
Content-Area Language Instruction: Approaches and Strategies

Review by Teresa Dalle, Memphis State University

CONTENT-AREA LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION: APPROACHES AND STRATEGIES. Gina Cantoni-Harvey. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1987. pp. 210 + xiv. \$21.25.

Content-Area Language Instruction: Approaches and Strategies attempts to explore "the relationship between second language acquisition and the development of academic knowledge and skills at the elementary and secondary grade levels." It provides its readers with basic information on the characteristics and needs of limited English proficient (LEP) students, or

minority students as the author refers to them, and the means of accommodating such students in the classroom.

Cantoni-Harvey divides her book into three parts. Part I gives some general background to the subject. First of all, it supplies information on the educational implications of providing for increasing numbers of ethnic minority students in U.S. elementary and secondary schools. Second, it summarizes what is known about second language acquisition, ESL (English as a Second Language) methodologies, and current approaches to

teaching ESL. Finally, it suggests some basic principles to be applied in the classroom to encourage educational excellence among all learners, specifically to "enhance the learners' linguistic and experiential knowledge." In fact, the theme of the book seems to be that all students benefit from teaching which encourages the development of language skills and of an increasingly complex schemata, (those mental representations with which everyone organizes the world and his/her experiences therein). Using this theme, then, of "enhancing linguistic and experiential knowledge," the author, in Parts II and III, discusses content courses, language, and the relationship between teaching both.

Part II gives suggestions for teaching language arts—literacy, reading, and writing—to LEP students.

Part III outlines specific strategies for teaching such students the content of social sciences, mathematics, science and "other" (music, arts and crafts, and physical education) in ways which take into consideration the limited language skills of the student while encouraging the development of those skills.

The lengthy reference list at the back of the book attests to the extensive research Cantoni-Harvey conducted before presenting her ideas. Also provided is a list of organizations which might provide useful information to those involved in teaching minority students, as well as a list of periodicals which give the reader sources of information on general education, English education, cross-cultural teaching, reading, mathematics, and educational research.

The book is extremely valuable to any teacher who has or may someday have a LEP student in his/her class. Since it is projected that 80% of those teaching today will at some time have a LEP student in the class, this book seems to have a large audience.

The author knows her audience well and speaks to them as professional colleagues. She aims at those who have an appreciation of quality education and who may not have had any experience in linguistics or ESL and bilingual methodology. The style and presentation is direct, helpful, and very readable.

Cantoni-Harvey is specific in her recommendations, and she presents theoretical materials in an enlightening and succinct way, always directing the readers' attention to the implications which research and theory have on actual classroom practice. For example, she emphasizes the need for every teacher to promote cognitive development as well as English proficiency in the LEP student by explaining the important distinction between "basic interpersonal communicative skills" and "cognitive-academic language proficiency" (from Cummins 1981).

Her basic premise, which she states carefully in Chapter One and supports throughout the book, is that "EFL methodology, which focuses predominantly on language, is less effective than an ESL approach, which combines language with content." After making her point, she provides an excellent overview of the current ESL methodologies which stress the "importance of meaning over grammar and the pragmatic and creative use of English."

Through her very thorough approach to the problem of teaching LEP students in content areas, Cantoni-Harvey gives teachers encouragement in working with minority students, a conviction that such students need not be ignored, and the key to organizing and presenting material in a way that makes learning possible. This book is highly recommended for all teachers who face the prospect of working with LEP, or minority students—in short, for nearly all teachers.

Reference

Cummins, J. 1981. *The role of primary language development in promoting educational success for language minority students*. Sacramento, CA: California State Department of Education, Office of Bilingual Bicultural Education.

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