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METHODOLOGICAL AND LINGUISTIC BASES FOR INTERGRATING THE FOUR SKILLS

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Annotation: the article is devoted to the research of some methodological and linguistic issues of integrating the four skills in teaching English to non-philological students. There have been considered some foreign researchers’ approaches to this question in teaching process.

Keywords: integrating skills, discourse-based teaching, task-based teaching, and communicative approach.

Annotation: статья посвящена исследованию методологических и лингвистических вопросов интеграции четырех навыков в преподавании английского языка студентам неязыковых вузов. Также рассмотрены подходы некоторых зарубежных исследователей к данному вопросу в процессе обучения.

Ключевые слова: навыки интеграции, дискурсивное обучение, обучение на основе задач, коммуникативный подход, преподавание английского языка, студенты неязыковых вузов.

Annotation: маколада филология йўқалишдани бошқа соҳадаталабаларга инглизтилиниўргатишда турттақўникмаларни интеграциялашувининг баъзиме тодология ва лингвистик масалалари ўрганилди. Айрим чет элликолдларининг ўқитиш жароёнда унлар масалалабий чиқарилиб кўрсатилди.

Калит сўзлар: интеграциялашувқўникмалари, матиасасанглатўқитиш сусули, вазифаасослишундай ўқитиш сусули, коммуникативёйданиш, инглизтилиниўргатиш.
English is not only used as an official language in many nations but also the key to broaden horizons, search information, learn about different cultures, and obtain future success for non–native speakers in the world.

In Uzbekistan higher education reform in the educational sector, and a wave of globalization throughout the world have increased interest in learning the English language among students. Hence the English language is considered an essential requirement for getting a job or increased opportunity in the workplace even in the domestic labor market, apart from good professional skills.

This means that in Uzbekistan, like other parts of the world, the number of students who want to learn English as a foreign language (EFL) is increasing day by day. Like many other Asian countries, English has been taught in Uzbekistan as a foreign language and compulsory subject, both in general secondary schools and higher educational establishments. Particularly, great attention is paid to teaching English to law students of Tashkent state university of law.

The main purpose of this paper is:

- to analyze foreign researchers’ views concerning the four skills in teaching English;
- to provide some guidelines that we hope can be useful to teachers of English as a foreign language.

The main purpose of the EFL teaching, the development of the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, the implementation of this approach has not been trouble-free as many teachers insist on asking their students to understand every single word they listen to or read, or expect them to write or speak without making the mistakes normally found in the process of acquiring any language.

As early as the 1970s, many researchers and methodologists noted that the teaching of language skills cannot be conducted through isolable and discrete structural elements (Corder, 1971; 1978; Kaplan, 1970; Stern, 1992). In reality, it is rare for language skills to be used in isolation; e.g., both speaking and listening comprehension are needed in a conversation and, in some contexts, reading or listening and making notes is likely to be almost as common as having a conversation. The central innovative characteristic of the communicative approach in second or foreign language teaching was the integration of the four macro – skills and their components.

A foreign scientist Widdowson (1978) was one of the first linguists to call for integrating the four language skills in instruction to raise learners' proficiency levels and enable advanced language learning. In his proposal for integrated and communicative language teaching in general and in particular in English for specific purposes, Widdowson emphasized that virtually all language uses take place in the form of discourse and in specific social contexts.

Although, he notes that the separated teaching of language skills is probably more administratively convenient, as in “divide and rule” (1978: 144), language comprehension and production does not, in fact, take place in discrete “units.” Thus, to attain proficiency, learners need to develop receptive and productive skills in both spoken and written discourse. Widdowson’s (1978) strong emphasis on the integration of the four skills, as well as discourse-based teaching, have had a considerable impact on the emergence of discourse - oriented curricula and teaching methods in English for specific purposes and English for academic purposes.

Widdowson's (1978) and Halliday's (1978) early work and their insights into the importance of discourse in language usage provided highly influential theoretical foundations in linguistic analyses and language teaching. These works have led to the subsequent rise and prominence of content-based and integrated language instruction, especially in English as a second language in Australia, in the U. K., and, to some extent in North America and Europe.

In the sphere of linguistics in the 1990s, a great deal of elaboration and refinement took place in communicative and integrated teaching of the four skills. In light of the fact that opportunities for meaningful communication in the language classroom are limited - particularly so in the regions where English is taught as a foreign language – a great need arose for integrated communicative activities. These had to be interaction – centered and as authentic as possible to enable students to use the language for purposeful communication (Savignon, 1983; 1990).

The need for integrated activities led to the evolution of task - based instruction in teaching English. At present, the ubiquitous language practice exercises for groups or pairs of learners typically combine listening and speaking, reading and speaking, or reading, writing, and speaking. Such integrated classroom activities (also called tasks), include, for example, listening to language tapes, playing games, or working on information gap and problem - solving exercises.

These types of practice require learners to engage in interaction and integrated language usage because group - or pair - work can be carried out only if the participants share and discuss, or read and pool their information. Task - based teaching is probably the most widely adopted model of integrated...
In his highly acclaimed book, Nunan (1989) outlines the principles that should guide the design of teaching materials and modules for integrating a variety of language skills. According to Nunan, effective integrated modules are characterized by uses of authentic language models and exemplars, continuity of language work from comprehension to production, explicit connections of classroom language practice to real world uses (e.g., a business presentation or a job interview), and a systematic language focus that enables learners to identify and analyze language regularities. In his later work on designing integrated syllabuses, Nunan (2001) explains that the first step is to identify the contexts and situations in which learners will need to communicate.

After the communicative events are identified in general terms, the next phase should work toward learners’ functional goals along with the linguistic elements required to achieve them. According to Nunan, in integrated instruction, language skills are taught and practiced depending on the students’ learning objectives, rather than in the context of the four separate instructional areas. In this paper we are not discussing the consequences of integration skills but the importance of teaching and learning English through integration skills.

Learning a new foreign language is a difficult task demanding a lot of time devoting to studying. Learners have to develop all four language skills: reading skills, listening skills, speaking skills, and writing skills at nearly the same level.

In the process of teaching English all four language skills (reading, listening, speaking, writing) are from the pedagogical and methodological reasons perceived as independent units, but in the real life we use all these skills together and in the communication between a speaker and a listener they are interwoven: when one person is talking, the other one is listening to him or her, similarly when someone is reading the text, there is a person who has written the text.

We may call it indirect communication. So, in human communication all four skills have their own peculiarities. Writing as a language skill differs from speaking as a productive skill and from receptive skills; it has its own specific features on both cognitive and socio-cultural levels, but in cooperation with other language skills it forms a union of all language abilities for a successful communication. Since the communicative language is considered as a whole, then the teaching of it should be integral as well, because that would facilitate the students’ natural language interaction.

Our teaching experiences show that some teachers find difficult or not important to teach students all four skills. We have outlined some practical guidelines in teaching the four skills that can be useful to teachers of English.

Listening is the language skill which learners usually find the most difficult. This often is because they feel under unnecessary pressure to understand every word. Assure them that they do not need to understand every word they hear. During the listening students should be able to concentrate on understanding the message.

In order for any speaking activity to be successful students need to acknowledge that there is a real reason for asking a question or giving a piece of information. Make sure that students speak as much English as possible without interfering to correct the mistakes that they will probably make.

In order to make reading an interesting it is important that students do not labor over every word, whether they are skimming the text for general meaning or scanning it to pick out specific information. Other things to keep in mind are. Choosing texts consider not only their difficulty level, but also their interest.

In writing it is important that time is spent building up the language they will need and providing a model on which they can then base their own efforts. At this stage, students’ work will invariably contain mistakes. Again, the teacher should try to be sensitive in his/her correction and not necessarily insist on every error being highlighted. A piece of written work covered in red pen is demoralizing and generally counter-productive. Where possible, encourage them to correct their own mistakes as they work.

All in all, we would like to point out, that the central innovative characteristic of the communicative approach in foreign language teaching is - the integration of the four skills and their components. Integrating the four language skills in instruction raises learners’ proficiency levels and enables advanced language learning. It enables students to use the language for purposeful communication. In language learning motivation also plays the main role. It pushes students forward in language learning with enthusiasm and willingness. It is one of the prevailing factors affecting students’ performance of English language learning. Integrating the four skills in teaching English to students, teachers of English should motivate their students not only to learn English but master their English.
To conclude, for a few years there have been many opinions reinforcing the idea of language as a whole and proposing that the integration of the four skills is the key for creating a classroom environment as authentic as possible in order to teach English in a way close to a real communicative situation. They propose that the English language should be taught in a way that mixes reading and listening comprehension with oral and written expression. The language teacher should give the proper emphasis to the specific ability that is being studied, but combining it with the others in order to create a communicative classroom environment that engages students to improve their language abilities.

References: