

Teaching U.S. History in a Content-based Course

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Definitions/Background Information

- ❖ Content-based Instruction (CBI) is “the concurrent study of language and content” (Brown, 2007)
- ❖ Previous approaches to CBI have promoted student engagement in content, opportunities to negotiate the meaning of both language and content, cooperative learning, discourse-based abilities, and content material to motivate learners
- ❖ Stoller (2002) argues that CBI prepares students for mainstream university courses
- ❖ CBI is more common in settings where students intend to study at the university level

Research/Studies

- ❖ Pessoa, et. Al. (2007) → teachers need to lead conversations in class which focus on an academic topic and include interpersonal communication; have conversations with students that encourage language use and negotiation of form
- ❖ Stoller (2002) argues that CBI should allow students to synthesize knowledge (e.g. debates; projects), encourage teachers to use a variety of content (e.g. different and opposing viewpoints), and promote the recycling of input for different purposes (e.g. jigsaw, re-reading, repeat, review)
- ❖ Stoller & Grabe (1997) indicate the importance of assessing students on both language and content knowledge

Effective Activities

- ❖ History Role Plays/Re-enactments: Students review the material in the form of a role play to develop spontaneous speaking skills (e.g. imagine you are a pioneer and you meet a Native American tribe; role play the encounter between the Pilgrims and Native Americans during Thanksgiving)
- ❖ Reading Selected Texts with Accompanying Photos: Pass out photos of historical events to students in small groups, which includes a brief description of the photo; underline vocabulary words; students take turns summarizing the main idea using the vocabulary words (summarize orally and in writing); share oral and written summaries with other groups
- ❖ Create own Stories using Storyboards: After completing a unit, pass out a collection of photos from the period in history; using a storyboard, student tapes photos in different area on the board, and then write a story (in the sequence of the photos) below each photo; students walk around the room, sharing their stories with their classmates

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