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Students' Content Responsibility in Content Based Instruction (CBI) and Active Participation

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ABSTRACT

Content Based Instruction (CBI), which has become popular since 1990s, is a method that aims to teach the language through subject matter in other words the main focus is not on the langue but on the content.In content-based approaches the interaction of the subject matter and language give ways to better learning environment and the main focus of teaching is more on content topics than grammar rules, vocabulary teaching, or contextual situations. This study aimed to determine whether students' content responsibility in CBI would enhance their active participation in English lessons or not. The participants of the current study were 40 advanced level senior male students 20 of who were involved in the control group in one class, and the other 20 were involved in the experimental group. The experimental group carried out presentations related to the topics in the course book through which the students demonstrated their content responsibility. However, control group students were not assigned any content responsibilities. As a result of the study,it was found through the current study that when the classroom teachers assigned the students content responsibility in CBI, active participation of the class would increase. The research also demonstrated that language teachers might have insufficient knowledge for the content part of the CBI program, but through students' content responsibility, while promoting active participation of the class, language teachers can alleviate their inhibitions as for "content" part of CBI.

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Keywords:
Content based instruction, active participation, communicative language teaching

Introduction

Over the years, different methods and approaches to teach and learn the language have appeared and gone in and out of fashion (Griffiths, 2008). Among those approaches, the popular one is Communicative Language Teaching Approach, mostly known as CLT, which still has applications in recent teaching-learning environment (Richards, 2002). It is described as "Community Language Learning, which seeks to encourage teachers to see their students as whole persons with their feelings, intellect, interpersonal relationship, protective relations and desire to learn" (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p.89). Rodgers (2001) states that CLT make use of a variety of approaches such as The Natural Approach, Cooperative Language Learning, Content-Based Teaching, and Task-Based Teaching.

Among those communicative-based methodological alternatives, Content-Based Teaching, or commonly known as Content Based Instruction (CBI), is one of the alternatives which has become popular since 1990s (Stoller, 2002). For this new kind of approach, Duenas (2004) suggests that in content-based approaches the interaction of the subject matter and language give ways to better learning environment. In line with this statement, in the content based language teaching, the main focus of teaching is more on content topics than grammar rules, vocabulary teaching, or contextual situations.

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The purpose of this study is to determine whether the students' content responsibility in CBI enhances their active participation in English lessons or not. Even though there can be witnessed some studies on student responsibility and participation just as is mentioned in the current literature review, there have not been any studies which focus on increasing students' active participation in CBI, in which the students can see the classroom teacher insufficient in terms of content. Situated in this concern, the present paper aims to help fill this gap that exists in the current literature.

The current study aims to answer the following research question;

"Does students' content responsibility in CBI enhance their active participation in English lessons?"

Content Based Instruction

A variety of definitions for content based instruction have been provided in the literature. According to Brinton, Snow and Wesche (1989, p.2) "content based instruction is the integration of the content with language-teaching aims … the concurrent teaching of subject matter and second language skills". On the other hand, according to Stryker and Leaver (1997), CBI is a milestone that diverts the direction of teaching, from language to subject. In another study, Short (1993) states that teachers facilitate the content topics instead of using vocabulary and semantic rules.

Although Genesee (1994, p.3) suggests it "needs not be academic", what is defined as meaningful "content" is the things that are covered in the curriculum (Duenas, 2004). Research held about depth of processing (Anderson, 1990; Barsalou, 1992, as cited in Duenas, 2004) shows that the more the message is meaningful, the more it promotes learning. Grabe and Stoller (1997, p.11) state that "depth-of-processing research provides support for the integration of language and content instruction."

Despite the commonality of the definitions proposed by different researchers, the issue of content is open to debate. To form CBI, Swales (1980) puts an important role for the teacher and proposes that language teachers, content teachers and administrators should work together and make necessary changes towards the desired goal (as cited in Astika, 1999). In this respect, language teacher in the content based instruction program will have some problems such as learner factor and methodology. Moreover, Abbott (1978) states that the language teacher will have to face three issues including material writing, student motivation and responsibility of content. The students may have prejudgment about the material because they know the content very well as part of their academic subject or they can see the teacher having insufficient and inadequate knowledge.

In Tomsk Polytechnic University, which is one of the oldest technical universities of Russia, a study was conducted by Brent et al. (2012) to create an English teaching model that would prove to be successful in teaching English for nuclear security students while raising awareness and changing attitudes of university students towards tolerance and cooperation on issues of global importance. Therefore, the model was based on content-based instruction (CBI) which can bridge language proficiency and content mastery. While implementing the model, some challenges to CBI occurred. One of these challenges was the insufficient content proficiency of EFL teachers. The teachers could not communicate specific concepts of the related field. Thus, students lost their trust in acquiring language through content.

Teachers may be knowledgeable enough in the target language, however they may lack of subject matter quite normally. This condition, according to Khuwaileh (1996), may cause lack of self-confidence as a teacher. Gaffield-Vile (1996) points out the cooperation between the language teacher and the subject-matter instructor. However, this kind of collaboration is a hard work because it would be expensive in the sense of time and money and increase practical difficulties by reason of inherent dissimilarities between the language and subject disciplines. Adam-Smith (1980, p.46) says that "there are obvious massive difficulties in the way of establishing real team teaching between disciplines as dissimilar as English and Biochemistry or Mechanical Engineering, among them being near total mutual incomprehension of purpose, subject matter, and pedagogical and problems of basic attitude" (as cited in Astika, 1999).

Astika (1999) thinks that teachers must solve the puzzle and look for the best teaching method. In addition to all these statements, Marzano (2011) suggests that teachers are the key to what happens in the classroom. Alternative solution for the content part of CBI can be to give the students content responsibility.

Tatistcheff et al. (2008) identify that making use of students as a content specialist can fulfill the imperfections of the language teachers. This condition requires collaboration between students and language teacher. Related to the previous statement, Heath and Smyth (1999) point out that while collaborating with their teachers, the students begin to learn alongside their teachers in a co-learning environment (as cited in Tatischeff et al., 2008). Also, this can help students promote their participation in language teaching sessions.

Active Participation

According to Howard, Short and Clark (1996), participation is defined as the student's active engagement in the classroom to promote effective learning. However, participation cannot be defined in only one pattern. Mustapha and Rahman (2011), through their research, found that there are four basic patterns of participation; active participation, selective participation, minimal participation and passive participation. Yet, in general, they focus on active and passive participation. Within the scope of active participation, Majid et al. (2010) suggest that answering instructor's questions, making a comment on the topic under discussion, participation in small group discussions, and student presentations are some examples of overt participation of the students. On the other hand, Turner and Patrick (2004) argue that the participation of the students may not be gestural, which can be thought in the frame of passive participation. However, the latter is not explicit and observable. Besides, Turner and Patrick (2004) state that there are different factors that affect student participation such as students' motivation and the environment. In the sense of this statement, Elias and Schwab (2006, p.334) argue that "sharing responsibility with students increases their active participation to the lesson". Lave and Wenger (1991), by their model of situated learning, assert that learning is a communal activity succeeded by the interaction of both the teachers and the learners.

In Lincoln, Nebraska, United States, Timoney (2007) conducted a study in a high school. The researcher tried to increase students' active participation in the classroom to provide better understanding of the target subject. He stated the problem by saying "my students need to be more active in the classroom." He used observation and questionnaire to collect data as instruments. To increase students' active participation, he gave them oral presentation responsibility about some topics of the course. A total of 44 presentations were completed during that study. The result of the research showed that the students felt more comfortable during presentations and actively engaged in the classroom activities. Besides, in the implications part of the study, the researcher stated that that including student oral presentation in class was extremely beneficial. Students were building both responsibility, and as a result, their confidence in participating to the lesson.

Methodology

This paper is designed to explore whether students' content responsibility in CBI would increase their participation in English lessons or not. The method of the study is mixed-method. Namely, the researcher utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods together. The quantitative data come from observation by using class utterance tally sheet (see Appendix B). Also, qualitative data are acquired from self-administered questionnaire (see Appendix A). In this section, participants, setting, data collection and instrumentation, procedures, data analysis will be covered in detail.

Participants

As a sampling strategy, purposive sampling was used to select participants. Maxwell (1997, p.235) defines purposive sampling as "a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices". The participants in this study are 40 advanced(at least C1 on the CEFR) level male students who come from similar backgrounds. 20 of them are involved in the control group in one class, and the other 20 are involved in the experimental group in the other advanced group. They are all from Turkey. Namely, they are all Turkish students, and there are not any international ones.These participants are adult students with ages ranging from 21 to 23. Those included in this research are at advanced level. The students have been studying lessons in content-based instruction program for six semesters. For this semester, they have been studying English with aviation content.

Setting

The current study was undertaken in a public university which has military characteristics in Istanbul, Turkey, in which the students study in English language and their majors are aerospace, industrial, computer, electronic engineering, and administrative sciences. Although there are a few international students at this institution, the majority of students are domestic ones from similar backgrounds. Only Turkish students were included in this study since there were no international students in both control and experimental groups.

Data collection and instrumentation

In the study, the researcher used quantitative methods. In order to be able to acquire a perception for students' active participation in content based-instruction program from two standpoints, the initial step in providing data for the current study was class observation during the experimental period which lasted 5 weeks. For this purpose, the researcher used class utterance tally sheet through which both experimental and control group students' target utterances in the class were noted sensitively. Namely, they got a tally for each target utterance in the class. It means that off-content utterances were excluded such as asking for permission to go to the rest room during the class. For the last day of the experimental period, the researcher administered self-administrated questionnaire during the class time. For questionnaire, Paulhus and Vazire (2007) state that no one else has access to more information than oneself. The questionnaire that the researcher used in this study was adopted from the one created by Almanzor, Daguman, and Nicole (2009). The researchers tested validity and reliability of the items in the current questionnaire to measure students' view on the classroom participation. The questionnaire was administered to the students in both experimental group and control group.

In the questionnaire, there were 9 statements which were rated on a likert scale of 1 to 5 from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Besides, in the questionnaire, after each item, the students were provided with space to tell more. Thus, the researcher gave students an opportunity to comment about each item in the questionnaire.

Procedures

Experimental group. For three consecutive 45-minute class periods in an instructional week, English course which was designed in the principles of content- based instruction was offered to the students for one semester. The classroom teacher used "Aviation English for Cadets" (see Appendix C) book as the course book for this course. In the course book, there are 4 modules; Place, Plane, Flight, and An En Route Analysis. The researcher of the study was the classroom teacher. The experimental period covered the modules Plane and Flight, and it lasted 5 weeks totally. During this 5-week period, the experimental group carried out presentation. In other words, what they were responsible for content was actually carried out by the presentation of the topics of the mentioned modules.

The class was divided into 10 pairs. In Plane Module, there were 5 topics; aircraft components, how airplanes fly, flight basics, types of aircraft, and modern military aircraft. Also, in Flight Module, there were again 5 topics; language and air traffic control, and the ICAO alphabet and numbers, high frequency words/phrases in radio communications, IFR communication order, the phrases of radio communication at a flight, and Chicago Convention. For each pair, the classroom teacher assigned one topic, and for each week, two pairs were responsible for the assigned topics to present for the rest of the class. In addition, each presentation lasted approximately 30 minutes. They were free to use any kind of materials related to the topics assigned to them. Pairs found it useful to produce OHP, poster or some other visual aids as part of their presentation. They mostly used PowerPoint and videos to illustrate their topics.

When pairs were presenting their assigned topic, the teacher observed the active participation of the rest of the class. He noted down the number of times students voluntarily spoke. For this purpose, he used a class utterance tally sheet. He made sure that the students did not notice anything about tallies. Otherwise, effort of getting a tally could be another factor that could possibly promote their active participation.

Control group. The classroom teacher of the control group students was the same teacher. He was also the researcher himself. They were studying the same course book "Aviation English for Cadets". They also

had three consecutive 45-minute class periods in an instructional week. When the experimental group studied Plane Module and Flight Module, the experimental group students dealt with the same modules in the course book. Thus, in the same instructional week, they were provided the same topic in the modules. The only difference was the content responsibility. In other words, the experimental group was not assigned any responsibilities related to content, so they didn't present anything for their classmates. However, the teacher used the class utterance tally sheet for the active participation of the class. That is, students in the control group also got a tally for the number of times they voluntarily spoke, but student utterances unrelated to the content of the session were excluded. As in the case of the experimental group, the teacher made sure that the control group did not notice that they got a tally for their active participation.

Data Analysis

The data that were obtained through questionnaire was entered on to the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS). Through chi-square test, the results that experimental and control group obtained from the questionnaire were compared to see whether there were significant difference between two groups. Also, data from observation for which class utterance tally sheet was used for both experimental and control group were again entered into SPSS and the results were compared through one-way ANOVA to see if the difference between control and experimental groups was statistically significant.

Result

Observation

Table 1. Class utterance tallies one-way ANOVA results

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Between Groups df	Within Groups df	F	Sig. (2-tailed)
Experimental Group	39.55	12.9	1	38	4.76	.03
Control Group	31.00	11.8				

Table 1 above summarizes the results of the class utterance tallies on One-Way ANOVA that the researcher obtained by observing the two classes in 5-week period by means of class utterance tally sheet. It is quite clear that there is a statistically significant difference between the means of experimental group and control group's tallies because the observed p-value is < 0.5 [$F(1, 38) = 4.76$, $p = 0.035$]. In other words, the mean tally for the experimental group reliably exceeded that for control group on class utterance tally sheet.

Questionnaire

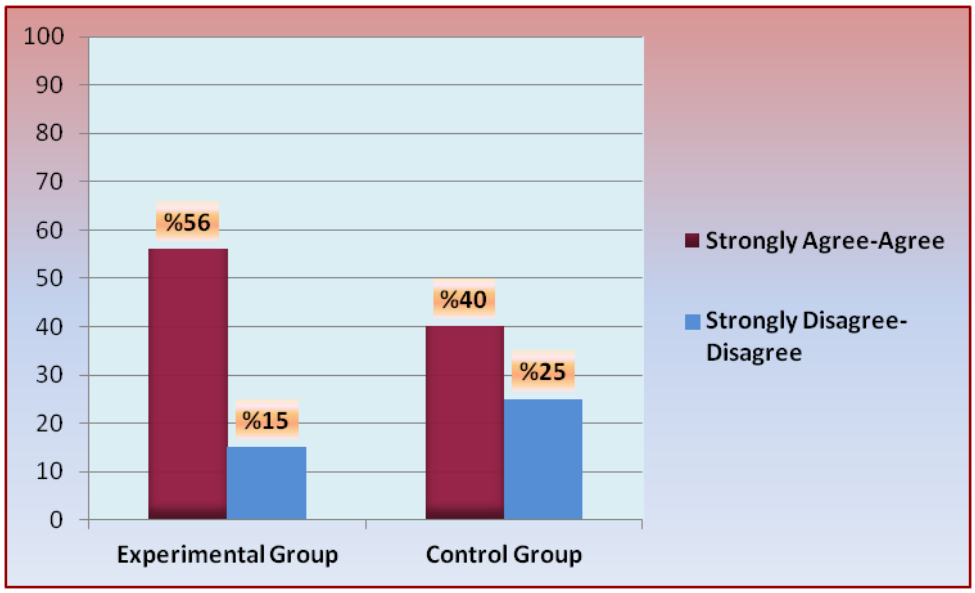
Table 2. Participation questionnaire Chi-Square tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10,053[a]	4	.04

a. 0 cells (0,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.

According to Table 2., it can be seen that chi square statistic (x2) is "10.053", degrees of freedom (df) is "4", and it is also known that the predetermined alpha level of significance is "0.05". When it is entered the chi-square distribution table with 4 degree of freedom and read along the row, it can be found that the observed value of x2 (10.053) lies above 9.49, which is the critical value at the level of 0.05. That means that the observed p-value (0.04) is below "0.05". Since a p-value of 0.04 is less than the conventionally accepted significance level of 0.05 (i.e. $p < 0.05$), there is a statistically significant difference in the questionnaire results of experimental and control group.

Graph 1 also reveals that while 56 percent of those in the experimental group chose "strongly agree" and "agree" options in the questionnaire, 40 percent of those in the control group chose the same options. Besides, while 15 percent of those in the experimental group chose "disagree" and "strongly disagree", 25 percent of those in the control group chose the same options. These numbers also show the difference between the two groups.



Graph 1. Comparison of experimental and control group for participation questionnaire results

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to determine whether the students' content responsibility in CBI promotes their active participation in English lessons or not. The findings of the current study suggest that there is a positive relationship between students' content responsibility in CBI and their active participation in English lessons. For example, the result of the observation shows that active participation of the experimental group students to whom content responsibility was assigned via topic presentations of the related module in the course book significantly exceeded control group students' active participation in the class.This result completely supports the idea that the more meaningful the message the more it promotes learning (Anderson, 1990; Barsalou, 1992, as cited in Duenas, 2004).

Also, the result of the questionnaire which was administered to acquire students' individual perception supported the result of the data obtained from class observation. The questionnaire results indicate that more than half of the experimental group students agree that they were active participant of the class, and 15 percent of them did not agree that they were active participant in the class.

Tatistcheff et al. (2008) argued that making use of students as a content specialist is one way to support the teachers. By virtue of engineering students, that are the target of the current study, the materials prepared by the experimental group also resulted in increase of the participation. Furthermore, the data obtained from the observation unveil that during the presentation by means of which content responsibility of students was carried out; the students got more engaged with the materials based on their own interest relevant to the topic assigned to them such as update and recent videos related to the topics.

It should be also noted that the findings of the current study regarding promoting active participation through allocating responsibilities to students about the things that they were concerned are consistent with findings of study done by Timoney (2007) that discovered when the students were given responsibility related to content of the course, their active participation in the class increased.

This finding of the current study has also endorsed the finding of the study done by Brent et al. (2012) where it was found that the students might lose their trust in acquiring language through content due to the insufficient content proficiency of EFL teachers, which was considered one of the challenges in the model of CBI for EFL teachers.

Implications

Based on the aforementioned findings, some valuable implications can be derived from the study. These implications have been categorized into two sections: pedagogical implication for teachers and management.

Pedagogical Implications for Teachers

Teachers play a key role to create effective teaching environment. Considering their limitations in CBI, especially in content part, teachers should find relevant ways to help learners participate into lessons. As is seen in the study, the students were assigned different topics that they are interested in. Also, the teacher paired the students. Similarly, class teachers should feel free to apply group studies, discussions, and debates through which students can concentrate on the content more effectively.

Pedagogical Implications for Management

The main role of the management is to create necessary atmosphere so that students and teachers can be in a kind of collaboration in CBI courses. While planning courses, the management of the school should take these specific features of CBI classes into account. They should be open to teachers' projects about increasing students' participation in the class. Also, if needed, they should attempt to redesign CBI course books aiming to enhance participation of the students.

Conclusion

This study investigated whether students' content responsibility in CBI would enhance their active participation in English lessons or not. The results of the current study provided evidence that when the classroom teachers assign content responsibility to the students in CBI, it will help students promote their active participation in English lessons. In particular, this can also help the language teachers in CBI alleviate their inhibitions as for "content" part of CBI. Especially, language teachers teaching in CBI can benefit from students' content responsibility in their classes. Apart from these, this study did not deal with the relationship between students' content responsibility and their success in CBI. Therefore, further research should be conducted whether there is a relationship between students' content responsibility and their success in CBI.

Limitations

In the current study, there were no female students because of the military characteristics of the school. Thus, it was not possible to analyze the data according to gender. Besides, the study was only conducted with advanced level senior students. The result might be different for other level students or other grades. In addition, the study was on too small a scale to draw a certain conclusion.

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Appendices

Appendix A

A Questionnaire on Students' View on Classroom Participation in English Lessons in CBI

Gender : Male Female

Age : 21 22 23 23+

Please rate the following statements according to your opinion

1. I disrupt the class discussion to ask a question.					
1	**2**	**3**	**4**		**5**
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Comments:					
2. I answer the teacher's questions during class discussions in complete thoughts.					
1	**2**	**3**	**4**		**5**
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Comments:					
3. I make comments during a lull in the general discussion or conversation.					
1	**2**	**3**	**4**		**5**
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Comments:					
4. I make comments aloud, even though the question was directed to someone else.					
1	**2**	**3**	**4**		**5**
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Comments:					
5. I ask my teacher whenever I don't understand something in class.					
1	**2**	**3**	**4**		**5**
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Comments:					
6. I ask others about their insights of the lessons in class.					
1	**2**	**3**	**4**		**5**
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Comments:					
7. I suggest other possible keywords to my classmates to help them review.					
1	**2**	**3**	**4**		**5**
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Comments:					
8. I correct others' mistaken definitions of key terms.					
1	**2**	**3**	**4**		**5**
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Comments:					
9. I voluntarily raise my hand for class recitations.					
1	**2**	**3**	**4**		**5**
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Comments:					

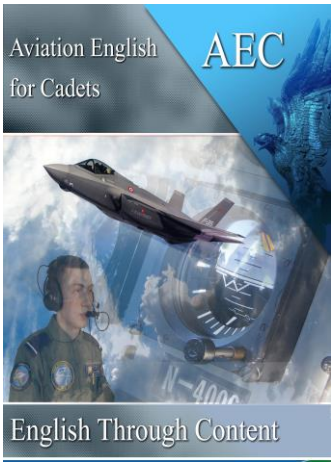
This questionnaire was adapted from the one created by Almanzor, Daguman, and Nicole (2009). The researchers tested validity and reliability of the items in the current questionnaire to measure students' view on the classroom participation

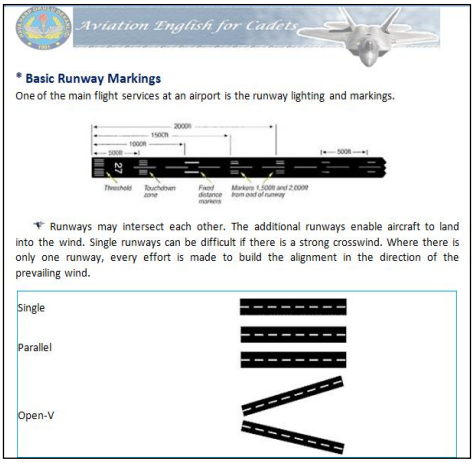
Appendix B

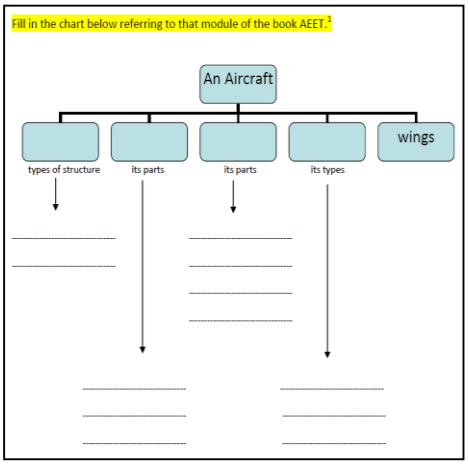
CLASS UTTERANCE TALLY SHEET

TALLY NUMBER / NAME	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70
CİHAN	𝍸	𝍸	𝍸	𝍸	𝍸	𝍸	𝍸	𝍸	𝍸	𝍸	𝍸	𝍸	𝍸	II
HAKAN	𝍸	𝍸	𝍸	𝍸	𝍸	𝍸	𝍸	𝍸	III					
KAAN	𝍸	𝍸	𝍸	𝍸										
...														
...														
...														
...														

Appendix C


Aviation English
for Cadets
AEC
English Through Content


Aviation English for Cadets
* Basic Runway Markings
One of the main flight services at an airport is the runway lighting and markings.
Runways may intersect each other. The additional runways enable aircraft to land into the wind. Single runways can be difficult if there is a strong crosswind. Where there is only one runway, every effort is made to build the alignment in the direction of the prevailing wind.
Single
Parallel
Open-V


Fill in the chart below referring to that module of the book AEET.[1]
An Aircraft
wings
types of structure
its parts
its parts
its types