

INTEGRATING LANGUAGE SKILLS IN TEACHING ENGLISH

Annotation: Teaching languages in integration demands certain skills of the teacher and is compared to the art where colours create a masterpiece. A skillful teacher is like an artist who can combine different colours in a beautiful picture. The article reveals the advantages of teaching languages integrating all four skills and shows its disadvantages as well.

Key words: integration, approach, teacher, skill, learner, colour, painting, reading, writing, listening, speaking, artist.

Developing students' abilities in learning English language depends on the effective way of arranging a class and how to teach the language skills to students. Integrated approach for the development of communicative skills of the classroom, in which the four skills in the acquisition of the knowledge of a foreign language can be taught in a coherent way, practiced together.

One image for teaching English as a second or foreign language is that of a masterpiece of an artist. For producing a beautiful, colourful masterpiece, all of the colours must cooperate with the idea and must be painted in positive ways. For example, the teacher's teaching style must address the learning style of the learner, the learner must be motivated and the setting must provide resources and values that strongly support the teaching of the language. However, if the colours are not chosen effectively, the word is likely to be not recognizable as a masterpiece at all.

In addition to the four colours mentioned above – teacher, learner, setting, and languages- other important colours exist in the masterpiece. In a practical way, one of the most significant of these colours consists of the four primary skills of listening, reading, speaking, and writing. This colour also includes associated or related skills such as knowledge of vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, syntax, meaning, and usage.

If this painting does not occur effectively and the colours do not correspond to each other, they may destroy the work, as segregated skills. This is sometimes known as the segregated skill approach. In this approach, the emphasis is not on learning for authentic communication.

By examining segregated skill instruction, we can see the advantages of integrating the skills and move toward improving teaching for English language learners.

Segregated-skill approach. In the segregated skill approach reading and speaking is seen as the key to successful learning, and language learning is typically separate from content learning. Segregated skill is reflected in traditional ESL\EFL programs that offer classes focusing on segregated language skill. Why do they offer such classes? Perhaps teachers and administrators think it is logistically easier to present courses on writing divorced from speaking or on listening isolated from reading. They may believe that it is instructionally impossible to concentrate on more than one skill at a time. One of the examples of segregating skills is the grammar-translation method, which teaches students to analyze grammar and to translate from one language to another. This method restricts language learning to a very narrow, non-communicative range that does not prepare students to use the language in everyday life.

Very frequently, experts demonstrate strategies as though they were linked to only one particular skill, such as reading or writing. However, it can be confusing or misleading to believe that a given strategy is associated with only one specific language skill. Many strategies, such self-evaluating, asking questions, analyzing, planning, and predicting are applicable across skill areas. Teaching students to improve their learning strategies in one skill area can often enhance performance in all language skills.

Fortunately, in many cases where the language is taught by a single skill, the segregation of language skills might be only partial. If the teacher is creative, the segregated way of teaching skills may involve integrated skills. For example, in a

course on intermediate reading, the teacher probably gives all of the directions orally in English, thus causing students to use their listening ability to understand the assignment. In this course, students may discuss their readings, thus employing speaking and listening skills and certain associated skills, such as pronunciation, syntax, and social usage. Students might be asked to summarize and analyze readings in written form, thus activating their writing skills. In a real sense, the, some courses that are labeled according to one specific skill might actually reflect an integrated-skill approach after all.

Advantages of the integrated-skill approach. The integrated skill approach, as contrasted with the segregated approach exposes English language learners to authentic language and challenges them to interact naturally in the language. This approach stresses that English is not just an object of academic interest and a key to pass an examination; instead, English becomes a real means of interaction and sharing ideas among people. This approach allows teachers to track students' progress in multiple skills at the same time. Integrating the language skills also teaches the learning of real content, not just the analyses of the language forms. Finally, the integrated skill approach can be highly motivating to students of all ages and backgrounds.

Integrating the language skills. In our point of view, in order to integrate the language skills, teachers should:

- * Learn more about the various ways to integrate language skills in the classroom
- * 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.
- * Integrate the other language skills through appropriate tasks, even if a given course is focused on just one skill.

However, teaching of integrated language skills can also have a number of disadvantages (McDonough and Shaw 003; Widdowson, 1978, 1993; 2003). To

begin with, a curriculum that concentrates on a single language skill at a time can permit more focused teaching and more intensive learning.

Additionally, complex integrated instruction with more than two language skills addressed in tandem places greater demands on both the teacher and the learner. Curricula and syllabi that integrate a range of language skills require the teacher well-trained. At the same time, teachers can be expected to devote more time and effort to preparing materials appropriate for integrated instruction. In many regions around the world, where teachers are required to teach very large classes, the teaching of integrated skills may not be a very practical option. Another notable disadvantage of integrated instruction is that many learners have unevenly developed proficiencies across the four macro-skills (Hinkel, 2002; 2003; Stern, 1983). For example, second language learners who live in English-speaking countries may have stronger skills in listening and speaking than in reading and writing. Conversely, English as a foreign language learners are better readers and writers than listeners and speakers. For this reason, teaching integrated skills can become complicated, when instructional materials and practice have to account for a considerable variance in learners' abilities.

In conclusion, we can say that with careful reflection and planning, any teacher can integrate the language skills and strengthen the masterpiece of language teaching and learning. When the masterpiece is worked well, learners can use English effectively for communication.

THE LIST OF USED LITERATURE

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