

Title: Content-based instruction for the multi-level LCTL classroom

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Abstract:

Teaching students of diverse backgrounds and competencies is always a challenge, but learner differences often seem magnified in the "second" Slavic or non-Slavic East European LCTL classroom where, given the exceptionally small class size, there can be no real middle, average or norm. The situation is only intensified at upper levels where, whether due to enrollment pressures or even pedagogical reasons, students of varying proficiencies (low intermediate, advanced, heritage) may be lumped into a single multi-level class. This paper will examine content-based instruction, an approach that emphasizes language as a tool for acquiring subject-area knowledge, as a way of addressing this problem. With thoughtful planning, content-based strategies can help accommodate a diverse student pool, allowing learners of different backgrounds and skill sets to interact and engage relevant cultural topics at their own level—just as we all do in real life. I will provide general strategies for creating content-based modules and tasks that vary input and output demands per students' linguistic preparation and will also present examples from one of my own theme-based courses for students of intermediate and advanced Czech.