read. She was also afraid that if the students read the story aloud, then the others would have a hard time understanding it as most students have problems with
pronouncing English words. All the students had copies of the book to follow the teacher. After each chapter, the teacher asked inferential questions to check comprehension.

When the reading part was over, students had to work through their worksheets individually. After working through the worksheets, the students discussed the book with each other and the teacher. However, there never seemed to be a lot of discussions as the teacher usually did all the talking. I never heard the teacher mention the word grammar and all work was done either by talking about the book or writing answers to the questions. The teacher was very expressive when she read the story aloud to students and used different inflection in her voice for the characters. She read the book rather slowly and looked up regularly to ask students if they had understood a particular word or concept. Students raised their hands to answer. The atmosphere was relaxed (my observation). The teacher never corrected anyone when they did not use correct pronunciation. She also joked with students and scolded them if they did not seem to pay attention.

One time, towards the end of one class, the teacher asked the students to get out their spiral notebooks. She made a Venn diagram and used it to explain to them how the legal system works in the United States. She told students that the executive branch is the boss, the judicial branch decides if the rules are fair, and the legislative branch makes the law. This was the only activity with this class that I saw the teacher use a chart like that in her teaching as a visual support.

6.1.2. ESL Language Arts for 6th Graders

This class was reading the book *Number the Stars* by Louis Lowry. The reason the teacher chose to read this book to her 6th graders is because this book is normally read in 5th grade. ESL teachers tend use material that is being taught at lower grade levels as their students can understand it better than material used at their own grade level. The teacher read the book aloud to students. During reading, she stopped to explain difficult words and asked students what they meant. All the students had their own book and followed the text while the teacher read. She also asked inferential questions and asked students to predict what would happen if so and such did this or that. The teacher
always read two chapters in each class and after the reading there were related activities.

The first activity at one time was group work. Students had to discuss in groups a few questions and then write the answer. Each group had to choose a leader who answered for the group when the teacher asked them to share what they wrote to the rest of the class. Before students started working on the group activity, the teacher reminded them to put the pencil down and think quietly about what she had just read to them. After discussions, students worked individually on answering multiple choice exercises where they had the choice of choosing between a, b, c, and d. The teacher then gathered the answer sheets to correct and grade them.

In the class which preceded the reading of the book *Number the Stars* the teacher handed out a map of Europe to the class and students had to identify Denmark and color it as well as Germany and all the other countries which were occupied by the Nazis in the Second World War. The teacher wanted to see if her students were familiar with countries in Europe as well as the Nazi occupation (teacher’s comments). The activity also served as an introduction to the book as students could visualize better where the events in the book took place.

In one lesson, the teacher brought in apples and honey. She sliced the apples and sprinkled them with honey and gave each student a slice to taste. In the book, Anne Marie, the main character who is a Jew, celebrates a Jewish holiday by eating the same thing. She did this as a type of realia. In another class the teacher explained to students about Jews and used a world map to point out Israel. She explained to students about the current conflict going on between Israelis and Palestinians. She told them they were going to study about it later in their 6th grade modified social studies class.

6.1.3. Modified Social Studies for 6th Grade ESL Students

The teacher teaches modified social studies for 6th graders as well. According to the teacher, many ESL students have not begun studying social studies in their home-countries. Many countries do not start to teach social studies until after 6th grade and students who come to the USA do not have sufficient background knowledge to keep up in the mainstream classroom.
When I started observing the classes, the students had just finished a unit on Africa and they had to take a quiz where they labeled all the countries in Africa on a map. Then it was time to start a new unit on Central America. The teacher started this unit by pulling down the world map and showed students where this region is located in the world. She handed out copies of worksheets from the book *Daily Geography Practice: Grade 6* by Sandi Johnson. The worksheets had one page with a map of the countries in Central America and another one with questions about geographical features of the region. The teacher divided the class into two parts. In one part she taught geography and in the other cultural studies and history. After the teacher talked about the geographical features of the region she turned her attention to cultural studies and started talking about the Aztecs. She used a different book for that subject and handed out new copies to students. She started the cultural lesson by talking about concepts related to the Aztec culture like human sacrifices and asked students if they knew what those things are. She explained the Aztecs had many things like we have today and took concepts like paying tribute in the form of food like we pay taxes in the modern world. She had a projector to show students a few transparencies with colored drawings connected with the Aztec culture like their homes, pyramids and so on. She drew a picture on the projector of the hierarchical pyramid of the Aztec social classes and she asked students to copy it. The teacher explained the social classes as she asked the students inferential questions about the subject. She ended that particular class by telling students they had to do an oral presentation later on the Aztecs and she handed out a topic to each one. As the teacher handed out the topics, she commented to individual students that she had picked this topic for him or her because of their interest. One girl got to write about the type of clothes the Aztecs wore because she loves clothes.

In another class, the teacher began a new unit on the Middle East and started the same way as with Central America. She used the same geography book and started the unit by explaining the situation with Israel and Palestine and asked students to imagine how they felt if Ohio would suddenly be populated by new people and would not be Ohio anymore. The teacher used the map to show the region she was teaching about and spent the class talking about all the different countries in the Middle East and explained the differences between them. After she had talked about the region and geographical features of it, she handed out worksheets students had to do with
questions about the things she had been talking about earlier in class. Students worked individually.

7. Data Analysis

This chapter has analyses of the classes. My objective is to look for characteristics of the original approach. I have organized the field data into five different groups: general characteristic, class material, objectives/goals, teaching models, and teaching methods and approaches.

7.1. General Characteristics

In this group I look for general characteristics of CBI and aspects of it like the role of learners, motivation, active learning, error correction, language use (target/native), and teaching material.

The language art classes for both 5th and 6th grades shared much of the same characteristics, even though they were for different age groups, and for students at different proficiency levels as the language arts class for 5th graders was a jump start class, meaning it was for beginner students, and the 6th grade class had students of all proficiency levels (beginner, intermediate and advanced). In both of the language classes I identified characteristic of CBI like teaching the language through content like literature, but it is a content matter and part of language/arts. The teacher integrated skills like reading, writing, listening and speaking in the various activities she had planned for each lesson. What was missing however, were more activities which concentrated on speaking. I do not know the reason for that. I think the teacher wanted students to practice their oral skills by discussing the books she read to them. I imagine that students get a lot of oral practice outside the classroom talking to friends but that does not equal practicing oral language with a teacher as one of the characteristics of CBI is to teach academic language. All the classes were organized around certain topics like in the 5th grade class the topic was the Revolutionary War. The teacher also used authentic material in the books she chose as they are not written as regular textbooks.
In terms of error correction and language use, the teacher never corrected students, and she only spoke English to them. The students were not very active participants in the lesson and there was very little emphasis on group work as well as pair work. There was group work once in the 6th grade language class. Most work was done by the individual student. The classes were all teacher directed. I never saw students being initiative when it came to activities done in class.

I never noticed the teacher do any type of grammar work. The grammar was taught through the text the students were reading. There were written questions after each chapter that students had to answer. That was the only written assignments I noticed. I never saw a writing assignment that was not from a pre-made activity. I even found some of the activities on-line when I was doing my research for this thesis. Even though the books were authentic in terms of content, all the other material was from regular workbooks that had been prepared for this topic. The teacher might have adjusted it to suit the books. Since Number the Stars is used in schools on a regular basis, a lot of material can be found on-line and the teacher used that. I therefore wonder if that book can be considered to be authentic material as it is used all the times as a textbook for language arts.

The modified social studies class was planned in a similar way as the other two. The teacher talked all the time and the students sat and listened quietly. The teacher did not allow students to pick their own topic for their future oral presentation. Instead she handed out topics to students. She did try to pick a topic which she thought would appeal to each individual student like the girl who got to do her presentation about how the Aztec dressed because she loves fashion in real life. There were many aspects of CBI present in the classes. It was a sheltered class where students are taught modified version of geography and history. The teacher concentrated on concepts as a part of building the student’s academic language. She integrated most skills in her teaching like, listening, writing and reading. However, the speaking part was missing in the classes that I observed. The teacher did ask the students questions to check comprehension, but the feedback she got from students was very limited and she ended up talking most of the time herself.

Second language theorists like Krashen talk about the importance of comprehensible input when learning a second language. His theory points out that it is
very important that students receive meaningful messages through authentic material. He also points out that there is a difference between learning a language and acquiring it. One of the objectives of CBI is to teach the language in a way that students acquire it meaning they learn the language in an environment where it is spoken all around them and it becomes their second language. This idea connects with what Brinton, Snow and Wesche (2005) say about using authentic text and to contextualize the teaching material. The material in the language arts classes was ‘more’ authentic than the material used in social studies as the teacher used real novels in both classes that were based on real events which took place in the world at some point in history (contextualized material). The students should have been able to relate to the books, especially the students in 5th grade language arts because it was an adventure book based on historical events that actually took place and the characters were children who are about the same age as the students. The book in the 6th grade class was also appropriate in terms of vocabulary as it is intended for native students in 5th grade. One of the goals of ESL is to use modified teaching material and that is often done by using material from lower grades. The teacher used scaffolding of the linguistic content by picking books with simpler texts and vocabulary. She also tried to pick books with information that students find interesting and that way she tried to motivate her students and make them realize that language has a meaning for them. The teacher supplemented by using material which has been modified for ESL students that had many pictures. The teacher also used visual support like maps and other things in her teaching. This was more so in the modified social studies classes as the material required different approach. In the social studies class the teacher used regular textbooks which are made for the content she was teaching. The main focus in that class was content while the language classes were ESL classes. The focus in all classes was on developing transferable academic skill which aid students in all their studies, both present and future.

7.2. Objectives/Goals

The state of Ohio has ESL standards which teachers have to follow. The teacher built on those standards when planning her lessons and she did, I believe, use material which reflected the state’s standards for content. She used appropriate material according to
the proficiency level of her students. In terms of language goals, the teacher used literature in her language arts classes to teach aspects of grammar like vocabulary, syntax, and pronunciation. This also holds true for the modified social studies class in terms of the teaching material. As the students did not talk much, it was hard to see if they had skills to analyze the story they were reading. The teacher did not work overtly on those goals. The students did answer questions on a worksheet. I did not see much planning on the teacher’s behalf of general skills goals. She did at one time tell her students to put away their pencils and think before answering questions. I did not see students do any presentations. However, I know the plan was for them to have one about the Aztecs in the modified social studies class.

7.3. Teaching Models

In relation to which kind of content-based model, the three classes were a mix of topic-based language instruction and sheltered content instruction. All classes were organized around a topic, more than a theme. The teacher used many different activities in connection with each topic and she had students work with meaningful and cognitively demanding language based on authentic material and activities like in 6th grade language art where students read a book which takes place in the World War II. The classes also had elements of sheltered content instruction because they were for a group of segregated students and content area specialist taught them. The teacher is an ESL teacher and she has a degree in history which worked well for the modified social studies class. The teacher is not a native speaker of any of the languages her students speak. All instruction was in English. The language classes were ESL classes where language is taught through content and the focus is more on the language while the social studies class was a content oriented class with incidental language learning.

7.4. Teaching Methods and Approaches

Even though CBI is a relatively recent phenomenon in language teaching it does not mean that teachers do not use traditional methods when teaching within that approach. I observed that the teacher did utilize a few different methods and approaches in her
classes. What I noticed is that there was very little interaction between teacher and students which means that the lessons were very much teacher directed. She read aloud to students because she wanted them to be exposed to the correct pronunciation and she did not want language to interfere with reading so it was like she was modeling the target language to students which is in the spirit of the Audio-Lingual Method. She also told me that if she allowed students to read, it would take forever and the meaning of the story would get lost. Most of the activities were done by the individual and there was no type of oral presentation. My opinion is that the teacher used traditional teaching methods in her classroom like the Direct Method and the Audio-Lingual Method, but she also used many aspects of CBI which I talked about in the general characteristics part. The teacher relied on worksheets with all kinds of fill in exercises and multiple choice answers for her activities which were pre-made and came from either textbooks or the internet. There was also no role play or an activity where students had to stand up and do something, and there were no games or other physical activities. They were always in their seats facing the teacher and she was located in front of them. My opinion is that the lessons did not include activities or teaching material which are original and made by the teacher herself, and activities directed by students. That is what I noticed the most. That is why I liked the fact that she used the Magic Tree House Books and the Venn diagram at one time. It was something fresh in my mind. Everything else was pretty standard.

Overall the teacher did use many of the elements that characterize CBI. She used content to teach English, and she used appropriate material in doing so. She did integrate all four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking in most of her activities, although the speaking part was lacking. Also, there were no student directed activities. I would say that the teacher followed the approach in general, but her teaching methods were also traditional which shows that CBI is not a single set of procedure. It encompasses a wide range of things and gives teachers freedom to use various methods and approaches. It is good to mention that the teacher is in her 60s and that is probably an influencing factor in the teaching methods she chooses to apply in her classes.
8. Conclusion

To answer my research question, I find that traditional language-based methods are different from content-based instruction. I base my findings on the material I researched and present in this thesis. There are many aspects that make up the difference like the fact that traditional language-based methods are based on a single set of procedure and they set out to teach the language in grammatical parts thus isolating it from the cultural and social functions of the language. In one class the teacher might concentrate on teaching the past while in another he or she teaches sentence structure. The lesson planning does not integrate all four language skills which are taught through separate activities. Also, classes tend to be teacher-directed with minimal participation from students. Another fact is that the spoken part of the language is modeled by the teacher and there is great emphasis on error correction in some of the methods. Almost all, if not all material is especially made for language teaching and therefore students are not being exposed to authentic texts.

The key terms in connection to discussing the difference between the two are contextualization and decontextualization. This means that traditional methods have the tendency to take the language out of context from elements like culture and social interaction. This is in contrast to approaches like the CBI which teaches the language from an integrated point of view. CBI teaches the language through content and it integrates all four skills of reading, listening, speaking and writing. One of the main goals is to present authentic text to students as the language has to have meaning and be relevant to them. CBI relies on comprehensible input as students need to build on their pre-existing knowledge and then stretch it and increase their vocabulary. Instead of classes being centered on a specific grammatical element, CBI classes are planned around a theme or a topic which gives students excellent opportunities to learn about the language from different viewpoints as CBI connects with different disciplines. It also allows for a variety of teaching methods to be applied. It is important in CBI to use scaffolding to help students as they learn a new concept, but traditional methods can do that as well. It really depends on the teacher how this is done. CBI also relies on visuals and realia to help students with meaning and one lesson should include many different activities. Another important aspect is that CBI aims to improve students’ academic vocabulary so they may succeed in their academic studies.
I believe that both the traditional language-based methods and content-based instruction are effective when it comes to teaching a foreign language. My observation was too limited to say which one is better or worse. I do think that it is somewhat harder for teachers to use CBI because it takes more preparation as it uses content from many different disciplines and it has to be embraced by the school because it is connected to other content areas while the traditional methods are more self-sufficient in the classroom. The teacher does not need a lot of support from outside the classroom. Also, it is takes more time for a teacher to use authentic material versus pre-made textbooks made especially for language teaching.

This has been an interesting research material and I believe I have learned quite a bit about the differences between the traditional teaching methods and the more recent approaches like the content-based instruction.
References


