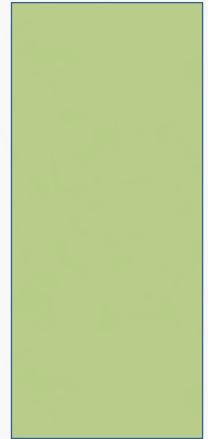


ACHIEVING COHERENCE IN CONTENT-BASED INSTRUCTION USING THE 6 Ts FRAMEWORK



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SESSION ABSTRACT



Content-based instruction (CBI) provides an alternative to other types of language syllabi (e.g., the grammatical syllabus, the notional syllabus, the task-based syllabus), enabling the course designer to specify the overall course goals, the topics to be explored, the materials to be used, the academic skills and language issues to be covered, and the assignments to be completed.

Despite its obvious strengths, the CBI syllabus has been criticized for its “potpourri” approach toward topic selection. This session proposes one remedy for achieving course coherence—the 6 Ts framework (Stoller & Grabe, 2017). Each of the 6 Ts (themes, topics, texts, tasks, transitions, and threads) is discussed and illustrated via the example of a unit on saving the environment.

OVERVIEW



- CBI as a syllabus type
- The CBI “prototypes”
- Putting theme-based instruction in perspective
- Theme-based instruction: Strengths and weaknesses
- The potpourri approach
- Achieving curricular coherence via the 6Ts framework
- Online delivery of CBI
- Final thoughts

CBI AS A SYLLABUS TYPE

“...the content-based syllabus is best viewed as an even newer attempt to extend and develop our conception of what a syllabus for a second-language course should comprise, including a concern with language form and language function, as well as a crucial third dimension—the factual and conceptual content of such courses.”

WHAT IS A SYLLABUS?

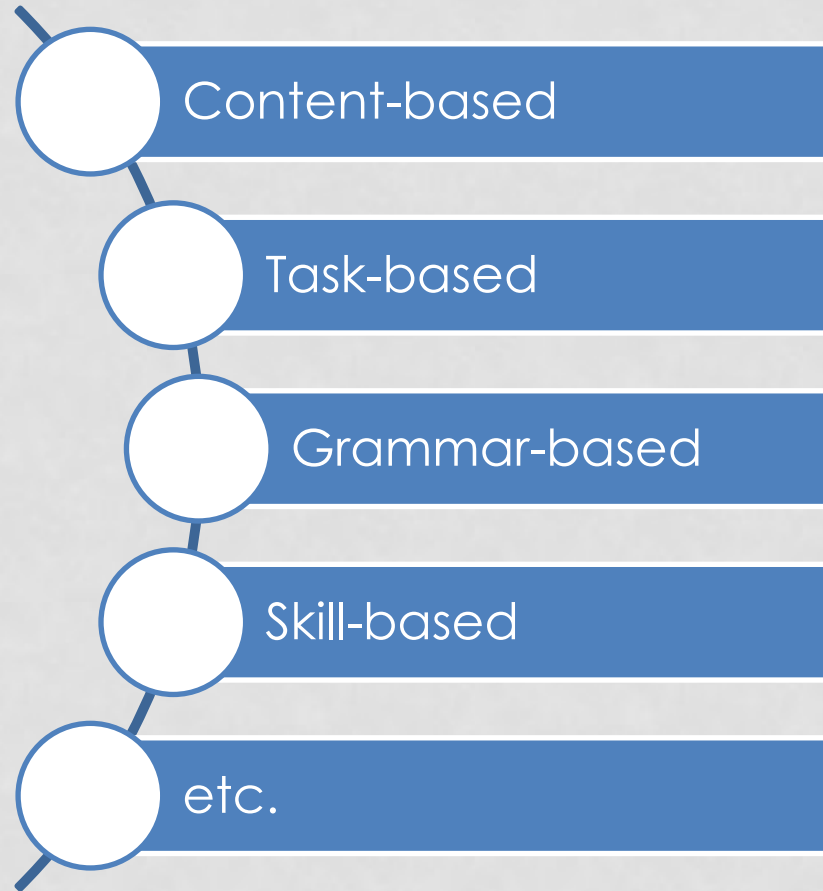
The term syllabus refers to a public document that defines course content, usually listing course objectives, components, requirements, etc. In short, it outlines the plan for the course.



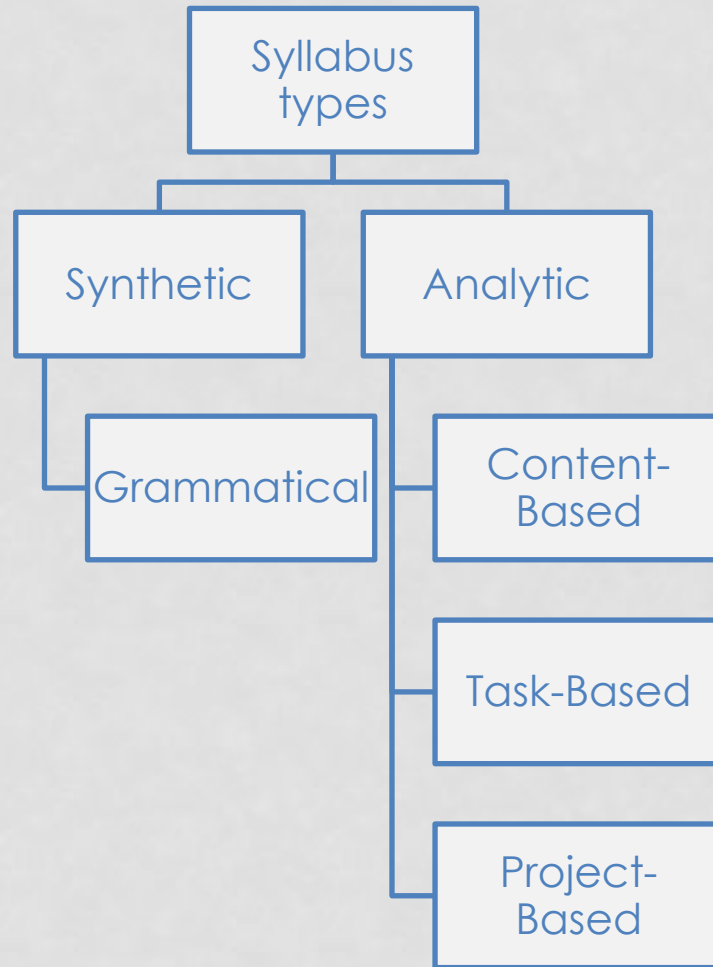
TYPICAL SYLLABUS COMPONENTS

1. overall *goals* for the course and specific learning *objectives* or *outcomes*
2. *topics* to be explored
3. specific *academic skills* to be used or learned
4. subject-specific *content* and *concepts* to be mastered
5. *grammar* or *vocabulary* to be studied
6. the *timetable*
7. *materials* used
8. *assignments*
9. types of in-class *interactions* and *activities*
10. the *assessment* and *grading scheme*

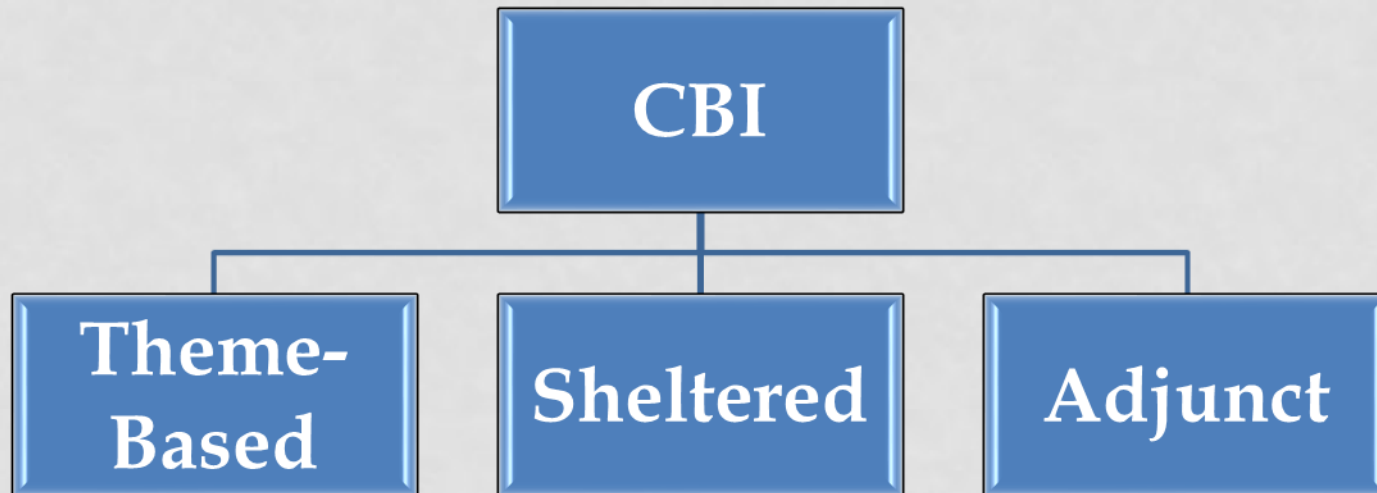
SYLLABUS DESIGN OPTIONS



CBI: ONE SYLLABUS OPTION



“PROTOTYPE” MODELS OF CBI





THEME-BASED INSTRUCTION

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

COURSE ORGANIZATION

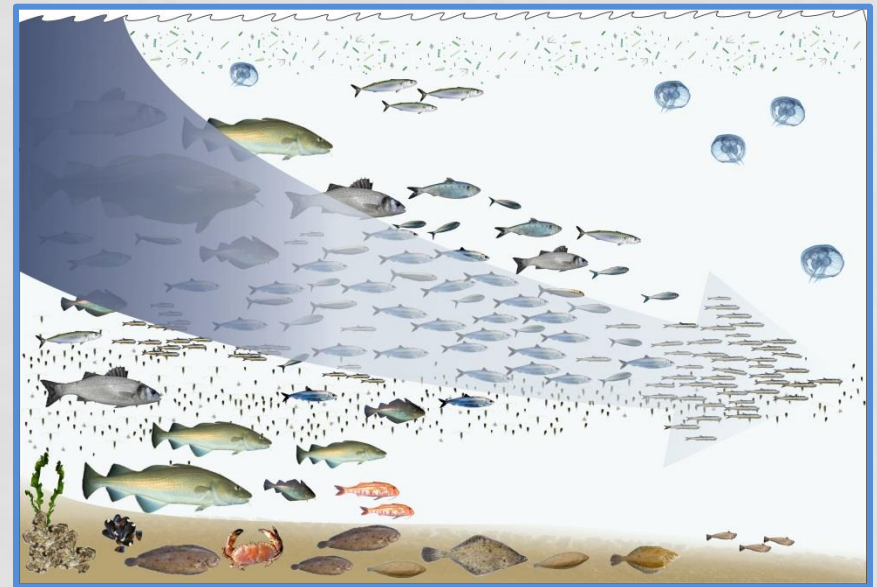
- The CBI syllabus is organized around content of relevance and interest to the student, e.g.,
 - Extreme sports
 - Voluntourism
 - Your carbon footprint
 - Smart cars
 - Emotional support animals
- This content drives all decisions about the selection and sequencing of items in the syllabus.



PUTTING THEME-BASED INSTRUCTION IN PERSPECTIVE

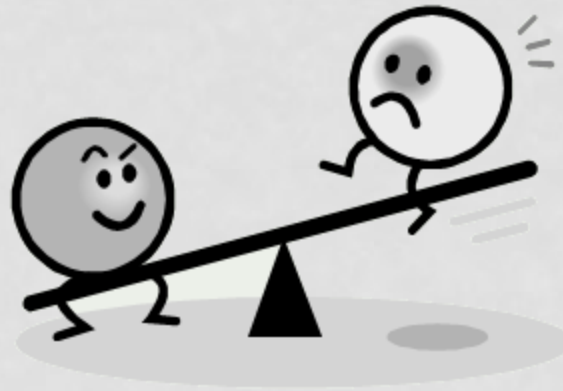
Themes...

- of interest and relevance to the learners form the organizing principle for the syllabus
- create and sustain student motivation.
- provide the rich input that allow learners to acquire new language
- form the point of departure for skill- and language-based instruction.
- may vary in length —from the 4-page course book format to extended themes (a.k.a. *sustained content*).



Save the Environment

Brinton, Snow, & Wesche (2003)



EXAMINING THEME-BASED INSTRUCTION

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

STRENGTHS

Themes...

- connect language learning to the real world
- expose learners to authentic issues
- provide a “carrier topic” for the teaching of skills and language issues



AN EXAMPLE

NGL'S OUR WORLD TEXTBOOK SERIES



Learning about the world through theme-based teaching benefits young learners, as different topics provide informational structure and a meaningful basis for exploration through a variety of language-learning tasks. Learning is enriched through activities that expand knowledge of the world and its cultures, people and places.

Our World Philosophy

<http://ngl.cengage.com/ourworldtours/levels-1-6/be/all-downloads/>

POTENTIAL WEAKNESSES

Consider:

- Selection of the theme
- Novelty
- Cultural relevance
- Student interest
- Coherence from unit to unit




IF IT'S TUESDAY...



POTPOURRI APPROACH



pot·pour·ri

/ˌpɒpəˈreɪ, ˌpɒpʊˈreɪ/ 

noun

- a mixture of dried petals and spices placed in a bowl or small sack to perfume clothing or a room.
- a mixture of things, especially a musical or literary medley.

plural noun: potpourris; plural noun: pot-pourris

"he played a potpourri of tunes from Gilbert and Sullivan"

synonyms: mixture, assortment, collection, selection, assemblage, medley, miscellany, mix, mélange, variety, mixed bag, patchwork, bricolage, [More](#)



ACHIEVING COHERENCE

WITHIN AND ACROSS CURRICULAR UNITS

OUR WORLD 5



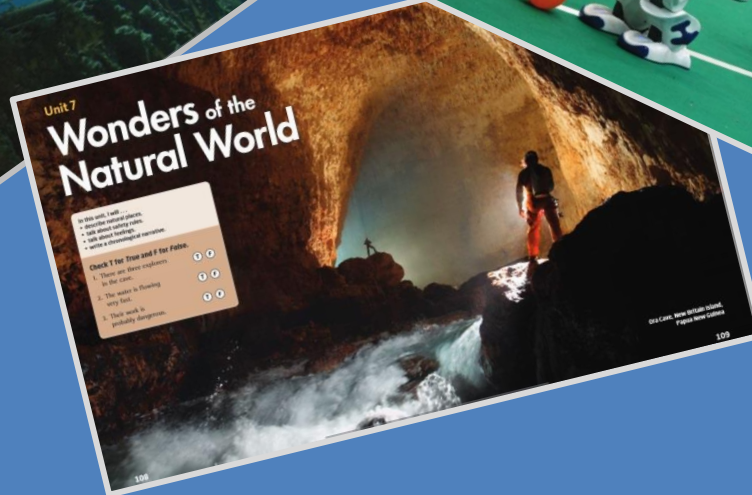
BOOK 5 - TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW



- Unit 1 – *Extreme weather*
- Unit 2 – *Copycat animals*
- Unit 3 – *Music in our world*
- Unit 4 – *Life out there*
- Unit 5 – *Arts lost and found*
- Unit 6 – *Amazing plants*
- Unit 7 – *Volcanoes*
- Unit 8 – *Reduce, reuse, recycle*
- Unit 9 – *Cool vacations!*

OUR WORLD 6

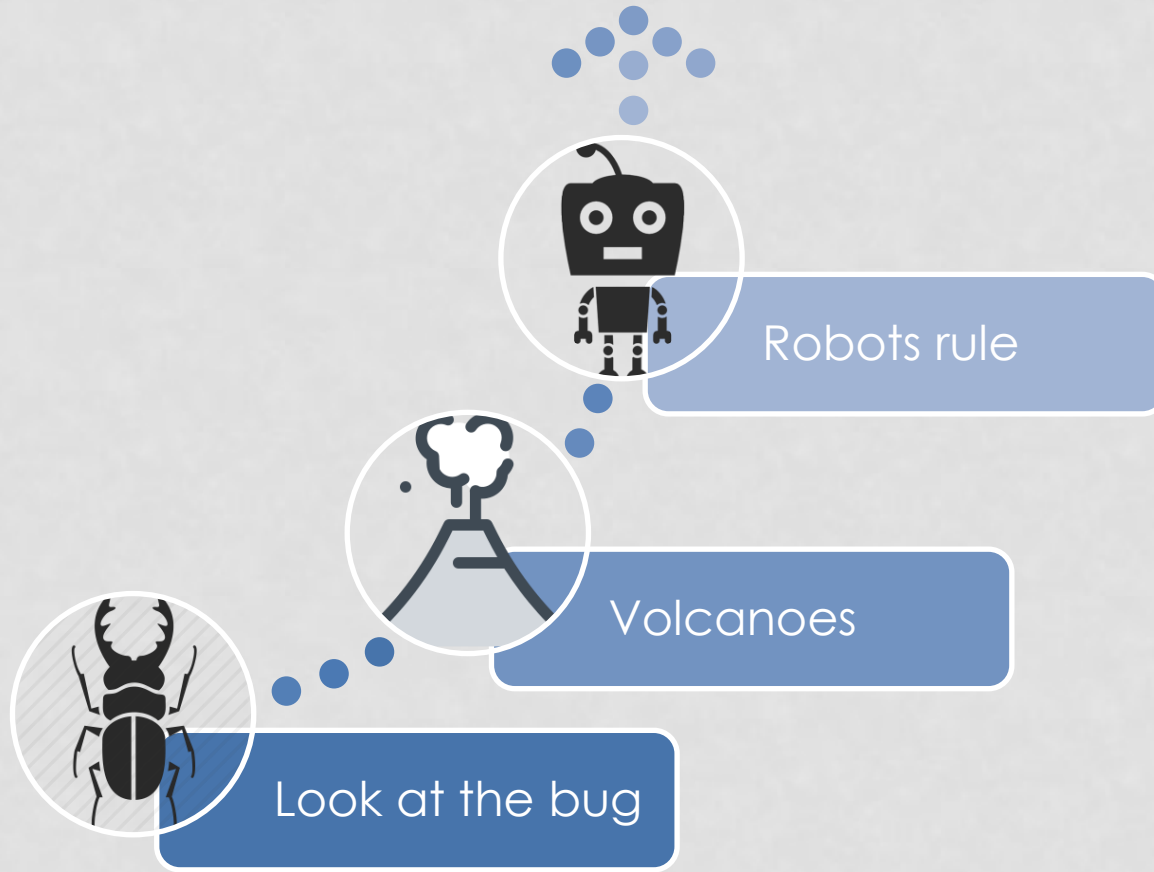


BOOK 6 – TABLE OF CONTENTS



- Unit 1 – *Exciting sports*
- Unit 2 – *History's a mystery*
- Unit 3 – *Chocolate*
- Unit 4 – *Water, water, everywhere*
- Unit 5 – *It's a small world*
- Unit 6 – *Smart choices*
- Unit 7 – *Wonders of the natural world*
- Unit 8 – *Robots rule*
- Unit 9 – *Amazing adventures at sea*

A MIXED BAG?



THE SIX T'S



Stoller & Grabe (2017)

Themes

- central ideas that organize major curricular units
- typically, multiple themes explored in a given term

Topics

- sub-units of content that explore more specific aspects of the theme
- selected to complement student interests, content resources, teacher preferences, and curricular objectives

Texts

- content resources (written and aural) which drive the basic planning of theme units

Tasks

- instructional activities and techniques utilized in the classroom
- derived from the texts that have been selected

Transitions

- explicitly planned linkages (a) across topics in a thematic unit and (b) across the texts and tasks within them that create greater curricular coherence
- means for reviewing and recycling content and language across themes and for revisiting learning strategies

Threads

- linkages across themes that create greater curricular coherence

6Ts IN ACTION

Theme: Save the environment

Topics: Reducing plastic waste; environmental legislation; individual actions that count

Texts: *10 Ways to Reduce Plastic Pollution* (reading); *Seas of Plastic* (listening); Internet research (group project)

Tasks: Reading for main idea; information gap; group poster; oral presentation

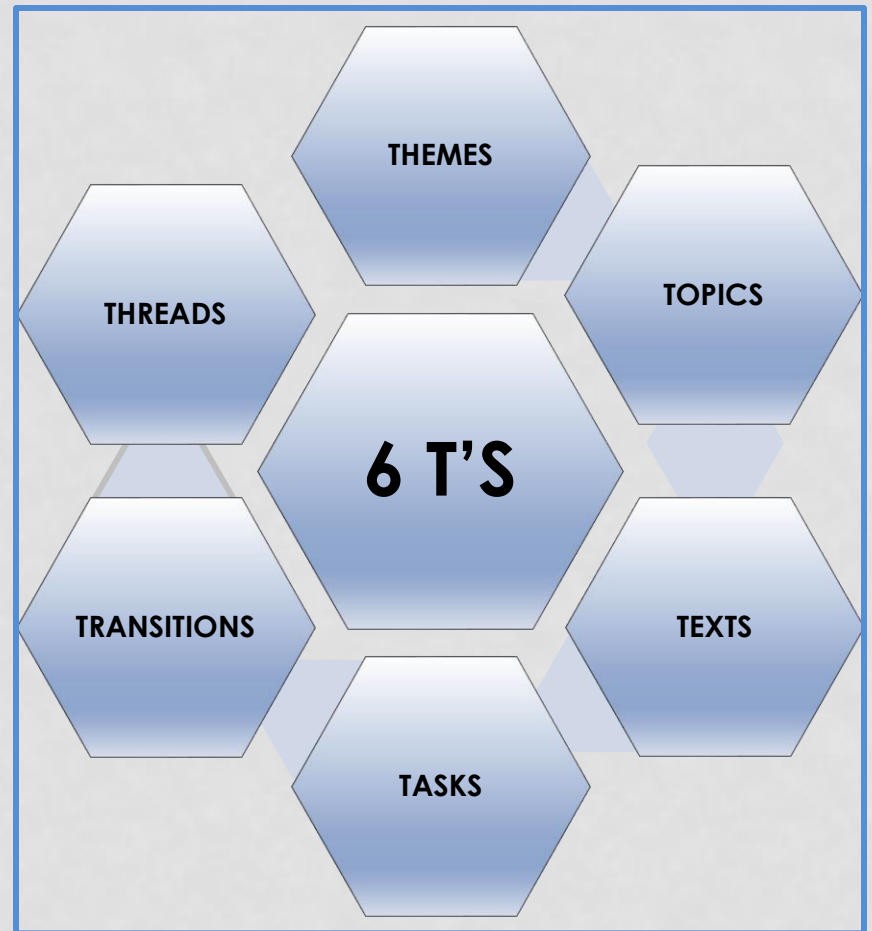
Transitions: Individual and societal actions

Threads: (e.g., to new theme of civil rights): Responsibility of the individual in society

APPLYING THE MODEL

Imagine that you are teaching a unit on the theme “Extreme weather.”

- What are some topics you might include?
- What tasks and texts would be appropriate?
- Assuming your next unit is “Amazing Plants,” what might your transition be?
- What thread could you use to tie your entire course together?





WHAT ABOUT ONLINE DELIVERY OF CBI?

SOME PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS

WHAT'S NEEDED?

- It is entirely possible to teach a S/FL language successfully online.
- However, online learning environments demand a rethinking of S/FL pedagogy.
- Ideally, the online delivery system should include asynchronous and synchronous components.
- This enables students to:
 - independently access course materials outside of class (autonomous learning) and
 - interact with their teacher and peers in a “live” classroom setting (guided learning).

Online Delivery

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graph TD; A[Online Delivery] --- B[Asynchronous]; A --- C[Synchronous]; B --- B1[• Autonomous learning]; B --- B2[• Materials repository]; C --- C1[• Guided learning]; C --- C2[• Teacher/student & student/student interaction];
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Asynchronous

- Autonomous learning
- Materials repository

Synchronous

- Guided learning
- Teacher/student & student/student interaction

CBI AND THE FLIPPED CLASSROOM

- CBI lends itself perfectly to the flipped classroom.
- Instead of the teacher delivering the content *during* class, students access the content *before* attending class via the asynchronous platform.
- This frees up class time for the teacher to focus on individual student needs during synchronous class time and for teacher-guided active learning, e.g.
 - In-class discussion prompts
 - Pair or group work
 - Language analysis tasks
 - Etc.

WHY FLIPPED?

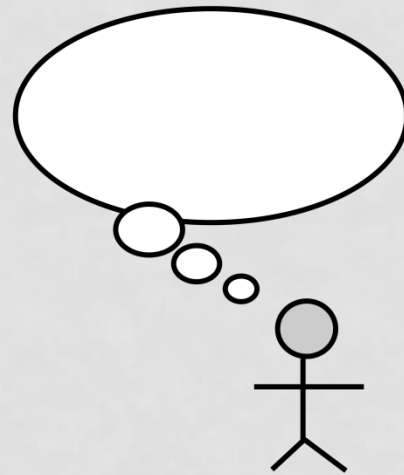


ASYNCHRONOUS
(autonomous,
outside of class)

- Engage new content (videos, podcasts, readings, authentic materials)
- Complete teacher-created tasks (assessments, journaling)
- Access content as needed
- Learn at own pace
- Accept responsibility for own learning

SYNCHRONOUS
(collaborative,
in-class)

- Attend to teacher-fronted activities (lecture, presentation of new language items, etc.)
- Participate in teacher-guided interactive activities (warmups and cool downs, discussion prompts, role plays, storytelling, break-out rooms)
- Complete language-focused pair or group work tasks
- Receive one-on-one help from teacher as needed



FINAL THOUGHTS

SOME CAVEATS

KEEP IN MIND



- CBLT is a flexible model of instruction.
- It is context sensitive; it should be adapted to the specific context in which it is being implemented.
- Content must be age-appropriate, relevant to the lives of students, and motivating.
- Curricular goals must be approach-specific, be clearly spelled out, and reflect the needs and interests of the students.

DON'T FORGET



- Materials must be reflective of the curricular goals, appropriate in level, and rich in language teaching possibilities.
- In-service education can assist teachers in better understanding the model and in more successfully implementing it.
- As with any curriculum, success lies in careful attention to all details of its implementation and to the coordination of teaching aims among instructors.



THANK YOU

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS WELCOME

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A FEW FLIPPED CLASSROOM LINKS

- <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/blogs/ljwood99/empower-students-flipped-cooperative-learning>
- <https://www.schoology.com/blog/flipped-classroom>
- <https://www.edutopia.org/article/4-tools-flipped-classroom>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dm6xd0Wb_SU
- <https://teaching.cornell.edu/teaching-resources/designing-your-course/flipping-classroom>