

PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT, TAKE YOUR BREATH

Sabriye Şener*, Ayten Çokçalışkan**

ABSTRACT

This activity was carried out at a state school in Muğla. In total, 14 seventh grade students (including 6 males, 8 females), with an average age of 13, participated in the activity. It took two class hours to complete the whole activity. The aim of the study was to make the students be aware of environmental issues, understand the environment and its problems related to human beings, and the precautions to be taken related to environmental issues. The activity was parallel with the topical content of the subject areas in the curriculum of the Turkish Ministry of National Education. A theme-based syllabus for a lesson was designed for the students by the researchers. At the end of the study, it was observed that students were aware of the environmental issues, global warming, and pollution. The output of this study was a poster and a campaign for recycling and energy saving.

Keywords: Environmental education, a theme-based teaching, environmental issues.

Makale Hakkında:

Gönderim Tarihi: 23.03.2016

Kabul Tarihi: 20.05.2016

Elektronik Yayın Tarihi: 25.05.2016

* Yrd. Doç. Dr., Muğla Sıtkı Koçman Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi , Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümü, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı , sabriyesener@mu.edu.tr

** Yüksek Lisans Öğrencisi, Muğla Sıtkı Koçman Üniversitesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı, ayten_88_demirel@windowslive.com

INTRODUCTION

What is Content – Based Instruction?

Content – based instruction (CBI) is an approach used in second language learning where teaching is organized around the content or information that students can acquire, rather than around a linguistic or other syllabus (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In other words, in CBI there is an integration of the language learning with the learning of the content concurrently. According to Brinton et al. (1989) theme – based teaching is one of the CBI teaching models that practitioners can use. Some of the most common models, implemented by increasing numbers of second and foreign language educators worldwide, include sheltered content courses, adjunct courses, theme-based and area studies modules, Language for Special Purposes (LSP), discipline-based instruction, and foreign languages across the curriculum (FLAC) (Stryker & Leaver, 1997).

What is Theme-based Teaching?

“Theme-based teaching is one of the approaches within the broader model of content-based instruction in which the emphasis is on exposing students to a highly contextualized second language environment by using the subject matter as the content of language learning” (Wesche & Skehan, 2002). Moon (2000); also states that theme-based teaching refers to designing a lesson by organizing it around a topic. Its main aim is for learners to acquire second language competence by studying on particular topic activities (Brinton et al., 1989). There are four major underlying principles of second language teaching in theme-based instruction identified by Brown (2001). They are automaticity, meaningful learning, intrinsic motivation and communicative competence.

The basic characteristics of theme-based instruction in second language teaching is that teaching, activities and materials used in classroom activities are organized around a specific theme. Theme based units are a way for teaching a range of skills and content by integrating curriculum areas around a topic. This integration of theme-based instruction derives from general primary education and has been practiced since the 1960s in UK primary classrooms, in which

students are with the same teacher all day (Cameron, 2001). In theme-based teaching, the teachers’ only aim is not to teach every topic with details but to help the learner use the topic to learn the certain aspects of the language (Bourke, 2006, as cited in Gürsoy, and Arıkan, 2012).

Since people learn better when the topic addresses their needs, theme-based teaching has several advantages for learners. Cameron (2001) indicates that theme-based teaching provides learners motivation and meaningful use of the language. Similarly, the study carried out by Alpekin et al. (2008) revealed that theme-based teaching provided progressed motivation in addition to improved learning because of the integration of language. Besides, the language and content are selected carefully, which enables learners to have meaningful, purposeful, and enjoyable experience. Vocabulary learning is also an important advantage of theme-based language teaching. Cameron (2001) claims that new vocabulary items can easily be learned because themes can provide a meaningful context for understanding, and also the natural use of a wide range of discourse types, both written and spoken. Ausubel (1963) also supports that meaningful learning occurs when new information can be related to learners’ former knowledge and existing cognitive structures. According to this knowledge, theme-based approach is useful in this situation. The most beneficial advantage of this approach is that teachers can relate all the areas in the curriculum. As a result, learners will use real language to talk about the topic and this will be more communicative and meaningful for learners. It offers more opportunities for using the target language in different contexts. Brown (2001) states that this method is practical and promotes effective language learning. Learners enjoy dealing with themes. Dealing with themes they love helps learners to develop critical thinking skills (Gürsoy & Arıkan, 2012).

The Aim of This Study

In our country, teaching English as a second language is a very demanding task for language teachers. Teachers have had lots of difficulty in teaching language. First of all, students do not have a need to learn English because they can perfectly communicate in their mother tongue (Gürsoy & Arıkan, 2012).

We should provide concrete reasons for students to learn a foreign language. The reasons we have mentioned above show that, theme-based teaching enables teachers perfect way to teach English. In accordance with this situation, education organizations in Turkey permanently develop because of their environment and their functions they undertake (Terzi, 2011). The Turkish Ministry of National Education has adopted constructivist educational approach in Turkish Education System in the whole country since 2005 – 2006 educational year. Since then, the Turkish educational system has changed and especially language teaching has undertaken prominent role. This educational system emphasizes learning, not teaching. It encourages learners' autonomy. Learners are responsible for their learning. They develop awareness and autonomy, set goals for learning, use strategies, accept the complexity of life, are respectful to multiple perspectives and world – views, and they are open minded, task oriented, process oriented, realistic, scientific, and holistic. Related with this educational system, the researchers have designed a theme-based syllabus, with the belief that such a syllabus would be more beneficial. There are also some research studies which support this view. For example; in 2007, Alptekin et. al. conducted a study and showed that primary school children who received a theme-based syllabus outperformed the others who followed the Turkish Ministry of National Education's regular curriculum for fourth grades.

In this activity, a theme-based syllabus for a lesson was designed for the seventh grade students. This lesson was related to environmental education. It was parallel with the topical content of subject areas in the curriculum of the Turkish Ministry of National Education. The aim of the study was to make the students be aware of environmental issues, understand the environment and its problems related to human beings, and think about the precautions to be taken related to environmental issues. The topics were also paralel with the seventh grade's curriculum, unit 4 Wild Animals, and unit 9 Environment.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTIVITY

This activity was carried out at a secondary school in Muğla during the second term of 2015-2016 academic year. The aim of the study was in paralel with the curriculum: "Students will be able to prepare a poster showing what happens if we do or do not take precautions to protect our world."

"Students will be able to relate the new information to visual concepts."

There were 14 students (including 6 males, 8 females) in the class. They were all seventh grade students. The average age of the students was 13. The examples of the activities were developed from the activities which were suggested by Gürsoy (2012). The activity was conducted in two lessons' hours (40 min + 40 min) and during the break (10 min). There was a smart board in the class and this enabled us to show the visual materials easily. In the process of the activity, photos were taken without disturbing the students.

Material

- A video related with pollution and global warming
(ex:http://www.climatechangeeducation.org/videos/youtube/home_sweet.html)
- A video related with recycling
(<http://www.wondergrovelearn.com/lesson/recycle-to-help-the-earth/>)
- Four big boxes
- Colorful cartons and papers
- Scissors
- Glues
- Crayons

At the beginning of the activity, teacher explained the lesson and aims of the activity. The students watched a video related to air pollution and global warming. They watched the video twice. The video took 2 minutes. They liked it very much because it was funny, interesting and educational. Videos are chosen based on the theme on syllabus of English for the seventh grade students and chosen in form of cartoon video in order to make the students being more interested in teaching-learning process. The great value of video lies in its combination of sounds, images, and sometimes

text in the form of subtitles, together with the sociocultural information about habits, traditions, culture, etc. All this makes it a very comprehensible tool for teaching vocabulary to foreign language students.



Photo 1. *The First Video Watched by the Students*

After watching it, they were asked what they understood from the video, how they felt, and the main point in the video. They said that they felt sorry for the world, and they were upset because of pollution. They also expressed that unfortunately there were same situations in their environment, and they realized it after they had watched the video. After this small discussion, brainstorming activity began. Teacher wanted the students to tell what they thought first related to the video and she wrote them on the board. Water pollution, global warming, air pollution, soil pollution, garbage, dry, and deforestation were the examples of students' answers. This activity took almost 6 minutes.

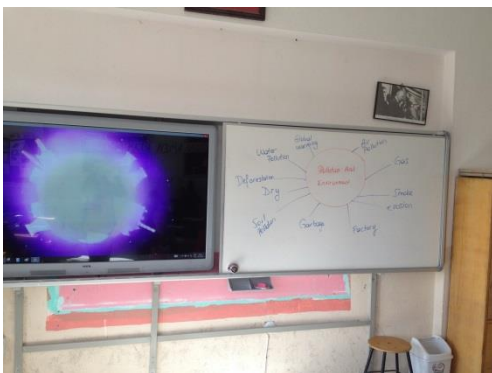


Photo 2. *Brainstorming Activity*

After this activity, students were divided into three groups and learning in station technique was applied. The technique was introduced to the students. Because the number of the students was limited, the small version of this technique was applied. Teacher gave the

students a piece of carton, which was the station and each group would make something on this piece of carton. Teacher explained the process to the students. The first group drew a picture of polluted world. It took 10 minutes. While drawing pictures, students talked about the reasons for pollution and global warming. In this process students realized that our world were getting more polluted. They said that they realized this truth and they should have realized it before. After that the second group drew a picture of unpolluted world. They also discussed about the ways of protecting the environment, and the precautions that could be taken in order to prevent pollution. They found interesting ideas. Starting a campaign for recycling, preparing some warning notes about global warming, and handing them out were the examples of their ideas. It took 12 minutes. The third group found a slogan and wrote on the carton: "Protect your environment, take your breath!" It also took 8 minutes.

When all students finished the activity, they hung the poster on the wall. They talked about the activity. They told their feelings. They were proud of themselves because they had done something for our world. They said that they realized the issues of pollution and global warming. Since they hung the poster on the school corridor, the other students in the school were also interested in the issue. They also gave some information about the activity they had done to other students.



Photo 3. *The First Group Drew a Picture*



Photo 4. The Second Group Drew a Picture



Photo 5. The Third Group Wrote the Slogan



Photo 6. The Poster was Hung on the Wall.

After the break, the second activity started. The teacher again introduced the process. The topic was recycling. The students watched a video about recycling. It took 3 minutes. The students liked it very much because it was a cartoon and it was suitable for their age. After watching the video, the students discussed it. Teachers asked some questions about it: “What do you think about recycling?”, “What are the advantages of the recycling?, etc.



Photo 7. Students Watched a Video about Recycling

After finishing this activity, students were divided into 4 groups. The teacher explained the process and gave 4 big boxes to each group. They covered the boxes and wrote on each of the boxes ‘Paper, Glass, Metal, and Plastic.’ Then, they talked about 3 R’s (Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle). It took 10 minutes. They also prepared a poster related to recycling. It took them also 5 minutes to complete the activity.



Photo 8. Students Prepared the Boxes.

After the boxes were prepared, students drew pictures of do’s and dont’s of energy saving in the lesson and pasted them on the appropriate places at school during the break time. Drawing the pictures took them 10 minutes, and pasting the pictures lasted 6 minutes. The students liked this activity very much and they said that they felt themselves very responsible for environment. They enjoyed this part most. They expressed that they were happy since they were doing something in order to make contribution to save the environment.



Photo 9. Students Pasted the Pictures.



Photo 12. The Campaign Started by the Students

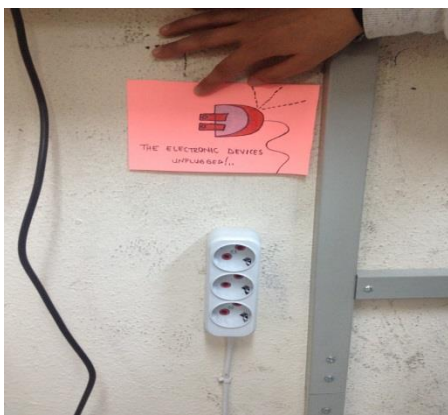


Photo 10. Students Pasted the Pictures.

At the end of the activity, students prepared a chart for themselves. The chart indicated that the times that the tap/lights left on/off, the electronic devices unplugged. They would observe themselves in a week time and put a tick or cross for their actions. This activity took them 6 minutes to complete. In this activity, students said that they would be objective. They also stated that they enjoyed this chart because this chart would enable them to observe themselves and realize what they had done for the environment.



Photo 11. Students Pasted the Pictures.

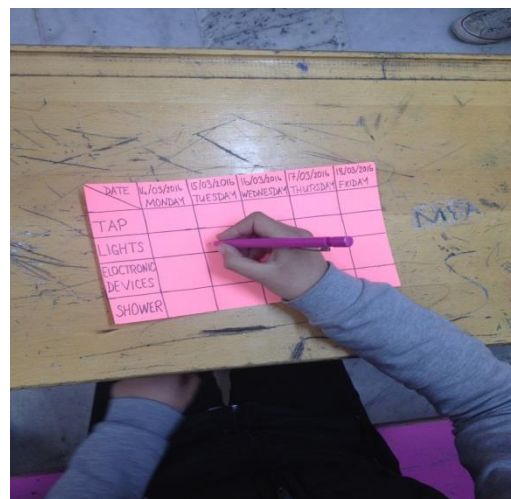


Photo 13. Students Prepared the Chart.

The students started a campaign in the school and created a recycling corner on the first floor's corridor. All the students in the school were willing to take part in this campaign. They said that they also wanted to start a campaign in their village and they wanted to raise the awareness about this subject. They were so excited and enthusiastic.

The last step of this activity was to complete this chart. All students were happy because of taking part in this environmental activity.

RESULTS AND SUGGESTIONS

The activity which was applied with the seventh grade's students was also in their curriculum. However, we designed a theme-based syllabus and we taught the lesson according to this syllabus. In the process of the activity students' relationship with each other was perfect. Especially, in the group activities, the communication was very good. The groups' ideas were creative. Especially in the finding slogan activity, they found different and interesting ideas.

Even if there were not lots of students, it was necessary for the teacher to balance the amount of the task students had. Every student had the same amount of the task. Teacher was very careful about giving directions. All directions were given in English but sometimes unfortunately mother tongue was used.

The most important issue in this activity was that all students were actively engaged in the activities. Every student had responsibility in the task and they all were willing to do this task. The other teachers in the school also appreciated the activity and they stated that it was very important and trendy topic in today's world.

After the activity, a small conversation was made. Students said that it was the most

interesting lesson they had ever had, they liked the topic very much, they also helped each other in the group activities and they shared the tasks and it made the activity funnier. At the end of the activity, the other students of the school said that they all wanted to take part in an activity like this and they were all eager to perform activities like this.

As it was seen in this activity, students enjoyed it very much, learnt subjects easily, so it could be suggested that these types of activities could be applied in other lessons such as Science, Social Sciences, etc. For example this activity could be associated to Science lesson. The themes we used were also in Science lesson curriculum. Students said that they were familiar with the topics because they had learnt them in their Science lesson

The limitation of the activity was that there was limited number of students in the class. It is suggested that this activity should be with larger groups.

REFERENCES

- Alptekin, C., Erçetin, G., & Bayyurt Y. (2007): The effectiveness of a theme-based syllabus for young L2 learners. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 28(1), 1-17.
- Ausubel, D. (1963). *The psychology of meaningful verbal learning*. New York: Grune & Stratton.
- Brinton, D. M., Snow, M. A., & Wesche, M. B. (1989). *Content-based second language instruction*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle Publishers.
- Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: an interactive approach to language pedagogy 2nd edition*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.
- Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching languages to young learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gürsoy, E. (2012). Theme-based teaching: environmental education. In Gürsoy, E. & Arkan, A. (Eds.) *Teaching English to young learners: an activity-based guide for prospective teachers*. (pp. 75-86). Ankara: Eğitimciler Yayınları.
- Moon, J. (2000). *Children learning english*. Macmillan Heinemann English Language Teaching. Oxford
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language*

- teaching (2nd ed.)*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Stryker, S. B., & Leaver, B. L. (Eds.). (1997). *Content-based instruction in foreign language education: Models and methods*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Wesche, M.B., & Skehan, P. (2002). Communicative, task-based, and content-based language instruction. In R.B. Kaplan (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of applied linguistics* (pp. 207–228). New York, N.Y: Oxford University Press.
- Terzi, Ç. (2011). Türk Eğitim Sistemi'nde okulların örgüt ve yönetim yapısı ile yapılandırmacı eğitim yaklaşımı arasındaki ilişkinin çözümlenmesi. *Anadolu Journal of Educational Sciences International*, 1(1).