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The CATESOL Journal

Title
Abstracts

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4rn86974

Journal
The CATESOL Journal, 2(1)

ISSN
1535-0517

Publication Date
1989

DOI
10.5070/B5.36666

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The CATESOL Journal

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This paper defines and illustrates content-based language teaching in the ESL context. Some good programs are cited as examples, and the reader is given an introduction to the theoretical and practical motivations of content-based ESL, along with some notion of who the principle innovators are. Three content-based models (theme-based, adjunct, and sheltered) are presented in some detail. Since content-based ESL fits so well with current principles of communicative second language teaching, the author argues that content-based ESL, tempered with judicious use of humanistically motivated experiential activities, will be the major approach to formal ESL instruction at all levels in the near future.

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Then a second set of assumptions is introduced: (a) Learning is an active process of meaning construction that occurs during social interaction; (b) reading, writing, speaking, and listening develop interdependently; and (c) learning proceeds from whole to part. Extended examples of learning activities taken from classes in which the teachers ascribe to these assumptions are provided. The examples come from middle and high school classes with both Hispanic and Southeast Asian students. In classes based on this second set of assumptions, all students, but especially bilingual students, find learning easier.

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