

# **BLENDING CONTENT-BASED INSTRUCTION AND COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN A LANGUAGE CLASSROOM**

**Maria Baida (Zhytomyr, Ukraine)**

The purpose of the article is to present an instructional unit developed while auditing English for Academic Purposes (EAP) class at the TESOL department of California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA) during the author's internship as a Fulbright visiting student researcher.

The goal of the unit is to explore different aspects of American culture through the prism of California and Los Angeles. The author, as well as many other Ukrainians, grew up watching American TV-Shows, movies, cartoons. The imaginary world that was shown on a silver screen showed various peculiarities of American culture and lifestyle. Not surprising that when a person came to California it stroke her as a heart of where it all came from, and became an inspiration to create an educational unit embracing topics like Art, Movies, Technology, Wealth, Poverty, and which would have a cultural background of California.

The unit is composed of content area of California and mentioned above subtopics. It is a try to blend Content Based Instruction (CBI), Cooperative Learning (CL) methodology (face-to-face CL and online CL), media (e.g. text, audio, video) and different time-scales (e.g. asynchronous, synchronous). This unit is designed for high intermediate level students. It aims at developing reading, listening skills and integrates writing into the content of the theme. It also aims at developing critical thinking skills through cooperative problem solving tasks. One of the key principles of CBI is the usage of authentic texts (Brinton, 1997) which are taken from the sources that ESL/EFL students may come across in everyday life. In accordance with this principle the unit consists of authentic texts (online magazine articles, blog publications), audio (podcasts, e.g. "This American Life") and videos ("TED talks", content-related movies). There are 5 lessons in it; each of the lesson suggests a certain topic and a set of activities developed in accordance with CL principles concerning organization of group work (face-to-face promotive interaction, interdependence, individual

accountability, social skills, group processing) (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith, 1998). Different techniques which are used in the unit reflect CBI and CL principle of involvement into all phases of learning process (Brinton, 1997). The activities involve usage of cooperative pair and group work, jigsaw activities, cooperative role-play, cooperative debates, process writing, cooperative problem solving etc. The unit is full of visuals and graphic organizers like: charts and flowcharts, organizers, checklists, idea web, Venn and chain diagrams. The element of blended learning is included in the unit in the form of home assignments in which students have to arrange meetings of their base cooperative groups and complete assignments both asynchronous and synchronous, using available online resources, such as chats, Google docs, Skype and social networks.

All in all, the unit is a result of the knowledge received in auditing classes at TESOL department and cultural experience gained within the Fulbright program. It highlights some of the topical problems in American society from the author's point of view. Elements of the suggested unit might be used as a basis for developing a course for methods of language-teachers' training.

## **References**

1. Brinton, D. Content-based Instruction (2003). In D. Nunan (ed.), *Practical English Language Teaching*, pp.199- 224. Singapore: McGraw-Hill.
2. Roseth, C., Akcaoglu, M., Zellner, A. (2013). Blending Synchronous Face-to-face and Computer-Supported Cooperative Learning in a Hybrid Doctoral Seminar. *TechTrends*, 57(3), pp 54-59