

## LANGUAGE COMPETENCY AND CIVIC EDUCATION

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### ABSTRAK

*Tiga pendekatan terhadap Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan, yaitu pemahaman tentang struktur pemerintahan, pengembangan nilai-nilai dan sikap siswa, serta penguasaan ketrampilan yang diperlukan sebagai warga negara, menghendaki agar siswa mampu untuk berdebat, menilai, menganalisis, aktif mengemukakan opini sendiri, kemampuan negosiasi, membaca secara kritis, dan ketrampilan-ketrampilan yang diperlukan sebagai warga negara yang hidup di alam demokrasi. Kemampuan seperti ini sama dengan bentuk-bentuk kemampuan yang dikehendaki dalam penguasaan bahasa secara formal atau CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency). Sheltered Content Approach, yaitu melaksanakan pengajaran bahasa berdasarkan materi pelajaran tertentu, merupakan salah satu alternatif dalam penguasaan CALP. Karena itu penulis menganggap dan mengusulkan bahwa materi pendidikan kewarganegaraan dapat menjadi materi dalam pelaksanaan pengajaran bahasa.*

**Key Words:** *Civic Education, language competency, Sheltered Content Approach*

### I. INTRODUCTION

The selection of curricular approaches and corresponding content for English as a Second Language courses in countries, like the Philippines, is of particular importance given the central role English plays throughout the educational system. As mandated by law, learners in the Philippines are expected to acquire most literacy skills, scientific understandings, advanced cognitive skills, and mathematical skills though the medium of a language (English) which is not generally used at home (Gonzalez, 1998). Although many learners in the Philippines are relatively fluent in day-to-day, conversational English, few, according to those I interacted with in the Philippines in November, 2000, had mastered the more demanding academic registers of English. This was widely attributed at the failure of school curricula and instructional material to focus on the development of academic, cognitively demanding English Language skills (as well as the believe that many of the teachers had failed to master these academic registers). Given that the home language, after year 1, play only a “supplementary” or “supportive” role in the classroom, few learners have had opportunities to acquire these advanced “academic” skills, conceptual understanding and cognitive processes in their home language. In short, many learners in the Philippines have not had opportunities to develop academically and cognitively though the

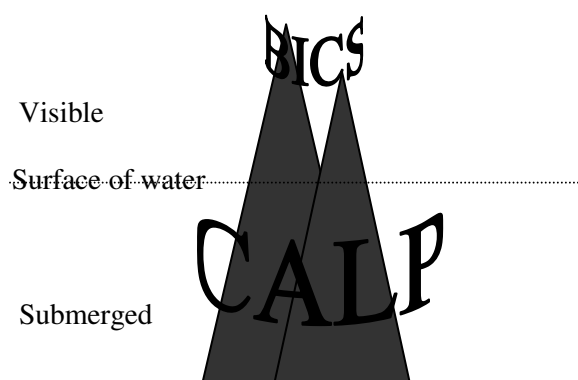
medium of any language and are therefore at a decisive disadvantage in terms of academic achievement.

The following paper begins with a short overview of two useful models developed by Jim Cummins (Cummins, 1984). These models are followed by discussion of three content-based curricular approaches which may be relevant to the Philippines as it struggles to overcome the challenge of helping student acquiring CALP. One of these approaches, “Sheltered Content”, is selected as a potentially effective. A course in “Civic Educational” is used to illustrate how a “Sheltered Content” approach can be used to help students acquire CALP. The paper concludes with an overview of how teachers and instructors from 7 different regions from across the Philippines reacted to the proposal of using a “Sheltered Content” approach to Civics Educational as a way of developing learners academic language skills and corresponding cognitively skills. Recommended readings and resources for developing Civic-Based sheltered language courses are provided in a appendix.

## II. CUMMINS’ “ICEBERG” AND “QUADRANT MODELS”

The “Iceberg” and model (Cummins, 1984) illustrates the distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skill (BICS) which tends to be readily observable (thereby resting above the surface of the water) and the submerged Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP).

**Figure A: Iceberg Model**



BICS is everyday language. It consists of language used to communicate with friends and family. It is generally the language used at home, in the office, in restaurants and bars and generally in everyday life. It is the language one uses to express one’s feelings, to recant personal experiences and the express opinions. It is the language used in everything from flirting to telling jokes. In most foreign language learning settings, acquisition of BICS is the primary, if not exclusive, language learning objective.

However, in English second language settings like the Philippines in which English is used as a medium of instruction, learners are expected to learn curricular content, to analyse and synthesize input, critique presentations and publications, process and use academic texts, identify writer biases and develop and support perspectives in the English Language. These abilities go beyond the BICS into the realm CALP. They are generally cognitively challenging and often require the individual to learn or do something new. Unlike BICS, which can be found just about any life experience, from watching the TV to reading a popular novel, from chatting with a friend on the phone to going out a date, CALP is only commonly found in academic settings and therefore the responsibility to develop CALP depends very much on the schools.

The second model of great use here is the “Quadrant Model” (Cummins, 1984). The model (see figure B below) is based on two continua. The cognitive continuum concerns the degree of difficulty of the language input. Although sensitive to individual learner differences, language can broadly be perceived of as being more or less cognitively challenging. Clearly the language used to describe one’s weekend plans has a tendency of being less cognitively challenging than the language used to explain the rationale underlying U.S. East Asian policy in the 1960s. The context continuum concerns the degree to which context provides meaningful information to help the individual decipher the message. Contexts can be internal or external. Internal contexts are those stemming from the experience and knowledge of the learner. So, for example, it is easier to process a text about a subject we are knowledgeable about than one which we have little or no background knowledge of. External contexts are cues and clues found in the environment surrounding the linguistic input. These could be in the form of pictures, charts, facial expressions, postures, tone of voice, physical objects, etc.

**Figure B: Cummins’ Quadrant Model**

<b>I</b> <b>Informal Language</b> <b>For Social</b> <b>Interaction</b>	<b>II</b> <b>Informal Language not</b> <b>Support by</b> <b>Contextual Cues</b>
<b>III</b> <b>Formal Academic</b> <b>Language Enriched with</b> <b>Contextual Cues (Internal</b> <b>and External)</b>	<b>IV</b> <b>Formal Academic</b> <b>Language without</b> <b>Contextual Cues</b>

Quadrant #1 consists of cognitively easy input presented in high context settings such as reading in a grocery store engaging in face to face conversation with close personal friends. Quadrant #2 consists of cognitively easy input presented in low context settings

such as engaging in a telephone conversation with a stranger about a routine issue or filling in forms or applications. Quadrant #3 consist of cognitively challenging input presented in high context setting such as studying pond ecology in a nature centre or investigating the American legal system by visiting courts and prisons. Quadrant #4 consists cognitively challenging input presented in a low context setting, such as listening to an academic lecture presented without visuals or taking a standardized exam (see Chamot and O' Malley, 1987 for further details). Of course, categorizing input varies according to the individuals involved and the nature of their own "internal contexts". It should also be noted that the quadrants are based on continua and not mutually exclusive categories and therefore, given the background of the individual (s) involved, input can be categories as "more" in one quadrant than another. The model is more useful for identifying trends than categorizing particular events.

### **III. LANGUAGE FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES, THEMATIC-TOPIC BASED AND SHELTERED CONTENT CURRICULAR APPROACHES**

Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) courses aim essentially at providing the language necessary for studying particular subject areas or fields. These courses are developed based on a systematic analysis of the language needs of learners in the identified field or subject area (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). So, for example, an LSP course for airline attendants will be very different from a course designed for international business persons or a courses for student preparing to study in a graduate program in engineering. These courses include subject-specific vocabulary, rhetorical and grammatical patterns, readings and functions commonly found in these subject areas. In some English for academic Purposes (EAP) setting, particularly in programs structured along the "adjunct model" (Brinton, Snow and Wesche, 1989), the language instructor bases his/her lessons on the curricular material used in the subject area courses and coordinates his/her efforts with subject areas instructors. In any case, the objectives of the ESP courses are to teach the register of a particular subject area or courses within that subject area. Although in practice, one can not teach the linguistic component in isolation from the concepts of the subject to be considered, LSP courses focus primarily on the language usage needs of the learners given the identified characteristics of the field/ subject area they are being prepared to function in.

Thematic-Topic Based programs can be organized around one or more topics. The selected topic (s) serve as the foundation upon which all subsequent language-learning tasks are developed. Because one topic is focused on for several lessons (or even throughout the entire course), the language used tends to be recycled, thereby hopefully facilitating the acquisition of the language. Although the thematic/topic based course do not aim to teach learners

about the topic per se, the nature of the language input and classroom discourse in large part are driven by the topics being used. In other words, the topic or theme provide a forum in which language is used and acquired.

“Sheltered Content” course are linguistically modified content course. They can be implemented by subject area instructors who are sensitive to the language abilities of their students and experienced in providing the non-native speakers of the language with contextual support so that language does not pose a barrier to the learning of the subject area (Brinton, Snow and Wesche, 1989). Alternatively, this course can be provided by language specialist who intimate with subject being taught. In cases where one individual both the subject-area and language learning/teaching expertise can not be found, such courses can be team taught by subject area and language learning specialists. The important issue here is that classroom discourse falls primarily into Cummin’s Quadrant #3 (Figure B above). CALP is acquired as learners work their way through curricular content in such “contextually enriched” settings.

#### **IV. SHELTERED CONTENT AND CIVICS/DEMOCRACY EDUCATION**

A course in civics was selected for illustrative purposes for several reasons. First, given the nature of history of the Philippines, particularly over the past 20 years, the issues facing civics/democracy educators appear to be most pertinent. Second, the United States Government (my employer) has set the promotion of the civics education and certain related values which it has posited as “universal” (such as freedom of expression and the pre-eminence of rule of law) as a high priority. Third, a course in civic lends itself to a clear demonstration of how specific aspects of CALP can readily be developed through a Sheltered Content approach. Fourth, there are already instructional materials available (see Appendix A) which can be use in adopting extant civics courses to meet the language learning needs of non-native English speakers or to develop new courses, given extant curricular guidelines, for teaching such content to non-native English speakers. Finally, to appeal of civics education is broader than many other subjects. It is more likely that one would find a language specialist with civics expertise or a civics education specialist with language learning/teaching expertise than it would be for a field such as mechanical engineering or ichthyology.

A “Sheltered English” approach was selected because it most clearly has content-learning as it first priority. The importance of teaching academic English language skills through relevant cognitively challenging curricular content is a high priority in the Philippine and it seemed that the Sheltered Content approach most closely corresponds with that society’s educational needs. The Sheltered approach can be readily adapted on a wide scale. Activities and tasks (outline below) which tend to fall in Quadrant 3 (see Figure B above) can be introduce to content area specialists and language specialists through intensive professional development program

accompanied by formal, regular follow-up in various forms including classroom observations, peer teaching experiences and action research projects.

## **V. THREE APPROACHES TO CIVICS**

Historically, civics education courses focused primarily on learning ABOUT governmental structures. Such “Content-Oriented” courses could include information about the constitutions of various countries, federal structures, relationship between executive and legislative branch, impeachment and vote of no confidence processes, the structures of judiciary, control of the military, the social welfare system, role of the government in the economy, regulatory bodies, etc. Learners would learn about the structure and processes of political system and the relationship between public sector institutions and the private sector and the individual.

A second broad category of civics education courses focuses more on developing attitudes of responsible, law abiding and committed citizens. The “attitudinal” or indoctrination approach is based on the belief that schools are there in part to inculcate certain values and attitudes among the youth so that the fundamentals of the system are carried forward into the future (Dewey, 1916). Attitudes vary considerably across cultures and societies but some of the “universal values” may include valuing and respecting the rule of law, the right of others who may be different in some way, a free and pluralistic media and an honest and uncorrupted civil service.

The third broad category of civics education courses focuses more on the skills and abilities one needs to function effectively in a society. This skill or “experiential” approach aims to equip learners with a certain set of abilities which are believed to be characteristic of the “ideal” citizen. These could include the ability of identify biases in the media, knowing how to use the legal system to protect one’s rights, knowing and exploiting special interest groups and lobbying organizations, writing petitions and making informed choices about which community to live in or whom to vote for.

## **VI. CIVICS EDUCATION ACTIVITIES/TASKS AND CORRESPONDING CALP ABILITIES**

Although any of the broad categories of civics curricula could be used for developing students’ CALP, I have found the experiential model the most conducive for providing the relevant opportunities for students to exercise their CALPs. Below is a chart consisting of five “experiential” activities, along with illustrations of some possible corresponding aspects of CALP which could be developed through such activities.

<b>Activity Type</b>	<b>Brief Activity Description</b>	<b>Some Possible Corresponding CALP</b>
<i>Debating controversial issues with clearly distinguishable sides</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have learners conduct research or read relevant texts about the issue in question and the different sides of the debate</li> <li>- Groups prepare their debate strategy. Each group member should have a role</li> <li>- Criteria for judging debate should be clear and published/ distributed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conducting research</li> <li>- Supporting positions w/ evidence</li> <li>- Identifying assumptions and weakness in arguments</li> <li>- Organizing presentations in a convincing manner</li> </ul>
<i>Analysis and discussion of cases in which individual liberties may be limited for the “good of society”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Present a series of controversial individual freedom cases</li> <li>- Groups discuss cases in which the freedom of an individual can be limited and provide rationale</li> <li>- Identify reasons why one might oppose such limitations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Negotiation of terms and values with partners</li> <li>- Expressing one’s rationale</li> <li>- Identifying opinions which differ from one’s own and assessing those opinions and the underlying rationales</li> </ul>
<i>Working about a solution to a societal problem</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify and present information about a real societal problem (e.g. violence in public schools)</li> <li>- Provide background reading which gives learners various perspectives on the causes and possible solutions</li> <li>- Have groups work out a “best” solution and provide rationale-share w/class</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highlighting relevant information from readings</li> <li>- Critical reading skills (e.g. ability to analyse different position/opinions)</li> <li>- Comparing and contrasting different perspectives</li> </ul>
<i>Community activism aimed at addressing a problem facing the immediate community</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify a community problem (e.g. constructing a shopping centre on the site of a public park)</li> <li>- Have students research the respective responsibilities of community leaders and look for similar cases elsewhere</li> <li>- Select mechanisms to address the problem (e.g. petitions, demonstrations, boycotts, letters) and carry them out</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research skills (e.g. information about who is in power, relationship, etc.)</li> <li>- Decision making (who to address and how)</li> <li>- Preparing a multiple step strategy for addressing the problem with contingency plans</li> </ul>
<i>Role Play followed by Analysis of critical legal decisions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presentation of background information on a critical legal case</li> <li>- Class “acts out” (role play) court cases) with judge, jury, defence lawyers, prosecutors, witnesses, etc.)</li> <li>- Provide groups with judges’ decisions for analysis and discussion</li> <li>- Groups relate their own positions to those of the justices in the case</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Legal vocabulary and court-specific registers</li> <li>- Speaking skills-functions like convincing, arguing, pleading, negotiating (within jury) etc.</li> <li>- Analysis of decision and comparison to own opinions and beliefs</li> </ul>

Debating, analysing, judging, expressing opinions, researching, supporting one's position, actively promoting one's public agendas, negotiating, appealing, reading critically and finding common ground are all skills and abilities needed by people living in democratic societies and therefore are part of an experiential civics curriculum. These same skills all fall within the domain of CALP. By teaching civics, one provides learners with relevant experiences to develop their CALP-skills which can readily be transferred to other subject areas.

## VII. TEACHER REACTIONS TO TEACHING SHELTERED "CIVICS" CONTENT COURSES

Over the years, I have provide introductions to many secondary and tertiary level teachers about the importance of teaching CALP in ESL settings like the Philippines and how civics courses tend to lend themselves to such instructions. Some of the most common reactions are summarized below, along with summaries of my responses.

1. I'm a language teacher and know precious little about civics OR I'm a civics teacher and I know precious little about teaching language.

*Response:* Expertise in both language teaching and the subject at hand is necessary. Subject area teachers can be provided with courses and other forms of professional support so that they can gain the requisite familiarity with language teaching. Similarly, language teachers could receive instruction in the subject area (e.g. civics) so that they can gain the requisite familiarity with the subject. Alternatively, a language teacher and civics teacher can team teach the subject.

2. The content of civics is culturally biased (in a pro-Western direction). It often clashes with our cultural mores and ways of thinking. Civics education, as it is presently constituted, can be seen as a form of cultural imperialism. Therefore it is not a good choice for teaching advanced language skills.

*Response:* Most of those working in the field of civics education are "universalists" in that they believe that certain values transfer across cultures and societies and therefore hold true, at least in some form, for everybody. It is believed that different societies and cultures will "adapt" these universals in culturally appropriate ways. Although the core values remain the same, the specific substance and form of the courses varies considerably across culture and societies.

3. Our civics courses tend to be very much geared toward learning about political and social systems and involves the learning of facts and figures. This does not naturally lend itself to the development of students' CALP. How can I deal with the extant materials, curriculum and program in the field of civics?

*Response:* Adapting content-oriented courses is a difficult but by no means impossible task. All of the content found in such courses can be covered in a more hands on, experiential



fashion which is more conducive toward the development of CALP. Expertise in course adaptation and development and corresponding teacher training may be needed.

4. I have 50 students per class and insufficient time to deal with of any of this. I would like to know how practical a “civics for language development course” is given my situation?

*Response:* The effect of such a program would be much more limited given such constructions. The standard response is to use group formations as often as possible. Initially, this can be significant managerial headache. However, overtime, students can become habituated to working in groups and do so effectively. This only partially mitigates the negative impact of the large classes and little time. In the end, policy makers must recognize that unless resources are spent to reduce class size, all other educational reform efforts will have little if any impact.

## VII. CONCLUSION

This paper began by distinguishing between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Communicative Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and asserting that it is the primary duty of schools to develop the later. Two continua (cognitively less demanding to more demanding and contextually enriched-contextually reduced) were introduced and argument was made for carrying out more instruction in Quadrant 3 (cognitively demanding, contextually enriched). Then three curricular approaches to content-based programs were discussed and the Sheltered Approach was selected as the most appropriate given the needs of learners in Philippines. After justifying the selection of civics over other curricular subject for illustrative purposes, three approaches to civics education programs were reviewed and the “experiential” approach was selected as the one which most readily lends itself to teaching CALP. Then given the selections (i.e. Sheltered-Content, Experiential approach of Civics), five concrete activities were outlined and corresponding CALP objectives were highlighted. Finally, reservations commonly raised by classroom teachers were presented and briefly addressed.

I do not claim that the Sheltered-Content” approach is the only way of addressing the CALP learning needs of Filipino students. I selected it because in my mind’s eye, it most clearly makes the critical connection between CALP and curricular content. I do not believe that civics is the only or even the best subject to use in developing CALP. In fact, I believe that all subjects should be taught with dual foci-CALP development and curricular content acquisition and that the two merge into one and the same. Finally, I do not claim that the experiential approach to civics or any other subject area is the only or best approach. I believe, however, that approaches should be balanced and that application of knowledge and understandings is critical for learning and retention of that which was learned. Knowledge is power and our intention, I believe, is to give as much of

this sort of power to the learners-so that they do not seek power via other means.

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