

***17 Students can learn both language and academic content (for example, science and history) simultaneously in classes where the subject matter is taught in their second language***

The advantages of content-based instruction are numerous. Motivation is increased when the material that is used for language teaching has an inherent value to the students. That is, it creates a genuine, immediate need to learn the language. Content-based instruction is usually associated with the opportunity to spend more time in contact with the language, without losing out on instruction in other subject matter. The range of vocabulary and language structure that students encounter in learning academic subjects is more varied than that which is typically available in foreign language classes.

Research has confirmed that students in content-based and immersion classes develop comprehension skills, vocabulary, and general communicative competence in the new language. Teachers and researchers have also found, however, that the ability to understand the content and to function in classroom interaction does not ensure that students will continue to improve in certain aspects of their second language, especially in areas of accuracy on language features that do not usually interfere with meaning. Thus, for example, students can spend years in French immersion without achieving accuracy in marking nouns for gender or verbs for tense. Experimental studies in which an element of form-focused instruction was added to the content-based instruction have shown that, with guidance, students can improve in these areas as well. Both students and teachers need to keep in mind that content-based language teaching is also language teaching.

Source:

Lightbown, P., & Spada, P. (2006). *How Languages Are Learned* (3rd ed.). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press. [pp. 193-194]