

INTEGRATING THE LANGUAGE LEARNING SKILLS FOR AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AMONG ENGINEERING RURAL ENTRANTS

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Abstract: Integration of skills and an integrating approach for the effectiveness of communication in the classroom, where the four skills are woven in the acquisition of knowledge of English language can be taught in a coherent way, and practiced together, with a distinction of the importance of one upon the other. Integrating the language skills also promotes the learning of real content, not just the dissection of language forms for a proficient language speaker. The human race has fashioned two forms of productive performance, oral and written, and two forms of receptive performance, aural (or auditory) and reading which the full scrutinies of integrated-skills are involved. Many educationalists stress the importance of building new knowledge and skill what the students already know and able to do. So, if students are able to read a short story, this listening skill will help them to write their own story. In the same way, if they can understand a dialogue about buying things in a shop, they can use this as a model for practicing their own speaking skills in a similar situation. Also, integrating the skills allows building in more variety into the lesson because the range of activities will be wider. Instead of just having listening, the students can have speaking, reading and writing practice. This can raise their motivation to learn English. Four skills activities in the language classroom serve many valuable purposes like giving learners an immense support, opportunities to create, contexts in which to use the language for exchanges of real information, evidence of their own ability and, most important, confidence. Above all, integrating the skills means that the learners have to work at the level of realistic communication, not just at the level of vocabulary and sentence patterns. This Paper also explores on realistic communication which is the aim of the communicative approach and many researchers believe that handling realistic communication is an integral part of essential conditions for language learning.

Keywords: Integrated Approach, Productive, Receptive, Realistic communication.

Introduction: Integrating the language learning skills is one of the effective communicative approaches in learning a language effectively to achieve a realistic communication. The ability to understand spoken English is fundamental for the development of reading, writing, and speaking. Reading ability is essential to the growth of writing ability. Speaking skills are built gradually on the foundation of the other skills, especially listening. All four skills contribute to academic performance.

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 main focus of learning a language lies on listening and speaking which later interconnected with the acquisition of reading and writing skills. Learners get drilled with the elicited systematic patterns of spoken language to replace their first-language "habits" with second language behaviors.

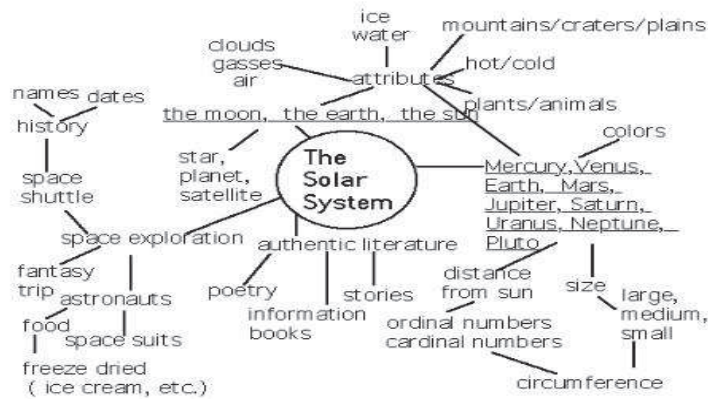
Integrated Skill Approach: Teachers have been studying the ways of enabling learners to use English freely, effectively, and as far as possible accurately, in realistic communication, which has become not only the major goal of all English language teaching (ELT), but also the students' main concern when they make their efforts to study English. Integration of the four skills can develop communicative competence by focusing on the real life situation which is the main purpose behind teaching and learning any language. As discussed above, a learner or the person whose requisite becomes strong accordingly the habitat to communicate him, speaking alone plays a crucial part rather than remaining three skills. Nevertheless a student needs to meet a goal which is called, "Communicative competence" that includes both the knowledge about the language and the knowledge about how to use the language appropriately in communicative situations. In the real life we simultaneously use more than one language skills for communication.

Integration of the four skills emphasizes the focus on realistic language and can help the Language Teachers in developing communicative competence amongst the learners of English. The integration helps a teacher add up more variety into the lesson because the range of activities will be wider. Successful integrative approach helps a Language Teacher make the lessons dynamic; involve the

learners in diverse activities and interactions. This makes students actively participates in class activities. A vivid and effective communicative class is supposed to be involving the integration of the four language

skills, in which the teacher needs to establish a positive atmosphere, plan appropriate activities, encourage learners and deal with problems sensitively.

MODELS OF SKILLS INTEGRATION



“The integrated-skill approach, as contrasted with the purely segregated approach, exposes English language learners to authentic language and challenges them to interact naturally in the language. Learners rapidly gain a true picture of the richness and complexity of the English language as employed for communication”. (Oxford, 2001)

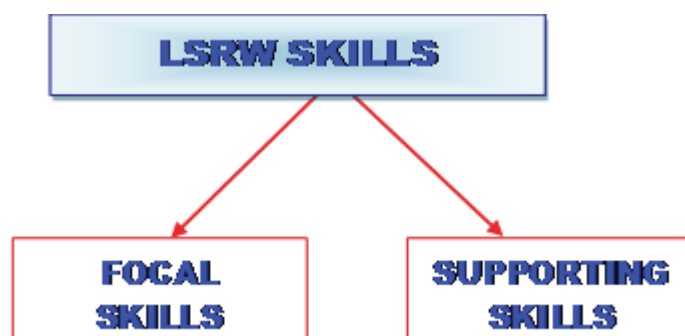
INTEGRATED SKILLS

Integrating the skills comes under working at the level of realistic communication, which is the aim of communicative approach and many researchers believe that handling realistic communication is an

integral part of essential conditions for language learning:

- Using the language to exchange meanings
- Experiencing a rich but comprehensible input of real spoken and written language.
- It focuses on discourse which is in realistic communication

The integrated approach varies according to the necessity of the learners and environment. Hence a frame work is needed to formulate the learning of these skills.



The four macro skills (listening, speaking, reading, and 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.

Supporting Skills are language skills that can be used to support work on a focal skill. As outlined above, listening can be used to support work that is focused on all other skills; reading supports work

focused on writing; and so on. A skill that has developed to the supporting level can normally continue to develop through regular use, and no longer requires focused attention.

The Focal Skill Approach in English language classroom: It is a set of well-researched ideas, principles, and techniques that can be used to revitalize the language program and energize our stuff. The goal of the focal skill approach in the language classroom stresses the balanced development of listening, speaking, reading and writing by measuring competency in each skill and then focusing on the development of the weakest skill. Resources like those developed by the International Center for Focal Skills (ICFS) use placement tests to identify weak skill areas. Hence the weak area of determining a student's level among these LSRW skills and then assigning the student the required task they need. FOCAL SKILLS includes program design principles and specific guidelines, recommendations for teaching methodologies and materials, and a placement test system. Four skills can be used simultaneously with the proper structure of approaches in particular to enhance a learner. These approaches are:

- ✓ Focal skill approach
- ✓ Content-based instruction
- ✓ Task-based instruction
- ✓ Project-based approach

Content-Based Instruction (Cbi): Content-based instruction has been widely used as a language teaching approach, and its "popularity and wider applicability have increased dramatically since the early 1990s" (Stoller, 2002). Content-based instruction (CBI) is defined as "the integration of content with language teaching aims" (Brinton, S now, Wesche, 1989). Language is used as a medium for learning content and content as a resource for learning and improving language (Stoller, 2002). CBI is "teaching a content area in the target language wherein students acquire both language and subject matter knowledge" (Dupuy, 2000,).

In CBI the focus is on the use of subject matter or topic not on the language form, therefore teachers use content topics rather than grammar rules, vocabulary spheres, operative functions or contextual situations as the framework for instruction (Duenas, 2004).

Similarly, Short (1993) points out that, "In content -based instruction, language teachers use content topics rather than grammar rules or vocabulary lists, as the scaffolding for instruction" (p.629).

In the content -based class, students are tested on content, not language; thus the focus is always on meaning, not form. Knowing that they will be tested on content, students will not be tempted to review their grammar and memorize long lists of vocabulary

words, but rather will listen closely to lectures, participate in discussions, do topic -related readings, and acquire a great deal of language in the process. Keeping students motivated and interested are two important factors underlying content-based instruction. Motivation and interest are crucial in supporting student success with challenging, informative activities that support success and which help the student learn complex skills (Grabe & Stoller, 1997). When students are motivated and interested in the material they are learning, they make greater connections between topics, elaborations with learning material and can recall information better (Alexander, Kulikowich, & Jetton, 1994; Krapp, Hidi, & Renninger, 1992). In short, when a student is intrinsically motivated the student achieves more. This in turn leads to a perception of success, of gaining positive attributes which will continue a circular learning pattern of success and interest.

As an example, the theme is on "Insects" decided by the teacher to discuss in the classroom as an activity.

Building background knowledge: Before entering directly to the topic the teacher can question the students in general related to the content, in order to have a schematic understanding. (Listening skills)

Enhancing Critical Thinking Ability: To be wider on the topic the teacher asks the students to write, a. "Insects which are helpful, b. Insects which are harmful c. Insects which eat other insects d. Insects which eat vegetation" relatively on the topic. They can answer with another set of sample topics Ants, Bee, Caterpillars, and Bugs etc. (Writing Skills)

Vocabulary Development: Study of insects - Entomology (Reading skills)

Promote Co-Operative Learning: Students are divided into groups and asked to find out more about the study of insects in the library to participate in Group Discussion and other information regarding the topic.(Speaking skills)

Task-Based Instruction: In task-based instruction, students participate in communicative tasks in English. Tasks are defined as activities that can stand alone as fundamental units and that require comprehending, producing, manipulating, or interacting in authentic language while attention is principally paid to meaning rather than form (Nunan, 1989).

Vocabulary pertaining to different fields and particular area can be learnt easily without memorizing as the students are getting involved in an activity. In task-based instruction, basic pair work and group work are often used to increase student interaction and collaboration. For instance, students work together to write and edit a class newspaper, develop a television commercial, enact scenes from a play, or take part in other joint tasks and even in a

role play. More structured cooperative learning formats can also be used in task-based instruction. Task-based instruction is relevant to all levels of language proficiency, but the nature of the task varies from one level to the other. Tasks become increasingly complex at higher proficiency levels. For instance, beginners might be asked to introduce each other and share one item of information about each other. More advanced students might do more intricate and demanding tasks, such as taking a public opinion poll at school, the university, or a shopping mall.

Illustration of an activity through TBL:

Task 1: Assigning students the task of “Your Observations at Bank”

1. Giving them a couple of days to attend the lab after observation at the Bank.
2. Students form a group to perform a role play as their observation.

Outcome: Through this social activity their organizational skills, speaking skills and sense of teamwork will be improved. (Listening skills)

Task 2: Assigning them into groups and asking to write the related vocabulary terms used in Bank giving them “Vocabulary at Bank” (Reading skills)

1. Asking the students to write the words they heard and suggesting word list.
2. Interacting and explaining the vocabulary terms like Bank statement, Bankruptcy, Challan, pay-in-slip, ledger, credit, debit, Bank charges, denominations etc.
3. Discussing related words like Debt, Insurance, Education loan, Atm withdrawal, deposit etc.,

Outcome: Through this activity their fluency, usage of appropriate words, synonyms will be improved.

As seen above, number of activities conducting seminar and discussions can be created by the teacher according to the situations so that enrichment of language usage, new words are known to the students.

Project Based Instruction (Pbl): Project-based learning is a dynamic classroom approach in which students actively explore real-world problems and challenges and acquire a deeper knowledge. It is student-centered, student-driven and gives space for teachers to meet the needs of students in a variety of ways. This approach concretizes the integration of not only the four skills but also language, culture, experience and learning strategies (Turnbull, 1999). With the careful selection of a final project that requires learners to demonstrate what they have learned through both oral and written production, the teacher plans backwards to identify what aspects of language, culture, experience and learning strategies are required to complete the end project. A

number of researchers and educational theorists have adopted the principles of project-based learning as a foundation for related methodologies (Knoll, 1997; Prince & Felder, 2006). The goal of these methodologies is to move education toward more student centered, inquiry-based, active learning methods. The intent is to help students become self-directed learners who can apply sound higher-order thinking skills. Meyer (2004) describes three broad inquiry-based approaches that emerged as a response to the rise of constructivist ideas about learning in the 1960's: inquiry on the basis of understanding problem-solving rules based on the work of Jerome S. Bruner; in the 1970's, Jean Piaget's conservation of strategies applied to problem solving. Integration of skills takes place here which include skills such as:

- Creativity and Innovation
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Communication and Collaboration
- Flexibility and Adaptability
- Initiative and Self-Direction
- Leadership and responsibility

Project Based Activity: Project Based instruction is more effective in teaching science, social and Political subjects which involve the teacher and students in a collection. The teacher along with the students may go for a short trip, picnic to attain the effectiveness of learning. But while coming to the English Language Project Based Activity simple topics can be assigned which is realistic and practical orientation of learning.

Task: HOW ATM WORKS?: Teachers involve along with students to make the instruction effective.

1. Students can also explain with video and picture collection through projectors, chart etc.,
2. Five days can be given for preparation and the project can be presented in the language lab.

Outcome: Integrating LSRW skills and soft skills can be attained and through this a high level of interest is seen in learning the language in a sensible and realistic manner.

Conclusion: Above all, integrated way of teaching enhances the learning with great motivation and the outcome of latent talents in and among the students is highly visible through these activities. Learning becomes more interested and easy through this integrated skills approach. Realistic communication develops through this life oriented practical activities which is the main part of Communicative Competence. A final outlook, integrating language learning strategy instruction into language classrooms is a challenge that all language teachers should take because not only does it help learners become more efficient in their efforts to learn a second or foreign language, but also provides a meaningful way to focus one's teaching efforts.

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