Sustained Content Language Teaching: Insights from an ESL and an EFL Course

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ABSTRACT

Instructional settings (English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL)) may provide different opportunities for learners' meaningful language use. This qualitative study was designed to shed light on this issue. The data included multiple sources collected from a sustained content gastronomy language course taught in an American ESL and a Taiwanese EFL context. Findings revealed that various factors (e.g., themes, environment, and learners) contributed to learners from both contexts meeting course goals. The findings further indicate that it is not the ESL/EFL context but instead using a sustained content language teaching approach that incorporates theme-based instruction and dynamic units that ensures learners are provided opportunities for meaningful and purposeful language use.

1. INTRODUCTION

While there is a long history in western education of language instruction being integrated into content instruction (e.g., Mohan, 1986; Salsbury, 2012), this integration has only recently started to gain traction in certain Asian contexts (e.g., Beaudin, 2022; Chung & Lo, 2022;

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Yang & Yang, 2022). All instructional approaches that combine language and content can be categorized under the umbrella term content-based instruction (Stoller, 2008). Countries have adopted various modes or subtypes of content-based instruction in their respective pedagogical programs: examples include the French immersion programs in Canada (Cummins, 1998), the content and language integrated learning programs in Europe (Cenoz, 2015), and the bilingual curriculums in Hong Kong and Singapore (Lin & Man, 2009). Content-based instruction has been researched mainly by examining learners' language use or perceptions toward the instruction (Bellés-Calvera, 2018; Huang, 2011; Snow & Brinton, 1988); however, factors influencing the implementation of content-based instruction have received much less research attention.

1.1. Sustained Content Language Teaching

Among the different subtypes of content-based instruction, sustained content language teaching (SCLT) has gained popularity as it allows language learners to be immersed for an extended period of time in topics that are of interest to them (Brinton & Snow, 2017). If a theme is extended beyond one unit to encompass an entire course, the benefits for learners can be further increased. Murphy and Stoller (2001) posit that SCLT has an advantage over other more general theme-based language teaching modes because (1) there is a connection between all the lessons and thus avoidance of scattered topics or themes, (2) it simulates the content learning demands of subject courses, (3) students are engaged in learning more advanced content, academic vocabulary, and language skills, and (4) learners and teachers focus on both content and language development. Moreover, the language taught will be used and recycled throughout the course and students are ensured multiple opportunities to productively use the language they have learned receptively (Brinton, 2003). Shin (2007: 3) goes one step further, arguing that teachers should ensure that their SCLT courses are composed of "dynamic units" which "incorporate real-life situations, integrate all four language skills communicatively, encourage learner autonomy or learner choice, use experiential learning, [and] apply project-based learning".

1.2. Balancing Content and Language

When opting to plan a SCLT course, teachers should "choose a theme that is meaningful and relevant to students" as learners deserve to learn language that has "potential for real-life application" (Shin, 2007: 4). Curtain and Dahlberg (2004) offer up several issues that deserve consideration by teachers before selecting a theme, including motivation/interest/relevance to teachers and learners, connection to real life, relevance to students' age group, appeal to various learning styles, likelihood of authentic interaction, authentic language discourse, and connection to the target culture. A theme that centers around gastronomy, the practice of

choosing, cooking, and eating good food, is appropriate because English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners can appreciate the possibility of the need for interactions that involve communication about food; furthermore, global English Language Teaching (ELT) textbooks at all levels of education usually include a topic that centers on food (Shin, 2007). A theme with wide appeal, such as gastronomy, would be welcomed by teachers and learners alike as the SCLT theme allows teachers to simultaneously teach language and content. In other words, the content "is a carrier topic for the language being presented and practiced" (Brinton & Snow, 2017: 8). Moreover, teachers should be aware that they can either balance language and content or emphasize one over the other depending on their students' needs.

Students can acquire both content and language knowledge from studying gastronomy. Introducing gastronomy into the American English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom has promoted language learning through critical engagement in health-related texts and participation in dialogues about transnational identity and staying healthy (Santos, McClelland & Handley, 2011). Moreover, food as a theme has successfully assisted international postgraduate students in acclimatizing themselves to a new learning context, culture, and language (Brown, Edwards & Hartwell, 2010). Previous studies have also shown interactive learning opportunities are provided for students when they cook food (Liquori, Koch, Contento & Castle, 1998). Additionally, teaching food preparation has been shown to increase self-efficacy for cooking, reduce students' intake of unhealthy commercially prepared foods, and increase the frequency of students sharing what was learned in class with peers outside of class (Levy & Auld, 2004; Liquori, Koch, Contento & Castle, 1998). Furthermore, gastronomy provides the contextualized need for learners to acquire the vocabulary and structures needed to talk and write about food, meals, flavors, food descriptors, the process of food preparation/consumption, tools for food preparation, places for consumption, nutrition, and reasons for gathering together to eat (Jiang, 2000). It is also documented that language learning in work contexts, for example in professional kitchens, often occurs due to the interactions surrounding gastronomy (Pang, 2018). In this current study, we examined the factors that might influence a teacher's implementation of a SCLT course focusing on gastronomy in two different contexts.

1.3. ESL and EFL Contexts

A SCLT theme of gastronomy is motivating and relevant to a wide range of language learners. However, when teaching in an EFL context, learners still may not have clear, immediate needs for language learning to the same degree as learners in an ESL context. Although an appropriate SCLT theme such as gastronomy can appeal to learners regardless of the instructional context, language teachers must still consider the challenges faced by EFL students. It may be necessary for EFL teachers to highlight the real-life applications for the

language learning goals set for a course. While there is some presence of food topics in the ELT classroom in the form of textbook units that focus on topics such as fast food or eating abroad, topics are dealt with superficially and the eating of food may even be banned by some language instructors.

Therefore, unlike previous studies that examined the effect of the ESL and EFL contexts on linguistic development alone (DeKeyser, 2007), the present case study aimed to uncover the factors that were considered in implementing a SCLT course focusing on gastronomy in both an ESL and an EFL context. We observed the teacher participant's implementation of and reflections on his teaching of an English course on gastronomy in two different contexts over an extended period of time. The study also investigated how such factors were helpful in meeting the students' goals of an English language course implemented in both an ESL and EFL context. The following research question was proposed to guide the current investigation:

> Which factors are considered by a teacher when adopting a sustained content language teaching instructional approach in ESL and EFL contexts?

2. METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative research design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to investigate the factors influencing the implementation of a SCLT course focusing on gastronomy. It was hoped to gain some in-depth insights into the opportunities for meaningful language use in two different contexts, namely an ESL course in America and an EFL course in Taiwan. Both courses focused on the same theme, gastronomy, sustained throughout the course.

2.1. Research Contexts

The study was conducted at one English language center in the USA (ESL) and one Junior College in Taiwan (EFL). The two courses were taught by the same teacher. The ESL course was taught first, followed by the EFL course. More detailed information about the two teaching contexts is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. ESL and EFL Research Contexts.

	ESL (USA)	EFL (Taiwan)
Institution	English Language Center (Non-Credit Course)	Junior College (Elective Credit Course)
Time	1 hour 4 days a week for 9 weeks (36 hours total)	3 hours 1 day a week for 18 weeks (54 hours total)
Course type	Sustained Content Language Teaching	

Theme	Gastronomy
Course goals	**Content knowledge** and **skills**
	Familiarize oneself with English recipes
	Know how to prepare typical American dishes
	Create a recipe booklet[1]
	Language knowledge and **skills**
	Use listening and reading skills
	Give an informal presentation
	Orally communicate in everyday situations
Course objectives	By the end of the course students will:
	1. Demonstrate the ability to use small talk by having a ten-minute conversation with at least three classmates during a potluck[2] with the instructor present.
	2. Show knowledge of the five basic recipe parts by labeling the parts on a handout with 100% accuracy.
	3. Prove their knowledge of the origins of three common American dishes by writing a 150-word summary of each origin with 80% accuracy in grammar and 90% accuracy in historical facts.
	4. Demonstrate an ability to follow verbal directions by responding to the instructor's commands while preparing a dish in class with 90% accuracy.
	5. Demonstrate an ability to follow written directions by presenting two dishes for each of the three class potlucks with 80% accuracy in appearance and taste.
	6. Prove their ability to take notes by writing down recipe information while viewing a 30-minute cooking show with 80% accuracy in the information.
	7. Demonstrate an ability to give a 10-minute presentation by introducing two dishes prepared for one of the class potlucks with 90% accuracy according to the rubric.
	8. Prove their ability to scan by circling each appearance of a target word in a 300-word article in 3 ½ minutes with 95% accuracy.
	9. Prove their ability to skim by writing the main idea of a 300-word article in 8 minutes with 90% accuracy in content.
	10. Prove their ability to read closely by preparing a dish of food based on a recipe with 100% accuracy.
	11. Demonstrate the ability to write a recipe by translating a recipe for a dish from their culture with 100% accuracy in American recipe format and 80% accuracy in English grammar.
	12. Demonstrate knowledge of American recipe patterns by compiling a local cuisine recipe booklet in English with 80% accuracy in

	grammar and 100% accuracy in format.	
Language skills	Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Vocabulary	Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Vocabulary, Translation
Academic skills	Academic Reading	
Facilities	Kitchen with stove (range and oven) and microwave always available	No kitchen but portable toaster oven, microwave, and gas burner (limited availability)
Teaching materials	Cookbooks, cooking utensils, ingredients, teacher-developed course materials (readings, videos, exercises)	
	None	PowerPoint presentations

2.2. Participants

The teacher participant was a male native speaker of English in his late 20s with a master's degree in TESOL and 6 years of experience teaching academic English and English for general purposes courses in both ESL and EFL contexts. He held several beliefs about language teaching. For example, language skills and content should be integrated, language learning occurs through using the language for specific purposes and as a by-product of using the language, and language learning should not be mundane but instead enjoyable.

The student participants included five ESL and twelve EFL students. Regarding students' needs, the ESL students aimed to complete a six-level ESL program with the intention of graduating from the program with acceptable TOEFL scores for admission to study for various undergraduate degrees. The course taught in this study was of the second level out of six. The EFL group aimed to fulfil an English elective course requirement to prepare for studying Dentistry abroad, obtain an undergraduate degree in the English language or study a subject of interest in the evening after work. More detailed demographic information about the student participants is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Participant Information for ESL and EFL Contexts.

	ESL (USA)	EFL (Taiwan)
Student number	5	12
Students' ages	Two students in their 30s and others 19-21 years old	One student in their late 30s and others in early 20s
Students' L1/cultural background	Mixed (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai)	Chinese (with various cultural heritages)
Students' L2 proficiency	CEFR A2	CEFR A2-B2

2.3. Data Collection

The study employed multiple sources of data, including the teacher's reflection reports, syllabus and teaching materials, student course evaluations, and transcripts of videoed presentations and classroom observations. More details about the sources of data collected in the two contexts are described in Table 3.

Table 3. Data sources.

ESL (USA)	EFL (Taiwan)
- Teacher's reflection report (2,645 tokens) - Syllabus, teaching materials - Videoed local TESOL conference presentation given by teacher including questions and comments from primary and secondary ESOL teachers in the audience (5,676 token transcript)	- Teacher's reflection report (1,244 tokens) - Students' course evaluations—open- and closed-ended questionnaire items (4 out of 12) - Syllabus, teaching materials (including PowerPoint presentation files) - Videoed potluck presentations and classroom observations (12,152 token transcript)

2.4. Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using a two-cycle coding scheme developed by Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014). First, deductive coding used in conjunction with environment analysis and needs analysis constituted the first cycle of coding. Based on a framework encompassing both environment analysis and needs analysis, the data were analyzed by focusing on how learner, teacher, and situational factors placed positive or negative constraints on the implementation of the course in two different contexts.

Environment analysis is recognized as an important step in curriculum design and evaluation (Tessmer, 1990) that takes into consideration situational factors related to learners, teachers, and the teaching and learning situation of a course that may affect goals, content, teaching practice, and assessment (Nation & Macalister, 2010). Thus, environment analysis, also known as situational analysis (Richards, 2001), was part of the framework used by the researchers to evaluate the course taught in the two contexts.

The needs analysis focused on learners' learning background, including L2 proficiency, learning styles and strategies, learning beliefs, and motivations for learning. Examining the needs of the learners can also provide insights into why a course does or does not succeed (Brown, 2009).

During this first cycle of coding, the first and third author independently generated lists of codes based on the research question and the environment analysis and needs analysis. During this process, the data was read recursively and closely to identify chunks of data related to deductive codes –these were compared afterwards to ensure inter-rater reliability. The segmentation of the data during the first cycle of coding was aimed to uncover how the course goals were achieved in the two contexts. The inductive coding allowed for the potential of emergent codes. The following process was used to organize the codes. To start with, codes concerning the teacher, the learners, and the environments (i.e., contexts or spaces) were used to mark off relevant segments of data from the different data sources. For example, segments indicating that the learners' motivation was aroused to facilitate the development of L2 language skills and American cooking skills in the two contexts were separately marked and segmented. For example, the code "instrumental motivation that facilitates learning investment" was applied to the segmented excerpt taken from the teacher's ESL reflection report: "*a lot of their language growth had to do with their motivation…They were invested in the course because of their interest in its content but also because they knew it would help them to get ready for the university*". Likewise, the "integrated motivation inspires learning enjoyment" code was applied to the following excerpt from the teacher's reflection report: "*In the EFL class the students were mostly taking the class as an elective and most of the time enjoying themselves*".

The second coding cycle was used to group codes generated from the first cycle of coding into categories, themes, and patterns. Pattern coding was then used to modify, compare, and integrate similar categories to generate broader themes for discussion. For example, "instrumental motivation facilitates learning investment" and "integrated motivation inspires learning enjoyment" were categorized under the theme of "learners' motivation". The coding process is illustrated in Figure 1.
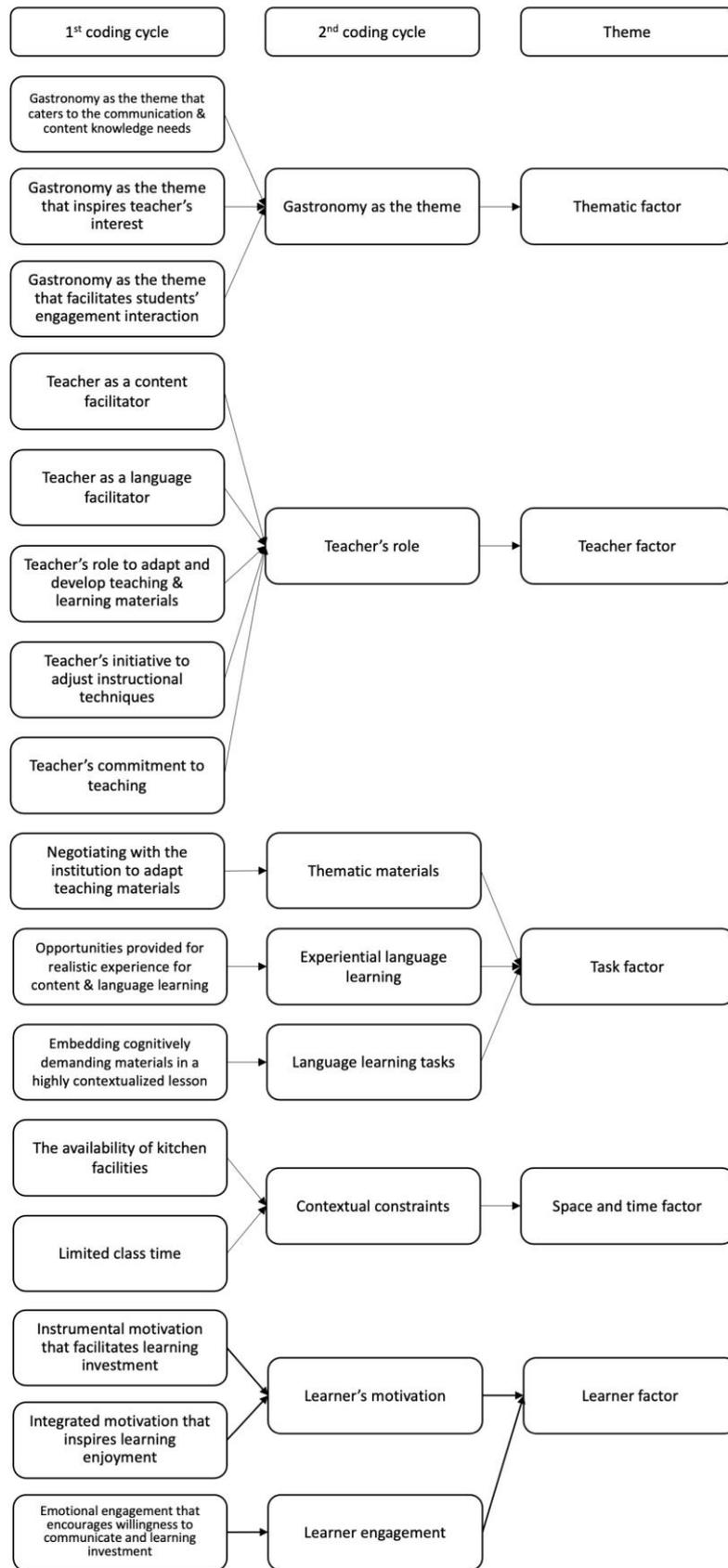
Figure 1. Coding process.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main aim of the study was to uncover which factors ESL and EFL teachers should consider when adopting a sustained content language teaching instructional approach. Regardless of the context, gastronomy was successfully implemented as the theme using the same teacher-developed materials. Learners from both contexts were reported as being equally engaged in the course, and the teacher successfully implemented experiential learning and provided extralinguistic cues to scaffold and facilitate content learning in the L2.

The data analysis uncovered five main factors that facilitated the teacher in adopting a SCLT instructional approach. The first factor concerns the selection of the course themes. The study showed that gastronomy as a theme was effectively implemented in both ESL and EFL contexts because it raised students' interest and engagement in learning activities. The second factor concerns the role of teachers in tailoring the students' study needs. The third factor is related to learning tasks. The study suggests that teaching materials need to be adapted to be context-specific, challenging enough but interesting and appropriate for students to ensure that a main theme can be sustained throughout the content language course. In addition, time and space factors should be considered, involving the adjustment of tasks due to contextual constraints. Finally, the involvement of the students in their learning, or learner factors, should be considered to ensure the success of a sustained content language course.

3.1. Thematic Factors

EFL and ESL teachers must take into consideration the appropriateness of a theme when adopting a sustained content language teaching approach. The theme of the course was instrumental in ensuring the course goals were realized. The course showed that gastronomy as the theme took care of both the communication needs and content knowledge needs of learners by arousing their interest and engagement in the course.

Unlike language for specific purposes courses, for example, where students usually have a similar motivation for course enrollment, students in a theme-based course can be considered as heterogeneous since they may have very different educational backgrounds and expectations. Thus, it is important for a teacher to select the content that does not only help induce interest and engagement but can also help to take care of students' linguistic needs (Brinton, Snow & Wesche, 1998). The data supports that the theme of gastronomy used in both the EFL and ESL course was able to arouse and engage learners' interests while also taking care of their language needs. The teacher recalled that the theme of the course did not hinder and instead encouraged communication. He emphasized in the reflection reports that "[f]ood is a common language for communication and [f]ood is the universal language".

Communication needs in terms of what learners actually use are decisive for determining the course content. As the teacher noted, students in the ESL class not only increased their content and cultural knowledge but also became active learners:

> *Language and culture cannot be separate....To have the students become involved in American culture, we hoped they were motivated to learn, so that's why we came up with this course....those were foods associated with the culture....when the students were reading these texts, they seemed more engaged, they seemed more interested, you know, talking with each other and even talking to me, and letting me ask questions.* (TESOL Conference Presentation Transcript)

Another reason for gastronomy to have been a successful theme for the course was due to the teacher's background knowledge about cooking. Brinton, Snow, and Wesche (1998) report that a language teacher that is teaching a theme-based course should feel confident about teaching the theme or be willing to invest time to increase their background knowledge about the theme. The teacher wrote in the ESL Reflection Report about how he had experiences in his life that encouraged him to take up cooking as a hobby which likely added to the effectiveness of gastronomy as a sustained theme:

> *At that time...I found creative ways to make interesting dishes in my kitchen. This got me interested in food, and I found myself cooking and baking things I had never considered attempting in the past...This further sparked my interest in food.*

The interaction initiated during the course not only contributed to students' knowledge and shared experiences but also facilitated their oral English practice. Often in English for general purposes classrooms, such as the context where the EFL course was taught, students are more reserved and rely on the teachers to "spoon-feed" language instruction, and there is little interaction between students (Shih & Reynolds, 2015). The theme of gastronomy, however, provided the contexts for the learners to work towards meeting the language goals (Brinton, Snow & Wesche, 1989), which is also evidenced in the teacher's reflection reports:

> *I recalled that a lot of speaking and language use happened around tables of food and people even would get together to cook food together. I found the process of cooking allowed for an authentic need and use for language.*

For example, the potluck presentation transcripts show that the learners were actively engaged, and even when their oral English skills were lacking, they still were willing to use English to ask questions to the student presenters. In the example below, Gina expressed her

concern about the presence of worms in broccoli and wanted to know how Calvin addressed this issue when he prepared the dish. The misunderstanding of Gina's question, rather than intimidating students from further communications, prompted clarifications.

> Gina: *How many times do we need to wash the broccoli? You know, the broccoli has a lot of worms inside.*
> Calvin: *Worms? But I don't think there are worms.*
> Gina: *No, broccoli has a lot of worms inside.*
> Calvin: *Then I guess you just let the water keep running on the broccoli.*
> Teacher: *I guess you bought fresh broccoli? Maybe you didn't have the opportunity to see worms?*
> Calvin: *If you can't buy fresh broccoli, you can just go to the supermarket and buy a frozen one. Or go to a salad bar to get one that's already treated for you.*
> Gina: *I don't know about that because if the worms appear…*
> Calvin: *Yes, and it's good for your protein.* (Potluck Presentation Transcripts)

3.2. Teacher Factors

When adopting a sustained content language teaching instructional approach in ESL and EFL contexts, teachers must be reflective and active. The analysis revealed that the teacher played the role of a content and language facilitator. The teacher provided opportunities for learners' oral communication. For example, in a jigsaw reading task, the students communicated with each other to figure out how to go about cooking a dish. This required a text beyond their current reading comprehension abilities since the learners still needed to build on their previously acquired content knowledge and language skills. For the task to be successful, the teacher was required to continuously assess the students to confirm that all of them were contributing to the task at hand (Salsbury, 2012). Such tasks can be beneficial in providing learners with an opportunity to produce language. While any content course has the potential of providing students the opportunity to learn language, these opportunities can be enhanced if task design requires language use (Nation, 2013).

The teacher cared about not only language needs but also content needs. In another example, Gina and the teacher negotiate meaning about a substitution that Gina made when preparing a dish. Here the teacher focuses on the features of pie filling. This was to explain to Gina that the substitution used was not pie filling but instead canned fruit. As the teacher focused on the lexical form, he also introduced a number of related vocabulary items to the class, including "glaze", "jelly", and "jello". The example below is one of many opportunities given through the execution of communicative language activities to focus on form, which delivered during communicative language teaching can enhance language learners' incidental learning of vocabulary if executed properly (Ellis, 2015).

Teacher: *Yeah, what you used is canned peaches, but peach pie filling is a peach that's been chopped up into very small pieces. There's something similar to jelly, but it's very smooth and that's a glaze.*
Gina: *They are also in a can?*
Teacher: *It should be in a can.*
Gina: *So, they have a white-red color, right? I think the white (incomprehensible) or mixed fruits in a can.*
Teacher: *No no no, it's not that. No, it's for pies. If you have a crust for the pie, you can just buy this can of pie filling and put it inside the crust and bake it. You don't have to do anything else. Maybe you don't know this word. It's glaze. The juice from the peach and something very similar to jello is used to make a very sweet filling. It's really similar to jelly but smoother than jelly. Jelly is kind of sticky, but pie filling is very smooth. It will also have pieces of peaches mixed with the smooth like jelly….*
Minnie: *No, I don't think I have seen it here.* (Potluck Presentation Transcripts)

In another example, after presenting about preparing a broccoli dish, there was a lengthy class discussion about digestion and fiber. After this class discussion, the teacher and a student further discussed the issue, with the teacher referring to some lexical usage that occurred during the conversation. Here, the teacher was counterbalancing, ensuring that enough content knowledge was gained and certain language features were made salient (Lyster, 2007). To do this, the teacher is now focusing on forms while previously the conversation was a focus on form (Ellis, 2015). This is because exposure to comprehensible input may not be enough, and it may be necessary to increase the salient features of language (Schmidt, 1990). This can be accomplished in many ways, but just drawing the learners' attention to these issues and discussing them is a rather pragmatic albeit effective approach. Here, the teacher makes the learner aware through oral corrective feedback (Ha, 2022).

In the above interaction, we see that the teacher used the initiation-response-evaluation sequence (Nassaji & Wells, 2000) to encourage students' communication and involvement. Nassaji and Wells (2000) found this technique can help initiate frequent discussion and encourage interactions between students. Another example dealing with oral corrective feedback on vocabulary use is provided below:

Minnie: *Yes, we have three.*
Teacher: *Three sisters in your family?*
Minnie: *I am the medium.*
Teacher: *Middle sister? If you say I am the medium sister, it means your size.*
(Potluck Presentation Transcripts)

Thus, it seems that the teacher spent a great deal of effort to ensure that learners acquired accurate content and linguistic knowledge using several different techniques.

Language teachers, regardless of the level of the learners or context in which the teaching occurs, may need to develop and adapt learning and teaching materials. However, for content-based teaching, this often occurs during the teaching of a course instead of before the course starts (Brinton, Snow & Wesche, 1989). Instructional techniques that ensure the comprehension of subject matter taught through the medium of the students' L2 are at the core of content-based approaches and are requisite for students' learning (Lyster, 2007). Materials used for the course in the two contexts were continuously adapted by the teacher to ensure learners' comprehensible input. These adjustments to the course content were often made in response to space constraints and learners' needs. Making the content of the course comprehensible encouraged learner engagement and the teacher acting in response to space constraints still allowed him to guide students in meeting the language goals of the course (Brinton, Snow & Wesche, 1989).

Besides adjusting the course content, instructional techniques were also adjusted to help meet learners' needs. For example, roleplays and PowerPoint presentations were incorporated into the course taught in the EFL context. These additions allowed the instruction to become more contextualized. The use of the visuals and the interactive dialogues made a "direct link between the concepts being explored and the language used to explore them" (Salsbury, 2012: 179). As the teacher explained:

> *Some of the students wanted more conversation practice in English and asked whether we could do some cultural activities related to food through roleplays, such as ordering pizza in a pizza parlor….When I was teaching the EFL course in Taiwan, the students sort of expected to have PowerPoint presentations.* (Teacher's EFL Reflection Report)

The data analysis also revealed numerous occasions when the teacher's devotion to the course was necessary for the success of a content-based course (Stillwell, 2017), which was the driving force that helped overcome the many space constraints and meet the learners' needs. In addition, the teacher also devoted a large amount of time to increasing his own content knowledge as well as providing material support, regardless of the fact that no funding was provided by the educational institutions to teach a SCLT course. Teacher devotion or sometimes referred to as commitment has been linked to EFL learners' academic success (Lu, 2021). This is because teacher commitment usually leads to quality teaching (Tsui & Cheng, 1999) and increased passion that is passed on to students through encouraging them to do more (Lu, 2021; Vallerand, 2008). Teachers that are invested and committed to their work tend to interact more with students and practice mindful and reflective teaching that all lead to refinements in their teaching (Lu, 2021). Based on the data

obtained from the teacher, he appeared to have possessed these exceptional qualities that may have made some other potential limiting factors less important to the success of implementing SCLT in the course.

3.3. Task Factors

ESL and EFL teachers must consider how experiential language learning through tasks that highlight the theme can lead to successful sustained content language teaching. A series of techniques and measures have been used to ensure that learners acquired accurate content and linguistic knowledge. These included the adapted teaching materials and the emphasis placed on the realistic language use in the two courses.

3.3.1. Thematic Materials

Prabhu (1987) has suggested that all teaching materials must be adapted because it is impossible for any coursebook to be effective in meeting the needs of all language learners. Following a similar train of thought, the teacher adapted the course materials differently in the two contexts. The teacher recalled:

> *I went to discuss this with my boss. I told him that the textbook options in the language center in the ESL program were too difficult for the learners and I wondered if I might use my own materials to teach.* (Teacher's ESL Reflection Report)

The teacher negotiated with the higher management of both institutions to use teacher-developed materials for both courses, thereby meeting the individualized needs of both classes of students.

3.3.2. Experiential Language Learning

Kohonen (2006) argued for experiential learning to be incorporated into language learning because it facilitates personal growth, helps learners adapt to change, takes account of differences in learning ability, and considers both learner and teacher needs. This is echoed in the excerpts from the teacher's reflection reports and conference presentation. The teacher cared deeply about ensuring that the learners were provided opportunities for realistic experiences for content and language learning.

> *They could associate the action of doing and touching the fruit, the vegetable or whatever they were doing with the words, so it helps them to remember those words*. (TESOL Conference Presentation Transcript)

We had a staff kitchen with a working stove and range. I took students inside the kitchen, and we conducted many of our lessons inside the kitchen…. (Teacher's ESL Reflection Report)

3.3.3. Language Learning Tasks

Going beyond simply learning by doing, the type of tasks designed by the teacher were also influential in meeting the goals of the course. The hands-on tasks (e.g., potluck presentations, roleplays, recipe booklet construction) engaged learners in experiences that were strategically designed by the teacher to be cognitively demanding and context-embedded, further supported with concrete materials and visual aids. One of the forefront instructional strategies employed by content-based language teaching instructors is to embed "cognitively demanding material in a highly contextualized" lesson (Salsbury, 2012: 178). For example, the students were given the task to read the directions for setting up and operating a gas burner. Once this was completed, they were then required to use the gas burner and an English recipe to prepare a dish during class time. This task fulfills the requirement of contextualized instruction. Although the task was cognitively demanding, it became achievable due to the realia, visuals, and teacher and peer support provided.

It is worth noting that the tasks reported above and the others used in the course all stimulated language learning because they provided purposeful use of the language (Genesee, 1987; Snow, Met & Genesee, 1989). Effective content-based tasks are those that create opportunities for in-depth understanding through hands-on experiences where learners are learning by doing (Lyster, 2007). While these tasks emphasized fluency and creativity, they did not do so at a loss of focus on linguistic accuracy. What set these tasks apart from other communicative language tasks in English for general purposes courses was their focus on meaningful and purposeful communication (Reynolds, Yu & Ha, 2022).

3.4. Space and Time Factors

ESL and EFL teachers that want to take a sustained content language teaching instructional approach to the teaching of language must work within space and time constraints. Contextual constraints such as limited time and space should be considered in the design and implementation of an SCLT course. Aside from the language learning tasks that provide ample opportunities for communication, adjustments were also made to which language learning tasks were opted for in the two contexts. The decisions were made by considering the different contextual constraints, which can significantly affect curriculum design (Nation & Macalister, 2010).

The availability of kitchen facilities also necessitated that cooking in the EFL context be reduced to only certain days, for example, those planned for potluck presentations. This

was not an issue in the ESL context since learners had continuous access to a kitchen. Also, since class time in the ESL context was shorter (1 hour per class 4 days a week), it would have been difficult for all students to give potluck presentations on the same day. Thus, both the class time as well as the physical space placed limitations or constraints on what the teacher and students could accomplish during a single class session. The time constraint in the ESL context (i.e., length of the course semester) also prevented the teacher from incorporating a translation and recipe book compilation task that was possible in the EFL context. This also necessitated negotiation of the planned tasks and what was possible given these limitations. As the teacher reported:

> *We tried to center the days in which we were going to cook around these potluck presentations…One added task in the EFL class that I do not think I had time to do in the ESL class was to create a class recipe book.* (Teacher's EFL Reflection Report)

The teacher negotiated the syllabus with the learners to change the type of tasks and the instructional delivery. While the learners accepted a verbal-only method of instruction in the ESL context, the learners in the EFL context expected and requested PowerPoint presentations as guides. Published literature has noted that instructors in content-based classrooms did not feel it was their duty to assist learners with remedial language needs (Stillwell, 2017) and instead saw themselves only responsible for delivering content (Dearden, 2014). While responding to students' language needs require more than simply providing English PowerPoint presentation files (Dearden, 2014), when teaching the EFL learners, the teacher made several adjustments to instructional delivery in both classes to meet syllabi objectives. While this may significantly increase a teacher's workload, a teacher that has had learning experiences similar to the students he or she is teaching tend to be more sensitive to the remedial language needs of students (Stillwell, 2017). There was evidence of this found in the discussion after one of the potluck presentations where the teacher also shared experiences learning Chinese as a second language with his students. This shared experience, along with making strategic use of the students' shared L1 as a resource in the EFL classroom, was able to support the learners in this content-based classroom where English was used as the medium of instruction (Stillwell, 2017). Below is one example of such an exchange the teacher had with students after students' potluck presentations. During the exchange, the teacher shares with the students how he also felt there were many difficulties to preparing a presentation in one's second language and shared with his students the stress he was under when *performing* in front of classmates:

> Isabella: *How to present?*
> Teacher: *Just stand in front of the class.*

Isabella: *In Chinese?*

Teacher: *Yeah. It's difficult because this kind of presentation is not even what we are studying so there's a lot of vocabulary I don't know. I just have to try to memorize the vocabulary very quickly.*

Gina: *Sometimes when you feel nervous, you forget.*

Teacher: *Yeah, you just forget. You just keep saying uh uh uh. And just keep saying a lot of uh uh uhs.* (Potluck Presentation Transcripts)

Selective use of the L1 in the L2 classroom can facilitate L2 learning (Nation, 2013). While research has shown L2 teachers believe class time should maximize opportunities for students to use the L2, they have not been shown to discourage L1 use either (Gallagher, 2020). Instead, if used sparingly, the L1 can reduce cognitive overload and anxiety levels (Bruen & Kelly, 2017). While some contexts such as those in Spain have shown teachers to have mixed views on L1 use in higher education English as a medium of instruction (EMI) environments (Breeze & Roothooft, 2021), other contexts such as Hong Kong report L1 use as a strategy to overcome the necessity of using EMI (Pun & Thomas, 2020). Instead of taking the deficient view of the use of the L1 in the L2 classroom, it appears that the teacher has viewed shared knowledge of the EFL learners' L1 as a useful pedagogical tool.

However, when teaching a gastronomy SCLT course to learners unfamiliar with such a mode of instruction, teachers are cautioned to explain clearly to students the benefits of combining content with language instruction. Assuming learners will automatically understand or adapt to this mode of instruction, especially if the learners have just relocated from an EFL context to an ESL context, may result in unfavorable results and possibly even be met with resistance (Li, 2004; Ma, Yu, Reynolds & Jiang, 2022). However, results from the data analyzed in the current investigation indicate that the ESL and EFL learners were satisfied with learning language through learning about gastronomy. They felt cooking food helped them to improve their L2 proficiency, as shown in the following example:

I want courses like this that provide information about the historical background and origins of each dish so that we can be informed about different cultures—this is interesting. (Students' Course Evaluations)

3.5. Learner Factors

As with any instructional approach, ESL and EFL teachers considering a sustained content language teaching instructional approach must contemplate whether the learners will value integration of language and content. As an important agency in the teaching process, motivating learners' participation and learning engagement is vital to ensure the planning, delivering, and assessing the course. For example, Dörnyei (2014: 528) suggests encouraging

students to pick up on this behavior of teachers and mimic it in the group as a teacher should be a "role model" that is "friendly and supportive". In the excerpt below, the teacher explains how he encouraged group cohesiveness. He also reported that as the students became more invested in the group, change occurred, and he saw a difference in behavior and learning outcomes because of the group dynamic. It seemed then, as the class matured, so did the effectiveness of the learning.

> *It was very rewarding to see students finally understand and gain something after the interaction with me. At the time, this trust with students and willingness to communicate and negotiate meaning with me and their fellow classmates really showed me that teaching could be rewarding.* (Teacher's ESL Reflection Report)

Learners in both contexts showed active learner engagement as "a positive, fulfilling, and work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá & Bakker, 2002: 74). Learners in both contexts showed emotional engagement (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004) exemplified by their positive reactions to the learning of gastronomy content which further influenced their willingness to communicate with their classmates and peers and thus further encouraged L2 learning (Reynolds & Yu, 2018). The teacher recalled that students were constantly invested in their learning, a clear sign of emotional engagement:

> *Still, when I recall both the ESL and EFL classes, I still feel that the students were always happy, active, and enjoying themselves. Everyone always focused on the tasks at hand and were enjoying themselves.* (Teacher's EFL Reflection Report)

The teacher's choice to use SCLT allowed for an equal focus on both content knowledge and language skills (Murphy & Stoller, 2001). Students from the EFL course reported on their course evaluations that they were motivated and challenged to improve their L2 abilities by learning the targeted content knowledge.

Aside from the engagement in the course, the course goals were also achieved by inspiring learner motivation. Although their reasons for class enrollment in the two contexts were different, they were all active learners, as the teacher reported:

> *They were invested in the course because of their interest in its content and because they knew it would help them get ready for content learning in the university.* (Teacher's ESL Reflection Report)

Regardless of context, all students were considered to be in a pre-higher education learning context. Regardless that the two groups of learners held differences such as their L1 language backgrounds or their previous educational experiences, their active involvement in the learning activities is what made all the learners homogeneous. Teachers that are interested in applying SCLT to their language courses should be concerned with students' eagerness and engagement in learning, not whether their backgrounds are homogeneous.

The learners' motivation really fueled their engagement in the course. Dörnyei (2014) claims that group cohesiveness and group norms are the two areas of group dynamics that are most concerned with motivation. For example, providing opportunities to learn about one another can be the most crucial factor to foster a good group dynamic. After the potluck presentations, the students and the teacher would sit down together to not only share the food that had been prepared by the students, but also to practice their language skills. During these sessions, the students got to know one another, often sharing more about the process of buying ingredients and preparing the dishes. They also shared in their successes and struggles, thereby fostering a supportive group learning dynamic. Numerous examples of both emotional and linguistic support were found in the transcripts. Often one student may have struggled with task completion and shared the experience and then this sharing triggered other students to share their experiences. Other times it was the struggle for a particular word that triggered another student to negotiate with the student until successful communication occurred. In the example below, Gina shares the story of how the PowerPoint presentation file for the potluck was lost because of her sister. While recounting the story, the teacher misunderstood Gina, triggering another student, Iris, to step in to clarify.

> Gina: *I did my PowerPoint twice.*
> Teacher: *Really?*
> Gina: *The first time my younger sister played a game or chatted, and she closed, my God.*
> Teacher: *What do you mean? You lost your PowerPoint?*
> Iris: *She didn't save it.*
> Teacher: *Wow.* (Potluck Presentation Transcripts)

4. LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

While the present study was able to uncover several factors that are pertinent to language teachers considering implementing SCLT in either ESL or EFL contexts, it was not without its limitations. The data collected from the ESL and EFL contexts differed and have made comparison of the two groups difficult. Although the majority of the ESL and EFL students had a final goal of obtaining a bachelor's degree, there could have been certain linguistic individual differences that might have affected their learning outcomes. Considering these

limitations, in what follows, the authors provide a brief summary of the findings and a conclusion to the study.

The present study aimed to uncover which factors a teacher should consider when adopting a sustained content language teaching instructional approach in ESL and EFL contexts. To reach this aim, qualitative data from multiple sources were collected from a sustained content gastronomy language course taught in an American ESL and a Taiwanese EFL context. The present study found support for previous research findings including increased: self-efficacy for cooking (Levy & Auld, 2004), interactive learning opportunities (Liquori, Koch, Conteneto & Castle, 1998), and contextualization for language learning (Jiang, 2000; Pang, 2018). In addition, the qualitative data coding and analysis revealed teachers should consider thematic factors, teacher factors, task factors, space and time factors, and learner factors when designing a SCLT course.

Traditionally, theme-based language instruction occurs more often in ESL contexts or is dictated by textbooks selected for use in EFL contexts. The current study results show that it is feasible to implement a SCLT course in both an ESL and EFL context with learners of various second language proficiencies, cultural backgrounds, and motivation for course enrollment. The investigation found five major factors that a teacher should consider when adopting a sustained content language teaching instructional approach in either ESL or EFL contexts. First, thematic factors regarding the selection of the theme of the course need to be considered, which does not only help induce interest and engagement but can also help to take care of students' linguistic needs. The current investigation found gastronomy as the theme raised learners' interest and level of engagement and made important connections between language and content through students' peer interactions with real objects to complete experiential language learning tasks. Second, considering the role of the teacher, the results of the present study also illustrate the necessity for teachers to possess the pedagogical know-how to conduct environment and needs analysis in order to continuously make necessary adjustments to meet learners' needs. Teachers should develop cognitively demanding yet context embedded language learning tasks requiring use of both linguistic and content knowledge to encourage learner engagement. Third, task factors, including the adaptation of existing materials to be context-specific, the design of intriguing and challenging tasks, and the selection of appropriate delivery instructions, should be given adequate attention when running a sustained content language course. Fourth, although the ESL or EFL context may influence a teacher's decision-making when designing and implementing a course, the current study suggests that the success of running a SCLT course cannot be solely attributed to context. Instead, the environment analysis and the needs analysis indicated that the teacher's devotion and capability to adapt materials and design emotionally intriguing and cognitively challenging tasks and the flexibility to select

appropriate delivery instructions as well as the learners' motivation and peer support while completing cognitively demanding and context-embedded tasks led to successful courses. Last but not least, learners' involvement cannot be ignored, which may be boosted through a series of actions by the teacher, such as catering to any learners' difficulties, involving both linguistic skills and content knowledge development, and inspiring learners' motivation.

The main take away from this study is that greater emphasis on one factor cannot equalize the underemphasis of another factor. A motivating theme might be selected for a SCLT course but without teacher or learner investment the learning outcomes will suffer. Likewise, invigorating experiential language learning tasks could be developed but if the space or time do not permit thoughtful execution the learning outcomes will be disappointing. To sum up, as the factors are not independent but instead are interconnected, it is suggested that equal attention should be given to them all to ensure a successful SCLT course.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NOTES

[1] Students independently translated a recipe from their home culture and then received written corrective feedback from the teacher before revising. Then, the students worked together as a class to compile the recipes to form a book. The students wrote a short introduction to the cookbook and worked together to design the cover.

[2] Potluck, as defined by the Cambridge Online Dictionary (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/pot-luck), refers to "an informal meal where guests bring a different dish that is then shared with the other guests".

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