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MAKING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING EASIER: TEACHING LITERATURE USING CONTENT-BASED INSTRUCTION IN THE BANGLADESHI TERTIARYT EFL CLASSROOM

Tasnia Farzana

Cox's Bazar International University, Kolatoli Circle, Cox's Bazar - 4700, Bangladesh tasniaf31@gmail.com

Abstract

The main objective of this study is to determine the feasibility of CBI approaches for teaching literature in the context of EFL in Bangladesh. This paper conducts a pilot study to determine whether it is feasible to use CBI in literature classes to enhance EFL proficiency in Bangladeshi higher education. This study builds an environment in which students actively participate in literary conversations in order to acquire grammatical aspects of the target language and use them as a platform for the production of meaningful communication by combining form-focused and literature-based strategies. The pilot test involving 13 non-targeted undergraduate Bangladeshi students was undertaken to assess the lesson plans, and 20 targeted undergraduate students from Bangladesh took part in the implementation of the lesson plans for content-based instruction in a literary course. Through pre- and post-test results from pilot studies, the study examines the usefulness of content-based instruction in teaching literature to EFL students in Bangladesh as well as the effectiveness of CBI methodologies. The study integrates quantitative method for data analysis. In a fully randomised study, a variety of CBI outcome factors were assessed for feasibility and importance. Teaching ESL skills in literary courses with more detailed time information for each component would be useful. Finally, content-based education generated positive outcomes and may be utilised as an effective methodology and critical help in establishing opportunities to use English, resulting in improved English language performance.

Keywords: Bangladesh Context, Content-Based Instruction, EFL, Four Skills, Literature Studies

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh has been a significant focus on language teaching since 1990, particularly in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. In Bangladesh, EFL instruction aims to develop students' conversational abilities in elementary, secondary, and higher education institutions (Nawaz, 2019). At the tertiary level, universities offer English as a major or non-major course, with the Department of English teaching and learning English (Hossen & Musayeb, 2022). But EFL students usually face a significant deal of frustration when they attend university because of their inadequate English ability and the usage of immersion teaching in the classroom (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014; Ibna et al., 2021). Students studying English literature at universities in Bangladesh are typically thought to have poor English skills. Since universities implemented an EMI (English medium instruction) policy, the main linguistic condition on campus has been a "English-only environment." Students in this context are expected to converse in English both inside and outside of the classroom, yet they struggle to adapt to this atmosphere (Islam & Stapaszxwdz, 2021; Ibna Seraj & Habil, 2021).

English is traditionally taught as a specialized subject, following the cultural model of literature teaching. However, this approach lacks activities based on the literary language, resulting in inadequate linguistic skills (Ibna & Habil, 2021). Applied Linguistics and ELT curriculums also lack extensive literary reading materials, causing a gap between language and literature. EFL training today focuses on four critical skills: developing basic language skills, acquiring knowledge on the subject, and integrating language with literature (Nusrat, 2015; Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014). In Bangladesh, academics and researchers are working to apply various teaching approaches to increase students' language competency and academic topic knowledge. However, traditional teaching methods, such as grammar translation and audio-lingual approaches, often limit students' English competency development (Ali & Walker, 2014; Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014; Farooqui, 2007; Ibna Seraj & Habil, 2021; Rahman, 2015; Rahman & Pandian, 2018; Ibna et al., 2021). Bangladeshi EFL teachers often use ordinary events to create meaning, resulting from a lack of concern for selecting correct texts and fear of literary complexity (Nawaz, 2019). Finding more effective strategies in the EFL classroom for Bangladeshi tertiary students is becoming increasingly important as researchers have uncovered novel ways to improve language teaching and learning. Literature is crucial in promoting linguistic awareness and promoting linguistic awareness (Widdowson 1975). EFL teachers must use instructional strategies that integrate the four modes of language learning to improve both literacy and oral development (Butler, 2002). Literature discussions in the classroom teach about balancing form and meaning in effective communication. Incorporating literature in the classroom is essential for four main reasons: authentic resources, linguistic and cultural amplification, and student involvement (Collie and Slater, 1990). Additionally, the use of literature as an effective teaching tool is required by universality, non-triviality, personal relevance, diversity, interest, economy, suggestive force, and ambiguity (Hossen & Musayeb, 2022).

Content-based language instruction is a successful method for students to learn to speak a foreign language and understand academic material, particularly in literature courses that focus on studying ideas (Shang, 2006). The CBI approach is commonly used for teaching fundamental four abilities but rarely applied in language classes to develop critical thinking and ELT's core competencies (Nawaz, 2019). EFL teachers should collaborate on content-based instruction and literary study in order to impart academic subject matter and foreign language abilities in an effective manner. Collaboration between CBI and literary education has a number of advantages, according to Brinton et al. (1989). Students may learn vocabulary, grammar, paragraph structure, interactive communication skills, and many writing genres, for instance. Additionally, literature is a useful language tool with real texts, therefore it can aid language-minority kids in developing their literacy (Custodio and Sutton, 1998).

The study aims to enhance English language performance in Bangladeshi undergraduate English Literature students through Content-Based Instruction. It combines form-focused and literature-based strategies, encouraging active engagement in literary conversations and comprehension of grammatical components. The study investigates the effectiveness of content-based instruction in teaching literature to EFL students, using pre- and post-test data from pilot experiments.

Content-Based instruction (CBI) is a method that combines language and content into a subject, as introduced by Bernard Mohan in 1986. It allows simultaneous study of

a language and subject matter (Brinton & Snow, 2017). CBI has been advocated by numerous scholars and educators, with its recommendations supported by numerous literatures (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). It unifies language and subject learning by providing a simple and practical approach to language instruction and subject matter (Swain, 1988; Stryker and Leaver, 1997; Snow & Brinton, 1997). CBI is more of an approach to teaching second languages than a methodology, as it coordinates teaching around the content or subject matter students will gain, such as history or social studies. CBI differs from conventional language education curriculums, making it a more effective approach to language learning (Richards and Rodgers, 2014; Lyster, 2007).

CBI has evolved along with the rest of the globe, with EFL and ESL environments both experiencing transformation. The emergence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) gave rise to CBI, which is not a completely new idea in the teaching of second and foreign languages (Brinton & Snow, 2017). According to others (Duenas, 2004; Villalobos, 2014), it is seen as a framework for the adaptive implementation of language training. The following justifications for CBI have thus far been offered by these authors as a result of aspects of CBI found in their findings.

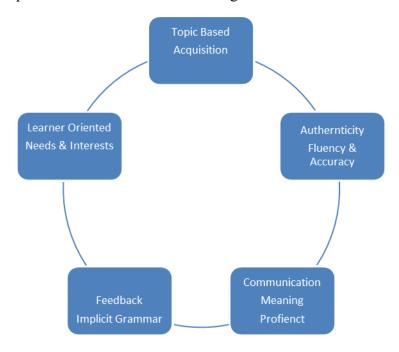


Figure 1 Fundamentals of CBI. Source: Own Elaborated

CBI is a curriculum approach that focuses on a subject-based curriculum, focusing on linguistic abilities and social and cognitive skills in practical settings (Short, 1993; Stryker & Leaver; 1997). It enables learners to acquire the target language more successfully through real-world contexts and meaningful materials, rather than traditional classroom instruction. CBI aids in the successful acquisition of the target language by modifying authentic and real-life materials for structural and functional differences in various contexts (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). Language objects should be created to match the individual needs and interests of learners in everyday contexts (Genesse and Lindholm, 2013).CBI drives students towards a bigger framework for deliberate communication and proficiency level development by offering meaningful and pertinent

academic information (Genesse and Lindholm, 2013; Stryker and Leaver, 1997). Feedback is highly valued in evaluating students' accuracy in class activities (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). CBI mandates a learner-centered classroom in all stages of the learning process. Content-based instruction uses content topics as scaffolding for instruction, with subject matter demands being more important in determining grammatical proficiency than difficulties (Short, 1993; Richards and Rodgers, 2014).

Many more CBI models exist today, more than 30 years after the emergence of CBI was first described in Mohan's "Language and Content" (1986). Although there are currently many hybrid models, the three major CBI models can be distinguished as "prototype" models that are still essential to the teaching of EFL and ESL methodology (Brinton and Snow, 2017). The three prototype models—theme-based instruction, sheltered instruction, and adjunct instruction—are described. Theme-based instruction uses themes as the foundation for curricular units, with language playing a supporting role (Brinton and Snow, 2017). This approach is suitable for all learning levels, but students at higher levels benefit the most. Teachers use real resources and timely subjects to develop various abilities (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). Sheltered instruction is taught in a second language by a content specialist to a group of learners who are sheltered from native speakers (Brinton, Snow & Wesche, 1989). This approach supports the acquisition of academic material and skills essential for success in all fields of study (Goldenberg, 2013). The instructor is an expert in the subject matter and skilled in language instruction, using visuals, pre-reading exercises lexical accommodations, strategy instruction, and frequent comprehension checks (Reynolds, 2015; Richards and Rodgers, 2014). Adjunct instruction emphasizes both language and content in secondary and post-secondary settings (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). According to Brinton, Snow, and Wesche (2003), this model was created to compete with native speakers for enrollment in conventional high schools or colleges, as students are more interested in learning about the subject matter than studying language individually (Chamot & El-Dinary, 1999).

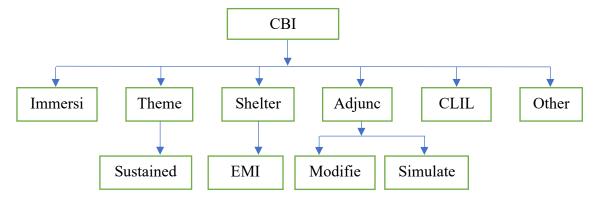


Figure 2 The Newer Models of CBI. Source: (Brinton & Snow 2017)

Newer models of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CBI) include Immersion Instruction, Sustained Content Language Teaching (SCLT), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), English-Medium Instruction (EMI), and Modified and Stimulated Adjunct Models. **Immersion Instruction** involves students learning a second language (L2) in a shared main language (Snow, 2001), which is beneficial for younger pupils (Lyster & Genese, 2012). **SCLT** is a theme-based education that focuses

on a single content area over the course unit, strengthening topic and language knowledge with various abilities (Brinton and Snow, 2017; Murphy and Stroller, 2001). According to Marsh (2013), the father of the CLIL employs an additional language for both teaching and learning subject matter and language, promoting cognitive development through inquiry and problem-solving (Coyle, Hood, and Marsh, 2010). EMI is a method used when academic subjects are taught in settings where English is not the prevailing language (Doiz, Lasagabaster, and Sierra, 2013), offering over 60% of postgraduate courses worldwide (Macro 2015). Modified and Stimulated Adjunct Models, according to Brinton & Snow (2017), have been created to increase usability in a variety of situations, such as an intensive English programme (IEP) that uses an adjunct structure for a university topic course at the introductory level.

As noted by Brinton, Snow, and Wesche (2003), the effective application of Content-Based Instruction (CBI) depends on various factors, including students' language and subject matter proficiency, course type and context, and teacher expertise. CBI courses' curriculum and learning objectives depend on students' command of both languages and subject matter (Lyster, 2007). According to Brinton and Snow (2017), teachers must contextualize their lessons using content as the starting point and become experts in presenting difficult content. Factors such as L2 competence, prior educational history, needs, and interests also influence learning rates (Richards and Rodgers, 2014; Brinton and Snow, 2017). Bridging activities can provide access to authentic materials suitable for learners' cognitive and linguistic abilities (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). However, CBI often fails to address the uneven integration of language and content in the classroom, as language instructors often place more emphasis on content than language (Brinton and Holten, 2001; Lyster, 2007, and Tan 2011). Administrative difficulties are the main reasons for introducing CBI and its implementation (Snow, 2001).

METHOD

The researcher uses the qualitative method to test or evaluate the effectiveness of CBI. Furthermore, in the realization of the implementation of this study, the researcher used two group pretest and posttest design. The aspects of content-based instruction identified through the literature study were used to build the lesson plans for content-based instruction, and a pilot test involving 13 non-targeted undergraduate Bangladeshi students was undertaken to assess the lesson plans. Over the course of 26 sessions, 20 targeted undergraduate students from Bangladesh took part in the implementation of the lesson plans for content-based instruction in a literary course (American literary: 19th century). Before-tests and an introduction to content-based instruction were covered in the first session, and after-tests were covered in the final session. The course was instructed by the researcher using content-based instruction for 26 sessions comprising a semester.

Participants

The experimental research involved 20 undergraduate students from Cox's Bazar International University in Bangladesh, enrolled in a content-based course in English Language and Literature. The participants were chosen using a purposeful sample technique for the specified content-based course.

Instruments

The research methods, which are discussed in more depth here, included contentbased instruction lesson plans on reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills and English language performance tests on the four skills.

Developing Lesson Plans for Teaching Four Skills

In order to combine language and content teaching, lesson plans for 13 weeks of 26 sessions of content-based instruction were created using the current lesson plans. They were created in accordance with the enormous body of study from a variety of materials that the CBI's experts have conducted. The "American Literature, 19th Century" course was pilot-tested by 13 selected, non-targeted, and 20 targeted undergraduates who were enrolled in the English department and studying there in the same semester in different sections.

The English Language Performance Tests measure Four Skills

In order to examine the effects of content-based instruction on English language performance in reading, writing, speaking, and listening (during and after the course), the researcher developed English language performance tests. The researcher used pretest and post test research designs, implemented a course with the same items, and pilot-tested it with 13 non-targeted students. These tests were developed from the content of the American Literature -19th Century course. A test on numerous topics from the created lesson plan for CBI included 15 reading skills activities for 15 marks, 3 speaking skills activities worth 15 marks, 2 writing skills activities worth 20 marks, and 2 listening skills activities worth 10 marks. The final scores, which ranged from 0 to 60 and represented the four English language performance qualities, were obtained by adding up all the items.

Data Collection And Data Analysis Techniques

The targeted students were given pre- and post-test on their English language proficiency to examine the effects on that performance. Finally, it was confirmed that each instrument distributed was accurate and complete.

To evaluate the applicability and efficacy of content-based training, the study used quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The performance of the English language was compared between pre- and post-testing using the t-test statistic. Content analysis was used to glean concepts about content-based education from students' perspectives. The significance level for the analysis was established at 0.05, and the data were looked at utilising the mean, standard deviation, content analysis, and t-test.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the presentation and discussion of the results of this study, there are two things or points of discussion that can be presented, namely as follows.

Creating A Lesson Plan That Incorporates Language Skills And Literary Content Using CBI

According to the literature review of lesson planning, lesson plans for content-based instruction were created from a literary course (American Literature: 19th Century) with

a dual focus on the subject matter and English acquisition. The literature of 19th-century America, which combines speaking, reading, listening, and writing skills, was one of the 26 sessions the researcher chose. The order of the topics followed the course syllabus. The researcher then used Sheltered content-based instruction, in which the course material was taught by the researcher in two situations as an instructor: as a subject-matter expert in the targeted content course and as a language teacher with subject-matter knowledge to teach the course in English. The learning of both content and language is actively encouraged among the students. The course covered reading, listening, speaking, and writing abilities in 26 sessions, with an introduction, themes, and tests. The conclusion included revised and translated slides and handouts, covering learning objectives, content knowledge, activities, teaching aids, assessment, and standard components.

The lesson plan design for the implementation of content-based instruction in reading, speaking, listening, and skills exercises are shown in Table 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Table 1 Resources for Reading Skills Exercises And A Vocabulary-Focused Lesson Plan

Reading Skill Focuses	Activities	
Vocabulary Classification	An easy exercise that motivates students to consider the connections between words from various subject areas.	
Expanding Academic Vocabulary	Aids students in distinguishing between more generic terminology and vocabulary that deals with specific topics.	
Whom Should You Believe?	Focuses on indemnifying bias in writing and comprehending the author's viewpoints.	
Observation or Interpretation, that is the Question	Supports students in determining, using written clues, whether a writer is conveying an observation or interpretation.	
What's the Issue Where Is It? What Is It?	Outlines a critical reading exercise where students must quickly locate "issue statements".	

Source: Hardman, 2009; Schacter, 2006; Brinton & Masters, 1997

Table 2 Design for The Implementation of Content-Based Education in Speaking Skill Activities

Speaking Skill Focuses	Activities	
From Debate to Essay	Evokes large group and class discussion of controversial issues. Could be used in collaboration with writing teacher.	

Speaking Skill Focuses	Activities	
How Do You Feel About?	Allows students to articulate their valves and opinions on specific topics particularly controversial topics, within a small group.	
Town Meeting	Simulates a town meeting in which students are given specific problems for which they must discuss the advantages and disadvantages of possible solutions.	
Synthesizing Content on a Continuum	Uses a continuum to structure group discussions of content by prompting students to organise various ideas onto a continuum. Could be used in preparation for group presentations to me class.	
A Gambit-Driven Debate"	Integrates reading and speaking and provides commonly used phrases in preparation for structured debates on controversial issues and differing Viewpoints.	
Speaking Out About the Issue	Involves role-playing in pairs on various issues using pre-established roles written on index cards.	
Feeling Empathy	Role-playing activity that has students reacts to various situations while the teacher or opposing group acts as "devil's advocate".	

Source: Hardman, 2009; Brinton & Masters, 1997

Table 3 Lesson Plan Layout for Putting Content-Based Instruction in Place for Listening Skill Activities

Listening Skill Focuses	Activities
Teacher Read-Aloud.	Teacher read-aloud are pre-selected books that fit the needs of the class and engage the students. They support lectures and are helpful in introducing students to the works that are available, ensuring that they choose chapters or sections that interest them.
Readers 'Theater	Involves students selecting a part from a script based on a book or story, reading it aloud and conveying meaning through voice inflection. This technique requires close critical reading and involves students actively listening and participating in the process.
Teacher-presented lecture	Teachers create brief lectures using PowerPoint or other presentation tools, partially written for preparation and

Listening Skill Focuses	Activities	
	accountability. However, lecturers should avoid reading from	
	scripts, as this would not provide students with the authentic	
	listening experience they need.	
Teacher-made	Teachers can record their own listening passages using	
recordings	Audacity, Sound Studio, or PowerPoint, which offer real-time	
	recording options for presentations. These tools help teachers	
	meet specific specifications and enhance their teaching	
	methods.	

Source: Hardman, 2009; Brown, 2001; Stephens and Jean, 2000

Table 4 Resources or A Lesson Plan on Writing Skill Exercises

Writing Skill Focuses	Activities		
Vocabulary,	Role-play conversations: Students Read the entire question		
Paragraph Structure,	carefully and comprehend the main points of the entire		
Using Cohesive	exchange. Complete the unsolved dialogues by using the		
Devices	direct voice's grammatical abilities.		
	Journal Writing: Students use journals to write about topics		
Grammar, Paragraph of personal interest, to note their observations, to ima			
Structure	wonder, and to connect new information with things they		
	already know.		
Paragraph construction specific topic: Students le			
Vocabulary	write paragraphs consisting of a topic sentence, supporting		
	sentences, and a closing sentence, which helps maintain focus		
	on the main idea and create a clear image.		
Paraphrasing, Summaries: Students will paraphrase by			
Paragraph Structure,	rephrasing text or speech in their own words. And		
Using Cohesive	summarising, cutting it down to its bare essentials. They can		
Devices	use both techniques to clarify and simplify complex		
	information or ideas.		

Source: Mantilla & Andrade, 2020

Impacts of CBI on Four Skills Tests of English Language Performance

The study investigated the effects of content-based instruction on Bangladeshi undergraduate students' proficiency in English language skills. Before and after the implementation of the instruction, tests were given. The means of the same group were compared before and after the instruction using a dependent sample t-test. The presumptions were met, and there were no apparent variations between the two tests. The differences in the dependent variable's distribution followed a normal distribution. Table 5 presents the study's findings.

Table 5 Students' Performance Before and After The Implementation of CBI

Performance Score on Four Skills Testing		
Before Applying CBI	After applying CBI	
Total Score	Total Score	
60	60	
41	44	
35	36	
40	48	
50	47	
39	40	
45	52	
35	35	
36	51	
44	46	
40	55	
46	39	
42	40	
37	36	
34	39	
38	50	
42	46	
46	49	
39	42	
40	51	
45	37	
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Table 6 Mean and Standard Deviation of Students' Performance Before and After
The Implementation of CBI

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means			
	Before Applying CBI	After applying CBI	
Mean	40.7	44.15	
Variance	18.64210526	37.92368421	
Observations	20	20	
Pearson Correlation	0.280883389		
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0		
df	19		
t Stat	-2.391312743		
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.013646744		
t Critical one-tail	1.729132812		
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.027293488		
t Critical two-tail	2.093024054		

The mean pre-test score was 40.7, and the standard deviation (SD) was 18.64, as shown in Table 6. The mean score ascended to 44.15 after using CBI, and the standard deviation decreased to 37.92. At the 0.05 significance level, the post-course performance was significantly better than the pre-course performance. The two-tailed P-value is smaller than the usual 5% criterion of significance at 0.027.

According to the study, content-based education significantly improved students' proficiency levels in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English. This was a result of the course's engaging instruction and numerous opportunities for English usage. There are numerous possibilities for students to practice and perform English in a meaningful and frequent approach because the learning environment was created to employ English as a medium for relevant information. As a result, we could state that after content-based instruction (CBI) was introduced, student's average test scores did change. The study advances knowledge of content-based instruction as a potent instructional strategy and offers methodical recommendations for applying it to enhance English language proficiency in higher education in Bangladesh. The results of this study emphasise the importance understanding the CBI concepts is for integrating EFL education into literary curriculum. In addition, CBI implementation in Bangladeshi universities is still in its early phases with regard to the creation of alignment to programme and course objectives.

The results of using CBI in a university in Bangladesh's EFL literature class: According to the study, Bangladeshi students are supportive of the use of Content-Based Instruction (CBI), describing it as a successful and adaptable method for teaching English in literary classes. They are open to switching from the conventional approach to this more contemporary one. They do, however, advocate for a gradual transformation that focuses on the attitudes of the administrative team, teachers, and students. A sufficient amount of faculty member training workshops and ongoing supervision are necessary for a successful implementation. Despite the positive attitudes, fundamental model training and real-world application strategies are still required.

The difficulties in implementing CBI in Bangladesh: The CBI approach encounters a number of difficulties in the Bangladeshi environment, such as conventional classroom practises and inadequate resources. If instructors are not properly taught to implement the assessment policy in the classrooms, they find it to be problematic. A CBI course's curriculum and learning goals are based on the students' language and subject-matter proficiency. Teachers must become specialists at delivering challenging material and contextualise their lectures using content. Both of these objectives—achieving academic success and acquiring a foreign language—are essential. Learning rates are influenced by foreign language proficiency, prior educational experience, needs, and interests. Authentic resources that are appropriate for learners' linguistic and cognitive capacities can be provided by bridging activities. However, CBI frequently fails to address unequal language and content integration, and its efficacy is hampered by administrative issues.

CONCLUSION

According to the study, content-based instruction greatly raised Bangladeshi undergraduate students' proficiency in the English language. This pilot study demonstrated that CBI improved the four skills for EFL students, increased lesson plan inventiveness, and improved engagement with the researcher through the use of technology. If the practice is regular and the themes are relevant, this strategy can result in several opportunities to utilise English. Teachers are essential in putting content-based instruction into practice, presenting meaningful themes, setting up a suitable learning atmosphere, and getting students involved in different activities. Teachers are encouraged to involve the students in specific CBI activities in a variety of contexts to advance inquiry. To ensure that content-based instruction fosters a supportive and positive English learning environment that results in improved performance, future studies should make use of students in non-English programs on a larger scale and use a control and experimental group of samples. This study strongly suggests that a critical approach to CBI be taken into consideration in order to fully realise the feasibility of CBI and envisage language education as essential to the growth of society.

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