

THE IMPORTANCE OF USING INTEGRATED METHODS IN TEACHING ENGLISH

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Abstract: Integrating the main four language skills means combining reading, writing listening and speaking in foreign language teaching in the classroom. In some cases, teachers separate language skills and highlight just one skill at a time. That was often for instructional purposes but even if it were possible to develop one or two skills effectively in the absence of the other language skills at the beginning stages, this does not ensure real communication using the language in which not only all the language skills but also communicative skills are employed simultaneously. In a normal situation, people use all language skills to communicate so experts in foreign language teaching have been moving in recent years toward integrating the four main language skills in EFL classes..

Keywords: integrated study skills, integrative approach, language skills, communication, EFL class, integrated methods.

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All new courses which are being created nowadays seem to integrate these language skills with communicative skills to improve learners' communicative competence using accurate and fluent language.

An integrative approach is the approach of teaching language skills simultaneously. This means the four macro skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) are taught concurrently. Richards and Rogers (2001) define it as "integrated language skills teaching approach is "the teaching of the language skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking in conjunction with each other as when a lesson involves activities that relate listening and speaking to reading and writing." According to Afnan, (2014), integrating language teaching approach is vital technique for effective language learning. This technique refers to including two or more than two language skills, in a lesson/ task. Richards and Schmidt (2010) as cited in Afnan 2014 also define this approach as relating reading, writing, speaking, and listening together in activity that can be taught via a holistic method. Integrating language skills teaching can be described as a whole-language approach or a multi-skill syllabus. This is because the approach teaches all the language skills together.

Integrated language skills teaching approach is a whole language approach. That is, if a lesson deals with reading skills, then, it will also deal with listening, speaking, and writing skills. It emphasizes on communication purpose in addition to academic success (Hungyo and Kijai 2009 as cited in Elena and Lorena 2011). The

four English language skills can be taught integratively in the actual classroom situation via integrative approach. For example, by practicing conversational skills the learner can focus not only on speaking but also listening, in order to reply and ask appropriate follow-up questions. All language skills are considered and to be essential components to develop the communicative competence of students, the skills should be taught together via interactive language teaching approach. Thus, the approach advocates integration of all language skills in actual classroom situation (Crystal, 2003). In other words, integrated language skill teaching approach is the natural way of learning a language. In real life communication, language skills are rarely used in isolation; it is a rare situation where one of the four skills occurs alone. For example, to engage in a conversation, one needs to be able to speak and comprehend at the same time (Jing, 2006).

Reasons for Integrating the Four Main Language Skills:

- By integrating the four skills, the students experiment and take risks with learning the foreign language which makes learning more lovely and productive.
- By integrating the four skills, we are providing a certain input that becomes a basis for further intake, which in turn will become a new output.
 - Production and reception are two sides of the same coin.
 - Interaction means sending and receiving messages.
 - Written and spoken languages have a relationship with each other.
 - This Integration will reflect the interrelationship between language, culture, and society.
- By inviting all four skills into an activity, we focus on what learners can do with a language.
 - Of course, one skill will reinforce another.
 - The integration of all the four skills can contribute toward a more real-life environment for both teachers and learners, the thing which may make learning more meaningful and motivating.
- The integration will ensure that students will learn to use English both fluently and accurately.
- Teaching integratively support the connections between language and the way we feel, think and act.

How to Integrate the Four Main Language Skills in Teaching process:

- Aim ultimately to preserve accuracy while still making use of authentic communicative activities for the students.
- Use the “PPP” (Present, Practice, Produce) approach. This is basically a structural approach that incorporates a final ‘free production’ stage where learners have the chance to use the structure they have practised in a communicative activity where they primarily focused on meaning.

- Use the communicative activities in which students produce certain structures according to certain real-life situations. While they do so, provide feedback to encourage students to use grammar accurately.
- When presenting and practicing new linguistic items, provide communicative activities to reinforce students moving from “controlled practice’ to “free production”
- Always present new language to students in rich contexts. Always provide them with situations in which they can practice the language, through role-playing, acting out scenes, or by asking and answering questions.

In order to integrate the language skills in ESL/EFL instruction, teachers should consider taking these steps:

* Learn more about the various ways to integrate language skills in the classroom (content-based, task-based, or a combination).

* Reflect on their current approach and evaluate the extent to which the skills are integrated.

* Choose instructional materials, textbooks, and technologies that promote the integration of listening, reading, speaking, and writing, as well as the associated skills of syntax, vocabulary, and so on.

* Even if a given course is labeled according to just one skill, remember that it is possible to integrate the other language skills through appropriate tasks.

* Teach language learning strategies and emphasize that a given strategy can often enhance performance in multiple skills.

Progressive Functional Skill Integration

The four macro skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) are all part of normal language proficiency and use. They can also work together in language acquisition, and the phrase integrated skills is commonly used to describe curricula that develop the skills in parallel fashion.

FOCAL SKILLS integrates the skills in a particularly effective way: by exploiting certain skills as tools for developing others. Progressive Functional Skill Integration refers to the logical, systematic integration of the skills in accordance with their potential uses in the classroom.

These considerations lead to the following principles:

*Students should have good listening comprehension before working on reading, writing, and academic skills.

*Students should have good reading comprehension before working on writing and academic skills.

*Students should have good writing ability before working on academic skills.

*Speaking should be encouraged throughout the process of acquiring English, especially after good listening comprehension has been attained.

The disciplined order of development set forth in these principles intensifies the efficiency of language acquisition, since students are always working on their weak skills from a position of strength.

Conclusion

Integrating language skills helps language learners to develop their ability in using two or more of the four skills within real context and also in their real life. All the language skills are vital in teaching and learning process and combination of the language skills has positive effects on student success. It is important to understand that the main purpose of integrating the four language skills is developing real-life communication, which means that it is very important to provide students with authentic materials and create real-life situations to increase opportunities for real communication and continuous practice in order to gain both fluency and accuracy in using the language.

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