

CONTENT-BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING: AN EDUCATIONAL JOURNEY  
BEYOND LANGUAGE TRAINING

by

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## Abstract

Recent development in language teaching beyond the functional approach focusses on content-based language learning. This thesis reports on issues raised in the implementation and evaluation of a content-based curriculum designed for international students participating in a summer English language program. Data for evaluating the curriculum is qualitative and includes information from interviews and questionnaires completed by instructors involved in teaching on the program. Instructors' concerns of content-based language teaching focus primarily on implementing this approach in the classroom and on the design of student tasks. Implementation strategies and priorities for the development of tasks in a content-based curriculum are identified. The conclusion deals with issues in content-based teaching at the implementation stage and at the task design level.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .....	ii
Table of Contents .....	iii
List of Figures .....	vi
List of Tables .....	vii
Acknowledgement .....	viii
 I. Introduction .....	 1
A. The Question: Is Content-Based Language Teaching an Effective Approach for ESL Curricula? .....	 1
i. Some Assumptions About Teaching a Second Language .....	 4
B. Objectives of an ESL Language Education Curriculum .....	 8
i. Content-Based Language Teaching .....	9
a. The Knowledge Framework .....	10
C. Some Pedagogical Issues and Rationale for Content-Based ESL Curricula .....	 14
i. Higher Level Thinking and Non-Native Speakers .....	 14
ii. Meaningfulness of Curriculum Content .....	17
iii. The Role of Culture in Language Learning .....	 20
D. Comments .....	21
 II. Review of Selected Literature .....	 23
A. Introduction .....	23
B. First Language Research on Language and Content .....	 25
i. Language Across the Curriculum .....	25
ii. Reading in the Content Area .....	27

C. Second Language Research on Language and Content .....	29
i. The French Immersion Connection .....	29
ii. Language Across the Curriculum .....	31
iii. Cognition and Language .....	32
D. Frameworks for Integrating Language and Content in the Classroom .....	33
i. The Adjunct Model .....	33
ii. The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) .....	34
iii. The Knowledge Framework .....	35
E. Methodology .....	36
i. The Contact Approach .....	36
ii. Structure of Student Tasks .....	37
F. Comments .....	38
III. The Method .....	40
A. A Qualitative Approach .....	40
B. The Subjects .....	41
C. The Role of the Researcher .....	42
D. The Research Design and Procedure .....	42
i. Curriculum Development .....	43
ii. Curriculum Implementation .....	44
iii. Curriculum Evaluation .....	45
IV. The Analysis .....	47
A. The Findings .....	47
i. Task Design and its Relationship to Teaching Language .....	52
a. Vocabulary .....	52
b. Eliciting Specific Language .....	54

c. Linking Content and Language .....	55
d. Meaningful Tasks .....	56
e. Task Difficulty .....	58
f. Group Work .....	59
g. Use of Visuals .....	61
ii. Other Findings .....	61
V. Conclusion .....	66
A. The Question: Is Content-Based Language Teaching Effective for ESL Programs? .....	66
i. Summary of Findings: Instructor Support ...	66
ii. Summary of Current Research Support .....	67
B. Implications of the Findings .....	68
i. Instructional Setting .....	69
a. Task Design .....	69
b. Use of Visuals .....	73
c. Sequential Language Development .....	73
C. Implications for Research .....	74
D. In Conclusion .....	76
VI. REFERENCES .....	78
VII. APPENDIX A - EXAMPLE OF A FLOWCHART .....	84
APPENDIX B - ACTIVITY: EATING OUT: WHERE SHOULD WE GO? .....	86
APPENDIX C - ACTIVITY: BUYING SOUVENIRS .....	88
APPENDIX D - ACTIVITY: EATING IN THE CAFETERIA ...	90
APPENDIX E - QUESTIONNAIRE .....	92
APPENDIX F - REVISED ACTIVITY: NUTRITIONAL OR JUNK? .....	97

## List of Figures

1	Integration of Language, Content and Thinking .....	3
2	Topical Analysis Using the Framework .....	11
3	The SELP Curriculum .....	24

## List of Tables

I	Appropriateness of Curriculum Content .....	48
II	Successes and Difficulties of SELP Curriculum for Instructors .....	50
III	Successes and Difficulties of SELP Curriculum for Students as Perceived by Instructors .....	51
IV	Curriculum Recommendations .....	64



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## Chapter One

### CONTENT-BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING: AN EDUCATIONAL JOURNEY BEYOND LANGUAGE TRAINING

Many students are educated in second language environments. For years educational institutions have offered specially designed language classes within this immersion setting. Although purposes for learning a second language varies from individual to individual, the commonality they share is the desire to improve their ability to use their additional language. Often students participate in curricula that are based on assumptions about language teaching and learning that current research in second language acquisition (SLA) now questions.

#### THE QUESTION: IS CONTENT-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING AN EFFECTIVE APPROACH FOR ESL CURRICULA?

Goals of many language program curricula, available to non-native speakers of English, state that their aim is to improve students' writing skills or to develop their conversational skills (Leggett et al., 1978; Yildiz, 1980). The format followed in the classroom is very much like a training session where students are asked to practise speech acts and repeat speech patterns modelled by the teacher, use grammatically correct sentences, conjugate verb tenses and listen for and repeat specific letter sounds. Often students must memorize bits of language conversation and try to reproduce them in appropriate simulated situations set up by

the teacher. In these classrooms language is studied in a functional-notional and/or grammar-based context and it is hoped that the functions, notions and/or specific grammar points learned will be used by the students when real conversation or writing opportunities arise. The work done by Widdowson (1978:IX) indicates that the nature of discourse has a much broader scope than what has been described above and he states that,

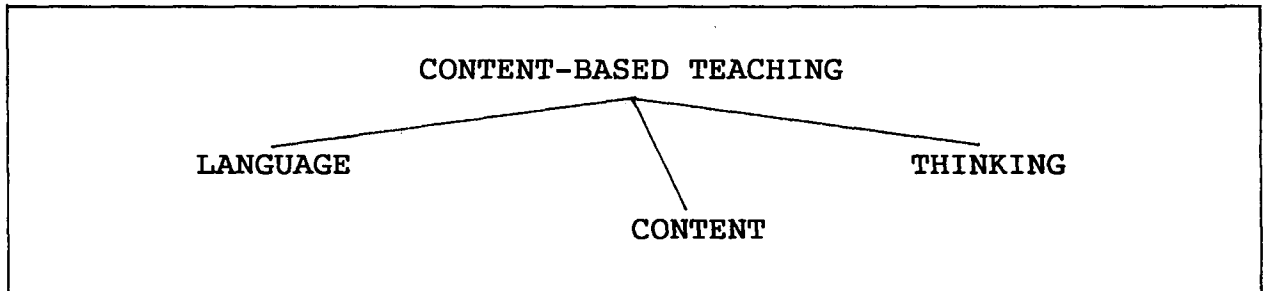
There seems to be an assumption in some quarters ... that language is automatically taught as communication by the simple expedient of concentration on 'notions' or 'functions' rather than on sentences. But people do not communicate by expressing isolated notions or fulfilling isolated functions any more than they do so by uttering isolated sentence patterns. (p. ix)

Yet, this kind of language training has been a common teaching practice until recently.

Now it is recognized that students want to talk about a variety of interesting and complex topics. What is needed is a way to organize the information to make the topics and the language more accessible to second language learners. Current second language research findings (Cummins, 1984; Mohan, 1986; Chamot and O'Malley, 1987) recognize the importance of topic and its interrelationship with language and thinking as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

A Content-based Approach Integrates  
Language, Content and Thinking



These content-based approaches are educational in their broader perspective on language. That is, educational in that students use language to learn about the topic, and are learning language as they use it. This way of teaching provides students with opportunities for educational growth, a notion supported by Dewey when he states, "... the educative process is a continuous process of growth." (Dewey, 1926:54) and "... language tends to become the chief instrument of learning about many things ..." (Dewey, 1926:17).

As early as the 1900's, the concern of learning language in isolation was raised about native speakers when Dewey (1900) commented,

Think of the absurdity of having to teach language as a thing by itself ... when language is used simply for the repetition of lessons, it is not surprising that one of the chief difficulties of school work has come to be instruction in the mother tongue ... In the traditional method, the child must say something that he has merely learned. There is all the difference in the world between having something to say and having to say something. The child who has a variety of materials and facts wants to talk about them and his language becomes more refined and full, because it is controlled and informed by realities. (pp. 55-56)

This concept of language learning views language as a vehicle to learn about the world. It recognizes the important roles content, language, thinking and motivation play in learning. Elson (1987:6) speaks of these as recently developing views and suggests that it "... is a growing part of language teaching today." It is the belief of this writer that some language support classes for non-native speakers are beginning to put more emphasis on content, recognizing the motivation it can generate when learning language, yet there are still many classes that teach language in isolation.

Thinking, language and content are inseparable - one uses language to express one's thoughts about something. It appears that language learning, viewed in isolation from content learning, does not facilitate the objectives of the educational philosophy held by this writer and others. Both language and content must be seen as integral components of learning and that one cannot be mastered without the other. As marble is to the sculptor, language is to thought.

#### i. Assumptions About Teaching a Second Language

Second or additional language curricula developed over the last ten to fifteen years have been based on several commonly held assumptions about teaching and learning language for non-native speakers. These assumptions are now in question by many language educators.

One assumption is the need to teach grammar or isolated bits of language and separate skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) as an aim or objective of a course.

As Celce-Murcia and Hilles (1988:1) point out, "From an historical perspective ... teaching grammar has been central to and often synonymous with teaching foreign language for the past 2,500 years (Rutherford, 1987)." Measurement and assessment tools focus on this aspect of language learning and therefore grammar is viewed as essential. For example, the Test of English as a Foreign Language is commonly used to test language proficiency. This measure often determines whether or not a student may enter a college or university program. Therefore, some ESL instructors teach towards the items being tested, thinking that if students can master the grammar and other bits of language, then students will be able to function with mainstream native speakers. Research findings (Cummins, 1979) indicate that it takes non-native speakers five to seven years of schooling to reach grade norms in English verbal academic skills (academic skills as opposed to social chat). This is a much longer time than would be expected given the continuous, mostly traditional (language in isolation) ESL instruction students were involved in during this period. Taylor (1987:45) questions "... the effectiveness of our current approaches: traditional, grammar-based instruction has been widely criticized as being ineffective". Yet it continues to be a well established ESL teaching approach for students learning to communicate, both academically and socially, in their target language.

Another common assumption is that ESL curricula should not include the same topics as English teachers would teach to native speakers. It is believed that the two courses should

be distinctive. Teachers sense that non-native speakers' needs are different from mainstream students and therefore they should not learn the same content material. Elson (1987) suggests that the ESL class should be based on authentic language experiences that come from investigating the use of English for special purposes. Little concern is indicated for what the regular students may be studying. Not learning what their peers are learning definitely sets them apart. Linked to this is an assumption that students who cannot speak the target language think at the same level as their language skills. For example, a student participates in a very simple, descriptive activity like food bingo when he is really capable (with some language support) of working through a consumer decision-making exercise that has a meaningful purpose beyond building vocabulary. Based on previous teaching experience it is clearly erroneous to make this assumption. Most students have been engaged at higher levels of thinking in their first language and want to continue to challenge their thinking while learning the second language. Frequently they are faced with activities that equate thinking and language skills. The method of teaching the same content to both mainstream and ESL classes may be different but most non-native students are quite capable of understanding the same curriculum content as their native speaking peers.

Tied to this postulate is the idea that ESL classes should not teach content. The job of the ESL teacher is to teach language. This view is documented by the many current ESL resource materials developed for classroom use that are

grammar-based. English is taught in isolation, with little or no thought about what students talk about in the process of practising language. The teacher decides on the language skill he/she wants the students to improve on, whether it be speaking, listening, reading or writing; decides what specific aspect of that skill to work on; and then chooses a convenient topic to practise. The topic here is seen as less important than the other criteria in determining the curriculum activity.

Related to all of this is another assumption that ESL is about teaching English and not about teaching thinking or subject matter. With language as a priority and little emphasis on thinking and content, it would seem at the very least that students miss many opportunities to extend their thinking and knowledge.

If believed and acted upon, these assumptions clearly lead to something similar to the programming of robots, where students will use the language they have learned in the classroom if that same situation arises in real life. In most cases it is highly unlikely that it will reoccur exactly the way it was practised in the classroom. This approach frequently does not promote opportunities for interactions with language, knowledge and thinking, thus educational growth, but instead encourages something similar to parroting. Why don't we have many parroting non-native speakers then? The answer to that question relates to ESL students' real-life experiences out of the classroom. The natural language laboratory of the social environment fosters growth, cultural



awareness and a desire for students to communicate clearly. These are the conditions for learning we must try to emulate in the classroom.

#### OBJECTIVES OF AN ESL LANGUAGE EDUCATION CURRICULUM

Curriculum designed for a language education experience with non-native speakers should facilitate second language acquisition as well as assist the intellectual growth potential of individuals. More specifically, curricula should provide ways of making the communication of teaching and learning easier (Mohan, 1986:26). Students and teachers need clear and simple ways to share knowledge and experience with each other. ESL curricula should develop integrated language skills, extend thinking (Gagne, 1965), and provide appropriate opportunities for students to gain a knowledge and understanding of meaningful topics (Mohan, 1986). Activities should build confidence in students (Freire, 1970) to express themselves in English regardless of their level of competency. A safe, supportive but risk-taking environment encourages students to share ideas and to view mistakes as signposts of learning. As students learn another language that is full of particular cultural insights (Condon & Yousef, 1975; Halliday, 1978), they should gain a greater international perspective on life as well as an understanding and appreciation of cultural values and world citizenship. These are viewed as the criteria upon which a language education approach to language learning should be based.

These criteria question the assumptions made above about second language teaching and learning. Are there ways to teach English to non-native speakers that are not based on those assumptions? Currently a great deal of research is directed towards a more holistic approach to ESL instruction that views language learning as an integrative process involving content, language and thinking. Does this content-based approach meet the criteria for a pedagogically sound ESL curriculum?

#### i. Content-Based Language Teaching

A content-based approach to ESL curriculum development focusses on topics or situations. Situations are the sociocultural activities of a society in which language is an integral part of the socialization of a society member. As Mohan (1987) states in support of Halliday's view of language as social semiotic,

the child learns language and culture at the same time, and the dynamic interrelationship between learning language and learning culture and subject matter continues throughout education. Language is a major source for learning about and expressing what one must say, know, value and do in order to participate in the sociocultural situations of society. (p. 1)

Language is one of the mediums through which one learns about life. And, through this process, the integrated learning of language skills, thinking and subject matter takes place.

a. The Knowledge Framework - a content-based approach to curriculum design

A framework that identifies six areas of knowledge and incorporates the integration of language and content, based on the idea of an activity, situation or topic (these terms will be used interchangeably by the writer throughout this thesis) has been successfully developed by Mohan (1986). Key visuals (pictures, charts, maps, graphs, etc.) are used to present content ideas; content and structure vocabulary and other language items are introduced or reinforced to bridge the relationship between language and content; and students are given meaningful tasks to practise what has been learned. This approach extends thinking and provides a technique for students to use language to learn more about their participation in a multi-faceted environment.

The framework suggests that every 'life' activity contains at least six knowledge structures. These structures or 'boxes' identify the practical and theoretical background information students will need to know in order to complete an activity. The diagram following is an example of how the topic, Preparing Fruit Salad: How is it Done?, is analyzed using the framework:

Figure 2  
Topical Analysis Using the Framework

CONCEPTS/ CLASSIFICATION	PRINCIPLES	EVALUATION
Types of fruit Types of preparation Types of utensils	Method for preparing fruit	Why was specific fruit chosen?  To what extent were decisions satisfactory?
Describe fruit Naming a variety of fruits Describing the preparation of fruit for eating Naming utensils	Select, wash, cut, mix, and serve fruit  Sequence of steps in recipe	Choose the kinds of fruit and the method of preparation
DESCRIPTION	SEQUENCE	CHOICE

The six knowledge structures of description, sequence, choice, classification, principles, and evaluation serve as an organizational framework for the activity.

In many cases teaching has emphasized description and classification. These are probably the easiest to teach. But, by developing the lessor or unit to include the other knowledge structures, the student is encouraged to engage in more complex thinking processes. The emphasis in a particular activity may well highlight one of the 'boxes' but all the boxes interact. For example, before one can make a choice or decision, one may need to understand the concepts

(classification) or the principles involved in the activity. Therefore, it is very important to cover all the material in the boxes, whether briefly or in detail, so that students are equipped with the appropriate information to allow for meaningful decision-making and evaluation.

How is the language handled within this framework? This integrated approach defines each 'box' as containing language specific to the knowledge structure it represents. For example, the language used to discuss the content listed in the description 'box' can be identified as stative verbs, nouns, adjectives, quantifiers (ie. the jaguar is a ferocious, carnivorous cat - this is descriptive discourse). Effective communication involves knowledge of both the language and content appropriate to the topic being discussed. Rather than teaching language and content independently there is a need to teach them cooperatively. Each activity is designed to promote and facilitate the use of language in discussing the content as designated in the outline or 'boxes' of knowledge structures.

The language needed to participate in a particular activity involves the language of description, sequence and choice. Once this language is learned in a specific action situation it can be easily transferred to other content areas. In an activity, not only does the student describe and tell the order of events but he/she is expected to talk about choices and reasons for those choices. This communicative environment needs to be created by the instructor to ensure appropriate dialogue and discourse usage. Mohan (1986)

suggests the use of graphics to teach the language and content of the activity. For example, a flow chart (see Appendix A) not only promotes dialogue about description and sequence but it also allows for discussion about choices and reasons for those choices. During the course of the dialogue various speech acts, social conditions for speech, and repairs can be demonstrated by the instructor and put into practice by the students. Flow charts also offer many opportunities for free responses to the situations presented.

This approach uses visuals extensively to organize the content and the language to be taught and learned. The instructor uses graphics to promote the language necessary to discuss specific activities and assist students to generalize their learning about background knowledge within the cultural restraints of the English language. The same graphic (ie. a classification tree) can be used with a variety of topics whereby the structural vocabulary can remain the same and while the content vocabulary changes. In this way language and content work cooperatively at a specific level that is then generalized and applied to other content areas.

This thesis will focus on a specific content-based curriculum (An Interactive Content-Based ESL Curriculum (1989) herein referred to as the SELP curriculum) that uses the knowledge framework as a way of organizing the language, content and thinking processes for a short stay (three to six weeks duration) program for visiting overseas students. This curriculum will be used as a basis for discussion of some key pedagogical issues involved in content-based ESL curricula.

## SOME PEDAGOGICAL ISSUES AND RATIONALE FOR CONTENT-BASED ESL CURRICULA

### i. Higher Level Thinking and Non-Native Speakers

The idea that non-native speakers might often have to deal with complex concepts in a content-based curriculum is a concern of some ESL instructors. It seems that many feel students cannot communicate about complex topics until their language has reached an intermediate level of proficiency. Therefore the instructor's focus is on the structure of language and vocabulary development, and frequently what the students speak about is a simplified or conceptually easy topic. What the knowledge framework approach offers is a link between language, content and cognitive processes that will allow students to think about topics at the higher conceptual levels used in their first language. As has already been stated, graphics play a key role in uniting the content studied and the language needed to express information and students' ideas about the content.

In R.S. Peter's Ethics and Education, there is an account of the cognitive aspects of education. He states that for someone to be educated,

(h)e must have ... some body of knowledge and some kind of a conceptual scheme to raise this above the level of a collection of disjointed facts. This implies some understanding of principles for the organization of facts. (p. 30)

Clearly Peters describes the educational important of knowledge and understanding in a way that supports the notion of providing opportunities in the classroom for engaging

students in higher level thinking while they learn content and language. Peters goes on to say, "... education implies that a man's outlook is transformed by what he knows." (Peters, 1966:31) That is, the student is committed to an active participation in the forms of thought and awareness that have been transmitted to him through his experience in the instructional setting. In international education, most students want to be involved in exploring other cultures; they want to extend their cognitive perspective on life. That is part of what international education is all about. A content-based approach, through the integration of skills and knowledge, is able to reach this mandate of education more effectively than other ESL approaches.

Thinking processes have been a topic of discussion for many involved in education. Gagne (1965) identifies eight types of learning and describes the conditions that are necessary for each type of learning to take place. His types are hierarchical and support the concept of higher level thinking. He recognizes principles and problem solving as types of learning that are more complex cognitive processes. This is similar to the organization format of the six structures of knowledge presented in the knowledge framework. Both espouse the importance of extending the educands' cognitive ability in their participation of educational activities.

For example, one of the courses in the SELP curriculum is entitled International Citizenship. One activity has students identify global issues (concepts) through the use of pictures;



develop some vocabulary from the visuals; and, contribute background information about the concept expressed collectively on a chart (classification tree, condition-effect tree, concept map, etc.) that will form a basis for discussion about the topic. Not only are students expected to describe and classify the topic, ie. pollution, but also look at cause and effect, choices and evaluations regarding this issue. Of course, each individual's level of language and background knowledge will affect their interaction in the classroom, but they can all participate in learning from each other and in extending their thinking however low their language or knowledge of the topic might be.

Freire, an educational philosopher who works with illiterates in Third World countries, would view this activity as a liberating educational approach to curriculum. Although he deals with oppressors and the oppressed, he suggests that power struggles exist at many levels and intensities in a variety of situations, including the classroom between the teacher and his/her students. His pedagogy is structured around dialogue between the teacher and student where real-life problems are presented and discussed and then solutions are sought. In this sense, it is a problem-posing/liberating approach to education where students are engaged in higher levels of thinking. As Freire states, "Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information." (Freire, 1970:67). He goes on to speak of students,

As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators. In this way, the presence of the oppressed in the struggle for their liberation will be what it should be: not pseudo-participation, but committed involvement. (p. 56)

This is tied to Peters (1966) idea of commitment, the active involvement and follow through of the participants to behave in a manner that displays their beliefs, their understanding and awareness of the topic being discussed.

The Knowledge Framework approach to language education involves students in intellectual growth because they are asked to think about topics at levels which are often not included in a more traditional language training curriculum. It expands their cognitive perspective and views these components of learning (knowledge and cognitive processes) as a part of the process of learning language.

#### ii. Meaningfulness of Curriculum Content

Students are motivated to participate in discourse when it is on a topic they are interested in; have a specific purpose for learning it; or view it as a situation that contains 'real-life' elements (Mohan, 1986; Swain, 1987). Motivation of this nature is essential in the overall process of education. Students need to see a logical, meaningful reason for learning a particular topic, that as Peters would say, is something worthwhile. Not all students will recognize the value of learning about a topic initially, but during the process of being educated about the topic, the realization of learning something worthwhile should occur.

Bruner in The Process of Education talks about, "... the desire to learn and how it may be stimulated." (Bruner, 1960:14) He says, "Ideally, interest in the material to be learned is the best stimulus to learning ..." (ibid.).

Freire, too, supports this notion in that the dialogic nature of his approach determines the topic or content material for the curriculum from the students. In this way students feel they play a role in their education, become more interested and involved and, ultimately, become more educated. When students are intrinsically motivated to learn about a topic, their language skills will develop, their vocabulary will grow and their thinking will expand because they want them to, not because some extrinsic force is telling them they have to.

Dewey (1926) warns of the,

... standing danger that the material of formal instruction will be merely the subject matter of the schools, isolated from the subject matter of life-experience. (p. 10)

This does not have to happen if educators are sensitive to the needs and interests of their students and ask for student input in such decisions about content wherever possible. The knowledge framework allows for this.

Oakeshott, a conservative educator, writes that education is "... learning to look, to listen, to think, to feel, to imagine, to believe, to understand, to choose and to wish ..." (Oakeshott, 1975:20)". Yet, he explains that education will be "... inhibited unless there is a contingent belief in the worth of what is to be mediated to the newcomer ... (ibid.)". Oakeshott's concern is that education is commonly seen as

having an extrinsic purpose for the educand. He believes the worth of education to the newcomer (student) should focus on the intrinsic quality of life. Although his sense of worth should be intrinsic motivation, this is not always the case. But students can turn extrinsic purpose into intrinsic value if guided thoughtfully through carefully designed curricula that is meaningful and involving.

Freire, as well, writes of the significance of involving the students in meaningful dialogue when he states,

The teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teaches. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow ... the students are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. (p. 67-680)

The importance of motivation and how it relates to meaningfulness in curricula cannot be underestimated. Motivation is the key to learning and curriculum must somehow package itself in such a way that allows motivation to play a role in the curriculum's delivery of meaningful content.

The developers of the SELP curriculum investigated the general needs and interests of students visiting Canada before determining the content of the intended curriculum. Some of the content in that curriculum includes the topic of consumerism because most visiting students are notorious shoppers. In an integrated way, the activity "Eating Out: Where Should We Go?" (see Appendix B) can focus on specific need-to-know information (such as local customs, understanding the menu, how to pay, taxes, tipping, money) for eating out in the city. Another consumerism activity (see Appendix C)

focusses on the question of quality versus quantity when purchasing gifts and souvenirs to take back to their home country. These are experiences that are 'real-life' activities and students want to know about them, not only from a cultural perspective but also from a language perspective. Students are involved in using the language to learn about topics that are interesting and important to them. By extending their extrinsic motivation of purchasing gifts to thinking about what they are buying and why they are buying it, values and beliefs about themselves and others become an intrinsically educational experience.

### iii. The Role of Culture in Language Learning

Culture plays a significant role in language learning that should be recognized and addressed by educators involved in second language teaching. As expressed by Dewey, language cannot be isolated from culture. He states that, "... the habits of language ..." (Dewey, 1926:21) are the result of the "...unconscious influence of the environment" (ibid.). Although he speaks of native speakers, the socialization of language is culture specific and can be learned by non-native speakers as well. Many non-verbal cultural cues facilitate communication and are a part of the process of learning to speak like a native. Dell Humes (1968) has researched what he calls conditions for speech and identifies components such as sex, status, age, setting, topic and audience as influencing how we speak to others. Non-native speakers can be taught to recognize and use appropriate discourse according to these

conditions for speech. With different cultures the appropriateness of speech and non-verbal behaviour changes and by comparing native and non-native cultures students learn more about themselves from an international perspective, as well as learn more about their native culture. Many scholars have studied the relationship between culture and language and most emphasize the importance of including culture when learning language.

In the SELP curriculum a unit on interactional discourse was designed to assist students in their investigation of the structure of conversation and then apply that learning to Hyme's conditions for speech. In this way students could learn both non-verbal cues and appropriate language for situations that were culturally specific. They were learning to speak more native-like, but at the same time they were learning more about their own culture. Dewey would, again, see this as a growth experience. In an international educational environment, culture is an essential element of curriculum. An experience in international education should be more than learning an additional language, it should encompass opportunities to learn about and understand other cultures' perspectives and, in reflection, learn more about oneself.

#### COMMENTS

Given the issues and rationale discussed above, it seems that there is clear justification for using a content-based approach, such as the knowledge framework, for English as a

Second Language curricula. This approach integrates language skills, thinking and subject matter as a way of learning. Depending on the aims and objectives of the curriculum, the focus of any one task may be speaking, listening, reading, writing in combination with any one of the multiple levels of thinking and topics. The key is to view the skills as integral components of the discourse generated about topics; the starting point is the topic, not the language skill.

Other factors which play a role in the education of the educand cannot be ignored: learner strategies, individual differences (as opposed to cultural differences) for both the teacher and the student, and methodology used by the teacher in the formal setting. For example, group work has been recognized by many scholars as an important technique in the achievement of educational objectives. Dewey (1926) comments that the,

... use of language to convey and acquire ideas is an extension and refinement of the principle that things gain meaning by being used in a shared experience or joint action. (p. 19)

And, Freire supports this notion with his advocacy of a dialogical relationship between the educator and the educand. Although there are occasions when lecture style or teacher-fronted activities are necessary, the models of shared learning such as peer teaching and cooperative learning (Mohan, 1986; Slavin, 1987) seem to promote a more positive environment for educational opportunities.

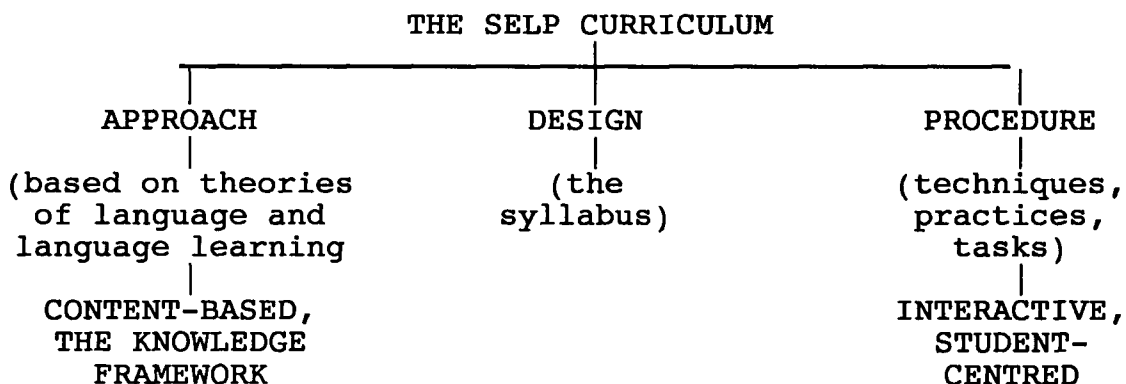
## Chapter Two

### REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

An increasing number of visiting foreign students participate in short-stay (defined as two to six weeks duration) English language programs as part of a broader experience in international education. They come with a variety of backgrounds both in their previous study of English and in their motives for participating in such a program. Some seek a social-functional operation of the language while others strive for academic proficiency. That is, they want to learn the language that is associated with academic learning. Tied to all of these demands is a keen desire to understand cultural aspects of the language and its society. The goal, then, is to design a curriculum that encompasses student tasks which are communicative, cognitive and socio-culturally appropriate as a way of using language to study content. The key is to use an organizational framework that will allow these approaches to integrate successfully. The SELP curriculum, used in this study and diagrammed in Figure 3, is an example of a content-based, interactive curriculum.



Figure 3  
The SELP Curriculum



As expressed in Chapter 1, many researchers have studied both first and second language learning in isolation from that of learning subject matter (Bloomfield, 1942; Chomsky, 1957; Brooks, 1964; Van Ek, 1971). Often discrete grammar items and language functions and notions were taught independent of authentic context. For linguists, this approach appeared appropriate but many second language learners' needs were more concrete. They wanted to be able to communicate in a variety of situational contexts, both socially and academically. Halliday (1978) views language as social semiotic and argues that

The context plays a part in determining what we say; and what we say plays a part in determining the context. As we learn how to mean, we learn how to predict each from the other. (p. 3)

More recent studies focus on the relationship between language and content and view language as an instrument that is used to learn content material. Wesche and Ready (1985) report the results of a study that suggest

... gains in second language proficiency are best achieved in situations where the second language is used as a vehicle for communication about other subjects rather than itself being the object of study. (p. 90)

This interest has grown rapidly and several researchers have developed approaches that emphasize the link between language and content.

This review of literature addresses language and content pedagogy for second language (L2) curriculum design and interactive teaching methodology. First, a summary of first language research across the curriculum and reading in the content areas will be discussed. Second, a survey of second language research in French Immersion, cognition and language, and writing in the content areas will be presented. Third, a look at several models that integrate content and language will be reviewed and a more detailed analysis given to one of those models as a basis for organizing curriculum. Finally, two pedagogical methods will be discussed as to their potential for maximizing the use of language to learn.

## FIRST LANGUAGE RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE AND CONTENT

### i. Language Across the Curriculum

Recognition was given to the need for a language policy for all subjects throughout the school in the early seventies when the Bullock Report (1975) made public its findings in Britain. This study had a great impact, not only in Britain, but also influenced other areas such as Australia and Ontario, Canada and was the beginning of a new direction in language

teaching. Not only did it support a common language and reading program for all teachers in every school, but it was one of the first to suggest that the process students worked through in completing a task was just as important as the product. Although the study made numerous other recommendations, its focus was really in providing premises about whole-school language pedagogy from which others could build. It offered little in showing how their recommendations could be implemented or how the link between content and language could be made.

Many did attempt to make some of the Bullock Report's recommendations operational. Marland (1977) created an organization pattern for a whole-school language policy. He believes that,

Learning ... involves language not merely as a passive medium for receiving instruction, but as the essential means of forming and handling concepts. Thus learning is not merely through language but with language (p. ix).

In his program, all teachers had to participate in order to be effective. It did not allow for individuality of teaching approaches. The school theory of punctuation that was developed was one indication that the focus was primarily on language. Very little was said about subject content and the interrelationship between the two.

Even as recently as 1980, the Bullock findings were being used as a basis for developing implementation strategies for language across the curriculum. Torbe (1980) looked more closely at understanding the connection between language and

learning and focussed on a theme teaching approach in his attempt to close the gap.

The Bullock Report's findings opened the water gate to language and content research and practice but, it did not seem to have clearly defined the communicative environment of either the language class or the content class in an attempt to determine exactly what their relationship was. A school language policy was one of the first steps toward recognizing that there was a connection but it was a long way from identifying exactly what that relationship was and how it could be incorporated into an equalized organizational plan for language and subject learning.

#### ii. Reading in the Content Area

An area that has been investigated and organized successfully for learning strategies is reading in the content areas. Herber (1978) recognized the need to be taught different reading strategies depending on the kind of text students were reading. He felt that,

... formal education should acquaint students with the structure of various disciplines independently (p. v).

He viewed teaching facts as secondary to the main goal of education in any content class. The two premises that are the foundation of his approach are that students need to be taught how to learn and that too few teachers know how to develop content and reading strategies at the same time. He presents a teacher's guide to the teaching of learning skills with content. Herber (1978) suggests that there are some universal

content reading skills that can be taught and transferred across the curriculum. He identifies technical vocabulary as the language of content and suggests that students need this vocabulary before they can discuss their ideas about the content material. His recommendation is that reading be taught in the subject area rather than in the language class.

Many of the reading in content area approaches provide learners with a process to follow as a strategy for learning content. One such process might help the learner work through a physics problem by asking questions that help focus on the key words needed for understanding. Many other techniques have been developed by people involved in reading in the content areas. These are important learning skills to be mastered by all who want not only to learn to read but to read to learn. The findings in this field of first language research have significant implications for second language learners as they, too, have the same reading demands placed on them by content teachers and will need to learn and practise these skills for successful achievement in content courses.

It seems that there are several different types of reading skills that a learner must master. Developmental reading skills teach the learner how to read, a task usually done in the language class. Content reading demands different types of reading skills, some of which can be transferable (Herber, 1978) and others which are specific to a particular subject area, giving the learner the opportunity to read to learn. The identification and teaching of these skills can only enhance the learner's cognitive ability to deal with the

content material whether they are native speakers or second language learners.

Not only are specific reading skills important to master, but learner's schemata must be considered and expanded as they read to learn. The Schema Theory, as presented by Hacker (1980) states that,

these schemata represent generic knowledge, that is, what is believed to be generally true, based on experience, of a class of objects, actions, or situations (p. 867).

This theory says that reading comprehension involves relating textual information to the background knowledge or schemata of the reader. The reader's schemata aids their understanding of the reading material and that further reading of informational material can expand the learner's schemata. Therefore it is essential that the previously mentioned reading skills be taught and practised in the content classroom.

Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) recognized the importance of schemata with second language learners and noted how culturally specific background knowledge could affect the comprehension of reading material.

## SECOND LANGUAGE RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE AND CONTENT

### i. The French Immersion Connection

The French Immersion programs offered in Canada teach content through the French language. Students in this program study the same curricula prescribed for English speaking students at the same grade level. When they were compared to others who were involved in a French as a Second Language

course, findings show that French Immersion students attained a higher level of language proficiency (Swain, 1974). This does not indicate that FSL instruction is not needed, as may be interpreted by this finding. A closer examination revealed that it was the type of child enrolled in French Immersion, one whose first language was a majority language, that affected acquisition of a second language and achievement in content classes (Cummins, 1979). This factor contributes to the success of the French Immersion program as well as French language arts, but what is the connection to content?

Swain (1987) suggests that methodology in presenting content is one area that should be investigated as having an effect on second language acquisition (SLA). Her study focussed on a typical content lesson (History), which involved a teacher-centred question and answer session, and looked at the frequency and length of student talk. The findings reveal that the majority of student turns were of minimal length and only a small portion were of sustained length. She argues that

... opportunities to produce sustained output in the second language are crucial to the second language learning process. Sustained talk provides both opportunities for variety and complexity of language use, and it forces the learner to pay attention to how content is expressed. This suggests that at least some portion of content lessons need to be structured in different ways in order to permit more opportunities for the sustained use of language by students (pp. 6-7).

Brock (1986) found similar results when looking at the effects of referential versus display questions in the classroom.

In Swain's (1987) analysis, she considers the effects of focussing on meaning-oriented responses in the classroom and suggests that the input students receive may be functionally restricted. It appears that the French Immersion program still has much learning to do in strengthening its link between content and language. Similar implications can be made for other second language programs as well. She recommends that

...[1] students obtain language input in its full functional range ... [2] students must be given the opportunity to produce language in its full functional range ... [3] there will have to be a way of providing consistent feedback to learners about their language errors ... [4] any solution will have to help learners attend to their language weaknesses (p. 16).

Methodology is an important issue in second language teaching, and as Swain (1987) has pointed out, it can create the connection between content and language learning by providing "carefully contrived activities, which bring into the classroom authentic language in its full functional range (Swain, p. 25).

## ii. Language Across the Curriculum

Cuelho (1982) looked at the demands of language across the curriculum for ESL students in the secondary school and analyzed them for "selected subject-areas in vocabulary, rhetorical organization, and linguistic surface-structure" (p. 56). She points out the need for teachers to shift their focus to these language demands as well as spelling errors and sentence structure when evaluating students' language ability in the ESL class. She discusses the importance of developing



motivating tasks that include content to encourage students to use the skills she has outlined. She concludes that her approach will allow for a smoother transition to regular or mainstream classes.

### iii. Cognition and Language

Lawrence (1972) looked at writing as a thinking process based on the work of Jerome Bruner. The resulting textbook outlines a method that focusses on semantics and cognition as a link between controlled and free expository writing. She states that

... the writing practice is concerned with meaning, both in content and through relationships. The cognitive method treats writing not as an end-product to be evaluated and graded but as an activity, a process, which the student can learn how to accomplish. Pedagogically, it relies on active thinking ... (p. 3).

She covers a wide range of content topics that relate to specific thinking skills such as classification, comparison and contrast, chronological order, cause and effect, prediction and hypothesis making. She also acknowledges the difference between general and specific language. Her emphasis on vocabulary allows students to express their thoughts about the content in writing. Lawrence (1972) seems to have developed an approach that can successfully relate language and content learning in writing.

Cummins (1984) looks at the relationship between language proficiency and academic achievement. He questions the assumption that "the 'language proficiency' required for L2 face-to-face communication is no different from that required

for performance on an L2 cognitive/academic task (Cummins, 1984:131)." He formalized two levels of communication as basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP) and then created a theoretical framework that added the dimensions of context and cognition. He emphasized the need to distinguish between BICS and CALP so that ESL student evaluations on language proficiency would not discolour their true academic potential. His recognition of the BICS and CALP distinction and how it relates to minority language children adds another important dimension to the complex picture of language and content learning in SLA.

Recently several publishers have produced classroom material for ESL students emphasizing the importance of tasks that involve cognition, content and language. Think and Link and Discovering Discourse both offer exercises developed around specific thinking skills related to subject matter and communication.

#### FRAMEWORKS FOR INTEGRATING LANGUAGE AND CONTENT IN THE CLASSROOM

##### i. The Adjunct Model

Several frameworks or models have been developed to link language and content so that ESL students will have opportunities to learn a full range of the second language. Snow and Brinton (1984) use an adjunct model of language instruction in which the language skills taught in an ESL

course are closely related to the content courses the students participate in. Another model, sheltered learning, shares a common assumption with the adjunct model: "successful language learning occurs when students are exposed to content material presented in meaningful, contextualized form with the focus on acquiring information, not on language per se" (Snow & Brinton, 1984:8). In the sheltered course, the teacher is responsible for both content and language. In the adjunct model, the content teacher is responsible for content and the ESL teacher teaches the language. Although both are attempting to bridge the gap between content and language learning, they are very specific to their goal of support and do not attempt to provide a system for integration of the two.

ii. The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA)

Another support approach that is designed to bridge the gap between ESL and regular or mainstream content classes is CALLA (Chamot & O'Malley, 1987). It is aimed at intermediate and advanced ESL students and attempts to broaden their academic language development through instruction in the content areas. Components of their design include content-area topics, language development activities and instruction in learning strategies. CALLA is influenced by Cummins' (1984) work which is reflected in the type of language activities suggested. CALLA appears to be a comprehensive approach to its goal of "supplying added support for English language development among LEP (limited English proficient) students ..." (Chamot & O'Malley, 1987:245).

### iii. The Knowledge Framework

The last approach to be reviewed is the knowledge framework (Mohan, 1986). It integrates language, content and cognition to aid the teacher's organization of objectives and teaching material. It is

based on the concept of an activity, which is central to education, since education initiates the learner into the public activities of his or her society. The organizing framework ... is also intended to be a guide to the structure of knowledge across the curriculum. But because the structure of knowledge is abstract, ... graphics (are used) to represent it and communicate about it (p. 25).

The framework encompasses six facets of knowledge: three that represent theoretical knowledge structures (classification, principles and evaluation) and three that represent practical knowledge structures (description, sequence and choice). In dividing it this way, Mohan, as Lawrence (1972) did, recognizes the distinction between general and specific discourse and cognition. Mohan (1986) suggests that it is these knowledge structures that are inherent in every activity that one participates in. The activity is the content of the lesson and can be divided into the six boxes. In every case the boxes are interactive but the teacher may choose to focus on only one or two knowledge structures at a time. Mohan (1986) also identifies and lists specific language items related to each box as the language of description, the language of sequence, etc., therefore defining an interrelationship between language and content.

Graphics are used as a way to lessen the language load (for example, use of text, oral speech) and help ESL learners

understand how the content is organized. Carrell (1985) discusses the importance of using graphics to facilitate reading for ESL students. Concept mapping (Novak & Godwin, 1984) uses graphics as a way of relating various concepts to enhance comprehension of content material. Mohan (1986) not only encourages the use of graphics but has identified specific types of graphic designs that link with the specific knowledge structures.

This framework makes the interrelationship of content, language and cognition easily accessible for the teacher and the student. It is a way of organizing tasks and using graphics to aid language and content learning. It appears to be a well defined instrument that can be used at all levels.

The ESL Resource Book Volume 1 (Early, Thew, & Wakefield, 1986) introduces the knowledge framework as a basis for designing language instruction in content areas and provides many examples of its application to curricula.

## METHODOLOGY

Once the content and language of the curriculum is organized, the methods used to teach it must be given careful consideration. Two areas that focus on interactive strategies, contact and task structure, are discussed below.

### i. The Contact Approach

The Contact Approach (Loughrey & Smith, 1979) is a method that has been used to give ESL students an opportunity to converse with a native speaker of English in a meaningful way.

It was influenced by the work of Widdowson (1978), Tough (1976) and others who believed in the communicative approach to language teaching and focussed on language as discourse.

The Contact Approach takes the student out of the formal setting of the classroom and allows him/her to experience the environment of the English-speaking community. Students are given community-oriented tasks that are real-life interactions between the L2 learner and the native speaker.

Four main features outline this approach in its attempt to study language within a real social context: classroom preparation, the event, the tasks to be completed during the event and the feedback sessions. With careful planning of the contact assignment, the student gains confidence in his/her ability to communicate with native speakers and learns valuable feedback from the teacher regarding language problems he/she experienced during the contact.

This approach has been used successfully by short-stay programs in the Vancouver, British Columbia area for many years (Yildiz, 1980) and continues to be a key technique in promoting situational activities that involve second language learners and native speakers in meaningful discourse.

## ii. Structure of Student Tasks

Student tasks can be structured to facilitate oral language (Staab, 1982). This, in turn, will enhance the student's reading ability because the semantic and syntactic components of oral language are also a part of the reading process (Goodman, 1972). An appropriate method for developing

students' oral language ability has been suggested by Staab (1982). She focusses on what Halliday (1975) calls meaningful situations and agrees with Loban's (1979) view that language is an instrument to be used to participate in real events. The method she proposes is universal for all activities.

Initially designed for first language learners, it seems easily adaptable for ESL students. It contains five basic principles which involve assigning a common project to a group, ensuring the activity is meaningful, emphasizing the process not the product, placing language models in the group (stronger with weaker) and using topics from across the curriculum. It puts the focus on thinking about language as one talks about content, a method that appears to be complimentary to a language and content approach.

#### COMMENTS

The literature clearly supports the view that content is an integral part of SLA. Positive contributions to language development were seen in many previous attempts in pedagogical strategies to relate language and content (Marland, 1977; Herber, 1978; Coelho, 1982). A concern that arises from these studies is that the emphasis was still very much language-oriented and presented a precarious balance in the view of the content teacher. Because content teachers did not view themselves as language teachers and language teachers did not view themselves as content teachers, neither felt they could fulfil each other's educational mandate. Therefore an unbalanced emphasis of either language or content was the

reality of classroom teaching. In the language classroom the students were not involved in-depth in content knowledge and in the content class they were not engaged in comprehensive language learning. Mohan's (1986) framework shifted the fulcrum back to the middle, creating an instrument that addresses some of these concerns. It presents a means through which content and language can be taught as equal partners in the educational activities that engage students in learning.



## Chapter Three

### THE METHOD

#### A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

There are two main categories of methods used to investigate research problems. Each offer their own set of criteria for collecting and analyzing data. An appropriate pairing of the method with the problem, issue or question to be researched is essential. One method is more scientifically based (quantitative) while the other method is more descriptive by design (qualitative). In a quantitative approach, standardized tests, statistics and relationships between countable criteria play a dominant role. In a qualitative approach, observations, interviews, open-ended questionnaires become the major tools for collecting data.

The qualitative method allows the researcher to examine the process and context of an event as opposed to focussing on specific variables. The questions raised in this thesis investigate implementation and task design issues related to the effectiveness of a content-based curriculum in ESL programs, an approach to teaching that is new to the field of ESL and therefore exploratory in nature. Rather than isolate a variable for precise measurement, the goal or outcome of the following research focussed on deriving meaning about the process of teaching content and language from those involved in the curriculum's implementation. Therefore, a qualitative

approach was selected as the method used to investigate the research questions referred to above.

## THE SUBJECTS

Thirty instructors, with valid British Columbia teaching certificates, field-tested a content-based curriculum for a summer English language program offered by a local Vancouver community college. All but five instructors had taken university courses in ESL methodology and/or were experienced ESL teachers. All were considered to be very capable teachers and interested in working with international students. Some were public school teachers, others instructed ESL classes for adults. For two, it was their first independent experience in the classroom.

The 428 students who participated in the program were from Japan. They ranged in age from 12 to 23 years and were divided into two main groups: high school and college age. The core curriculum was the same for all students and included courses in conversational analysis, consumerism and international citizenship. The courses were written to allow for flexibility and adaptability in depth of topic and language level. Two additional courses were included in the curriculum, one for each of the two age levels. The majority of the students' language level was considered to range from lower to upper beginner. Several of the college age students were low intermediate speakers of English. No students were put in an advanced level class. All but five classes included three weeks, or 60 hours, of instruction. Those five classes

received two weeks, or 40 hours, of instruction. Although students did participate in a program evaluation, they were not asked to complete a specific curriculum evaluation.

#### THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

The dual role of researcher and administrator undertaken by this writer sets limitations on the study. In quantitative research, the researcher collects data through objective measures. In simple qualitative research, the researcher is unknown to the subjects and therefore the subjective data collected is viewed as unskewed. In action research there is the danger of one role (the administrator) interfering with the other (the researcher) in that it is possible that the subjects might only give positive feedback to the evaluation process for job security reasons. On the other hand, the administrator role may influence the subjects to increase their effort in the implementation of the curriculum. Given these factors, the findings should not be generalized to a larger population, but should be considered when discussing other similar situations.

#### THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

The research design involved curriculum development, implementation and evaluation.

## i. Curriculum Development

Initially, the following curriculum principles were established. They reflect content ideas, language development, thinking processes and instructional strategies.

The curriculum will offer opportunities for students to:

1. use English while learning about Canada in interesting and challenging contexts
2. integrate language and content within an academic framework
3. learn language items as they occur in the natural sequence of communication
4. develop oral language skills
5. develop the ability to describe, analyze and reflect about a wide range of topics
6. experience a positive and successful learning environment
7. participate actively in the program
8. think critically about North American life and international concerns
9. be involved in purposeful interaction with native speakers.

The principles clearly support a content-based approach to language learning. The knowledge framework (Mohan, 1986) was selected as the organizational tool for integrating content and language. Appropriate content for short stay international students was then determined and support visuals were collected (pictures, hands-on objects, etc.) and/or drawn. Instructional strategies included interactive and student-centred approaches to learning, such as jigsaw, peer teaching and small group tasks. Within this milieu of criteria and considerations, the curriculum was written.

## ii. Curriculum Implementation

Professional development workshops were given to instructors prior to their teaching assignment. One mandatory three-hour session that focussed specifically on the curriculum was held for all instructors teaching on the Summer English Language Program. Topics included such areas as background information on content and language; the knowledge framework; how to use visuals as a link between language and subject matter; language and the knowledge structures; and, interactive strategies for the classroom. Further opportunities were provided for instructors to meet with the researcher in small groups to discuss curriculum issues before the beginning of the program. It is important to note that instructors were not paid for their time while attending these sessions, although it was an expectation of the program to attend two whole group sessions (one for program information and one for curriculum implementation). Therefore the administrative staff agreed to limit the number of times instructors were expected to participate in whole group professional development. Emphasis was then placed on this researcher being available to meet with instructors on an individual and small group basis when requested.

Throughout the program, this researcher was available to answer questions about the curriculum, observe in the classrooms occasionally, and participate in several off-campus curriculum activities. Ongoing support was provided for instructors in this implementation phase.

Because of the fast-paced, compact nature of the program, when instructors did raise questions about specific activities from the curriculum it was almost consistently just before or immediately after using those activities in the classroom. Surface explanations and advice was offered at that time but rarely was there an opportunity to do any in-depth educating of the approach and techniques involved in using the curriculum. The highest degree of curriculum consultation was done at the mid- and post-program evaluation sessions but even then it was of limited discussion because of time constraints and other program commitments for the instructors. On an individual basis, less than one quarter of the instructors requested assistance in curriculum implementation. Most instructors adapted the activities to meet their personal teaching style and the needs of their students while attempting to address the content and language approach of the curriculum.

### iii. Curriculum Evaluation

Instructors were asked to write comments on each page of the curriculum as they used it to ensure immediate feedback. They were encouraged to recommend changes, highlight areas of difficulty and indicate those activities that were successful. A similar format was developed in a descriptive questionnaire (see Appendix D) and instructors were asked to respond to appropriateness, difficulties, successes and recommended changes in more depth. The questionnaire tended to generate very general responses and therefore the feedback was not

always appropriate to the objectives being evaluated. If this were to be repeated, it is recommended that the questionnaire, in addition to the existing questions, include descriptive questions related to the curriculum principles outlined in this chapter. Both the curriculum and the questionnaire were collected and used as part of the research data.

Two curriculum and program evaluation sessions were also provided within each of the three week programs. The first group (maximum number in any one group was four instructors) evaluation session (15 minutes long) was held mid-program and everyone was given an opportunity to comment on the program and curriculum to initiate immediate revision or adaptation. A second group evaluation session, held at the end of the program, was a longer session (30-45 minutes). Topics focussed on appropriateness of the curriculum - its structure, content and language approach - for the wide range of age and level of ESL students that participated in it. All comments from both evaluation sessions were documented by tape recorder and handwritten notes.

## Chapter Four

### THE ANALYSIS

Analysis of the data is limited in its scope because of the action research role of this researcher. Effort was given to maintaining a neutral or objective perspective toward curriculum issues, promoting a positive and supportive environment for instructors to constructively address their concerns about the curriculum. Yet, the dual role of administrator and researcher in the SELP may have influenced the content of the data given by the instructors.

Curriculum principles identified in Chapter Three created a foundation for the curriculum and Mohan's (1986) knowledge framework provided a structure to organize the content and language. At another level, interactive teaching strategies were used to design the tasks within this model. The tasks were student-centred, rather than teacher-led, and focussed on the oral discourse students needed as they worked through the process of the content-based task. It is this context of the SELP curriculum that will be the point of reference in the analysis of the data. Questions about curriculum implementation and evaluation are raised as a result of the analysis.

### THE FINDINGS

The hand notes, tape recordings, written comments on the curriculum pages and the curriculum questionnaires were reviewed. Because the questionnaires were completed by all



instructors on the program, they were deemed representative evaluative curriculum comments and will be the major focus of the analysis. All other significant data, that is data that either supports or contradicts the questionnaire data, will be included in the following discussion.

The first question on the questionnaire referred to the appropriateness of the curriculum content. It asked instructors to consider the content relative to their students' interest in the content (meaningfulness); level of English competency; and, length of stay (40-60 hours of instruction). Table I shows the results of the data collected.

Table I  
Appropriateness of Curriculum Content

Factors	Supportive		Not Supportive	
	High School Instructors	College Instructors	High School Instructors	College Instructors
the group of students (meaningful- ness)	14	16	0	0
their level of English competency	3	10	11	6
their length of stay (40-60 hrs of instruction)	2	12	12	4

Instructors supported the selected topics found in the curriculum but raised some concerns about the level of language difficulty, especially for the high school students. Instructors indicated that their students did not have what they saw as the necessary vocabulary to engage in discussion about some of these topics. Several instructors viewed some of the concepts within the activities as too abstract and therefore too difficult for students at the lower language levels. The activities that were more concrete seemed to be generally more successful. The number of hours in the program related to the amount of content instructors could cover and those high school groups with fewer program hours and with students at a lower language level did not support the amount of content as appropriate.

The second main question of the questionnaire asked instructors to discuss the successes and difficulties of the curriculum, first for themselves and then for their students. The following main themes were identified from the data collected from question two and are shown in Tables II and III:

Table II

## Successes and Difficulties of Curriculum for Instructors

Factors	Successes		Difficulties	
	High School Instructors	College Instructors	High School Instructors	College Instructors
Vocabulary Development	7	14	7	2
Eliciting Specific Oral Language	10	13	4	3
Linking Content and Language	4	6	10	10
Meaningful Tasks	11	13	3	3
Difficulty of Tasks	5	14	9	2
Group Work	14	16	0	0
Use of Visuals	10	12	4	4

Table III

Successes and Difficulties of Curriculum for Students from the  
Instructor's Perspective

Factors	Successes		Difficulties	
	High School Instructors	College Instructors	High School Instructors	College Instructors
Vocabulary Development	7	14	7	2
Eliciting Specific Oral Language	4	13	10	3
Linking Content and Language	4	6	10	10
Meaningful Tasks	11	13	3	3
Difficulty of Tasks	3	8	11	8
Group Work	9	10	5	6
Use of Visuals	10	12	4	4

For 26 of the 30 instructors participating in this study, the issues they raised related to task design. The other area of concern identified by four instructors focussed on the non-sequential development of language skills in content-based language learning. Both task design and non-sequential

language development will be discussed in the analysis of the data.

The results of parts a and b of question 2 differ in only three areas. In analyzing the data, attention will be given to these three areas in the discussion of the findings.

The evaluation comments relating to task design were categorized into seven areas. Three areas speak to issues involving task design and language: vocabulary, eliciting specific language and linking content and language. The others refer to aspects of task design that include meaningfulness, task difficulty, group work and use of visuals. These task design factors will form the basis of the following discussion.

#### i. Task Design and its Relationship to Teaching Language

##### a. Vocabulary

Vocabulary level was a topic that emerged frequently as causing difficulty in implementing the curriculum and completing the student tasks as designed. Figure 4 shows that college instructors felt they were successful in developing students' vocabularies such that they could engage in the curriculum tasks. Others felt they had difficulty building students' vocabularies to a level that would enable students to participate in the activities. Comments such as,

- ... the vocabulary the students were expected to use was too difficult
- ... my students didn't have the vocabulary they needed to complete the task
- ... there were too many new words all at once

would suggest a need to develop vocabulary more systematically for a wider range of English proficiency levels. Saville-Troike (1984) recognizes the contribution of vocabulary knowledge in second language competency and states that it should be closely related to the content or topic being studied. The activity, EATING IN THE CAFETERIA (see Appendix D), was difficult for low level language students because they were not familiar with the vocabulary they needed to complete the activity. High school students reportedly had difficulty with the activity EXPLORING CANADA for the same reason. Some extended vocabulary building tasks need to be done before lesser language proficient students attempt this task. Introductory, picture naming and classifying tasks did not seem to be enough for some of these students because new vocabulary needed to be learned more thoroughly. For some students the concepts were also new and this added to the confusion of attempting to master new vocabulary and a new concept at the same time.

The tasks within the activity need to allow students to work with the content and structure vocabulary in a variety of ways so that they gain confidence, have an opportunity to understand the concept being presented and develop some competency in using the language. In the activity, EATING IN THE CAFETERIA, one of the tasks was to classify different foods for different meals in Canada and compare this to Japan. Even though a chart was provided the lesson guide did not clearly suggest to the teacher that students work with the structure vocabulary (for example, ... is a type of ... food;

breakfast usually consists of ...) in a variety of ways to show their understanding of both the content and the language.

b. Eliciting Specific Language

The tasks were originally designed to elicit specific language from the organizational framework of the curriculum. Although this understanding was clear to the researcher, it posed many problems for some of the instructors because they were unfamiliar with the knowledge framework. Some of the comments were as follows:

- ... I didn't understand what language I was supposed to teach
- ... the language component was too vague
- ... I want to know more specifically what language I'm supposed to be teaching
- ... need more guidelines for the language part of the lessons

These comments suggest that the teachers still think they are feeding the students words and sentence patterns, rather than creating situations where certain knowledge structures need to be expressed, and then take an 'informed' lead from student responses. More in-service for instructors is necessary for working with language in this way. Clearer guidelines for vocabulary and language items need to be built into the curriculum. The development of an introductory activity will aid instructors in this respect. As well, teacher reference materials that relate to the language in each of the knowledge structures must be identified. Once instructors become familiar with this information, they will be able to work through the language demands of the tasks more easily. As Staab (1986) has shown, tasks can be designed to elicit, but

not necessarily teach, specific kinds of language. It is an objective of this curriculum that students have opportunities to use all structures in the framework. Therefore tasks must be designed to include at least the six kinds of language identified.

A comparison of Figures 4 and 5 indicate that although many of the instructors felt they were successfully attempting to elicit specific oral language, the high school students were having more difficulty than the college age students. This seems to be a natural occurrence given the generally lower language level of the students and lack of experience in the second language usage.

#### c. Linking Content and Language

The content-based curriculum was designed to promote both language learning and content learning. The initial tasks were written to provide opportunities to talk about the content. Many visuals were included as support for the conceptual understanding of the content. Yet instructor evaluations, as shown in Figure 4, indicated a difficulty for many to link language and content together. Some comments are as follows:

- ... I knew what the content was but I couldn't understand what the language component was
- ... it was so easy to focus on what the students were saying but difficult to listen to how they were saying it
- ... I need to teach language or content but it's too difficult to do both at the same time

The evaluations demonstrate that it was not enough to provide opportunities to talk about topics and hope that



instructors could identify problem areas when the talk broke down. The contrived nature of the lesson again becomes necessary as students need to be taught both the what and how of 'talk'. Mohan (1986) and Early (Vancouver School Board Project, Funds For Excellence) use graphics as a structure to link the content and language. Visuals of many types (charts, pictures, films, concept mapping) assist the students' conceptual understanding of the content and suggest the structural or rhetorical vocabulary that relates to the way the content is being expressed in the visual. In this way language is integrated with content and students can talk about 'real' topics in a contrived but authentic way. Despite the many graphics that were provided in the curriculum, it seems clear that many did not understand how to use them.

#### d. Meaningful Tasks

The topics of the initial activities were chosen because of their authenticity to real situations students might find themselves in (eg. asking for direction to a specific location) and because of their topical interest to visiting foreign students (eg. cultural perspectives of North America). For the most part, as exemplified in Figure 4, the choice of content and situations were listed as appropriate in instructor evaluations. Several observations follow:

- ... many of the activities gave the students information they needed to know
- ... they (students) really liked the contact assignment, it gave them a 'real' reason to talk to native speakers
- ... most of the activities were interesting to students, especially the food and shopping tasks

- ... EATING IN THE CAFETERIA was good but needs another dimension to broaden its scope
- ... I find it hard to predict the language my students will need and use because the situation is complex and offers opportunities for many different responses

Although some topics did not appeal to all students, it is felt that 'real world' activities were most meaningful to the majority of students involved in the program and therefore facilitated greater participation in the tasks offered and enhanced SLA.

As well as being meaningful, Mohan (1986) recommends the teaching of activities as a way of encompassing the larger speech situation (top down) rather than learning isolated language items (bottom up). In this way when students are involved in an activity they experience a more complete picture of the various functions, notions and specific language items that make up that picture. Although EATING IN THE CAFETERIA is viewed as a situation, it was too specific and needed another topic relating to a broader perspective of food. Swain (1987) argues for the need of authenticity, though contrived, to make tasks more meaningful to students. In this study teachers stated that tasks involving talk with native speakers for a specific purpose (directions, interview, survey) were the most successful. The need for structured language and content tasks is important but often difficult with 'real world' activities because of the numerous language possibilities it offers. EATING IN THE CAFETERIA, CONDUCTING SURVEYS and MULTICULTURALISM IN CANADA are examples of such

activities from the SELP curriculum, although some vocabulary is obviously predictable.

e. Task Difficulty

Tasks were designed to elicit simple and complex responses, challenging a wide variety of linguistic abilities. Students, at all competency levels, were given tasks that reflected aspects of all six knowledge structures (Mohan, 1986) at the beginning of the program with little consideration for the increasingly complex cognitive demands inherent in the structure of situations or topics. The results shown in Figures 4 and 5 indicate that the instructors and students at the college level appeared to have more success but in both cases, the students had more difficulty working in complex tasks than the instructors had teaching them. The effects are reflected in these comments:

- ... some tasks were just too difficult for my students
- ... choice and evaluation on the first day - my students couldn't handle it
- ... expressing decisions and opinions is uncomfortable and difficult for many of my students, I think their cultural background is influencing this attitude

Clearly the instructors' evaluations indicate that the level of difficulty is an important factor when designing tasks and that more than vocabulary development is involved. One has to question what it was about the task that students could not handle. Were the visuals appropriate to the content? Were the teaching techniques appropriate to the level of language of the students? One must consider

carefully the many factors involved in situations similar to those indicated in the comments.

The EATING IN THE CAFETERIA activity involved students in making and expressing decision. Brown et al. (1984) suggest that some tasks are more difficult than others and list static, dynamic and abstract as the order of complexity in task design. The definition of abstract is similar to choice/evaluation in the knowledge framework and is evidenced in the task involving the lunch budget. In reviewing the activity, it is recognized that the focus is abstract, with little emphasis on the static task of describing the food pictures. Other activities from the SELP curriculum that followed this pattern and were of concern to instructors were: IDENTIFYING INTERNATIONAL ISSUES AND SHARING THOUGHTS ON THE FUTURE and CONDUCTING SURVEYS.

#### f. Group Work

All activities in the curriculum were based on paired and small group work, focussing on student interaction. For the most part, the task design met its objectives and instructors felt this was a good approach as indicated in Figure 4. Some of the instructor feedback was as follows:

- ... paired and small group activities worked well
- ... I liked the idea of the students being actively involved in their learning
- ... it was good to see the students help each other with the ideas and the language
- ... some students dominated small group discussion while others said nothing
- ... some of them spoke too much Japanese when they were speaking with their friends
- ... some found ways to complete the task without speaking - they each did their own section

Many issues are raised here. Is language proficiency the only factor resulting in the behaviour described above? How does personality and/or cultural background influence behaviour in language learning? When the students spoke Japanese, were they on task? If so, does that interfere with or enhance language learning? There are still many unanswered questions but the comments seem to suggest that although group work is seen as successful, the careful structure of the task is important to ensure maximum student participation and, therefore, maximum output of English language.

Long and Porter's (1985) review of the literature supports the use of group work in SLA in terms of its opportunities for negotiation of meaning. Several of the students they report suggest paired two-way tasks as optimal for output and interaction, a perspective they share in SLA theory. Others feel that students should be involved with the language of teaching and learning (Mohan, class handout, ENED. 508, 1988) to reach their goal of SLA. In this area group work is also recommended and focusses on such structured approaches as cooperative learning and peer teaching. In the initial activity, EATING IN THE CAFETERIA, group work and paired two-way design were used for the task about the lunch budget. For those students who had the vocabulary, it worked well. Pica (1987) suggests that decision-making activities and information exchange tasks provide a more balanced opportunity for all participants and diminishes the possibility of dominance within the group. The other problems

that sometimes occur with group work, as mentioned in evaluations listed above, can be handled with instructor support, interest and encouragement to improve these situations and elicit appropriate discourse.

g. Use of Visuals

Several instructors questioned why visuals, such as flowcharts, classification graphics and decision trees, were employed so frequently in the curriculum. They voiced difficulty in using anything but pictures to elicit language and therefore avoided using other graphic representations of ideas found in the curriculum. Novak and Gowin (1984) discuss the relationship between graphics and learning, focussing on the use of concept mapping to assist students in their understanding of the information and the language that is needed to talk about topics. Mohan (1986) refers to key visuals as the important link between content and language and offers suggestions as to how the use of visuals can promote language acquisition. The use of graphics in SLA is new territory to be explored, but it seems that both the instructor and the students need to be shown how to use visuals to maximize language and content learning. Once the potential is recognized, visuals will be an integral part of all language and content learning.

ii. Other Findings

Four instructors were concerned about language development and felt there was a need for a sequential list of language items to be covered in the curriculum. In an

integrated, content-based approach, language is not taught in a sequential manner. Instructors must have a solid understanding the language the tasks will demand of the students, but must be flexible to respond to the students' language needs as they enter into discussions about topics. The underlying concern is the assumption that language is learned through the teaching of sequential language items. This has been called into question by current research by Krashen (1980) and others. Content-based language teaching, which we are pursuing here, supports the view of non-sequential language development, although it is recognized that this is still an issue for many instructors in ESL.

A further review of the data identified individual instructors and how they responded to question 2 in Figure 4. Two questions came to mind: were there any instructors that placed themselves consistently in the successful category? If so, how did they differ in their understanding of the curriculum approach, design and procedures from other instructors? Because specific data was not collected regarding these two questions, the discussion that follows is based on the reflective comments of this researcher, curriculum recommendations from instructors and any pertinent data collected during the program's operation.

One level of the findings has been analyzed earlier in this chapter. At another level, there seems to be two groups of teachers that can be identified. One group of six instructors consistently stated successes with the curriculum and contributed constructive criticisms on both the curriculum

pages and the questionnaire. Their students ranged in language level from low to high intermediate. Instructors' comments reflected concerns with the design of various tasks and they offered specific suggestions and ideas for improvement as a result of their own adaptations to the materials in the curriculum. For example, one instructor in this group created a key visual, which he had developed for his low level students, to go with a story in the activity CURRENT TOPICS. The key visual was included in the evaluation feedback. Other comments from this group follow:

- ... my class was at a basic language level so I adapted where I could and added bits of my own to meet my students' needs. I was content with the curriculum
- ... whatever I could reduce to a game format was well-received
- ... I think we still need some materials worked out in more detail ... I designed two graphics to help get at the information
- ... the students didn't have difficulty with the curriculum and I found it a good basis ... I supplemented some areas

This group of instructors seemed to be able to adapt and supplement materials successfully to meet their students' needs.

The remaining 24 instructors form the second group and they raise a variety of concerns about the curriculum, as identified earlier in this chapter, with little feedback in terms of ideas or suggestions for improvement. Table IV, Curriculum Recommendations, as shown below, supports this notion.



Table IV  
Curriculum Recommendations

Comments	Number of Responses
Include more low level vocabulary building exercises	25
Give samples of language that can be used with visuals on the student handouts	30
Show more clearly in activities how language and content is handled within the task	30
Identify task difficulty by some sort of levels	5
Provide a list of language items related to the Knowledge Framework or more background resource materials	30
Provide more in-service training on content and language strategies, use of graphics	30

All six areas identified in Table IV could easily be interpreted as implementation and/or task design issues. Therefore being able to identify and categorize the instructors into two groups facilitates the analysis of data.

It seems that the first group was much more comfortable with the curriculum and, from close knowledge of those instructors and personal observations, this researcher

believes that they were more familiar with the approach and expectations of a content-based curriculum, as well as being very experienced ESL instructors. Therefore, it is felt that their questionnaire comments were more representative of evaluation issues than implementation issues. The other group, though, were new to using the Framework and the interactive strategies inherent in the design of the tasks. This complicates the analysis of data collected because there seem to be two issues at work - one of implementation and one of task design. Were their concerns about the tasks a result of not being familiar with the Framework and therefore unsure of how to implement it? Or, were their concerns truly reflective of difficulties with task design? Some of the comments about difficulties and unsuccessful attempts with activities in the curriculum from group two emphasize the importance of implementation strategies and the role they play in successful programming.

## Chapter Five

### CONCLUSION

#### THE QUESTION: IS CONTENT-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING AN EFFECTIVE APPROACH FOR ESL CURRICULA?

This document examines a content-based curriculum for a short stay ESL program and, from a teaching perspective, reports on its effectiveness for students learning a second language. This curriculum approach goes beyond a traditional view of language teaching and encompasses a broader perspective of language education.

#### i. Summary of Findings: Instructor Support

The instructors involved in this study responded positively to the curriculum principles and supported a content-based approach to language learning. The recommendations, as shown in Table IV, did not reflect major changes to the curriculum. Most of the instructors' concerns focussed on implementation strategies, that is, they asked for more specific instructional techniques, increased background knowledge of the approach used and in-depth language support to assist them in actualizing the goals and principles of the curriculum. The other concerns, raised at the task design level, were recommendations for making the SELP curriculum even more effective for second language learners.

From this researcher's observations and notes, the message of most instructors clearly supported content-based language teaching. In the discussions they highlighted

student contact with native speakers, especially when the contact assignments could be organized within the Framework. The importance of culture was also a central theme in instructor conferences and they supported the way culture was recognized and included in the teaching process within the curriculum. Generally, the instructors' comments gave support and encouragement, to not only continue with the curriculum, but to build on it and strengthen what is already there.

#### ii. Summary of Current Research Support

Cummins' (1984) distinction between communicative competence of social speech and that of academic proficiency adds a significant dimension to language pedagogy. This supports a content-based approach and recognizes the need to go beyond conversational gambits, functional discourse and sentence patterns when learning language.

The emphasis on situations in meaningful contexts, rather than speech events and language items studied in isolation, presents a new perspective of language. Not only does it involve a communicative grammar but also a language related to specific knowledge structures (Mohan, 1986). Structural language within the knowledge structures, as well as from the content, is identified as essential in language and learning.

The significance of structuring tasks carefully and the use of the contact approach seem viable methods to produce and encourage the sustained talk (Swain, 1987) that appears to be so essential to SLA.

The knowledge framework facilitates these components to interact positively providing an educational setting for ESL students at all levels and interests, including those involved in a short stay program. If Halliday's (1978) view is incorporated into this curriculum design through course content, socio-cultural aspects of the language will be learned as students participate in the program. This, then, is seen as meeting the predetermined objectives of a content-based short-stay English language program for visiting foreign students.

Further research is needed to pursue many of the questions generated by this study in an attempt to strengthen the understanding and implementation of a content-based approach to language education.

#### IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

Given the action research nature of this study, implications of the findings are exploratory and do generate many unanswered questions. Initially, the task was to evaluate the SELP curriculum in terms of its effectiveness for short stay, second language learners. An analysis of the findings indicates that the issues raised could be considered more implementation than evaluation concerns for many of the instructors. For a small group of others, evaluation of the curriculum was their focus. Whether implementation or evaluation issues, a revision of the tasks based on the responses from the instructors was recommended. It was felt that the changes in task design would benefit the students and

assist the instructor in implementing the curriculum in the future. A discussion of those recommended changes follows.

i. Instructional Setting

a. Task Design

Current research in curriculum design for second language learners emphasizes the need to focus on the structure of student tasks as a way of linking curriculum objectives and student performance. Critical aspects of task design identified in this study include vocabulary development, eliciting specific language, linking content and language, meaningfulness, task difficulty and types of group work. Content-based tasks offer the learner important strategies to learn subject-matter and language and to extend thinking.

Difficult vocabulary demands within the activities was a concern for many instructors. It was recognized that a more systematic approach to introducing vocabulary was needed as well as offering many opportunities to engage in discourse using vocabulary in meaningful ways. It is recommended that an introductory activity be provided for low level students, and used as review for higher level students, that consists of tasks designed to elicit specific kinds of vocabulary. The knowledge framework (Mohan, 1986) recognizes two types of vocabulary: content and structure. The content vocabulary changes as the topic changes but the structure vocabulary, relating to the knowledge structures, identifies language items that can be held constant over a variety of topics within the same knowledge structure. Once the students feel

comfortable with one language structure related to a knowledge structure, they can be taught how to express that same knowledge structure in many different ways. The introductory activity would prepare students for the challenge of the content and structure vocabulary demanded in the activities in the curriculum.

The activity, EATING IN THE CAFETERIA, could be revised so that the focus is on kinds of food and the situation of eating in the cafeteria became one of several tasks within a larger theme or topic entitled NUTRITIONAL OR JUNK? (see Appendix E). In this way the language and content are much more focussed and students are given more opportunities to work with the same vocabulary in various ways within each task. It is felt that this will aid the instructor in his/her implementation of the activity and vocabulary will build in more of a controlled way, therefore creating many opportunities for successful student participation in the task.

Attempts to elicit specific language posed problems for instructors. They were given minimal support in background knowledge of language and content connections or in the way it was handled in the curriculum. In the activity, EATING IN THE CAFETERIA, the content was organized into the six structures as shown in Appendix D. A brief introduction to the language linked to each structure was included for teachers at the beginning of the curriculum. In the lesson guide there was not mention of the language and how it is linked to the content. It was presumed that the instructors would connect

the content to the structure, link the structure to the language and know what to listen for and teach. The revised activity (Appendix E) identifies the language structure to focus on and refers to language and vocabulary throughout the tasks although it does not list specific items. Use of an introductory activity and availability of a more developed resource of language materials relating to the structures, will assist instructors greatly. They could also prepare their own lists for the lessons they will be teaching, and therefore become more familiar with both the content and language their students will be learning and using. Caution is needed, though, in that teachers need to be informed and open to teach to student responses. Therefore, instructors need to be thoroughly prepared and have a strong sense of direction for the language items they want their students to work with. They must move students in the direction of these words and structures and discourse patterns but be perceptive and highly flexible in realizing the actual language that the task demands.

Similarly, strategies for linking language and content were not expressed very well in EATING IN THE CAFETERIA. Visuals were used to support conceptual understanding but it was not related to structural vocabulary in a practical way. In the revised activity, NUTRITIONAL OR JUNK?, each task has at least one key graphic that links content and language. For example, task 1 asks students to classify foods into different types and uses a classification tree as a graphic. Instructors, familiar with the language of classification,



know the vocabulary and language items the students will be using to talk about the topic.

EATING IN THE CAFETERIA, although meaningful to the students in an immediate context, needed to be broader in scope for extending thinking and generalizing concepts. Therefore, the topic was changed to encompass ideas about nutritional and junk food and this theme was carried through to the eating in the cafeteria task, as well as other activities in the unit on Food Studies. This approach provides the students with a more cohesive understanding of the language and the content of the situation. The revised activity, NUTRITIONAL OR JUNK? has been contrived or structured for specific language that is meaningful to students but it also includes opportunities for students to respond as independent thinkers that will challenge them both academically and linguistically.

The structuring of challenges within the activities need to be more clearly established. Therefore it is recommended that the revised activities include static and dynamic tasks as well as involving students in choice and evaluation, allowing students at different levels of proficiency to be challenged at all levels of task difficulty. It is recognized that there are some very simple choices that all students could be involved in, such as likes and dislikes or food preferences and therefore could work with the language of choice at a very low level. There is little evidence of a progression or developmental stage to language learning in terms of complex thinking processes. Young children in their

native language successfully use simple language to convey complex thinking. Perhaps the same applies to second language learners as well.

b. Use of Visuals

The findings also raised questions about the use of visuals in SLA. concerns reflect the 'how to' rather than the 'why' when discussions of visuals were reviewed. This seems to relate directly to methodology and the importance of professional development in this area. When instructors are informed of various strategies that use visuals to facilitate learning, language and thinking, and then experiment with these strategies in their teaching, the potential of visuals will be realized.

c. Sequential Language Development

The lack of sequential language development was also an issue addressed by several subjects participating in this study. Their frame of reference as a language teacher was from a traditional grammar background and they viewed content-based language teaching as confusing and non-sequential. Most other instructors agreed that having a good understanding of the language of the knowledge structures was essential for successful implementation of the curriculum but found it difficult to see a pattern in their language teaching. It seems that a clear definition of language from a content-based perspective is necessary to clarify the concern of sequential language development. Perhaps a checklist of language items

that represent each of the knowledge structures would help address some of their concerns.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

This study has raised many issues involving content-based language teaching, especially in the process of implementation and at the level of task design. Further research is needed to develop strategies to assist instructors when working within a content-based setting. Finding a way to balance theory and practice, with limited time available for professional development, is a challenge. Is experience the best teacher or will detailed explanations of teaching strategies within the curriculum meet the needs of the instructors who raised implementation questions? Given the nature of this integrated approach and the non-sequential development of language, it would be very difficult to include detailed expectations of language outcomes within every activity. Practice and continued professional development support seem to be the best partnership.

Research is also needed to investigate links between task and the knowledge framework. This document speaks partly to concerns about language, visuals, level of difficulty or complexity and how they relate to task. It seems that these three areas are also very much integrated within the knowledge framework. Therefore, an examination of task types and their relationship with various types of knowledge seems to be a logical progression in content-based research.

Task is a common but dynamic tool that instructors use frequently for many different purposes. The adaptability and flexibility of the structure of task plays an important role in SLA merits further investigation. Are there developmental stages within a task that enhance SLA and learning? Feedback from instructors seem to reflect that there is. The importance of task cannot be underestimated and deserves a closer examination in SLA research.

Further investigation in the area of visuals and their role in teaching language and content is essential. Most instructors recognized the usefulness of visuals but were not using them to their potential in the classroom. Traditional methods focussed on the content of the visual but rarely was it used to elicit and practise language.

The need for a more effective way to organize the language component of content-based approach was raised. This is an important issue that needs to be addressed from a linguistic perspective so that instructors feel more confident in this approach to ESL.

This study recognizes the need to investigate the importance of culture and its relationship to language and the structure of knowledge, although this was not one of the more practical types of issues that most instructors raised. Having a clearer understanding of the role that cultural differences, and the process of acculturation, play in learning language and content would benefit ESL curriculum writers and instructors immensely.

Another issue worthy of investigation relates to the use of students' first language as they worked through tasks: when students are on task, does the use of the first language interfere with or enhance SLA? This is one area most instructors must deal with regularly as they often support and encourage an "English Only" policy in the classroom. Perhaps their efforts in policing and enforcing this notion of always using the second language is not valid. More research is needed.

This study has generated many questions about teaching language and content. It is hoped that it will contribute to further research in a new and growing field in SLA and learning.

#### IN CONCLUSION

No matter how well the curriculum is written and designed, it is how instructors use it that will determine the quality of education the students receive. Eisner (1985) states that, "The only way to appraise the quality of the curriculum is to watch the teacher and the students in the class" (Eisner, 1985:46) because "... there is no assurance that those plans (of the intended curriculum) will be actualized." (ibid:47). This focusses on the significant role instructors play in what happens in the instructional environment and confirms the importance of involving teachers in curriculum development. They are ultimately the users and must support and believe in what the curriculum represents. It is the firm belief of this writer that it is only when

instructors are included, wherever possible, in the decision-making at both molar and molecular levels; provided opportunities to participate in professional development; and allowed to be flexible in their adaptation of the curriculum to meet the needs and interests of their students, that the most effective educational environment be realized.

The ideal implementation strategy described above is very difficult to achieve in a short stay program such as SELP. Yet, the principles it represents can be strived for. The professional development limitations of a summer program must be considered when implementing a new approach and new activities. Overall the instructors did an excellent job given the enormous task of trying to understand the theory and then put into practice content-based language teaching, a new perspective in second language acquisition many of them had not previously considered.

In summary, the content-based approach to language teaching, as outlined by Mohan (1986), seems to be pedagogically sound. The knowledge framework not only facilitates an understanding of the cultural component of language learning, but also organizes topical information as a link to language, content and thinking providing a framework for second language learners that allows them to learn and talk about interesting and complex topics. It is this kind of educational arena that fosters personal growth in all aspects of learning.

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## APPENDIX A -

AN EXAMPLE OF A FLOWCHART FROM AN ACTIVITY  
IN THE SUMMER ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAM  
CURRICULUM

## CHART #2-B-4

Teacher's Copy

TRY ALL THREE POSSIBILITIES

1. WHICH ONE TELLS YOU TO ASK ANOTHER PERSON? 12. WHICH ONE MIGHT GET YOU LOST? 2  
WHY?3. WHICH ONE WILL HELP YOU THE MOST?  
3ASK FOR  
DIRECTIONSdo you know  
how to get to...excuse me,  
could you please  
tell me...

1.

DOESN'T  
GIVE DIRECTIONS

RESPONSE

2.

GIVE  
DIRECTIONS

CONFIRMATION

that's right  
yes

3.

REPEAT  
DIRECTIONS

CLARIFICATION

Speaker gives  
more detail  
i.e.: the building  
with the  
red roof

CORRECTION

no, I mean...

CLOSE  
CONVERSATIONthank you very  
much, you've been  
very helpful.  
Thanks for your time

APPENDIX B - THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXCERPT FROM THE  
ACTIVITY, EATING OUT: WHERE SHOULD WE  
GO?:

Objective: The student will be able to select a  
suitable restaurant and eat out observing  
the appropriate Canadian customs.

Student Activities:

Classification: Begin the discussion by eliciting the  
different kinds of restaurants and some of  
the characteristics. Students in small  
groups complete Chart 1-C-1. Explain  
thoroughly the terms on the chart.

CHART # 1-C-1

Type	Price Range	Kinds of Foods	Reserve	Tip	Pay★	Positive/ negative Features
1. fast food EG: McDONALDS a) KENTUCKY FRIED CHICKEN b)	\$ 3.00 ~ \$5.00	HAMBURGERS/ FRIES	✓	✓	CASH	-FAST AND CLEAN -ALL FOOD IS FRIED
2. Inexpensive (FAMILY STYLE) a) DENNY'S b)						
3. Fine Dining (GOURMET) a) FOUR SEASONS HOTEL b)						

Classification

"McDonald's  
is a kind  
of restaurant  
that is \_\_\_\_\_."

★ PAYMENT - CASH, CREDIT CARD, TRAVELLER'S CHEQUE, PERSONAL CHEQUE



## APPENDIX C -

IN THE ACTIVITY, BUYING SOUVENIRS, THE FOLLOWING EXERCISE FOCUSSES STUDENTS' THINKING ON QUALITY VS. QUANTITY WHEN THEY MAKE CHOICES ABOUT PURCHASES.

**Objective:** The student will be able to purchase specific souvenir items of his/her own choice and within his/her budget.

**Student Activities:**

**Choice:** Students divide into four groups

- two groups of customers
- two groups of clerks

"I prefer ..."

"I would like ..."

The "clerks" set up souvenir shops with pictures replacing actual items. Include both expensive and inexpensive items at each shop.

"Customers" are each given \$400.00 in play money. They roleplay making purchases, being aware of price and quality differences. Use the flowchart 2-B-2 to guide conversations that will involve requesting the items, questioning the features or descriptions, determining the tax and justifying choices. Groups may then change roles.

COURSE: CONSUMER AWARENESS

UNIT 1: FOOD

ACTIVITY A: EATING IN THE CAFETERIA

OBJECTIVE: The student will successfully be able to order and eat lunch in the cafeteria.

VISUALS:

- CHART #1 - Canadian Meals
- CHART #2 - Cafeteria Price List
- CHART #3 - Canadian Money
- CHART #4 - Countable/Uncountable Food Items
- CHART #5 - Short Order Procedure
- CHART #6 - Table Setting
- CHART #7 - Food Pictures
- Oregon Dairy Council food pictures

LESSON GUIDE: Discuss what students might wish to order for lunch. Although most students bring a bag lunch they usually purchase some additional items. Focus discussion on naming foods and food categories. Use Chart #1 along with the food pictures (or Chart #8) to talk about foods that are appropriate for different meals in Canada as compared with the students' home country.

Students work in pairs and using Chart #2, discuss and decide what they would eat on a \$4.00 lunch budget. If necessary refer to Chart #3 and Chart #4 providing only one sheet per 2 students (to ensure discussion). Students change partners and report their decisions.

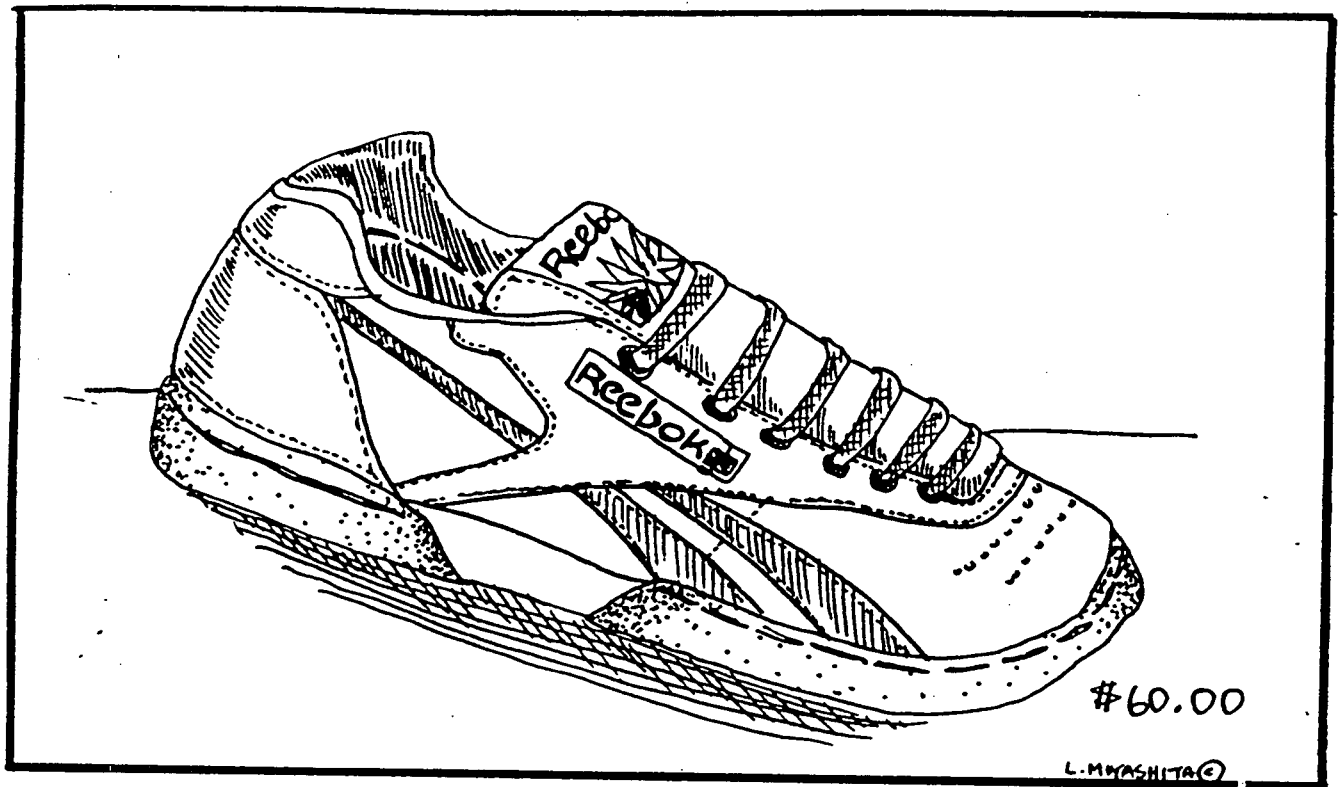
Ask 2 students to go to the cafeteria to determine the procedure for ordering a hamburger and to report their findings to the class.

Small groups of students role play going to the cafeteria to eat lunch. Refer to Chart #6 if students are unsure of naming utensils. Discuss differences between formal and informal dining.

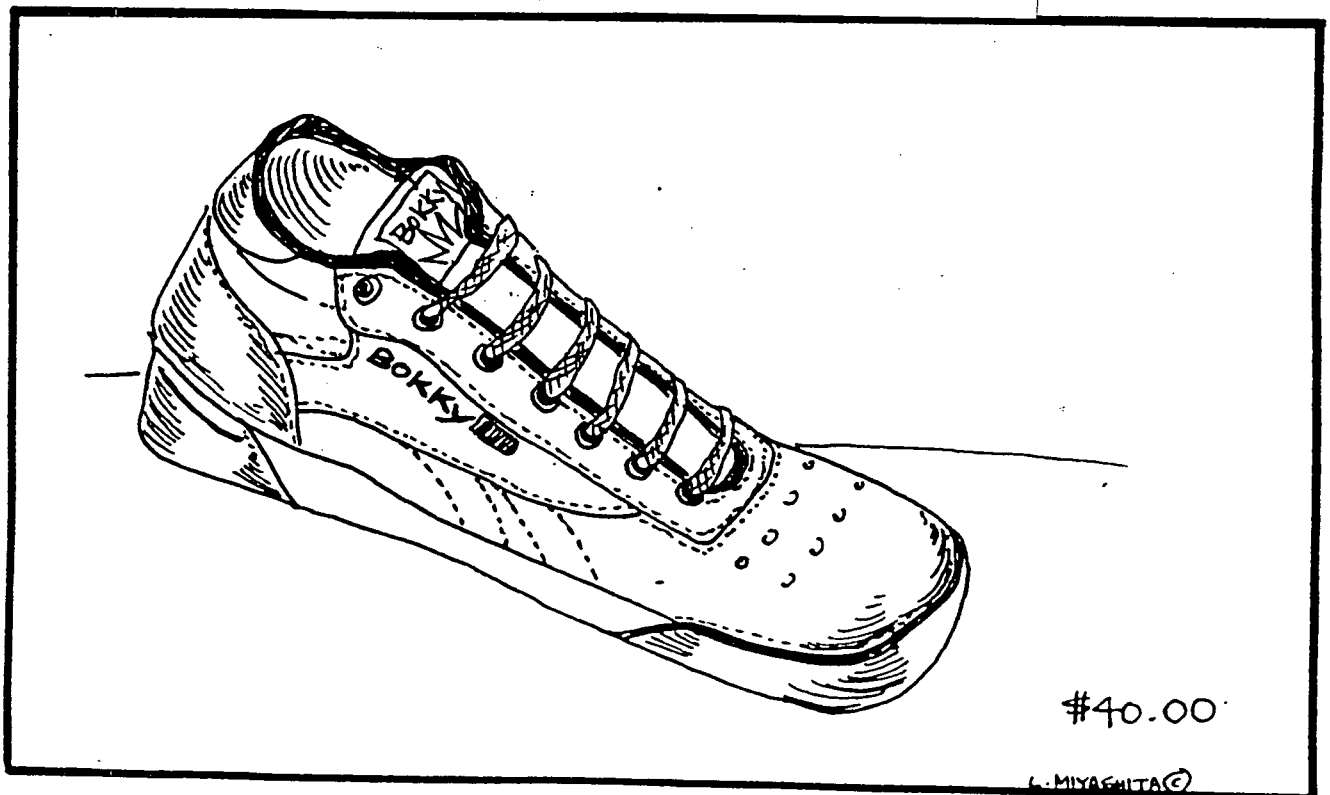
The class might go to the cafeteria during the break.

**APPENDIX D -**

**THE FOLLOWING LIST OF ACTIVITIES FROM  
EATING IN THE CAFETERIA, IDENTIFIES TASKS  
THAT WERE CONSIDERED BY MANY INSTRUCTORS  
AS TOO COMPLEX AND LACKING IN BUILT-IN  
LANGUAGE SUPPORT STRUCTURES FOR LOWER  
LEVEL STUDENTS.**



Choice: I would like to buy \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_ .



APPENDIX E - CURRICULUM EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE GIVEN  
TO INSTRUCTORS PARTICIPATING IN THE SUMMER  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAM

# VANCOUVER COMMUNITY COLLEGE



## Continuing Education Division

1155 East Broadway,  
Box No. 24785 Sta. 'C'  
Vancouver, B.C. V5T 4N5

Langara Campus Office • 100 W. 49th Ave. Vancouver, B.C. • V5Y 2Z6 •

To all S.E.L.P. Instructors,

On behalf of Margaret Froese and Marylin Low, I thank you for your patience in handling the working copy of the new curriculum this summer. We understand that there are always some difficulties when implementing a new curriculum but are pleased with your determination to make it work. Your participation in the assessment of the curriculum, including all the notes you have made on various pages in the binder, will contribute to a most important part of the overall evaluation of our program.

Consequently we ask that you complete the following tasks:

1. Respond to the three questions on the curriculum.
2. Please submit your responses with the curriculum binder on the last day of classes to Marylin Low.
3. Complete the program evaluation. These comments should be submitted on the last day of classes to Marylin Low.

Your comments and observations are valued and will be considered carefully in our goal to provide excellence not only in curriculum development but in all areas of our program. Thank you for your time and effort in completing these evaluation tasks.

Thank you,

Dr. Ian Andrews

Instructor\_\_\_\_\_

Group\_\_\_\_\_

Level\_\_\_\_\_

Length of stay\_\_\_\_\_

1. Was the curriculum content appropriate relative to your group, their level of English competency and the length of their stay?

If so, why?

If not, why not?

2. a) What were the successes and difficulties of the curriculum relative to you as an instructor?

b) What were the successes and difficulties of the curriculum for your students?



3. How can we better assist you if you were to teach the curriculum next year?

## APPENDIX F -

THE FOLLOWING PAGES SHOW THE TOPICAL ANALYSIS FOR NUTRITIONAL OR JUNK? AND GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF A KEY VISUAL AND THE INTERACTIVE STRATEGY USED TO ELICIT LANGUAGE IN AN AUTHENTIC CONTEXT.

## Student Activities:

Brainstorm for advantages/disadvantages of a junk/balanced diet. Then have students, in pairs, complete Chart 1-A-5 by considering the two choices (actions, the outcomes and advantages/disadvantages). Ask students to express their choice and explain why, focussing equally on what they are saying and how they are saying it. (This is not to say that only a junk or only a nutritional diet is the answer but to make students aware of what they are eating, what it might be doing to them and to give them an opportunity to explore other possible avenues for working towards a healthier combination of the two types of food.)

## Language Structures:

Choice - Models: can, will, must, ought, should, would, in my opinion it would be beneficial ...

### UNIT ONE: NUTRITIONAL OR JUNK?

Objective:

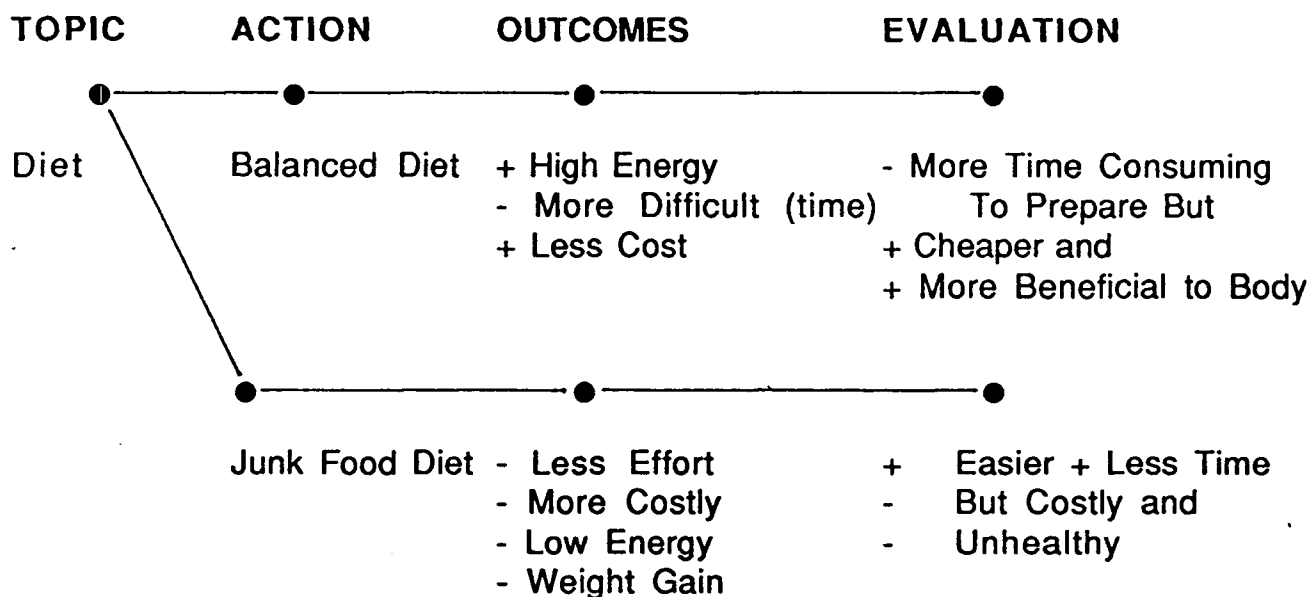
Students will be able to describe and classify various food items as either nutritional or junk food. They will also be able to evaluate the comparison between their diet and what is recommended by the Canada Food Guide. They will then be able to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of eating a balanced diet and/or junk food diet.

	CONCEPTS/ CLASSIFICATION	PRINCIPLES	EVALUATION
Theoretical Background Knowledge	Classify foods as nutritional or junk	Effect of balanced nutritional and junk/sugar diet	Evaluating daily food intake to Canada Food Guide recommendations
Specific Action Situation	Name/describe specific food items	Keeping a personal record of all food intake for one day	Possible choices of nutritional or junk food diet
	DESCRIPTION	SEQUENCE	CHOICE

**THINKING SKILLS AND A SAMPLE OF THE LANGUAGE RELATED TO THE  
KNOWLEDGE FRAMEWORK FOR:**

**ACTIVITY A: NUTRITIONAL OR JUNK?**

CLASSIFICATION	PRINCIPLES	EVALUATION
<p><b>CLASSIFYING</b> by food groups, "Cereal is a type of grain"</p> <p><b>DEFINING:</b> processed food, junk food, nutrition</p> <p><b>GENERALIZING:</b> "All these foods belong to the fruit and vegetable food group"</p>	<p><b>PREDICTING:</b> "With a balanced diet I.."</p> <p><b>HYPOTHESIZING:</b> "If I ate more of ... then it might mean ..."</p> <p><b>FORMULATING THEORY:</b> "If we ate ... then we would have a healthier body too"</p> <p><b>CAUSE and EFFECT:</b> "Because I eat a balanced diet ..."</p>	<p><b>EVALUATING:</b> "I believe a junk food diet is common because ... Based on the evidence, this information is correct.</p> <p><b>RECOMMENDING:</b> "This is a more important food item, so we should ..."</p>
<p><b>DESCRIBING</b> specific food items, balanced diet</p> <p><b>COMPARING/CONTRASTING:</b> "Eating eggs and cheese is similar to eating meat ... "</p> <p><b>LISTING:</b> "These food items would make a balanced lunch"</p>	<p><b>NARRATING:</b> "For breakfast I ate ... then I snacked on ... next I ... "</p> <p><b>SEQUENCING:</b> first ... happened, etc.</p>	<p><b>CHOOSING:</b> "I'd like to eat ..."</p> <p><b>CONCLUDING:</b> "Because the food here is ... we conclude/think ..."</p> <p><b>PROPOSING ALTERNATIVES:</b> "I think this is a more important idea and we should ..."</p>
DESCRIPTION	SEQUENCE	CHOICE

**CHART 1-A-5****DECISION TREE****Language of Choice:**

SAMPLE: (model verbs)

In my opinion \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.

If one eats a balanced diet, then he probably will have high energy  
which is more time consuming but cheaper and more beneficial  
 to the body.

In my view ...

I agree than ...

I don't know whether ...

To me ...

I disagree with ...

It is clear to me that ...