

The Effect of Planning Lessons on the Amount of Speaking When Integrating Language and Content in Iranian Content-Based Courses

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Received: December 30, 2011

Accepted: January 26, 2012

ABSTRACT: While learners' ability to speak academic language develops over time in content-based programs, the development of their nonacademic language appears to lag behind. Students' speaking in content-based (CB) classrooms is confined to an academic discourse style. In the researchers' point of view, the gap of less amount of nonacademic speaking can be bridged by the application of the conceptual framework prepared by Snow, Met, and Genesee (1989). Planning lessons which integrate content-obligatory and content-compatible language can be a practical application for the theory proposed by these scholars. The present study reviews the result of research on planning lessons which include content-obligatory and content-compatible language in content-based courses, and it investigates the effect of such a kind of reflective lesson planning on the amount of students' speaking. The sample lesson plan in this article applies techniques to integrate content-obligatory and content-compatible language through task. To conduct this research, 20 students in a content-based class in Sama private middle school of Tabriz City were selected as the participants and were pre-tested. The participants received 42 hours of planned instruction including content-obligatory and content-compatible linguistic items. After 28 sessions, a post-test was given to the same participants. Through the analysis of the obtained data, *paired sample t-test*, it was found that there was a significant difference between students' speaking scores on pre-test and post-test. The findings lent support to the development of the quantity of students' speaking.

Keywords: content-based program, content-compatible language, content-obligatory language, lesson planning

“Using content from other disciplines in language courses is not a new idea. Content-based instruction integrates learning language with the learning of some other content, often academic subject matter” (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 137). As Davis (2003) noted, “content-based instruction is a teaching method that emphasizes learning about something rather than learning about language” (p. 1). Content-based Instruction was brought into the school systems in Europe, as well as in Canada and other countries within America in the 1960s (Finkbeiner & Fehling, 2002). Over the years, due to the apparent success of content-based programs and the dissatisfaction with the traditional programs, content-based program became so popular that it grew internationally (Chen, 2006).

In Iran, content based programs have existed for three years. As far as the researchers know, overseas schools department of SAMA organization, affiliated with the Islamic Azad University, is the only administrator of content-based programs in Iran. In Sama middle schools, students study subject

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matters such as mathematics and science in English as extra-curricular courses. In Sama content-based instruction (SCBI), teachers use the English language as a vehicle to teach subject matters such as mathematics and science. SCBI teachers are language and content teachers, and as Snow (1990) mentioned, they wear two hats at all times (cited in Locke, 2004).

One of the perplexing problems for content-based instruction teachers is the little amount of students' nonacademic speaking. Students in content-based classrooms use target language when doing classroom tasks, while they choose first language for social interactions (Swain & Tarone, 1995, cited in LaVan, 2001). While content-based learners' ability to speak about academic topics develops over the years, the development of their nonacademic, everyday language appears to lag behind (Stein, 1999). As first year content-based program teacher, researchers were often overwhelmed by the challenge of integrating language and content as well as improving their second grade students' interpersonal speaking skill. Researchers frequently wondered how they can foster the amount of students' nonacademic (interpersonal) speaking. As Swain (1996) noted, teachers need to be aware of the language that is not naturally present in the classrooms and to provide it (cited in Numelin, 1998). Researchers, indeed, were aware of the existing deficiency in their classes and were seeking for different techniques and creative methods to provide the learners with opportunities to extend their conversation, to produce sustained discourse, and to develop their language use (Genesee, 1994; Harley, 1993; Swain, 2002, cited in Punchard, 2002). The problem remained at the same strength until Snow, Met, and Genesee's (1998) proposed approach provided some answers to the questions the researchers had posed throughout the years. In researchers' point of view, the gap of the little amount of nonacademic speaking can be bridged by developing lessons that apply techniques to integrate content-obligatory language and content-compatible language.

Content-obligatory and Content-compatible Language

Snow, Met, and Genesee (1989) discussed a conceptual framework for the integration of language and content and dealt with the question of how to determine language teaching objectives in four instructional settings: the mainstream class, the foreign language immersion class, the ESL class, and the FLES (Foreign Language in Elementary School) class. It is worth mentioning that language objectives are derived from two considerations in this study: a) content-obligatory language (COL), and b) content-compatible language (CCL) (Snow et al., 1989). Snow et al. (1989, cited in Ellis, 2003) distinguished between *content-obligatory language*, i.e., the language that is required to learn a particular content and *content-compatible language*, i.e., the language that can be usefully taught within the context of a particular content domain, but it is not required for successful mastery of the content. For example, if the topic is "gravity," content obligatory language might include the verbs 'to pull' and 'to force' and the use of apostrophe 's, for example "the earth's gravity". Content compatible language might include such items as mass and "*when clauses*" for example, when we throw a ball up into the air.

Locke (2004) reported that in a lesson designed to teach students about the various planets of the solar system, the name used to identify each planet is the example of content-obligatory language. In contrast, the teacher may choose to teach cardinal numbers as well, so the students may identify each planet according to its sequential cardinal number describing its physical proximity to the sun. While this obviously lends itself nicely to the lesson, knowing cardinal numbers is not absolutely required for students to master the concept of identifying the different planets.

Planning Lesson

"Lesson planning is the art of combining a number of different elements into a coherent whole so that a lesson has an identity which students can recognize, work within, and react to" (Harmer, 2001, p. 308). Planning is essential to successful teaching (Farrell, 2002). As Wagner (2004) mentioned, 'winging it' is an essential ingredient in a recipe for disaster. A good classroom manager is sure about what s/he is going to do each day. Even though a lesson may have already been planned, teachers will still need to make it better suit their students. Teachers should be aware of their students' needs, problems, interests, and content of the lesson as well to be able to adapt the lesson from the book (Farrell, 2002).

Planning enables the teacher to specify the goals, to delineate selected instructional objectives, and to organize a pertinent sequence of classroom activities accordingly. Lesson planning gives the teacher an opportunity to organize learning situation toward selected goals (Chastain, 1988). Teachers plan lessons for internal and external reasons (McCutcheon, 1980, cited in Richards & Renandya, 2002). Teachers plan lessons for internal reasons in order to promote their confidence, to have a better understanding of the subject matter, and to predict areas of difficulty. Teachers plan lessons for external reasons such as satisfying the requirements of supervisors or providing a guide for substitute teachers in times of need (Farrell, 2002).

Planning Language and Content

Many scholars have emphasized the importance of planning. Numelin (1998) discussed that in order to integrate language and content successfully, teachers must spend a significant amount of time planning for strategic sequencing of linguistic objectives. Graser (1998) noted that a content-based teacher has a particularly hard time with the challenge of integrating language and content.

An immersion-program teacher is expected to be a content teacher and world language teacher at the same time. As a result, an immersion-program teacher is constantly incorporating the work of two teachers into an average day. Lesson after lesson, this teacher teaches the content through the vehicle of the immersion language. This presents a particular challenge because there need to be lessons that are well planned and designed to teach both language and vocabulary comprehension and the new content that is presented to the student during that lesson.

Swain (1996, cited in Numelin, 1998) suggested that without systematic plans, immersion teachers might adopt strategies that are not optimal for promoting second language learning. Met (1994, cited in Numelin, 1998) put emphasis on strategically sequencing and planning language and content objectives. Snow et al. (1989) noted that, "The specification of language learning objectives must be undertaken with deliberate, systematic planning and coordination of the language and content curricula" (p. 204).

Identifying and pre-teaching Content-obligatory Language

Snow et al. (1989, cited in Ellis, 2003) proposed that in content-based courses teachers should identify COL first. Then, they should specify CCL. Irujo (2007) pointed out that, for identifying language problems, teachers should examine textbooks and look for the difficult language. Teachers, who have learned to 'look at' language rather than 'look through' it, are more successful in specifying difficult language. Irujo (2007), further explained that looking through language is like looking through a window. We look at whatever is on the other side of the window, and we are not aware of seeing a glass itself. Language is like a glass in the window.

Met (1994, cited in Numelin, 1998) believed that lessons requiring the introduction of new concepts should be taught only after students have been exposed to necessary vocabulary and structure. He further explained:

In planning for an upcoming unit on city life, which provides an opportunity to use the imperative form as students give and receive directions to various city buildings, the teacher might choose to focus on the imperative form and adverbs of location in a prior lesson. Thus, teachers sequence and embed language objectives within content lessons in a systematic way. (p.2)

Pre-teaching vocabulary is a controversial issue. Some scholars believe that pre-teaching vocabulary takes the vocabulary out of context. Those in favor of doing so claim that context is the most effective tool for providing real meaning. Contrary to these scholars, others believe that vocabulary should be pre-taught because trying to define and practice essential vocabulary as it occurs during the lesson interrupts the sequence of the lesson (Irujo, 2007). The solution of Irujo to this dilemma is to pre-teach COL in context. Irujo proposed that using vocabulary cards can facilitate further practice and study. After the introduction of content-obligatory words, students complete a card that has spaces for an example or definition of the term, a drawing that either represents the term

or helps the students remember its meaning, and anything else that might help learners memorize the meaning.

Tasks and Activities Accomplishing COL and CCL

In EFL content-based courses, students should be involved in a variety of tasks and roles as they try to improve their language and content command (Lingely, 2006). “Well -structured cooperative communication activities such as Jigsaw tasks and information gap tasks increase students’ interaction” (Stein, 1999, p .4). “Collaborative dialogue occurs when students work together on a task and talk to each other about content and language issues that arise as they carry out the task” (Swain, 2007, p .1). The type of task has a measurable effect on first and second language use in immersion programs. When the goal of the task is focusing on the L2, children use the L2 to a greater extent (Broner, 2000). Broner (2000) further reported that,

Children do more than just being "on task "and/or focusing on the L2. They co -construct (Vygotsky, 1978) dialogue in the L2, helping each other increase their use of the L2. In these activities children use more L2 than in any other content area. (p. 3)

According to Buchanan and Helman (1997), the selected task should be in line with interests and intellectual abilities of students; “In a lesson on calculating percentages, younger students might calculate the percentage of tax on a bicycle, while older students may use their pay stubs to calculate percentages of various categories of withholding” (p.2).

Task materials can be written or picture-based. One reason why pictures are used as task materials is that pictures elicit meanings without actual words. With picture-based tasks, they test developers can use existing pictures or draw new ones. All the test developers do not have artistic creativity to create actual drawing. So, artists or art teachers can help them.

In order to match testing needs with pictures, teachers should think ahead and keep their eyes open for the possible picture (Luoma, 2004).

Research Questions

In the researchers’ point of view, the gap of the little amount of nonacademic speaking can be bridged by developing lessons which integrate COL and CCL. The main purpose of this research was to investigate the impact of planning lessons that integrate COL and CCL on Iranian EFL learners’ amount of interpersonal speaking while integrating language and content in CB courses. The general question of the present study was as follows:

Does planning lessons which include both content-obligatory and content-compatible linguistic items, have any effect on the amount of students’ speaking in Iranian content-based program?

To answer this general question, the researchers focused on the following questions:

Q1: Does planning lessons which include both content-obligatory and content-compatible linguistic items have any effect on the total number of words (TNW) in students’ speaking?

Q2: Does planning lessons which include both content-obligatory and content-compatible linguistic items have any effect on the total number of T-units (TNTU) of students’ speaking?

Q3: Does planning lessons which include both content-obligatory and content-compatible linguistic items have any effect on the mean T-unit length of (MTUL) students’ speaking?

Q4: Is the progress of students the same on TNW, TNTU, and MTUL before and after giving planned instruction which include both COL and CCL?

Method

Participants

The students of a content-based class in Sama private middle school of Tabriz city participated in this study. There were 20 students in this class; these students studied subject matters such as mathematics and science in English as extra-curricular courses. Students were studying mathematics in English three hours a week. All of them were 14 years old. Since the subjects were all female and 14 years old,

the factors such as age and sex were controlled. As there was only one class at that level, the researcher could not have a control group.

Instrumentation

This study was conducted with 20 participants. A teacher-designed, picture-based story telling task was used to gather the students' speaking samples. A tape recorder was used to record the performance of the participants. One of the researchers, who was the teacher of the class at the same time, made a series of audio recordings of the learners' speaking as this would provide an opportunity to examine their speaking more closely.

Design

The researchers employed a pre-experimental, one group, and pretest posttest design. At the beginning of the term, a pretest was given to the participants. They had 42 hours of instruction. This instruction included planned lessons encompassing both content obligatory and content compatible linguistic items. Then, a posttest was given to the participants. In this study, planning lessons which integrate COL and CCL, served as an independent variable and amount of speaking served as a dependent variable.

Procedure

In this study, a pretest was administered in the first stage. In the second stage, the researcher developed lesson plans which encouraged the learners to use COL and CCL. The researcher took the benefit of tasks, activities, role plays, and communication games to incorporate COL and CCL into lesson plans. In the third stage, participants received 42 hours of planned instruction including content-obligatory and content-compatible linguistic items during 28 sessions. Finally, the participants received a post-test.

The data took the form of tape recording. The aim was to get the amount of language produced by the learners. Their speaking achievement was assessed by having them complete a picture-based speaking task (telling a story) and by collecting records of speaking performances. In order to reduce the participants' stress, the speaking task was conducted in the playground. The researchers also reassured them that there was no marking so that they did not feel anxious. The researchers allowed fifteen minutes for the recording. Participants' speaking samples were analyzed in detail. The researchers used T-unit for the segmentation of the participants' speaking samples and defined T-unit as "one main clause with all subordinate clauses attached to it" (Hunt, 1965, 1966, 1970, cited in Foster et al., 2000, p .20).

The analysis of the participants' speaking scores involved the identification of six measures, which are total number of words (TNW), percent of total number of words (%TNW), total number of T-units (TNTU), percent of total number of T-units (%TNTU), mean T-unit length (MTUL), and percent of mean T-unit length (%MTUL) (Xinhua, 2007) .As far as the calculation of these indices was concerned, the total number of words included in each language sample, and the total number of T-units were counted. Since the researchers were interested in knowing "how many words students know and use their counted word types, i.e., the words were counted just once; after their first occurrence, they were not counted" (Nation & Meara, 2002, p .34). In marking the number of T-units, the researchers excluded "back channel cues such as *mhm* and *yeah*, and discourse boundary markers such as *okay*, *thanks*, or *good*. False starts were integrated into the following t-unit" (Young, 1995, cited in Foster et al., 2000, p .38). MTUL was measured by dividing the number of words by the number of T-units (Xinhua, 2008).

Instructional Treatment

Through specifying long and short range goals, the researchers planned and sequenced lessons. Reflecting on research and scholars' recommendations for practice, the researchers developed some lessons that provide a model for integrating COL and CCL and show some ways to create input which includes both kinds of linguistic items. These lessons included content-obligatory and content-compatible linguistic items and incorporated daily activities, games, situational dialogues, role plays,

and tasks that encouraged students to use CCL and COL. These planned lessons were the basis of instructional treatment. Content-based instruction emphasizes a connection to real life (Cutain & Hass, 1995). So, planning lessons with tasks that integrate content-compatible and content-obligatory language seems to lead to more and better opportunities for improving learners' nonacademic speaking (See a sample of lesson plan for content-based instruction in Appendix I).

Data Analysis and Results

Three procedures were carried out in analyzing the statistical data related to the effect of planning lessons on the quantity of speaking in CB courses. First, *paired samples t-test* analysis was run in order to determine if there were any statistically significant differences between students' speaking scores in the pre-test and post-test. The analysis of the students' speaking scores involved the identification of six measures, which are total number of words (TNW), percent of total number of words (%TNW), total number of T-units (TNTU), percent of total number of T-units (%TNTU), mean T-unit length (MTUL), and percent of mean T-unit length (%MTUL). Next, a bar graph was drawn to vividly show the mean difference of TNW, TNTU, and MTUL in pre-test and post-test. Finally, a *Friedman test* was run to compare the progress percentage of students on TNW, TNTU, and MTUL in pre-test and post-test. Tables 1 through 6 show the descriptive statistics of the pre-test and post-test.

Table 1. *The Means, std. Deviations, and Std. Error Means of TNW in Pre-test and Post-test*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PRE.TNW	70.8000	20	63.23107	14.13890
	POS.TNW	115.4000	20	101.59590	22.71753

Table 2. *Paired Sample t-test for TNW in Pre-test and Post-test*

		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	PRE.TNW - POS.TNW	44.6000	65.5281	14.6525	-75.268	-13.931	-3.044	19	.007

The findings in Table 1 indicated that the mean score of TNW is 70.8 before giving planned instruction which integrates COL and CCL and 115.4 after giving the treatment. The t-test results showed statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test mean scores ($T(19) = 3.04$, $P = 0.007$).

Table 3. *The Means, std. Deviations, and Std. Error Means of TNTU in Pre-test and Post-test*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PRE.TNTU	6.9500	20	8.20446	1.83457
	POS.TNTU	19.7500	20	10.20255	2.28136

Table 4. *Paired Sample t-test for TNTU in Pre-test and Post-test*

		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	PRE.TNW - POS.TNW	12.8000	5.06380	1.13230	15.1699	10.43 1	-11.304	19	.000

The findings in Table 3 indicated that mean score of TNTU is 6.9 before giving planned instruction which integrates COL and CCL and 19.7 after giving treatment. The t-test results showed a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores ($T(19) = -11.3$, $P = 0.001$).

Table 5. The means, std. Deviations, and Std. Error Means of MTUL in Pre-test and Post-test

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PRE.TNTU	4.4450	20	3.22580	0.72131
	POS.TNTU	5.6100	20	2.81124	0.62861

Table 6. Paired Sample t-test for MTUL in Pre-test and Post-test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	PRE.TNW - POS.TNW	-1.1650	0.91552	0.20472	-1.15935	-0.7365	-5.691	19	.000

The findings in Table 5 indicated that the mean score of MTUL is 4.4 before giving planned instruction which integrates COL and CCL and 5.6 after giving the treatment. The t-test results showed statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores ($T(19)= 5.6, P=0.001$).

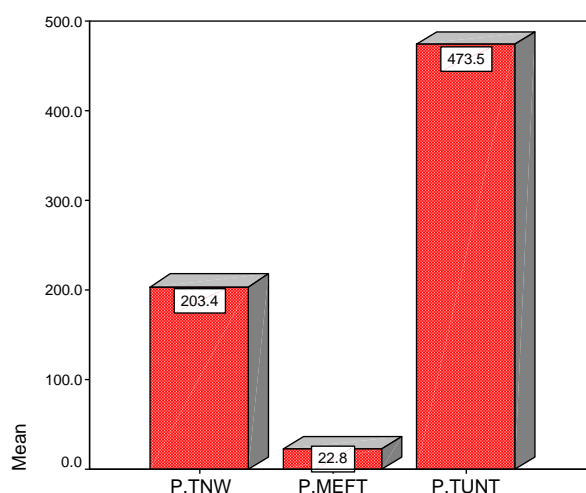


Figure1. Mean Differences of Pre-test and Post-test

As it is shown in figure 1, TNTU and TNW status was not only a significant but also a fairly strong predictor of the enhancement of quantity of speaking in CB courses.

Table 7. The Mean Ranks on TNW, TNTU, and MTUL

	Mean Rank
P.TNW	2.10
P.MEFT	1.18
P.TUNT	2.73

Conclusion

The researchers tried to measure the effect of planning lessons which integrate COL and CCL on the amount of speaking in Iranian CB courses. The results of paired-samples t-test presented in Table 1 and 2 showed that TNWs of the participants' speaking have changed more than 204%, so the first null hypothesis was rejected. In other words, planning lessons, which integrates COL and CCL, enhances TNW in the participants' speaking while integrating language and content in Iranian content-based courses. Moreover, the results of paired-samples t-test presented in Table 3 and 4 showed that TNTUs of participants' speaking have changed more than 470%, so the second null hypothesis was also rejected. Therefore, the researchers could infer that planning lessons, which integrate COL and CCL, enhances TNTU in the learners' speaking while integrating language and content in Iranian content-based courses.

The results of paired-samples t-test presented in Table 5 and 6 showed that mean T-unit lengths have changed more than 22.5%, so the third null hypothesis was rejected. In other words, planning lessons, which integrate COL and CCL, increases MTUL of participants' speaking while integrating language and content in Iranian content-based courses. The results of *Friedman Test* presented in Table 7 showed that the biggest progress was found in TNTU (2.73 %) followed by TNW (2.10 %) and MTUL (1.18%). TNTU status was the strongest predictor of the improvement of the quantity of speaking followed by TNW. MTUL is the third predictor, ranking behind TNTU and TNW, so the fourth null hypothesis was also rejected. It means that there is a significant difference on percentage of the students' progress in three domains of TNW, TNTU, and MTUL.

Discussion

Generally speaking, planning lessons which integrate COL and CCL increases the quantity of the students' speaking while integrating language and content in Iranian content-based courses. As mentioned before, no empirical research has been done to be directly related to this study. Referring to the conceptual framework proposed by Snow et al. (1989) and the interpretation of obtained findings, the researchers can come to the conclusion that planning lessons which integrate COL and CCL can be a practical application for the framework proposed by Snow et al. (1989). Creating these lesson plans can bridge the gap of little amount of speaking in content-based courses, as well. It is worth mentioning here that, as no control group was used, the evaluation of the course did not constitute a proof that it improved the quantity of students' speaking. But the findings lent support to the theory that planning lessons which integrate COL and CCL, enhances the quantity of students' speaking while integrating language and content in Iranian content-based courses.

This research project can be regarded as a guide that introduces CB teachers and administrators an innovative method. The planned lessons show how teachers can successfully encourage students to foster the quantity of their talk under content-based instruction. These students need much encouragement to develop the amount of their speaking. The present study offered a framework that the teacher can use to promote the development of speaking skill in the classroom. Teachers' imagination can help them to design the best lesson plans. After all, teachers are familiar with skills and learning styles of their students better than anybody else. By integrating COL and CCL, innovative courses can provide experiences that bridge the gaps in students' non-academic language, expand the amount of their social speaking, and ultimately prepare them for success in future. Content-based Instruction teachers need to provide opportunities for their students to communicate with each other. If teachers keep these aims in mind, they can develop lessons including motivating activities that will maximize the amount of students' nonacademic speaking.

What is important is the teacher's commitment to develop students' speaking skill. It is hoped that we initiate a dialogue with other content-based program teachers across the world and discuss this kind of instructional plan with a designated committees of CBI for implementation of such a kind of planning in textbooks by sharing the results of this study. It is worth mentioning here that the study discussed here was limited in size and the generalizations to other contexts should be done with caution.

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Appendix

Sample Lesson Plan

This lesson is an adaptation of the lesson prepared by Diane Tedick and Constance Walker (1999).

Subject :Math

Grade: 2

Topic: Area

Objectives:

Students will:

- find the area of polygons such as rectangle and square .
- find the perimeter of simple polygons.

Timing frame: 40- 50 minutes

Materials needed :

Measuring tape, paper, pencil, geometric figure pictures, and a poster-board for each group

Content-obligatory language:

Students will:

- Use the following terms :area, perimeter, side, length, width , surface, figure, and square unit.
- Use imperative sentence such as "calculate the area of rectangle."
- Use relative possessive word "whose" to show possession e.g .find the area and perimeter of a square whose side is 6 cm.

Content -compatible language:

Students will:

- use the following verbs and nouns:
to estimate, cost, carpeting, and measuring tape
- use phrase such as "the cost of carpeting"
- use sentence "I estimated the cost of the carpeting at a. Dollars."

Pre -Teaching Key Concepts

- The teacher presents the key concept of area and perimeter, relating them to concepts students know . S/he makes sure that students have the prior knowledge for understanding area and perimeter.

Description of task :

Pre-task

- The teacher divides the class into small cooperative groups with 4 students each .Each group is given a poster-board on which different geometric figure formulas have been written.
- Each group is also given a set of copies of geometric figure pictures that should be attached to the poster-board. Students are told that they are to work together as a group to place the figures under the corresponding formulas .Students have 15 minutes to complete the task.

Task set-up

- Students are told to estimate the cost of carpeting the classroom. Students have 25 minutes to complete the task.
- Each group member is assigned a role.
- Identifier_Students identifies the correct geometric figure of the classroom and find the correct formula of that geometric figure on the poster-board.
- Calculator_ Student measures length, width or side of the classroom and calculate the area of the classroom.
- Time keeper_Student keeps track of time so that the group completes the task in the allotted time.
- Reporter_Student reports back to the whole class his/her group's estimated price for class carpeting
- Facilitator_Student keeps the group on task and makes sure that everyone does his/her duty.

Post-task

The presenter for each group briefly explains how the group estimated the cost of carpeting the classroom. The class discusses the groups' work. Throughout the discussion, the teacher encourages the use of language they have been practicing.

Assessment

Informal assessment occurs throughout the activities. The teacher may also decide to assess students' use of COL and CCL.