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The interplay between language and content in counterbalanced instruction

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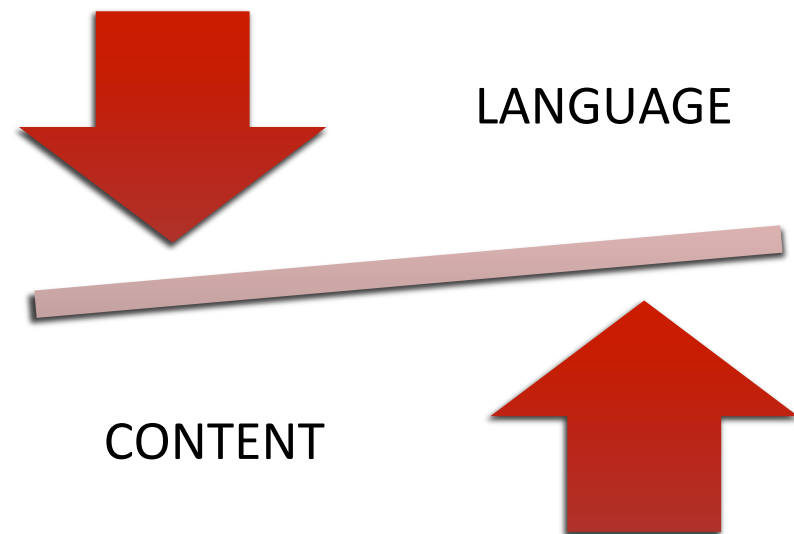
What my talk is (and is not) about

- not about a specific type of program but rather about instruction from an SLA perspective based on years of empirical research in content-based classrooms
- provides a rationale for integrating language and content as well as examples of how to do so
- also draws on Genesee's (1991) assertion that second/foreign language instruction in any setting can increase its effectiveness by:
 - integrating content other than only language
 - incorporating opportunities for interaction
 - planning systematically for language development

Counterbalance?

“A power or influence that balances the effect of a contrary one”
(*The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*)

- Research has long suggested that effective L2 instruction needs to **counterbalance** both form-oriented and meaning-oriented approaches.



Lack of counterbalance in L2 instruction

- Traditional grammar-translation approaches focusing *exclusively* on language form:
 - produce learners with
 - high scores on discrete-point grammar tests
 - problems communicating fluently in communicative contexts
- Communicative and content-based approaches focusing *exclusively* on meaning:
 - produce learners with
 - high levels of communicative ability
 - shortcomings in grammatical accuracy

The need for change...

- There is need to develop more effective second/foreign language (L2/FL) programs to meet the changing needs of today's students.
- To do so, there are many good reasons for integrating language and content instruction through **content-based language teaching (CBLT)**:
 - *an instructional approach in which non-linguistic content such as geography, history, or science is taught to students through the medium of a language that they are learning as an additional language*

Content-based language teaching (CBLT)

- has proven to be a more effective and motivating way of developing communicative ability than traditional grammar-based approaches
- enriches classroom discourse in a way that provides both a cognitive basis for language learning and a motivational basis for purposeful communication
- encompasses many types of programs:
 - Content and language integrated learning (CLIL)
 - Immersion
 - Content-based ESL
 - Theme-based language instruction

Range of CBLT settings

(Met, 1998)

Content-driven

Language-driven



Total
immersion

Partial
immersion

Content
courses

Content
courses
+
language
classes

Language
classes with
thematic
units

Language
classes with
content used
for language
practice

Content-driven programs

- *promote language & literacy development through subject-matter learning*
- *assess both content knowledge and language development*

Language-driven programs

- *promote development of target language proficiency*
- *entail no high-stakes assessment of content knowledge*

Wesche & Skehan (2002)

- ➔ CBLT “can provide the motivating purpose for language learning, a naturalistic learning context that includes social and other pragmatic dimensions, and the possibility of form-focused activity... Together, these perhaps offer as close to a comprehensive environment for second language development as is possible in the classroom.”
- ➔ But, CBLT is “not a panacea that can achieve success whatever the circumstances. It has to be carefully introduced and implemented and requires appropriate teacher training and adaption to local conditions.”

“I do not teach language”

- Across a wide spectrum of CBLT contexts, instructors claim they teach content but not language:
 - A 1st-grade French immersion teacher:
 - *“From 9:00 until 3:30, I do not teach French. I teach subject matter, and French is learned through this content”* (Salomone, 1992)
 - Lecturers teaching physics in English at Swedish universities:
 - *“I don’t teach language I teach physics”* (Airey, 2012)
- Yet, *“all teachers are language teachers”* (Airey, 2012)

Post-secondary CBLT in Japan

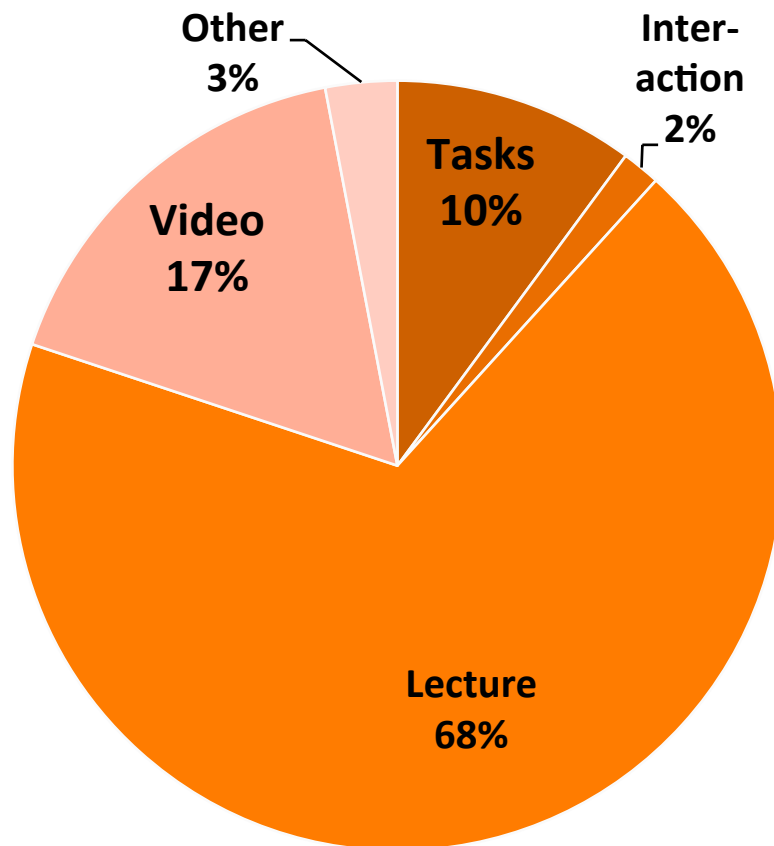
(Moriyoshi, 2010)

- Two postsecondary CBLT classes in Japan
 - 76 students and 2 native English-speaking teachers
 - over 7.5 hours observed and video recorded
 - teachers and students completed questionnaires and teachers were interviewed
- Results:
 - Teachers provided extensive comprehensible input to students, focusing exclusively on content, especially on vocabulary
 - Students had limited output practice
 - Both teachers and students perceived CBLT classes to be effective for improving *listening skills* and *content knowledge*

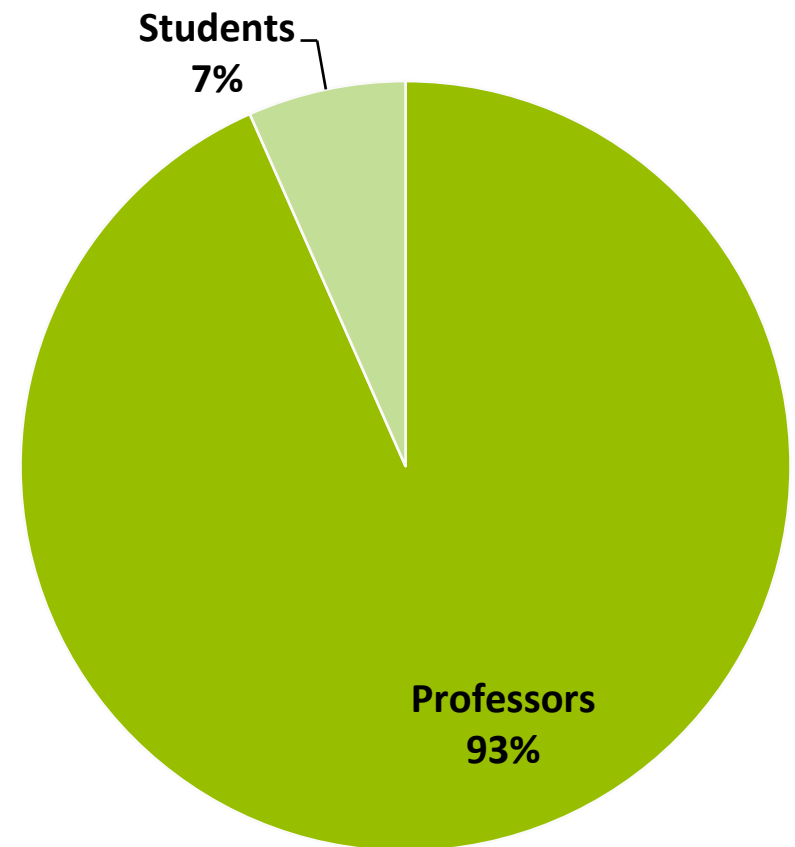
Post-secondary CBLT in Japan

(Moriyoshi, 2010)

Distribution of instructional time



Total words spoken by professors and students



Post-secondary CBLT in Canada

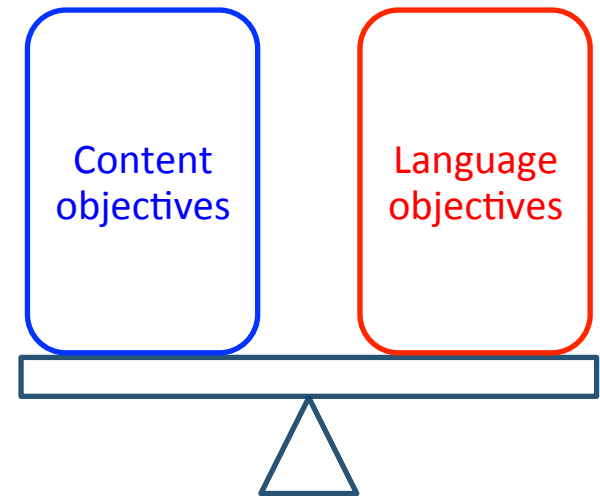
Burger & Chrétien (2001)

- At University of Ottawa, students can take an introductory psychology course in their L2 along with an ‘adjunct’ language course for 90 minutes/week.
- In spite of little time for formal language instruction in the adjunct courses, which focus on understanding content, students make substantial gains in oral proficiency.
- Gains are attributed to:
 - massive **exposure** to texts and lectures (in psychology course)
in combination with
 - opportunities for **practice** and **feedback** (in adjunct course)

Counterbalanced instruction

(Lyster, 2007)

- gives content and language objectives equal and complementary status
- shifts learners' attention between form and meaning in ways that strengthen connections in memory and increase depth of processing
- integrates **form-focused instruction** into CBLT to create contexts for:
 - ☑ noticing and awareness
 - ☑ practice and feedback



Contextualized use vs. decontextualized usage

- Counterbalanced instruction provides opportunities for students to notice and use specific target language features (otherwise misused, unused, or unnoticed in classroom discourse) in the context of content-based or meaning-oriented tasks
- It thus differs from traditional instruction, which:
 - isolates language from any content other than the mechanical workings of the language itself
 - emphasizes memorization of forms out of context
 - isn't associated with actual language use
 - does not foster *transfer-appropriate processing*

Transfer-appropriate processing

(Lightbown, 2008; Segalowitz, 2000)

The context in which learning occurs should resemble the context in which the learning will be put to use.

- Language features learned in isolated grammar lessons are remembered in similar contexts, but hard to retrieve in the context of communicative interaction.
- Language features noticed during content-driven interaction are more easily retrieved in similar contexts of real communication.

The noticing-awareness-practice sequence in counterbalanced instruction

Noticing

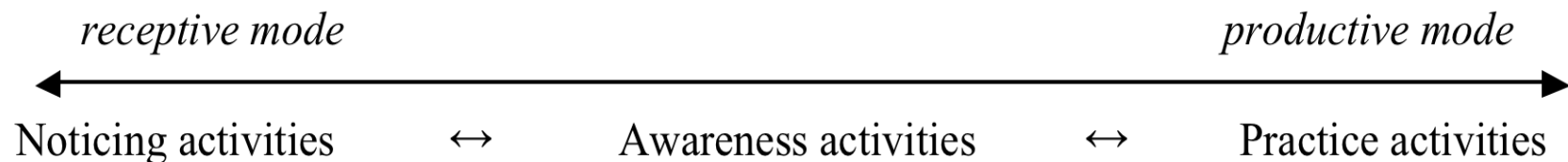
- students' attention is drawn to target forms so they notice them in a meaningful context

Awareness

- students reflect on and manipulate the target forms in a way that helps them to restructure their interlanguage representations

Practice

- students proceduralize their (re)analyzed representations of the L2



Noticing activities

- designed to help students **notice** L2 features contrived to appear more **salient** or more **frequent** in oral and written input.
- enhanced written input:
 - COLOUR CODING
 - *Italics*
 - **bold**
 - CAPS
- enhanced oral input:
 - increased frequency
 - intonational stress

*Le **déchiffrement** de la forêt était difficile et ____ nourriture manquait. Les colons risquaient donc de mourir de ____ **famine** ou encore du scorbut, ____ **maladie** très grave. ____ **survie** d'____ grande **partie** de ____ **population** dépendait donc de ____ **marchandise** venant de France.*



Awareness activities

Ending	Find the nouns in your text with this ending	What's the rule?
-ine	<i>la famine, la Chine</i>	F
-ie	<i>la survie, une partie, une maladie</i>	F
-ment	<i>le déchiffrement, un établissement</i>	M
-ure	<i>la nourriture, la fourrure</i>	F
-tion	<i>la population, la fondation</i>	F

Practice activities

Practice: “engaging in an activity with the goal of becoming better at it” (DeKeyser, 2007)

- Opportunities for learners to use the language in ways that help them to **automatize** their use of target forms
- Guided practice:
 - elicits the use of specific forms
 - develops accuracy and metalinguistic awareness
- Communicative practice:
 - emphasizes communication
 - develops confidence and motivation in using L2

Guided oral practice in using grammatical gender in history class (Lyster, 2004)

➔ **Riddles** helped to review history material and elicit nouns requiring correct gender marking

1. Samuel de Champlain en a établi la première en Nouvelle-France en 1608. [une colonie]

[Samuel de Champlain established the first one in New France in 1608.]

2. Le scorbut, la cause de beaucoup de morts en Nouvelle-France, en est un exemple. [une maladie]

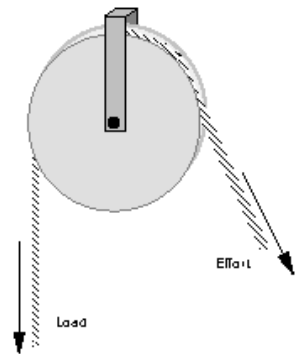
[Scurvy, which caused many deaths in New France, is an example of one of these.]

Guided written practice in using gender in science class (Lyster, 2004)

➔ T/F exercises helped to review simple machines in science while eliciting correct gender markings.

1. _____ poulie est _____ machine simple qui n'est plus utilisée aujourd'hui. **V ou F?**

[The pulley is a simple machine that is no longer used: T or F]



2. _____ marteau et le pied-de-biche peuvent servir de leviers. **V ou F?**

[The hammer and crow-bar can be used as levers: T or F]



Practice in using simple & conditional past-tense forms in science class (Doughty & Varela, 1998)

Make predictions then do experiment

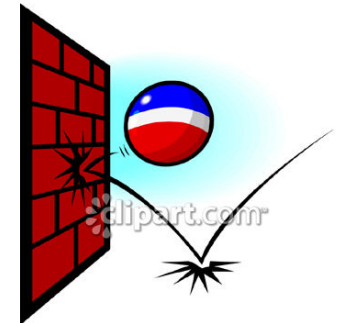
➤ What is the effect of the type of ball on the distance it will bounce?

➤ *Predict which ball will bounce the highest:*

➤ *basketball*

➤ *soccer ball*

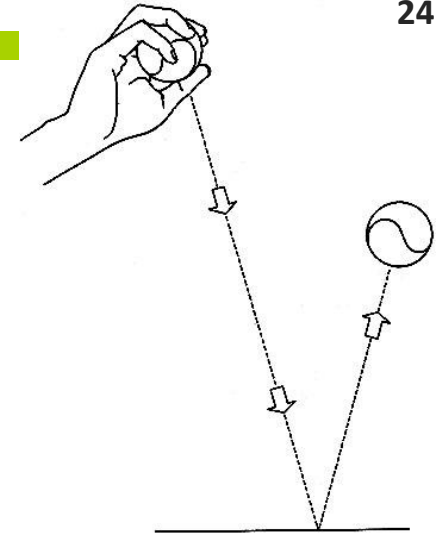
➤ *rubber ball*



Paper airplanes

- What is the effect of different types of paper on the distance a paper airplane will fly?
- *Predict which type of paper will make the airplane fly the farthest:*
 - *construction paper*
 - *bristol board*
 - *copier paper*





Lab Report

1. Problem and procedures
2. Hypothesis
 - What did you think would happen?
 - ***I thought that the rubber ball would bounce the highest***
 - What did the teacher think would happen?
 - ***She thought that the basketball would bounce the highest***
3. Results and conclusions

“Work on improving output is better done in the context of more interactive activities” (Lightbown, 1998)

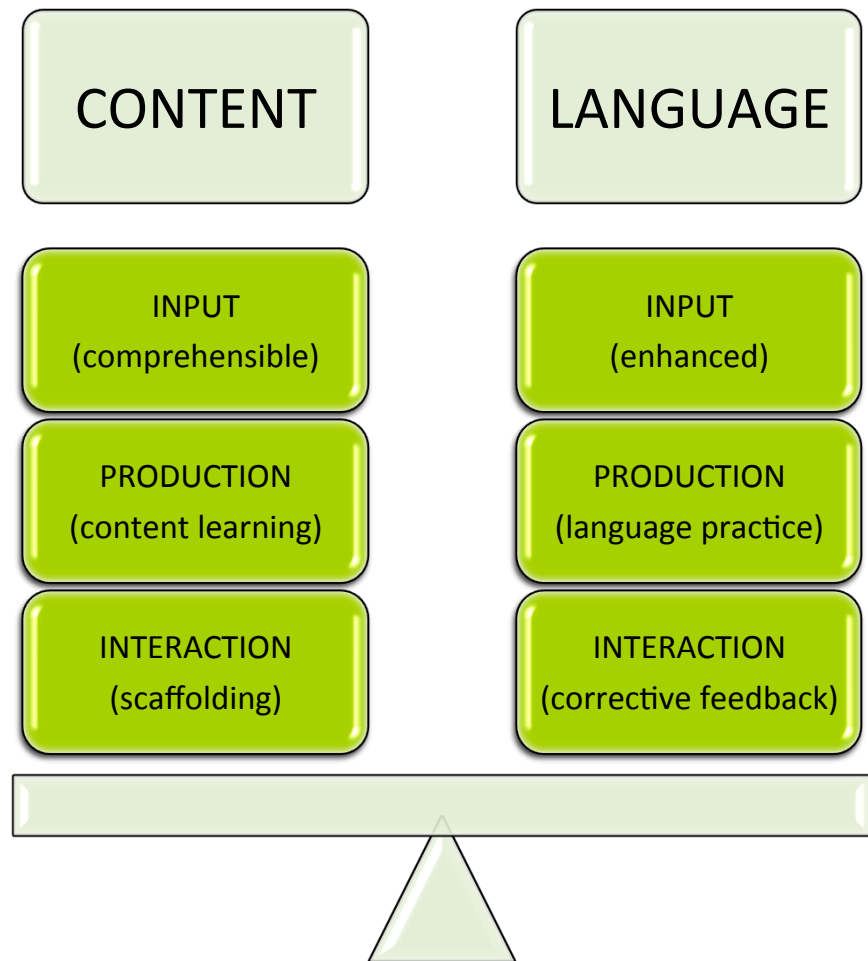
- Designing practice activities that are content-based and that also create obligatory contexts for the use of specific target forms is difficult.
- Outside of such activities, during interaction about content, CBLT teachers can provide different types feedback:
 - feedback to scaffold the interaction and facilitate students’ participation and appropriation of content
 - feedback that pushes students towards accuracy and beyond recurring use of interlanguage forms.

Counterbalanced instruction

➔ integrates content and language across three key areas of instruction:

1. instructional **input**
2. student **production**
3. classroom **interaction**

➔ the shifts in learners' attention between form and meaning are predicted to increase depth of processing and strengthen connections in memory



Counterbalanced instruction

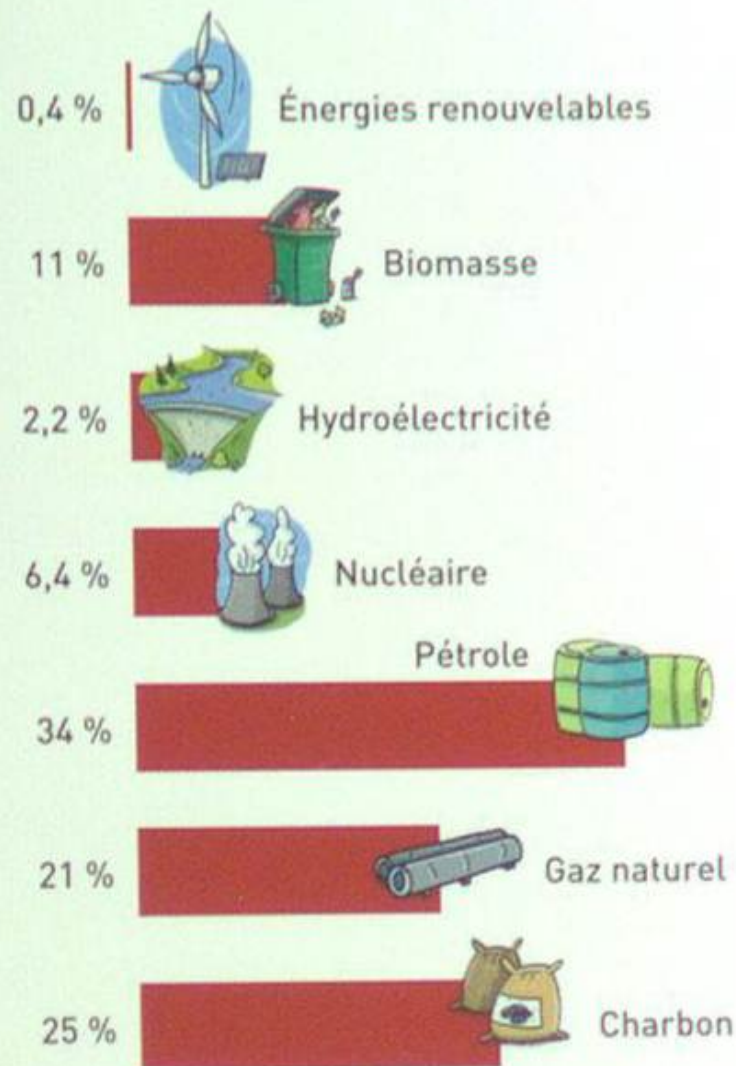
Lyster (2007)

- pushes learners who are either form-oriented or meaning-oriented in the opposite direction in order to strike a balance between the two orientations (Skehan, 1998):
 - ***meaning-oriented learners*** benefit from form-focused instruction designed to increase awareness of form
 - ***form-oriented learners*** benefit from content-based tasks designed to reorient attention towards meaning in ways that:
 - contribute to the development of communicative ability
 - avert an overemphasis on attention to form, which may jeopardize their ability to process other equally important aspects of the input (Tomlin & Villa, 1994).

Counterbalanced instruction in practice (Morgan, 2013)

- a high school French teacher and her 27 students from two U.S. foreign language classes participated in a 6-week unit on environmental issues emphasizing:
 - cause-effect relationships
 - solutions
 - local-global connections
- Data included:
 - pre- and post-test measures of language and content
 - classroom observations
 - interviews with teacher and sub-sample of students
 - questionnaires completed by teacher and students

La part de chaque énergie dans la consommation mondiale



Source : IEA, 2006

Sample Task

- analysis of graphs to answer questions (in French) about the extent of different energy sources and to formulate an opinion about future prospects

Final Project

- Public Service Announcement aiming to convince others to be environmentally conscious

Results

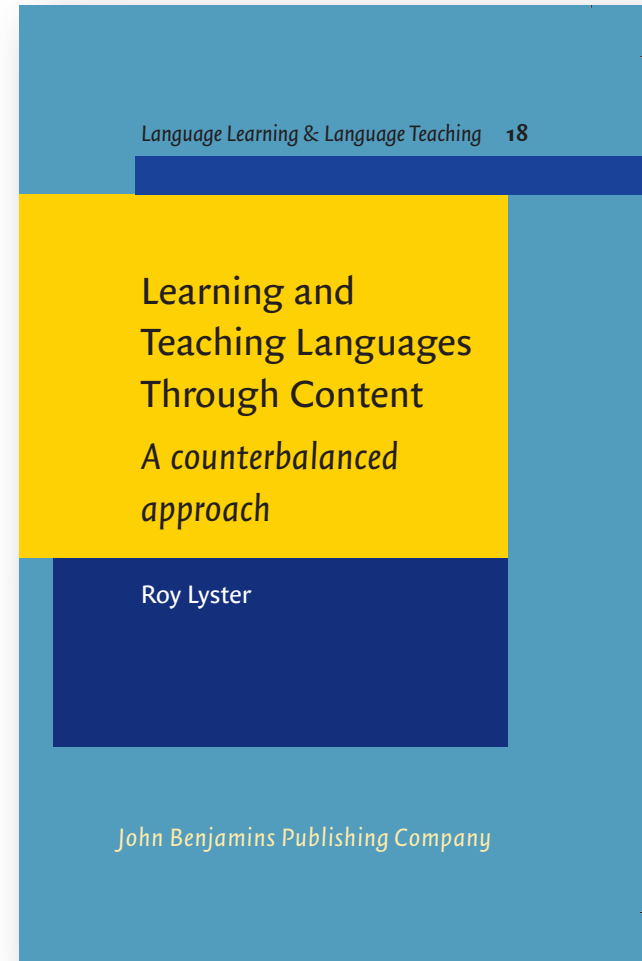
(Morgan, 2013)


- Integrating content into foreign language instruction:
 - was feasible
 - yielded positive outcomes in both language and content
 - helped students to “connect more to the language through the use of cognitively engaging and meaningful academic content”
- Students repeatedly mentioned how the unit applied to their own lives and was also part of a bigger picture:
 - “It wasn’t just for language—it was for science, and our world.”
- CBLT: “highly appreciated by students for their relevance and by teachers for the satisfaction of effectively helping students to prepare for life after language instruction” (Wesche & Skehan, 2002)

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谢谢
Merci
Thank you



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