

# Making language learning more fun: Integrating language and content in the classroom

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- By making language learning more fun for students, we help language proficiency develop more efficiently.
- One way of making language learning more fun is to:
  - Make it more relevant to students' everyday lives.
  - Make it more interesting to them.
  - Make language use more authentic.
- One way of accomplishing these goals is to focus on the content of language rather than the structure of language.

# We're Moving From To

1. Focus on Learning about Language  Focus on Standards-Based Language Proficiency Development
2. ESL Assessment = Language Development  ESL Assessment = Language Development + Proficiency
3. Teaching about Language  Teaching language through content

## Promoting language learning through a variety of roles. The teacher as:

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Language model .....   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • Stay in the target language and make meaning come through.  |   |   |   |   |   |
| 2. Language facilitator.....  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • Don't let students sit silently, just watching and observing, unless they are a new arrival at the very beginning stages of language acquisition. |   |   |   |   |   |
| • Plan for language practice in every lesson.   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 3. Teacher of content.....  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • Become conscious of the content of language   |   |   |   |   |   |
| • Teach what the students need to know about life/school/the world, etc.  |   |   |   |   |   |
| 4. Language detective .....   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • Study your instructional materials to determine the language and literacy demands.  |   |   |   |   |   |
| 5. Language and culture guide .....   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • Explain language and culture rules  |   |   |   |   |   |

We develop proficiency in a foreign language by learning language!

~~NOT~~

"If the subject is worth learning, you just have to allow the (student's) natural curiosity and interest in truth and understanding to mature and develop."

Chomsky (1994)

It is more efficient to learn a foreign language through another content; hence, the integration of content and language instruction.

# Why the Shift to Integrating Language and Content?

- Language is acquired most effectively when learned for communication in meaningful and significant social situations.
- It respects the specificity of functional language use.
- It exploits students' natural language learning ability.
- It motivates language learning by providing interesting topics to explore and communicate about.
- It provides material and experiences that actively engage students in learning.
- It ensures acquisition of authentic, specific forms of language.
- It works

(Genesee, 1994, Ed Practice Report:11)

# WHAT CONTENT? THE VALUE OF USING CONTENT THAT IS RELEVANT TO THE LEARNER

Content that is relevant to the learner is important & thus enhances motivation to learn language

Content that is relevant to the learner implicates cognitive engagement that deepens language learning

Content that is relevant to the learner and is familiar to them provides "old information" that is a suitable basis for acquiring new language

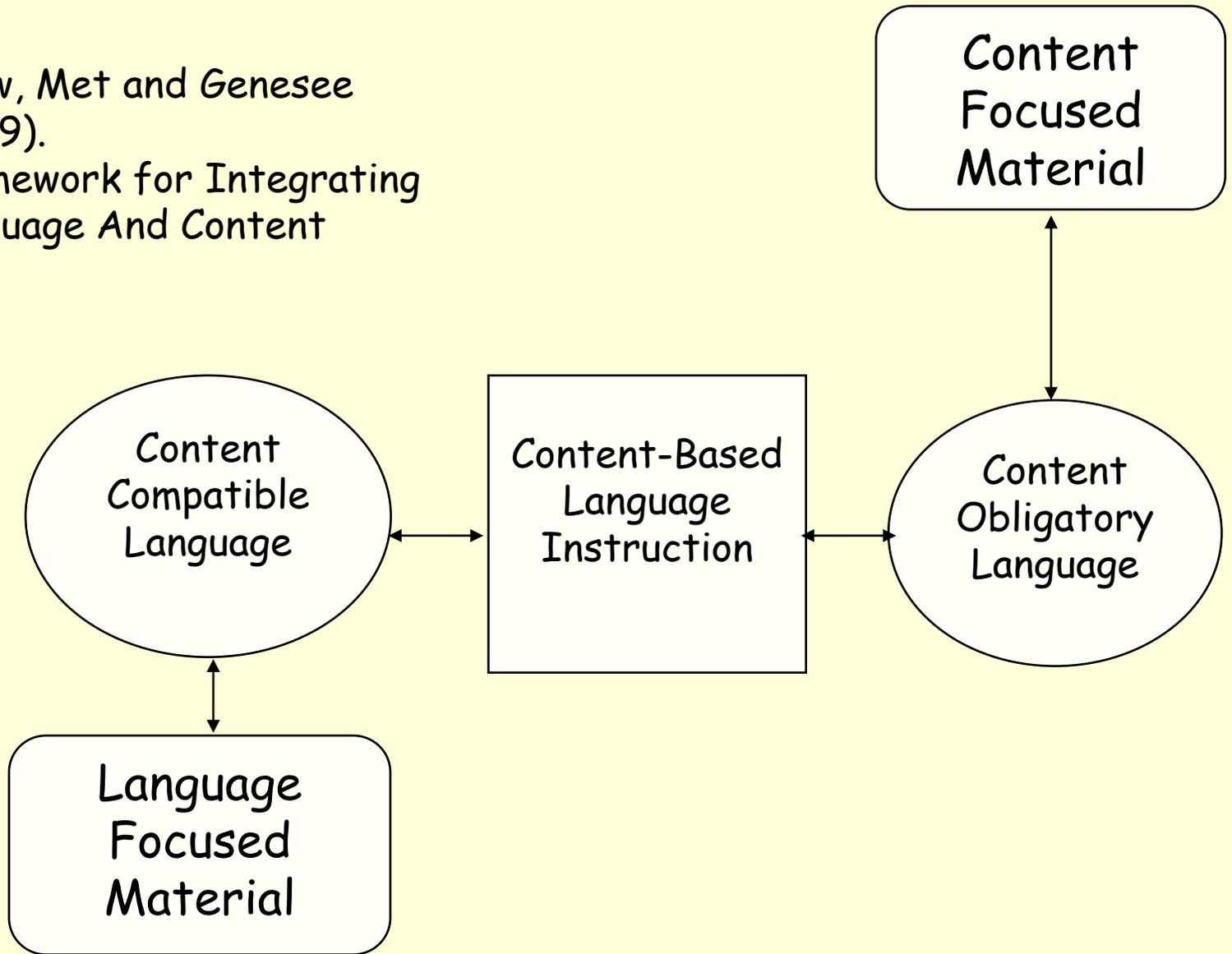
Content that can be drawn from a prescribed curriculum is defined and available -- no need to create new material

**Reflect: What content is relevant to YOUR students?**

# Developing Language through Content

- Planning language objectives + content objectives for each lesson
- Content made comprehensible with L2 techniques

Snow, Met and Genesee  
(1989).  
Framework for Integrating  
Language And Content



Sheltered instruction is a research-based approach that helps ELLs develop oral language proficiency while building literacy skills and content area knowledge.

1. We prepare students for a lesson by establishing common background knowledge;
2. we teach the lesson using strategies that make language comprehensible;
3. we provide opportunities for interaction and practice;
4. and we assess and review consistently.

(Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2004)

# 1. Establishing common background knowledge

## Visual scaffolding

Identify Vocabulary

### Collect Visuals

Internet : [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) & [www.Altavista.com](http://www.Altavista.com) (select images)

Photos

Illustrations in old textbooks

Drawings and black-line masters

### Organize the Visuals

Scan the visuals into your computer

## Pre-teaching the language of the content

TPR

Songs and chants

Reading of related literature

Language Experience Approach

1. Establishing common background knowledge

2. Using strategies that make language comprehensible

- Use cognates, controlled vocabulary, & shorter phrases
- Visuals and gestures
- Limit idiomatic speech for students at beginning stages
- Repeat key vocabulary; use natural redundancy
- Reinforce key ideas
- Pace instruction appropriately; provide natural pauses
- Check frequently for understanding

1. Establishing common background knowledge
2. Using strategies that make language comprehensible
3. Providing opportunities for interaction and practice

Language use is language learning

- Repeated practice is necessary for fluency.
- Increased practice creates conditions for restructuring.
- Optimal practice activities should be comprehensible, interesting, relevant, challenging, and in sufficient quantity.
- Optimal practice activities should be meaning-focused and communicative.

1. Building background knowledge
2. Using strategies that make language comprehensible
3. Providing opportunities for interaction and practice

#### 4. Assessing and reviewing

Classroom-based assessment

Using a proficiency framework

## INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES THAT INTEGRATE LANGUAGE AND CONTENT SHOULD:

- Be important and interesting to learners so that they want to get involved and so that they want to learn the language that is part of the activity
- Must be relevant to the students' lives
- Include some elements that are familiar to the learners so that they know how to get involved
- Include some elements that are new and unfamiliar so that learning will take place
- Encourage interaction between learners, between learners and teachers, and between learners and materials--without interaction, there can be no communication
- Include concrete, hands-on materials that will allow learners to be actively involved and will allow learners to associate new language with concrete objects and activities--without such contextualization, new language will be meaningless;
- Be appropriate for the level of intellectual development (or age) of the learners;
- Include all language sub-skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as appropriate) so that they are integrated and redundant;
- Motivate students to communicate in the language;
- Demand use of the language skills being taught.