Models of Integrating Content and Language Learning

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Abstract

Content-based instruction has become increasingly recognized as a means of developing both linguistic and content ability. Drawing on educational practices at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, this paper analyzes conditions that encourage the integration of language and content learning, presents various content-based instructional models—including those that have been developed at the Monterey Institute, and examines the decision-making process of selecting a content-based instructional model for a particular educational setting. Discussions center on making decisions that are most likely to accelerate the growth of foreign language proficiency and the acquisition of content knowledge.

Introduction

With globalization continuing to change the world, the need for foreign language skills and intercultural knowledge becomes more evident. Institutions of higher education have implemented different instructional models in an attempt to produce globally competent graduates who are ready to act effectively and responsibly in multi-lingual and multi-cultural environments. One of those models is content-based instruction (CBI). Educators who have embraced CBI believe it helps students to acquire cultural and linguistic expertise in a relatively short amount of time, as the learning of a foreign language is similar to the way we learn and acquire our first language. This paper will discuss three issues in content-based instruction. The first is to analyze the conditions that encourage the implementation of a CBI approach. The second is to describe various content-based instructional models, including those that have been designed and delivered at the Monterey Institute of International Studies (MIIS). The third is to examine the decision-making process of selecting a CBI
model for a particular education setting by citing examples from a content-based Chinese language curriculum.

A language teacher is like a chef. To create a delicious dish, she hunts for the perfect recipe in the hopes that what she serves will satisfy her clients. But soon she discovers that her clients have different tastes and demands. She alters the recipe, experiments with various combinations of the ingredients and cooking techniques, and tries to present the food in a way that appeals to all. In the process, she reflects, learns, creates, and improves. If the perfect recipe does exist, then a chef's life would be much easier and, at the same time, rather boring. Similarly, a language educator faces many challenges in discovering the most appropriate instructional model for her students. For some, CBI seems to be the best choice to train all-around students who are urgently needed in an increasingly diverse world.

**Adopting a CBI Approach**

Content-based instruction, as Jourdenais and Shaw (2005) point out, is not a new concept to language education. Since the 1960s, interest in teaching language for specific employment and educational purposes has led educators to include meaningful content in language classrooms. They give CBI the following definition:

The mastery of new subject matter and the provision of comprehensible L2 [second language] input and output through cumulative task-based interaction sequences in academic style and driven largely by authentic materials, such that learners' language, academic, real life, and learning skills are fostered in a positive, cooperative, and supportive environment (p. 4).

**Content-Based Second Language Instruction: Rationale**

Content-based instruction is developed on the core principles of a communicative approach, particularly those related to the role of meaning and contextualization in language learning. Meaningful learning leads to better long-term retention. Contextualized learning
provides students with useful language that is embedded within relevant discourse contexts rather than as isolated language fragments. Grabe & Stoller (1997) provide a detailed analysis of research that supports content-based second language instruction. The most influential theories include Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis, which posits that language acquisition takes place when a message being transmitted is understood. Therefore, “language is best taught when it is being used to transmit messages, not when it is explicitly taught for conscious learning” (Krashen & Terrell, 1983, p. 55). The authors state that a natural and whole language approach enables natural language acquisition to occur in context. Content-based instruction is consistent with this theory. As natural language is never learned divorced from meaning, CBI provides a context for natural language input and meaningful communication.

Depth of processing research indicates that the presentation of coherent and meaningful information brings about deeper processing, which results in better learning. Cummins (1992) proposes a distinction between two levels of language proficiency: surface-level basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and the deeper level of cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP). He uses the following diagram to illustrate this distinction:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive Process</th>
<th>Conversational proficiency</th>
<th>Language Process</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
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<td>Vocabulary</td>
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<td>Application</td>
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<td>Grammar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
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<td>Semantic meaning</td>
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<td>Synthesis</td>
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<td>Functional meaning</td>
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<td>Evaluation</td>
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(Cummins, 1992, p. 18)

Since it takes much longer to develop CALP than BICS, most minority school children start to take content courses before their
CALP is fully developed. Integration of content and language studies is more practical and efficient as students learn content information while acquiring CALP. Content learning also facilitates the development of cognitive/academic proficiency. As CALP requires more complex language abilities, it is best taught within a framework that manipulates more complex and authentic content.

Although comprehensible input is a key pedagogical technique in content-based instruction, Swain's findings indicate that an input-rich, communicative oriented classroom does not provide all that is needed for the development of native-like proficiency. Swain's output hypothesis proposes more balanced instruction integrating language and content with an explicit focus on relevant and contextually appropriate language forms. She also points out that teaching grammar lessons out of context, as paradigms to be rehearsed and memorized, is insufficient (Swain, 1998; Swain & Lapkin, 2001). Long and Robinson (1998) summarize that there are three major options to language teaching. Option 1, including audio-lingual, grammar-translation, structural, and notional-functional approaches, focuses on forms at the synthesis level. Pedagogical materials and classroom procedures are designed to present and practice a series of linguistic items, or forms. Option 2 focuses on meaning at the analytic level, without any attention to linguistic forms. The Natural Approach (Krashen & Terrell, 1983) is an example of Option 2. It assumes that people of all ages learn language best by experiencing them as a medium of communication. Language is incidentally acquired. Option 3 focuses on form at the analytic level. It employs a nonlinguistic unit of analysis, such as a task. Forms, together with their meanings and functions, are studied in context. Pedagogical tasks are designed, without specific linguistic focus, as successively more complex approximations to tasks in the real world. Content-based instruction is an example of Option 3 (Long & Robinson, 1998).

A CBI course usually relies on pedagogical tasks to achieve learning goals. Such a setting promotes negotiation of meaning, which is known to enhance language acquisition (Bygate, et al, 2001). Lantolf and Appel (1994) and others observe that in Vygotsky's notions of language acquisition, negotiation in the “Zone of Proximal Development,” the use of “private speech,” and student appropria-
tion of learning tasks are vital to language acquisition. The “Zone of Proximal Development” refers to the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under guidance or in cooperation with more capable peers. Vygotsky perceives that speech has two functions: non-egocentric utterances are social and communicative; egocentric utterances are individual and self-regulating. “Private speech,” or “egocentric speech,” is internal speech associated with such things as problem-solving and rehearsing strategies. Appropriation describes the phenomenon where, at first, our activity is organized and regulated by others, though we eventually organize and regulate our own activity through the appropriation of the regulatory means employed by others.

Another underlying rationale for CBI is that content provides both a motivational and cognitive basis for language learning. Content is a primary motivational incentive for language learning. For many, language is learned because it provides access to content (Snow et al, 1992). When students realize that they are able to use the foreign language in their academic study or professional work, they become more interested and motivated.

In principle, the learning goals in a CBI setting are focused on all of the components of communicative competence. Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not the central focus, but rather are aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish the purposes of acquiring new content and cultural knowledge. What is to be learned and what is to be practiced are meaningful to the students, that is, they correspond to the linguistic, cognitive, and affective needs of the students. Instructors use authentic materials to present content matter and provide support for students’ linguistic development, which facilitates their acquisition of content knowledge.

In practice, content-based instruction varies greatly in format. It ranges from giving a content course completely in a foreign language to a language course that includes a content topic for practice.
As it is demonstrated by van Lier’s (2005) chart, CBI is a continuum, not an either-or choice.

![Diagram of LANGUAGE and CONTENT](image)

(van Lier, 2005, p.15)

It is difficult to specify the context-specific dynamics between the linguistic and the content demands and resources. “There is no simple taxonomy or classification of CBI that provides a clear-cut or universally applicable methodological set of choices” (van Lier, 2005, p. 15). Despite such diversity, CBI approaches share certain commonality. Stryker and Leaver (1997) have identified three common features. A CBI course (1) is organized around a subject-matter core, (2) uses authentic language and texts, and (3) is appropriate to the needs of specific groups of students.

**A Case Study of the Monterey Institute of International Studies**

This paper uses the example of the Monterey Institute of International Studies (MIIS) to illustrate the conditions that have encouraged the implementation of a content-based curriculum. MIIS is a small graduate institution committed to training professionals who will work in the international arena. It consists of four graduate schools: International Policy Studies, International Business, Translation and Interpretation, and Language and Education Linguistics. The graduate programs aim at assisting students to grasp necessary content knowledge, improve their foreign language proficiency, and raise their cultural understanding so they will work successfully and competently in their international professions. Foreign language studies are the core of the Institute’s curriculum. Eight languages are regularly taught at the advanced level (3rd year and above): Arabic,
Chinese, English, French, German, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish. Other advanced-level less-commonly taught languages (LCTL), such as Korean, Farsi, and Polish, are offered through special arrangements when there is a need. The language faculty, strongly believing in the benefits of contextualized and meaningful learning, reasons that students can learn a foreign language and the content knowledge more effectively if the foreign language is used as the medium to convey content information. Because the content is of interest and relevance to students, integrating content into language classes will better meet students' needs. The majority of MIIS students have clearly defined their professional goals, which has prompted the establishment of a learning environment that facilitates and induces content and language integration. Content mastery and linguistic mastery, assumed by many to be strictly sequential, can be synergistic. Our belief in CBI is reflected in the following notion, "content-based instruction aims at eliminating the artificial separation between language instruction and subject matter classes which exists in most educational settings" (Oller, 1993, p. 137). The MIIS experience indicates that some conditions encourage a content-based language curriculum. These conditions include:

**Student Needs.** Advanced language study is integrated into the Master's degree requirement at the Monterey Institute. Prior to entering the MA programs, students are required to have had a minimum of two years college-level language studies. Most of the students have also studied or worked overseas. They arrive with relatively strong language and cross-cultural skills as well as a high expectation that they will gain professional language proficiency by graduation. Students also have specific learning needs, wants, wishes, and desires and, in order to optimize their learning, they often seek to develop their content knowledge and language competence for specific professions. They want practical, relevant, and meaningful content in foreign language courses. This is the most significant condition for the implementation of a content-based approach.

**Institute's Educational Mission and Curriculum.** The Monterey Institute's educational mission is to prepare students to become effective professionals and leaders in the policy-making and management arenas of governments, global businesses, international organizations, and non-profit institutions. The focus is on settings where advanced
second language competency, cross-cultural dexterity, a global mindset, and keen analytic skills are particularly important. Such a mission requires a curriculum in which the development of foreign language competency is one of the key elements. Language programs are entrusted, in collaboration with faculty from other academic programs, with the undertaking of coordinating content-based language instruction throughout the Institute. This career-oriented language curriculum emphasizes content-based language courses that encompass a wide variety of contemporary issues, politics, economics, and culture.

The Institute has instigated “Languages Across the Curriculum” (LAC). This curriculum supports the Institute’s international education missions and the needs and interests of advanced language learners. The Institute’s commitment to international education enables students, faculty, and staff to have a clear picture of what our goals are and what we should do to reach these goals. The development of foreign language and cross-cultural skills are of vital importance for cultivating students’ global competence.

Language Faculty’s Support. The language faculty concurs that the primary goal for language education is to develop students’ language competence and cultural understanding. We see content-based instruction as a valuable and effective method. Based on the practical situations at the Institute: (1) foreign languages are across the Institute’s curriculum, (2) the academic subject is defined, (3) students have clear professional goals, and (4) the administration is committed to international education. As such, the language faculty believes that CBI exposes students to relevant and meaningful language use, integrates their language and content studies, and empowers them to become autonomous learners who are able to continue learning beyond the classroom. Such a belief has resulted in a content focused language curriculum.

A major component in implementing such a curriculum is the language faculty’s willingness to devote the time and effort required to attain a level of competence needed to teach the subject matter. The language faculty also needs to learn and refine teaching techniques that foster a learner-centered environment by designing meaningful projects and tasks, locating appropriate authentic materials,
developing, organizing, and facilitating learning activities, and planning reliable assessment tools.

*Administrative Assistance.* The administration encourages the faculty’s innovation in developing content-based courses. It recognizes that such creativity is in line with the school’s mission. Inter-department collaboration is encouraged. Approval of new course offerings is timely and efficient. Scheduling of inter-departmental content-based courses is facilitated. Although most of the CBI courses rely on language teachers’ devotion and effort, the administration also tries to secure educational grants to support the faculty’s endeavors. When funds are available, the administration lightens the teachers’ teaching load to support them in developing new courses.

The implementation of a CBI approach is contingent on several conditions. This section has identified some general conditions, including the educational mission of the institution, the curriculum, the special needs of the students, the faculty’s teaching philosophy, the faculty’s willingness to devote their time and energy, and support from the administration. These fundamentals make it possible for a CBI approach to function properly.

**Models of Content-based Instruction**

In a content-based language classroom, language and content are integrated in many different ways. As illustrated by van Lier’s chart, shown in the previous section of this paper, language and content are accorded equal weight in some cases. In other cases, content or language is the more significant. Various forms of instruction have made it flexible and feasible to apply the CBI approach to language teaching.

This section will describe some content-based instructional models. The most commonly known models are the three prototypes defined by Briton, Snow, and Wesche (1989):

1. Theme-based – the language class is structured around topics or themes, with the topics forming the backbone of the course curriculum.
(2) Sheltered – content courses taught in the target language by a content specialist. Target language learners are sheltered from native-speaking students of the language.

(3) Adjunct – students are enrolled concurrently in two linked courses, a language course and a content course. Learners are sheltered in the language course, but integrated in the content course.

Met (1999) proposes that CBI can be perceived as a continuum. A CBI course can either be content driven or language driven.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENT DRIVEN</th>
<th>LANGUAGE DRIVEN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total &gt;&gt; Partial &gt;&gt; Sheltered &gt;&gt; Adjunct &gt;&gt; Theme-based &gt;&gt; Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>Immersion Immersion Courses Model Course Course with</td>
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<td>Frequent Use of Content for Language Practice</td>
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Along this continuum, the MIIS faculty has developed several more instructional models. Shaw (1997) labels these additional models as follows:

(1) Direct content model (similar to Met’s total immersion) – the subject matter is delivered entirely in the target language. All readings, all classroom discussions, and all assignments are in the target language. For instance, a political science professor gives the course “The Internationalization of Japan” completely in Japanese. The direct content model includes some native Japanese speakers in the class. Foreign language learners are not sheltered.

(2) Team content model – the course is taught by two instructors—one from the subject matter field and one a spe-
cialist in language instruction. They work in a team-teaching format, which maximizes learning opportunities by utilizing the combined knowledge and talents of the teaching team. All readings, texts, classroom interactions, and assignments are in the target language.

(3) Subsidiary content model – a content specialist delivers the subject matter in English. After the new topic is introduced and its scope examined, the topic is studied with greater specificity in the second language.

Combining elements from the aforementioned models, the "Monterey Model" was invented. The Monterey Model is a multi-lingual, multi-disciplinary, and content-based language instructional model, designed to engage learners in the practical, authentic, and functional use of the language for meaningful purposes, with an added dimension of comparative studies. It is an inter-department/disciplinary effort, involving faculty from two, three, or four academic departments—language, translation and interpretation, policy studies, and business. In the planning stage, the faculty team determines a content area, and negotiates and selects three or four common topics that are relevant to all the language/country teams involved in the course. In the implementation stage, the course breaks into several modules based on the topics. Various language sections study the same topic simultaneously in the target language for several weeks and then meet at a plenary session to present their findings and opinions in their language of study. Since Chinese, French, and German students may not understand Spanish, the Spanish presentation is simultaneously interpreted into English and relayed to be interpreted into Chinese, French, and German. Advanced Translation and Interpretation students provide the interpretation.

Students are able to learn subject matter in a multi-national, multi-linguistic, and multi-cultural environment. This unique learning experience broadens students' perspectives. The Monterey Model has flexibility and variety, which makes it possible to be adopted to different educational settings. Below is a brief description of four variations of the Monterey Model. They are uniform in the plenary + language sections format, but contain some differences. The differences
are primarily caused by the constraint of resources, but they help to demonstrate that the model works under diverse circumstances.

**Monterey Model 1:**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Plenary sessions with interpretation</th>
<th>Language sections each led by two teachers (a language teacher and a content teacher)</th>
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Funded by the National Security Education Program, the Institute developed and implemented a Monterey Model course “Current Issues in Nonproliferation,” using the components mentioned above. All students attended an introductory plenary that was conducted in English. Three content specialists lectured on the topics to be studied: 1) nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, 2) biological and chemical weapons, and 3) weapons of mass destruction and anti-terrorism. After the introductory plenary, students studied in three language sections—Chinese, Japanese, and Russian. A content teacher and a language teacher, both native speakers of the target language, headed each section. Students studied the first topic for four weeks in the target language. All classroom lectures, discussions, reading materials, and assignments were in the target language. The language teacher took half of the class time to engage students in language activities, assisting them to understand the reading materials and to acquire specialized vocabulary. The content teacher used half of the class time lecturing or leading class discussions. After consulting with the professors, students used the target language to write a short research paper on the topic they had just studied. The three language sections then met in a plenary. Representatives from each language group made presentations on the first topic. The presentations were simultaneously interpreted into English and the other languages of study. After the presentations, students in the audience posed questions to the representatives. All questions and answers were given in the student’s language of study, which were also simultaneously interpreted. After the first plenary, students returned to their language sections studying the second topic, and so on.
Monterey Model 2:

| Plenary sessions with interpretation  
| Language sections each led by one teacher (a language teacher or a content teacher) |

The course "Comparative Environmental Policies" is an example of this variation. The course was offered three times, each time with a combination of different language sections, depending on students' academic needs and faculty resources in the language programs. The format was similar to the nonproliferation course. All students attended the introductory plenary in English. A content professor who chaired the English section gave an English lecture on current issues, historical background, and theoretical framework of environmental policies. Four study topics were chosen: 1) geography and natural resources; 2) agriculture and the environment; 3) air pollution and the environment; and 4) country-specific environmental policies. The class included five language sections—Chinese, English, French, German, and Spanish. One teacher, either a content teacher or a language teacher, staffed each language section. The teacher was responsible for the study of content and language. Obviously, the proportion of language and content learning varied among different sections depending on the teacher's professional training, as well as the students' content and language backgrounds. Since language teachers headed most sections, the course had a "common English reader," ensuring that all the basic content was covered. All classroom discussions, reading materials, and assignments were in the target language. This also held true for the English section, as many of the students enrolled in the English section were non-native speakers of English. The class progressed similarly to the nonproliferation course. Language sections studied each topic, and then made presentations at the plenary with simultaneous interpretation.
Monterey Model 3:

| Plenary sessions with/without interpretation + Language sections each led by a language teacher |

Unlike the above two models that include the policy studies specialists, the course “International Gender Issues” was a joint effort between two disciplines—language studies and the interpretation program. The course format remained the same, with four language sections—French, German, Japanese, and Russian. It differed from the above courses in two aspects: 1) the language sections were all staffed by language teachers and 2) the plenary was sometimes in the target language and other times in English, depending on the availability of the Interpretation students.

Monterey Model 4:

| Plenary without interpretation + Language sections each led by one teacher (a language teacher or a content teacher) |

The course “Politics in a Post-Communist World” used the same “plenary plus language section” format, except that all plenary sessions were conducted in English. This serves as an example of working with restricted resources. As no interpretation was available in the fall semester, the plenary had to be in English. Students majoring in Interpretation could only provide interpretation during their last semester of study, which is usually the spring semester (2nd semester of the 2nd year). The course had three language sections—Chinese, German, and Russian. A language teacher or a content teacher led each language section.

Regardless of the variations, all models share some important elements of commonality. Content is the organizing principle of the courses, all courses use authentic tasks and materials, and they make
some degree of accommodation to second language learners, such as language instruction and language activities to help students process the content materials. The added value of the Monterey Model is bringing in the comparative and multi-cultural perspectives across languages.

**Selecting an Effective Model**

Content-based instruction can be both challenging and demanding for the teacher and the students. Simultaneously, it can be stimulating and rewarding. The degree to which a language teacher adopts this approach depends on the availability of resources and the willingness of the participants—the teacher, the students, and the administration. Many decisions are called for during course planning. At each decision point, we need to examine the range of options available and the conditions that may affect our decision. This section will use examples from several content-based Chinese language courses to illustrate the decision-making process.

**Content/Theme**

The first decision is “what content will be taught”. As trained language educators, we are accustomed to planning a course focusing on language forms. We need to change our mindset. The organizing principle for a CBI course is content, with the chosen content being relevant to students’ academic or professional needs. In the case of the Monterey Institute, the Chinese program tries to satisfy students’ needs by offering such courses as “Business Chinese,” “Readings on International Affairs,” “China’s Economic Development,” “Chinese Pedagogy,” “Chinese Intellectual Thoughts in the 20th Century,” “Women in China’s Development,” and so on. In a more traditional language curriculum, we are more likely to see courses on “Chinese Phonology,” “Modern Chinese Grammar,” or simply “Advanced Chinese.”

We face several options, not only in content variety but also in content scope. For instance, to learn about China’s economic development, we have an assortment of themes to select from, such as the history of economic development, policies on economic reforms,
reforms in the rural areas, urbanization, the impact on the environment, the labor market, or challenges of globalization. We can choose to study one theme in depth or cover a variety of topics to gain a general understanding. Several conditions affect our decision. One of them is students’ needs and interests. Generally speaking, if students come from various content fields, a more “general” topic, such as comparative environment policies or challenges of globalization, appeals to a larger audience. If students are mostly business majors, more specialized business-related content is more appropriate. Another important condition is the content knowledge level of the teacher. A language teacher may not feel confident to offer a total immersion course on conflict resolution because conflict resolution is new subject matter for her. Likewise, a content teacher may feel inadequate teaching a language course that refers to content for practice because she lacks training in language teaching techniques. A third condition affecting course planning decisions is whether the content selected fits into the overall curriculum. Anti-capitalism and anti-globalization may be interesting to some, but the topic may be considered too narrowly defined and cannot be incorporated into the school’s curriculum.

For less-commonly taught languages (LCTLs), content relevance to US students may pose some special challenges. LCTLs usually are non-Western languages, and represent cultures that are unfamiliar to many US students. A topic that is important or popular in a particular culture sometimes is remote from the student’s prior knowledge and future profession. Ancient mythology and folklore are prominent in many African and Asian cultures, but may not appeal to US students. It is always a good idea to select a content area that has some “universal interest/concern,” be it a development problem that impacts local cultures, or a social issue that concerns mankind.

**Learning Objectives**

A content-based language course needs to explicate to which degree content or language mastery is expected from the students. Depending on whether the course is more content driven or language driven, different weights are placed on content and language mastery. The Monterey Model course “Current Issues in Nonproliferation”
was designed to have equal weight in content and language. The faculty team (a content teacher and a language teacher) defined the course objectives as follows: (1) To understand the general scope of nonproliferation studies; (2) To engage in in-depth study of nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons; and how this relates to anti-terrorism; (3) To engage in in-depth study of China's nonproliferation policies and positions; (4) To expand specialized vocabulary on nonproliferation; (5) To enhance the ability to use Chinese for professional purposes (including the skills to read academic papers and government documents, to write short research papers, to participate in discussions of a specialized field, and to make formal presentations); (6) To improve the skills of public speaking; and (7) To gain experience working with interpreters. In comparison, a language course that uses "information technology" for frequent practice was developed for 3rd-year students. The course was language driven and had two learning goals. One was to enlarge students' vocabulary of information technology and the other was to improve their reading skills. Students' prior knowledge, the proportions of content and language, and the teacher's expectation of the students are some of the conditions that shape the learning objectives of a course.

**Instructional mode**

Once we have set our goals, the next question to ask is, "How will we get there?" A CBI course usually uses "backward planning." We first identify the desired end product, and then work in reverse to identify the learning activities and tasks. The end product is often linked to a real-life task, such as writing a research paper, giving a presentation, or leading a discussion. These end products require student involvement. They are at the center of learning, using their content knowledge and language skills to complete the tasks and projects. As van Lier (2005) points out, project-based learning is a combination of structure and process, and of planned organization and progress. The planned organization gives top-down direction, and the activity gives bottom-up creation. It is our task to find a balance between the two.
Conditions that are likely to affect our choice of instructional mode include our teaching philosophy, our expertise in language pedagogy, and our knowledge of the content matter. In a project or task-based classroom, the emphasis of our teaching is not necessarily on "what to know," but rather on "how to know." We teach and remind students that they can use context, recycle or spiral information, explore background knowledge and schemata, use peer work, and develop coping strategies to access the information they want. Student preparation also affects how we teach a class. Poorly prepared students often need more instruction on specifics.

One common concern from LCTL teachers is that an advanced-level Japanese or Chinese student does not possess the same language proficiency as an advanced-level Spanish or French student. After three years of study, a Spanish learner can probably do more with Spanish than a Chinese learner with Chinese. This concern makes some LCTL teachers reluctant to try CBI, as they fear content learning will take time away from language learning. From our experience at MIIS, we regard content as an asset, not a liability, to language learning. Content adds relevance, complexity, and authenticity to learning tasks. The quality of the end product may vary, but the learning process is most important.

**Instructional Materials**

Finding or developing instructional materials is another concern. A CBI course normally uses authentic materials to present content matters. Content materials that are written for foreign language learners are rare. Almost always we rely on authentic materials that have been developed specifically for native speakers. These include print, audio, visual, and electronic materials. No matter which form they are in, content relevance is our first concern. Diversity of sources, accuracy of the information, representations of various viewpoints, instructional appropriateness, and student interests also need to be considered. When possible, we try to locate materials that are close to the student's language ability, as comprehensibility is critical in content learning. Specifically, we need to evaluate the format, length, coherence, language styles, and complexity of the discourse (Howard, 2005). In any classroom, content or language, com-
prehensibility is essential. Language instruction should be designed to scaffold and support students’ language development as new content is understood and becomes the basis for accomplishing meaningful tasks and projects.

One way to enhance comprehensibility is to use different forms of authentic materials. In the course “Women in China’s Development,” one of the topics was gender roles in China’s social and economic development. Originally, students were assigned to read several lengthy articles. Since there was a gap between the readability of the articles and students’ reading ability, several movies were used to replace some of the readings. The movies not only portrayed the images more vividly, but also provided opportunities for students to improve listening skills.

Several conditions pose challenges for using authentic materials. They include: availability of the materials, the language and content complexity, the form of the materials, students’ prior knowledge in the content area, students’ language skills, and the availability of language support. For many LCTL teachers, using authentic materials is a common practice because textbooks are not readily available. CBI is a logical choice because it requires teachers to organize learning materials in a systematic fashion. Since information and knowledge are constructed around a content area, the materials provide students with more opportunities to review what they have learned, to associate language information with contextual meanings, and to expand on their prior knowledge, all of which induce learning.

**Assessment**

CBI courses usually use a performance assessment. Students demonstrate their understanding of the subject matter and their ability to use the target language in accomplishing real world tasks, namely, things that native speakers might do or things that students might be asked to do in a workplace. For example, students might read through Chinese language materials to locate the information they want, give a presentation on a non-profit organization, write a memo, or conduct an interview to learn about a cultural topic. Assessment can also take a more conventional form, such as taking a written test that examines how well students know the content. No
matter which form the test is in, teachers face the task of establishing the assessment criteria. A good assessment tool measures students' development in both content and language. The weights on content and language are determined by the nature of the course. In the non-proliferation course, students were asked to write three research papers. Each paper was graded twice, first by the content teacher who concentrates on the accuracy of the content information and the depth of analysis, and second by the language teacher who focuses on the accurate and appropriate use of the language. Following the individual grading, the two teachers discussed their reasons for giving the grade and assigned a combined grade for each student. In the information technology Chinese class, the emphasis was on understanding IT words and IT writings. The test contained reading comprehension questions.

**Getting Help**

Involving teachers from other disciplines, particularly those in other subjects, is always a good idea. They are a good source to direct us to relevant materials, latest developments, and information resources in the content field. We can also seek students' help. Some of them may know more about the subject matter than we do. An MBA student is likely to know plenty about business management. If content-based language instruction is encouraged by the school administration, an academic organization, or a national foreign language center, then we can seek their help and guidance when needed.

**Conclusions**

Content-based instruction is a holistic approach to foreign language learning. It encourages students to use the language as a real means of communication. There are many forms of content-based instruction that offer endless possibilities. Our practice at the Monterey Institute has validated some established principles of language learning and teaching. Contrary to some beliefs, that the integration of content and language may result in a sacrifice of linguistic skills, our experience indicates that the integration helps to accelerate the
growth of foreign language proficiency and the acquisition of content knowledge. Both students and faculty have benefited from the CBI approach. Students have increased motivation to learn the language, because it is relevant to their academic studies and professional goals. The role of the language teacher shifts from delivering linguistic knowledge to facilitating communicative competence in learners that makes them reflect on their teaching philosophy and refine language pedagogy. Content teachers also gain understanding of how to work with students with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The interdisciplinary cooperation breaks down the artificial barrier between subject matter and language. Weighing all the pros and cons, we believe the CBI approach works well at the Monterey Institute. In essence, the content-based approach better prepares students to cross language and cultural boundaries and helps them to function effectively and appropriately in the international arena.

References


