

Presenter: Joan Chevalier

Title: Content-based instruction for lower-level students?

Abstract:

There is an ever-growing body of pedagogical research discussing the advantages and benefits of content-based instruction (CBI) in foreign language. Genesee (1991), Leaver and Stryker (1997), and Lyster (2007) all document how CBI increases the motivation and self-confidence of students while producing proficiency gains. CBI for students of Russian is typically introduced at the intermediate high or advanced levels. Most Russian language professionals believe that students who do not have a solid grounding in case grammar are not ready for the challenges inherent in CBI. Some language professional who teach lower level courses believe that students using a theme-based textbook will reap the benefits of CBI. This paper will present a model for applying the principles of content-based instruction for lower level students. The premise of the model is that students will be more motivated to use their language skills if they are given the freedom to choose the topics of inquiry. The presentation will describe several project-based CBI units used successfully with advanced beginning Russian language students. The paper will suggest best practices for introducing content-based instruction to lower level students.

Works Cited:

Genesee, F. (1991). "Second language learning in school settings: Lessons from Immersion." In A. Reynolds (Ed.) *Bilingualism, Multiculturalism and Second Language Learning* (183-201). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Leaver B. L. and Stryker, S. B. (1997). *Content-based instruction in foreign-education : models and methods*. Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press.

Lyster, R. (2007). *Learning and teaching through content: A counterbalanced approach*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publisher.