

# English language education in policy studies

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Content-based instruction (CBI) is increasingly important in curriculum development for second-language acquisition (SLA), as language and non-language departments in universities are finding the integration of core-content as part of the second language curriculum to be beneficial. With this in mind, this paper describes the English program at Nanzan University's Faculty of Policy Studies and examines the synergy presently being developed between core-content and English language instruction there. Specifically, this paper seeks to shed light on how instructors can reflect on the meaning of language instruction at higher education through an illustration of our activities.

大学の外国語学部及びそれ以外の学部における第二言語カリキュラムに学部・学科科目内容の統合が有益であることが明らかになる中、第二言語習得 (SLA) の視点からコンテンツベース授業 (CBI) がカリキュラム編成において重要な役割を果たすようになってきている。そこで本稿では南山大学総合政策学部 (瀬戸キャンパス) の英語プログラムを事例として、学科科目と英語科目の協力関係を築き取り組みを検証する。特に、現在取り組み中の事例を通じて、いかに講師が大学での言語教育の意味を考慮できるかということに焦点を当てる。

**C**ontent-based instruction (CBI) is increasingly important in curriculum development for second-language acquisition (SLA), as language and non-language departments in universities are finding the integration of core-content as part of the second language curriculum to be beneficial. CBI focuses on language learning and content learning (Stoller, 2004). Dlaska (2003) claims that “the fusing of language learning and academically substantive content” (p. 104) is key to ensuring a high quality language program in higher education.

Grabe and Stoller (1997) describe the benefits of a CBI approach to student learning. For example, students receive increased opportunities to enhance their knowledge and understanding of core-content in tandem with language learning activities that are based on core-content. This, in turn, stimulates and supports their second language and interpersonal communication skills acquisition. Brinton, Snow, and Wesche (1989) claim that this approach is “geared to stimulate students to think and learn through the use of the target language. Such an approach lends itself quite naturally to the integrated teaching of the four traditional language skills” (p. 2). From the perspective of learner motivation, Wiesen (2001) suggests that CBI allows methods more conducive to raising the student’s intrinsic motivation. Further, Daska (2003) maintains that CBI promotes learner autonomy by encouraging the students to form a language learning community and learner identity.

With these findings and suggestions in mind, this paper first introduces Nanzan University’s Faculty of Policy Studies and its English program called NEPAS. It then examines the synergy presently being developed between core-content and English language instruction there. In the conclusion, suggestions are offered on how to reflect on the meaning of language instruction at higher education through NEPAS activities.

### Policy studies at Nanzan University

The Faculty of Policy Studies, one of the newest departments at Nanzan, commenced classes on April 1, 2000 at Nanzan’s Seto campus. First- and second-year Policy Studies students choose core-content courses such as labor and migration

law policy, environmental policy, Non-Profit Organization (NPO) policy, and urban development policy as well as other general policy subjects. In their third and fourth years, they select a seminar major from the areas of Public Policy, International Policy, or Environmental Policy.

The faculty’s central aim is fostering the talents of students so they can become competent in policy development and implementation and can think and act professionally in the real world. Since a significant amount of core-content material comes from English language sources, being competent in the English language is an integral part of the students’ educational development.

### Nanzan English program At Seto (NEPAS)

Grabe and Stoller (1997) state, “CBI offers ideal conditions for language learning when carried out appropriately” (p. 14). In our effort to appropriately carry out CBI within the department’s central aim, the Nanzan English Program At Seto (NEPAS) supports students’ English educational needs in conjunction with their core-content learning.

NEPAS consists of required and elective English language courses including English Communication, English Reading, Advanced English, as well as TOEIC and TOEFL preparation. To accommodate varying student abilities, we have streamed first-year students into advanced, regular, and basic levels for English Communication classes since 2002, and for Reading classes since 2003.

In addition to required first-year courses, NEPAS provides elective courses, including Reading III for second-year students, Advanced English for third- and fourth-year

students, as well as TOEIC and TOEFL courses for all years. Starting in 2006, two content-focused courses will be added to the list as electives—English Research Immersion Program and Business Events Planning and Negotiation Skills (Nanzan University Official Webpage, 2005).

Byram, Esarte-Sarries, and Taylor (1991) and Johnson (1995) suggest that skills in addition to the four core linguistic skills need equal attention when using a CBI approach. Interpersonal skills, intercultural awareness, and critical thinking should be enhanced concurrently for the four core skills to be internalized well (Neuner, 1988; Johnson, 1995; Omaggio-Hadley, 1993; Byram, Esarte-Sarries, & Taylor, 1991). To facilitate this internalization, the teachers in NEPAS keep in mind the following five pedagogical elements:

1. *Content-focused learning*: Students improve linguistic and thinking skills in the context of content-related areas. The program encourages enhanced and integrated learning in both language and content.
2. *Critical thinking*: Cognitive tools, such as visual organizers, are used for language acquisition and comprehension. (see Getting, 1999; Pally, 1997 for a discussion on critical thinking.) Students learn to understand underlying causes and effects and to offer appropriate solutions.
3. *Independent learning*: Students are required to use a combination of resources including the library, Internet, and the on-campus self-access/interaction center (known as the World Plaza) to complete reports, presentations, and student-led forums.

4. *Professional English*: Students can take elective courses to further their learning in interpreting and translating, oral presentations, business events planning and negotiation, and research immersion to develop their ability to function effectively in the workplace.
5. *Intercultural awareness and understanding*: In addition to in-class intercultural communication activities, students invite non-Japanese guest speakers for forums on social and business issues. This stimulates students' intellectual curiosity and expands their world knowledge.

NEPAS and the faculty obtained a 4-year “Good Practice” (GP) grant, known as *Gendaiteki Kyoiku Niizu Torikumi Shien Puroguramu* (An Education Support Program for Modern Education Needs), in 2005 from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology that will be used to further the program's efforts. This GP grant falls under the category of *Shigoto de Eigo ga tsukaeru Nihonjin no ikusei* (The fostering of Japanese who can use English at work) and focuses on providing assistance in design of classes and curriculums (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, Science and Technology, Japan (2005).

Among the GP initiatives to increase language and content synergy, NEPAS conducts a number of on-campus activities for students outside the classroom such as World Plaza, which functions as a self-access/interaction center where students have access to English learning materials. To address students' independent learning needs, World Plaza has English speakers (one full-time and one part-time) who assist students, provide conversational practice, and provide an English advising service. World Plaza is also the

venue for English Lounge, where students meet voluntarily at lunchtime to discuss various social and global issues in English.

NEPAS is also using GP funds to provide students with the Education-On-Demand self-access room for independent learning and to purchase extensive reading and listening materials. In addition, all students can access ALC Net Academy (a server-based CALL program) from any of the 6000 LAN outlets that are located throughout the campus. To ensure that every student is able to utilize the university's computer system and the materials offered on it, each student is given a notebook computer as part of their matriculation package.

### **Synergistic approach**

Omaggio-Hadley (1993) argues the importance of striking an equal balance between content-based and language teaching in order to acquire proficiency in a second language. Accordingly, NEPAS's curriculum design and development works to develop the educational synergies between various language courses and also between language and content courses.

### **Collaboration**

Content consistency is essential in a CBI approach (Stoller, 2004). Building on this understanding, instructors collaborate in teaching teams for first-year English Communication and English Reading courses. As part of lesson planning, teams work together on the order, amount, and flow of the core-content used in both classes. Japanese

and global social issues (policy, reform, labor, NPO activities) related to core-content classes are the main focus of the English Reading class.

By utilizing critical thinking tools and strategies such as visual organizers (Kang, 2004), students acquire and produce language specifically related to those topics in their reading class. To help students internalize the language acquired, the same topics are then used for speech tasks in their communication class. This collaboration encourages students to use multiple skills including research (speech content preparation) and interpersonal skills (speaking to the class and answering questions about their speech by other students). In addition to using the four basic skills in preparation and delivery, students internalize an array of knowledge that prepares them for participation in related core-content classes. This approach provides opportunities to unify and complement core subject content in the English language program.

To further internalization and integration, the department offers opportunities outside NEPAS for students to utilize English language skills as part of their policy studies. Students may take core-content courses where the language of instruction is English, such as International Politics, Security Issues, NPO Studies, and Labor Migration. The department also offers the Nanzan Asia Program for second-year students. Students spend one month in an Asian country to learn and experience that country's culture and language as well as honing their survival skills in English, which is sometimes the mutually understandable second language for the host country participants as well as for the students.

### Student responses to collaboration

To assist in planning future NEPAS initiatives, a predominantly open-ended questionnaire was completed by 54 first-year advanced-level English Communication and Reading students. Questions focused on student evaluations of the collaboration between the courses, of course materials, and of the synergy felt between English language and core-content classes. The students were also asked how this approach affected their motivation. The following quotations are representative of the responses of the participating students:

- “I was able to understand the content quickly in some of my core-content classes because we had covered that area in English class.” (Student 13)
- “The content and way the communication/reading classes were run helped me to keep up with my core-content material.” (Student 34)
- “We had to prepare speeches in communication class based on reading content. That helped me understand the issue much deeper. Also, the presentation skills we learned to use were useful in other classes when I was asked to give a short summary of class content.” (Student 7)
- “I studied similar content in my Constitution and Environmental studies classes, so I already had prior knowledge which made it easy to follow.” (Student 46)

In addition to these encouraging comments, the results of the university-wide student evaluation on the English

Reading class conducted at the end of the spring semester indicated that the students' satisfaction score increased from 4.33 to 4.57 on a scale of 5. This figure was higher than the highest of all the student scores received by the same instructor when no collaboration was being conducted.

### Future curriculum development

Continuous interaction between NEPAS and the faculty teaching the content courses has highlighted issues for future development. First, some core-courses for third- and fourth-year students are conducted in English, and a number of core-courses where the language of instruction is Japanese also use a vast amount of English materials. To provide support for students in those courses, greater coordination with the core-content course faculty is required.

Additionally, in a department that focuses on policy studies, more “policy making” issues and skills need to be taken up in English classes. Consequently, NEPAS must increase faculty development on core-content materials. One method of achieving this could be an increased integration between NEPAS courses and core-content courses, for example, through an early introduction to first- and second-year students of specific English language content covered in seminar classes and other policy studies in the third and fourth years. Sample material from these classes may help these students gain an accurate image of what they will be able to learn and what level of English is usually required for the materials they will have to use.

In addition to enhanced collaboration between core-content and language classes, the development of the

NEPAS curriculum continues. As mentioned above, the 2006 academic year brings two new courses: English Research Immersion Program and Business Events Planning and Negotiation. The immersion course enables students to participate in a five-day research camp off-campus. There, students will learn research, discussion, and presentation skills in English. The camp concludes with a student-run mini-symposium. In the business course, students learn the practical business skills needed to plan and execute an event such as an academic symposium run in English. Students will organize and lead a forum in which a guest speaker from outside the university is invited to give a presentation on campus to students and teachers or possibly the local community. These additions are expected to strengthen our effort to bring content, practical skills, critical thinking skills, and linguistic skills together.

### Conclusion

To borrow Dlaska's (2003:107) words, "the separation of content and language is an unholy division to the detriment of both linguistic and academic achievement." We at NEPAS believe that language instruction in higher education has the mission of helping with the growth of each student as a social and intellectual whole, and not merely as a language learner. However, social pressures in recent years to produce numeric results of students' improvement in "language competency" using standardized tests have driven language educators to obsess almost exclusively on specific "linguistic skills." One result of this is the recent trend for universities to outsource language education to language schools, which may be the appropriate choice for that particular purpose.

Having said that, those of us who are committed to university education need to remind ourselves of the meaning of, or the meaning that needs to be associated with, language education as part of higher education. As described in this paper, NEPAS aims to continue the strategic employment of synergistic efforts between content and language instruction as well as between English classes. Our goal is to contribute to the growth of students as social, intellectual, and professional wholes needed in the global society in which we live.

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