Module 3: Integrating Skills

Preview Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>Refers to tasks, activities, and materials used in “real” life by native speakers of a language for actual communicative needs. In a language classroom, they can be used in simulated situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
<td>Suggesting a lot of ideas quickly without giving each a lot of thought, usually in groups and in preparation for a future activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicative competence</td>
<td>The ability to communicate in a target language for meaningful purposes. Such an ability requires the use of language skills together in social interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content-based Instruction</td>
<td>The use of content to structure curriculum or lessons around central themes or topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphic organizers</td>
<td>Visual maps of information, such as graphs, semantic webs, timelines, diagrams, story maps, etc. that help learners understand and retain information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated skills</td>
<td>Language skills (reading, writing, speaking, etc.) used together for communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language retention</td>
<td>The remembering or storing language mentally over a period of time so that it can be used when needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-verbal skills</td>
<td>Body language such as facial expressions and gestures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatics</td>
<td>Social and cultural aspects of language use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary language skills</td>
<td>Reading, writing, listening, and speaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productive skills</td>
<td>The primary skills of speaking and writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receptive skills</td>
<td>The primary skills of listening and reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rote memorization</td>
<td>The process of learning something by repeating without necessarily gaining a deep understanding of it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-skills</td>
<td>Skills such as pronunciation, vocabulary use, spelling, etc. that contribute to success with the primary skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>A tangible item is something real that can be seen or touched. <strong>Intangible</strong>, <em>(opposite)</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task-based learning</td>
<td>An approach in which learners work together to solve a problem, complete a task, or create a product. Learning occurs through social activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Physical Response (TPR); TPR-Storytelling (TPR-S)</td>
<td>Total Physical Response (TPR) is a language teaching approach that combines language learning with physical movement, initially based on commands. TPR-Storytelling (TPR-S) adds the additional component of oral performance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now start the video. Listen to the introduction. Complete the guided observation and reflection tasks for each of the video segments. The next part of the manual is for trainees and is available on separate pages for ease of copying.
Introduction, Expanded Narrative

The long-term goal of successful language learners is “communicative competence,” the ability to communicate in a target language for meaningful purposes. Such an ability requires the use of language skills together in social interaction. This is why current approaches to language teaching and learning, from TPR to communicative approaches such as task-based, content-based, and cooperative learning, all require the use of integrated skills to be effective.

Realistically, how often do you talk without listening? Or write without reading? When we use language, we tend to use it as a whole, whether primarily listening, speaking, reading, or writing. All skills are needed in order to communicate effectively. Although there is a time to focus attention on just one skill at a time, especially at beginning levels, the final goal is to use skills together for communication.

Using language skills together can lead to better language retention? For teaching effectiveness, the teacher who integrates language skills can make lessons interesting and motivating for students, creating a more active learning environment.

Module Focus

Traditionally, there are four primary language skills: listening and reading (the receptive skills) and speaking and writing (the productive skills). Sub-skills such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and spelling are needed for proficient use of the primary skills. For the most effective communication, non-verbal skills such as gestures, facial expressions, and understanding of cultural space are also necessary.

In this module, we’ll focus on how these skills can be integrated in the classroom, along with a look at some kinds of activities and resources that may be used to support skill integration.

Video Segment #1, Classroom Techniques: Observation Guide
[Read before viewing.]

What to look for:
• Language skills used.
• Activities used to integrate skills.

In this segment, it is important to listen closely to the narrative and to notice which language skills are used and how they are integrated into activities. Watch the segment at least twice.

1. As you watch this video segment, list as many of the language skills being used as you can. Include teacher behaviors.
2. The second time through the segment, notice for what purpose each skill is used, both within the structured activity and outside the activity. Again, include teacher behaviors.

Reflection
[Read and answer after viewing.]

In this segment, we saw only one activity being done with a pair of students. This may be some-
what of an unusual situation for language teachers, but the activity could be done with a larger class. Learners can work alone, in pairs, or in groups.

1. Compare your list of language skills used with those of your colleagues. What skills did you list? Which were receptive and which productive? Did you include teacher speech and student response to it? Include teacher speech in your discussion. What did she use language for?

2. What was the main activity? What were the topics of the activity and how were they determined? What skills were required to do it successfully? What were the steps in the activity?

3. Consider the questions below with regard to the sequencing of activities and to adaptations that might make the activities more relevant to your own teaching context.
   a. What task could the listening student be doing while the other one was reading his story?
   b. How did the stories differ? How were they the same?
   c. What are some possible follow-up activities to this one? Some activities that could precede it?
   d. What did the teacher do at the end of the activity to personalize it and relate it to the interests?
   e. How could this activity be adapted to a larger class?

Video Segment #2, Skills and Resources
[Read before viewing]

Following are some things to look for in the video.
• Language skills used.
• How the language skills are integrated.
• Resources used.

In this segment, students in two classes in different parts of the world are talking about their work with two different International Education and Resource Network (iEARN) projects <http://www.iearn.org/>. iEARN is a free, non-profit, international organization that connects classes of students of all ages around the world through classroom and community projects and the Internet. These projects make authentic use of the language skills that students are learning. Language skills are integrated in these activities.

The students talk about many different kinds of activities for their iEARN projects in the video. As you watch the video, do the following.

1. Try to list all parts of the first group’s project that they talk about. For example, first they decided on a theme for the project. As you list the parts, consider what language skills would be used to complete each one.

2. Listen carefully to the students and teacher from the second class and list what they do to communicate with “foreigners,” or use the language for real communicative purposes outside the classroom.

3. Watch the video again and this time list the resources the students either talked about or would need to do their activities.

Reflection
[Read and answer after viewing.]

1. Work with a partner or group and compare your information from the video about the iEARN projects. What themes or topics did the classes choose? Why do you think they chose them? In what ways are these projects an authentic use of language?
Divide a sheet of paper into three columns and label the columns as follows. Start with the first class and iEARN project. Record your answers to the following questions in the appropriate columns on your paper. Add as many rows as needed. (An example set of responses is provided as a model in the first row below.)

- What were the various activities and tasks (parts) of the project?
- What language skills did students use for each part?
- What resources did they use or might they need for each part?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities / Tasks</th>
<th>Language Skills Used</th>
<th>Resources Needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The class chose one of the projects from the iEARN Web site.</td>
<td>Primary skills: • Speaking (negotiating, brainstorming); • Listening • Reading Sub-skills: • Research • Analysis (critical thinking) • Synthesis (critical thinking) • Negotiation</td>
<td>A computer with Internet access. Desks / tables arranged for conversation groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Now do the same for the second class. Note that both groups were participating in projects with one central theme. Both groups described a series of activities with one purpose: to use language outside the classroom and to establish international friendships and information or cultural exchanges.

3. How would you describe the students in these classes? How did they feel about the projects? Were they engaged in their activities? Were they using English for authentic communication? Are iEARN projects something you would consider trying with your class(es)? Why or why not?

**Summary Discussion**

1. Make an analysis of your own classes. Do you use integrated skills for some tasks and activities? If yes, what seems to be most successful in your class(es)? If no, why not?

2. Go back and look at your lists from this module of all the different activities and combinations of integrated language skills needed to do them. Consider these examples in relation to your own classes.
   - What projects or purposeful series of activities might be interesting for your students?
   - What could they do that would be appropriate to their level of language proficiency?
   - What language skills would they need to learn to do them? And what skills would be used together to do the activities?
   - What resources do you have available and how could you set up similar types of activities in your situation, with or without the Internet?

3. How might you evaluate student work in the activities above? In Video segment #1? For the project? For authentic communication outside the classroom?

4. After viewing this module, do you think you will try to use some of these techniques and activities in your class? Why or why not? If yes, which ones will you try?
Now You Try It—An Action Plan

**Step 1**
You can read some of the articles on the topic of contextualizing language (see Module 3 Readings A and B plus the List of Additional Readings and Resources below). Using the video, you have seen a few examples and ideas from other teachers’ classes.

Now, think again about your own classes and how could you use some of the activities listed to:
- Integrate skills for better language retention.
- Motivate students.
- Allow for plenty of practice.
- Provide opportunities for authentic communication.
- Create an active, interesting classroom.

Talk about your ideas with others.

**Step 2**
By yourself or with a peer, design a 15-minute segment of a lesson that includes the use of some of the techniques and activities you listed.

**Step 3**
Share your plan with others. Explain what activities would come before and after your segment. Get their ideas and feedback.

**Step 4**
Change your design, as needed. Try it with your class. Share your results with others, as applicable. If you are not teaching, ask the trainer or another experienced teacher for feedback.