Module 3

Integrating Skills

Video Length: Approximately 13 Minutes
Notes to the Trainer

For best results, have participants go through the readings for this module prior to viewing the video. As you work through this module, try to use pairs and group work whenever that might be effective. After each group activity, debrief the answers and use them for further discussion. Refer back to the main points when appropriate. It is important that teachers apply the concepts in the module to their own classrooms and situations. One goal for this module is to illustrate the importance of teaching language skills as integrated rather than discrete skills. A second goal is to illustrate how fundamental integrated skills are to most current language teaching approaches.

See Appendix A for additional handouts that can be used for general observation and discussion tasks with any of the modules.

Before Viewing

Ask participants to think back to a scene in a movie that they felt strongly about (one that evoked sadness, laughter, fear, disgust, etc.). The movie can be one that they saw in English, or in another language. Participants then answer the following questions:

1. What was the primary "message" in this scene? How was it communicated?
2. What language skills were part of that communication? What other elements contributed to the scene and the message that it conveyed (visuals, audio, actions)?
3. Did you feel that the communication was successful? Did you come away confused, or feeling that you understood what happened at a deep level?

Debrief

Discuss your answers with your colleagues in a group. Make a list of all the primary language and communication skills and sub-skills that your group recalled from the movie scene(s). Were there any cases in which only one skill was used?

Extension Ideas

Follow the procedure above, using instead a real-life experience, a story or report from a radio or other audio source, or a story from a book or other text source.

Preview Vocabulary

Terms	Definitions
Authentic	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.
Brainstorming	Suggesting a lot of ideas quickly without giving each a lot of thought, usually in groups and in preparation for a future activity.
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.
Content-based Instruction	The use of content to structure curriculum or lessons around central themes or topics.
Graphic organizers	Visual maps of information, such as graphs, semantic webs, timelines, diagrams, story maps, etc. that help learners understand and retain information.
Integrated skills	Language skills (reading, writing, speaking, etc.) used together for communication.
Language retention	The remembering or storing language mentally over a period of time so that it can be used when needed.
Non-verbal skills	Body language such as facial expressions and gestures.
Pragmatics	Social and cultural aspects of language use.
Primary language skills	Reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
Productive skills	The primary skills of speaking and writing.
Receptive skills	The primary skills of listening and reading.
Rote memorization	The process of learning something by repeating without necessarily gaining a deep understanding of it.
Sub-skills	Skills such as pronunciation, vocabulary use, spelling, etc. that contribute to success with the primary skills.
Tangible	A tangible item is something real that can be seen or touched. Intangible, (*opposite*).
Task-based learning	An approach in which learners work together to solve a problem, complete a task, or create a product. Learning occurs through social activity.
Total Physical Response (TPR); TPR-Storytelling (TPR-S)	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.

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.

Approaches to Language Teaching: Foundations

Module 3, Integrating Skills

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?

Approaches to Language Teaching: Foundations

Divide a sheet of paper into three columns and label the columns. 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?

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

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 in *Shaping the Way We Teach English: Readings and Resources*). 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.

Approaches to Language Teaching: Foundations

Answer Key to Module 3, Integrating Skills

Module 3, Video Segment #1, Classroom Techniques

Here are some suggested directions for answers to the questions for this module. Actual answers may vary depending on local context and the kinds of experience that viewers bring to the task of interpreting and applying video and text concepts.

1. Skills used in the pictured activity were reading and listening (receptive) and writing and speaking (productive). Sub-skills used were spelling and pronunciation. The teacher used speaking skills (giving directions, praise, and personal conversation) and listening skills (to students reading and to students' questions). The students' nonverbal response showed that they were listening to and understanding the teacher's directions.

2. The main activity was a "free write" task. One student wrote about bears and the other wrote about pirates and an underwater diving machine. They chose their own topics by going through magazines and cutting out a picture to write about. They could write a description of the picture or a creative story about the picture. This technique allows students choice, giving them the opportunity to write about something of interest to them personally. It also allows for more authentic communication, since the other students would be listening to a series of different topics as the writing was read aloud. They might learn some new content as a result.

Skills used were writing, speaking, and listening. Students chose a picture, pasted it on a sheet of paper, wrote about it on the same sheet of paper, and then read it aloud to the teacher and the other student. Although we didn't see it on the video, as one student read, the other student filled out a worksheet about the reading. This is one form of "active listening." Listeners might also keep a list of vocabulary they don't understand, write down one or two questions for the reader to be asked after the reading, and so on. At the end of class they put the writing in a notebook with all of their other writing. The teacher would look at it later. They could also take the writing home and use it for a longer writing assignment done as homework. They could write two questions to ask the class about the content of their reading. The reading could be used as stimulus for a conversation about the topic.

3. Both students wrote at least the minimum amount required, "half a page." The teacher did not give a fixed amount of time. She allowed them some leeway in taking as much time as they needed. She also gave them a choice in the type or genre of writing that they could do. The first student wrote a factual or descriptive paragraph on bears. The second student wrote a short piece of fiction about modern-day pirates, a sinking ship, and deaths among the crew members ("everyone died"). During the activity, the teacher expanded a bit on the second student's reading, giving a brief explanation of the ship to the listening student. At the end of the activity she remembered that the first student's previous writing had been about bears, too and asked if he was interested in bears.

4. For a larger class, the first part of the activity could be the same. The magazines could be placed in more than one location throughout the room to give students better access to them. The reading could be in large or small groups. Students could work in pairs to practice their reading before doing it before a larger group or the whole class. As "active listeners" in groups, students might be required to come up with a question to ask about the other students' writing after the reading.

Another option is to have groups of students co-author stories in parts or "chains." This works well in groups of three or four, where the story has a beginning, middle (or two parts to the middle, depending on the number in the group), and an end. Students write the stories in parts, passing them

around in a circle step-by-step. Everyone gets to write an introduction, a middle, and an end. This works well with all ages, can motivate students to participate, and can yield really fun results. When possible, display stories on walls or doors or other areas in the room so others can read them.

Important Note for the Following Section

Note that class-to-class cultural exchange projects have enjoyed much success via mail and other means for many years *without the use of computers*. In the event that computer and the Internet resources are not available on a regular basis, it is possible to find and set up exchange projects that take place via mail or other means. Local language schools and organizations, and Web sites such as Global SchoolNet <http://www.globalschoolnet.org/> can provide helpful information.

Module 3, Video Segment #2, Classroom Techniques
Answer Guide for Reflection Questions

1. Both classes were engaged in year-long, international projects with the International Education and Resource Network (iEARN). This is a non-profit educational organization. English is the common language of communication between classes in different countries. (For more information on past, present, and upcoming projects, see the <http://www.iearn.org/> Web site.)

In both classes, students were of mixed age and grade levels with mixed abilities in language and technical skills. More experienced students mentored less experienced students.

The theme that the first iEARN group chose was "Good Deeds." They liked the idea of doing good deeds and wanted to participate in a project to enhance their skills and to gain a sense of community. Here are some suggestions for filling in the chart. Answers may vary depending on the level and depth of observation.

Approaches to Language Teaching: Foundations

Activities / Tasks	Language Skills Used	Resources Needed
The class chose one of the projects from the iEARN Web site.	Primary skills: • Speaking (negotiating, brainstorming) • Listening • Reading Sub-skills: • Research • Analysis (critical thinking) • Synthesis (critical thinking) • Negotiation	A computer with Internet access Desks / tables arranged for conversation groups
Students went to the library to get information (books, magazines) and read about good deeds. They divided themselves into two groups for reading different information in "jigsaw" style.	Primary skills: • Speaking • Listening • Reading Sub-skills: • Research • Negotiation • Cooperation	Library materials or other text-based resources
Students wrote summaries of the information they got, including citations.	Primary skills: • Writing Sub-skills: • Analysis (critical thinking) • Synthesis (critical thinking) • Citations	Paper, pencil; or, computer
Working in groups, students combined their information and entered the summaries into a computer, printed it out, and brought it to class to talk about.	Primary skills: • Speaking • Listening • Reading • Writing Sub-skills: • Analysis (critical thinking) • Synthesis (critical thinking) • Negotiation • Computer skills	Computer
Students planned and did good deeds in the school, home, and community. Then, working in groups, they developed a Web page to represent class activities.	Primary skills: • Speaking • Listening • Reading • Writing Sub-skills: • Web site development • Cross-cultural communication	A computer with Internet access

Students e-mailed partners in the U.S. to describe, present, and compare activities.	Primary skills: • Reading • Writing	A computer with Internet access
Individual students drew pictures to represent good deeds. They posted the drawings around the room and on the project Web site.	Sub-skills: • Drawing	Paper, pencil or other art supplies
One group of students wrote a poem about good deeds. They posted the drawings around the room and on the project Web site.	Primary skills: • Speaking • Listening • Reading • Writing	Paper, pencil

This was authentic use of language, meaning that they used language to communicate purposefully in the class and then again to create a Web site for and communicate electronically with others.

2. Adapt the answers in the table above, as needed, for the second group (some parts will be very similar).

Summary: The second group participated in a different iEARN project called "Teddy Bears." The teacher's goal was to help students create friendships with students in other countries ("foreigners"). Thai and US classrooms exchanged teddy bears. The Thai group had a teddy bear from a class in the USA. It was named Uncle Sam. The teddy bears went home and participated in various activities with the students in the USA and Thailand. The Thai students planned to take the Uncle Sam bear to different places in Thailand, such as a temples and mosques, and take its picture there.

The students from each country recorded these "travel" events in a journal and reported on them to their partner classes as a form of information and cultural exchange. Then they would use the pictures and writing to show Thailand to a friend in the U. S. via electronic media, "Uncle Sam's Travels in Thailand."

For this project, students needed technical as well as language skills. They needed a digital camera, e-mail accounts, and computers; and, they need to know how to download their pictures onto the computer and send them as e-mail attachments. They also needed writing skills to write about the teddy bear's travels. Students used oral skills to make class plans and they used reading skills to understand written responses.

3. The students in both classes were very motivated and interested in their projects. They were using integrated skills for authentic purposes. They were involved in research, gathering information, making observations, summarizing events and information, talking with and writing to others on the project topics, and so on. They had an investment in doing the projects well because in both cases they were submitting the projects to outsiders to look at via the project Web sites. Even more compelling, they needed to use English to communicate with their project "keypals" (e-mail partners) in classrooms and schools in other countries.