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THE ROLE OF INTEGRATED SKILLS APPROACH IN
LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract: *The article depicts using a "Communicative Language Teaching" approach, Integrated abilities concentrates on the four primary English language abilities of speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Conversational or real-world contexts are used to teach new language patterns. Students will practice their English through a variety of exercises in reading and writing, role-playing, listening exercises, and thought-provoking conversations.*

Key words: *speaking, writing, listening, and reading, content-based language teaching and task-based language teaching.*

Introduction

The integrated skills approach emphasizes that interaction is both the means and the essential goal of language learning. Therefore, learning activities should be directed to enable the students to communicate the message in terms of its meaning, instead of concentrating exclusively on grammatical perfection or phonetics. In relation to this, the students' mastery of the language they are learning is evaluated in terms of how much they have developed their communicative abilities and competencies. To enable the students to develop their communicative abilities and competencies, the language components and skills must not be separated. Hinkel (2010) accentuated that a language may need to be broken into parts to study it. However, to use the language, we need to integrate the skills and components. In line with this, Harmer (2007) accentuated that both of the receptive skills and the productive skills are two sides of the same coin. They cannot be separated because one skill can reinforce another in various ways.

Integrated Language Skills Teaching Types Integrated language skills teaching is differentiated into two types: content-based language teaching and task-based language teaching. However, a hybrid of the two types is possible to use as an alternative. In content-based language teaching, students practice language skills while engaging with activities focusing on a specific subject. In task-based language teaching, students are involved in activities that require comprehending, producing, manipulating, or interacting in authentic language while attention is principally oriented to meaning rather than form (Nunan, 1989). The students work together to solve a problem, complete a task, create a product and etc. Therefore, learning takes places through social activity. Structured





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cooperative learning techniques (e.g., peer editing and sequence chains) are often employed in task-based teaching. Content-based Language Teaching Content-based language instruction is probably the most frequently used mode of language skills integration. In this mode, students practice language skills while engaging with activities focusing on subjects such as education, physics, culture or science. In other words, all the language skills are practiced in a highly integrated, communicative manner while the students are studying the contents of certain subjects. The main objective is to develop students' communicative competence in the target language, and the secondary goal is students' mastery of content knowledge of the subjects being learned. In Communicative Language Teaching method, the term 'content' refers to two things: the functions or the communicative purposes for which students use the target language (e.g., making introduction, invitation, greeting, interviewing, etc.) and the use of subject matters for second/foreign language teaching purposes. In content based language teaching, a topic or a theme of the subject matter is employed as a basic building block to unify language skills. In other words, language skills are interwoven around the common topic/theme being learned (Brown, 2001; Robson, 2002). Content-based language teaching includes three major models of language teaching, i.e., theme-based language teaching model, adjunct language teaching model, and the sheltered model (Oxford, 2002). In the theme-based model, language skills are interconnected to the study of a theme or a topic (which was carefully selected to ensure it very interesting to students and offers a wide variety of language skills to be practiced, particularly in communicating about the topic), which serves as the context for language use. In the teaching-learning process, the language skills 'revolve' around a common theme/topic; and the theme serves as 'catalyst' to join two or more language skills. Since the themes or topics that are suitable for elementary, intermediate, and advanced grade levels are relatively easy to find on the internet, theme/topic-based language teaching is applicable at any grade levels. It is even suitable for heterogeneous sets of learners. That's why it is the most helpful and frequently used form of content-based language teaching.

Main body

All fundamental abilities and subskills are improved by integrating skills into learning. The majority of pupils overlook the value of writing since it facilitates greater comprehension and assimilation of information. It is important to remember that integrating skills helps students understand a foreign language throughout their studies and fosters their capacity for free thought. Some kids can learn a foreign language just by reading and listening, but for the others, it's a more difficult and drawn-out process that takes a lot of time and focus. However, for all of them, writing is the most difficult yet crucial task because it is just as significant as speaking, listening, and reading. Pupils should be able to put words together to form phrases, statements, into a complete and meaningful text, write e-mails and letters.





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They should understand the fundamentals of writing and how to correctly enunciate words when speaking. Let's look at some instructional techniques for combining various abilities for successful EFL learning. Using a reading journal to take notes and keep track of our reading is one activity we may think about. While maintaining reading logs, teachers can assign tasks such as creating questions about the text and answering them after reading it, summarizing its key points, making pre-reading predictions before beginning to read it, and many more that are not constrained by their creativity. This kind of exercise makes it possible to combine writing and reading, boosts students' motivation, and improves writing by enhancing reading. In addition to the basic skills of reading and writing students can activate speaking while discussing the text they have read and sharing ideas, trying to find answers to questions appeared while reading. Another teaching strategy to integrate language skills is questionnaire. Questionnaire is a research strategy that involves group work, reading and writing, enhances creative and critical skills and also social skills as they have to work in groups with other students.

Therefore, a questionnaire is a great technique to stimulate vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and other subskills while also integrating all of the fundamental skills. For example, after being split up into three groups, our students suggested creating their own surveys on subjects like "Traveling," "Social networking," "Evolution". When the questionnaires were prepared, students traded them and responded to the questions on each group's questionnaire. Here is a description of the experience using peer composition and review of one of the skill-integration activities we performed with our kids. Peer composition is a type of exercise where students help with writing and provide criticism to make their work better.

At the first stage the teacher defines the evaluation criteria of writing and gives assignment instructions, then divides students into pairs. Students start writing their compositions with making outline of their written work. During this process students in pairs review compositions of their partners, making notes, providing corrections and giving new ideas. Students help each other correct mistakes, improve organization of ideas and restructure sentences. After students finish their writing work they proofread and make final corrections. The final step is to reread the completed work and grade it according to the teacher-developed evaluation criteria. Then the teacher asks one of the students to volunteer and read his/her written work in front of the class. The role of the teacher in this process is to give instructions and guidelines, observe students' cooperation and check students' grades. Using peer composition as we can see, focuses mostly on writing but also activates reading while students read their partners' works and speaking while discussion of the writing process; and listening. This activity also increases students' motivation to study a foreign language; includes alternative assessment, when it is done by students themselves; involves pair work that develops social skills and involves content-based study. The other approach which can be applied for integrating reading and writing activities is doing contrast essays, in which writer





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concentrates on the organization of ideas, their similarities and differences in the contrast. This activity comprises further elements: comparison of ideas, defining similarities and differences of these ideas and other. For organizing such teaching strategy the following methods can be usefully utilized: brainstorming (students must compare similar and different aspects of both topics), block method (in which each paragraph addresses one topic only from your pair of topics and includes the shared aspects you have chosen to compare to topic number two) and point-by-point method (each paragraph contains details on one aspect of both topics organized in the same order). To explore the effects of integrating writing and reading skills to maximize the effectiveness of EFL learning the following study was conducted. For this research two groups of students (experimental and regular) were taken to analyze their reading and writing skills in pre-test and post-test programs. The participants were university students with intermediate language proficiency level, studying EST. Students of the regular group were continuing their studying process without any changes according to the curricula. On the lessons of the experimental group all mentioned above teaching approaches for integrating writing and reading skills were utilized. Both groups completed 2 kinds of testing (pre-test – before the experiment started at the beginning of the semester, post-test – on the last week of the experiment at the end of the semester). The experiment lasted 1 semester and the results are presented in the table below. The results of the experiment on the effectiveness of writing and reading skills integration Skills Group Quantity of students Pre-test results, The results in the table show the increase in the language proficiency level as for writing and reading skills in the experimental group comparing with the results of the regular group. The results of reading pre- and post- tests show that the percent of students in the experimental group having A, B, C grades increased from 75% to 91.67% (by 16,67%) while in the regular group this percent of students having A,B,C grades increased only by 8,33%. The similar situation can be observed in the results of writing pre- and post- tests. There is a significant difference between the experimental and regular groups in favor of the experimental class students, their performance raised from 50% to 83.34% in comparison with those of the control group's 16.66%. This study emphasizes the importance of combining writing and reading skills in the studying process for students to achieve more benefits in academic proficiency.

Conclusion

There are several advantages to using an integrated-skills approach when teaching and studying English as a foreign language. In order to enhance the effectiveness of language learning, it is necessary to acquire both primary receptive and productive abilities in integration. With an integrated-skills approach, genuine language can be used in The article's activities, which include cooperative learning, group and pair work, and advanced task-based approaches, foster social relationships and increase language retention. Another benefit of integrating skills is that they enable students to demonstrate





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their language proficiency through written or spoken texts, guarantee success in academic or professional communication, or in daily interactions.

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