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Integrated Skills In The EFI Classroom

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Abstract: Integrated language skills focus on the four main English skills - reading, writing, speaking and listening - through a "Communicative Language Teaching" methodology. Communicative integrated language teaching (CILT) can be seen as an effective method to promote and create a more genuine learning environment for second year EFL students in Namangan State University as language learning follows a task based leaning. In this article we discuss how we enabled our students to improve overall in all four skills and to reinforce the use of language skills more effectively for intercultural communication by following the TBL and CLT approaches.

Key words: Integrated skills, reading, writing, speaking, listening, intercultural communication, TBL and CLT approaches

Introduction

Communicative integrated language teaching (CILT) integrates listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar and pronunciation into a single lesson in order to increase students' abilities to communicate using English naturally. It can be clearly seen that most language skills are not separated in everyday communication, therefore it is not helpful for the students to learn the skills separately. According to Su (2007), who sees integrating skills is as an integral part of language teaching. No-one only listens, speaks, reads or writes while participating in active communication and social interactions. There is always a combination of various skills in natural interactions. For this reason, students must be able to learn how to perform these skills in an integrated manner, be able to use the four language skills in integrated ways to a level equivalent to Band B2 in the CEFR as the goal of the course "Integrated skills" which is of the courses of Pre-

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service Teacher Training (PreSETT) Curriculum in Uzbekistan. And there is another reason for students to reinforce the use of language skills more effectively for intercultural communication through the course "Integrated skills". Particular attention will be paid to improving students' fluency and confidence in language use and developing their intercultural competences. CILT is a necessary teaching strategy which allows teachers to use various innovative activities in the class to aid in the English language learning processes.

Materials and Methods

According to Richards & Schmidt (2002), language skills or skills in language teaching is the mode or manner in what language is used. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are generally called the four language skills. Sometimes speaking and writing are called the active/productive skills and reading and listening, the passive/receptive skills. They distinguished integrated skills approach saying, "integrated approach (in language teaching) is the teaching of the language skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking, in conjunction with each other, as when a lesson involves activities that relate listening and speaking to reading and writing" (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). Oxford (2001) explains that when teachers integrate skills such as listening, speaking, writing and reading into classroom this allows EFL skill learning to become intertwined with task learning. Su, 2007) defines that the integrated skills approach "is based on the concept that in natural, day-to-day experience, oral and written languages are not kept separate and isolated from one another" According to Oxford (2001), integrating skills allows students to interact in a more authentic or natural form in the classroom. This approach gives students the opportunity to practice English in the classroom mimicking how natural interaction occurs. Oxford (2001) concludes that this learning approach encourages student learning in the classroom. Su (2007) finds another positive aspect of the skills-integrated approach, which is making students to become more active learners in the classroom. Through authentic activities students such as the ones involved in this research become more interested in the

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topics and more involved in the EFL classes. And he believe that segregating the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking in the classroom is an old way of teaching, while integrating skills is the future and puts emphasis on the fundamentals of the communicative learning theory, which increases the utility of this methodology in an EFL classroom.

According to Oxford (2001) teachers should consider taking these steps in order to integrate the language skills in EFL instruction,:

-Learn more about the various ways to integrate language skills in the classroom (e.g., content-based, task-based, or a combination).

-Reflect on their current approach and evaluate the extent to which the skills are integrated.

-Choose instructional materials, textbooks, and technologies that promote the integration of listening, reading, speaking, and writing, as well as the associated skills of syntax, vocabulary, and so on.

-Even if a given course is labeled according to just one skill, remember that it is possible to integrate the other language skills through appropriate tasks.

- Teach language learning strategies and emphasize that a given strategy can often enhance performance in multiple skills.

Hence, the students were given many different tasks focused on practicing and learning specific skills to reinforce the use of language skills more effectively for intercultural communication so that they enjoyed, learned and worked autonomously in class and out of the classroom. Those activities were done in pairs or in groups such as presentation, reports, drama, written and oral narratives about project works, newspaper and magazine articles, radio and TV programmes, and about selected stories, songs, paintings related to their field of interest at a higher level. These above mentioned activities integrated all four English language learning skills into each activity and they were based on CLT and TBL. Some examples of these activities:

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1. Students read and evaluate articles or extracts from books, newspapers, magazines or websites written by foreigners who have visited their town, country or region.
2. Students prepare a leaflet for foreign guests who are visiting Uzbekistan for the first time stating the things that should be avoided and the kind of behaviour expected from guests in Uzbek culture.
3. Students are given the following problem situation: You are a manager of a foreign company in Uzbekistan and you are going to hire a new employee. There are four candidates who are applying for this job and all four have higher education and know English quite well. One is a middle-aged Uzbek woman, married with two children, the second is a Russian male who has just graduated from the university, the third is a young unmarried Tajik woman, and the last one is an ex-group mate of yours. Who will get the job? Based on what assumptions did you make this decision? Optional: Students can be given role cards and they act out the process of interview.
4. Students read a text about business etiquette in different countries (e.g. inviting business partners to lunch/meeting/) and prepare a handbook for businessman “Business etiquette”
5. Students read a problem situation about an Uzbek student who lived in a British family and didn’t know how to use the two taps and sink plugs to save water. Then Students are given the picture of “two taps and sink plugs” and asked for the possible reasons for having them in Great Britain. They discuss attitudes to water saving in Uzbekistan.
6. Students are given pictures of recycling bins in Great Britain (e.g. from: http://www.fotolibra.com/gallery/610050/illustrated -recycling-bins/like) and asked to state the reasons for having them. Students discuss whether people recycle things or not in Uzbekistan? They may also speak about their own responsibilities for keeping the environment clean.

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7. Students find different samples of verbal and non-verbal messages that may cause cultural misunderstanding and present them in class in the form of a role-play. (e.g. “Thumbs Up” The thumbs up sign in most American and European cultures means things are going according to your plans or something you approve of. However, the going good sign translates into a rude and offensive gesture in Islamic and Asian countries. In Australia, it means OK, but if you move it up and down, it is considered as a grave insult. Students may act out a scene between an American and Asian businessmen who used some gestures and misunderstood each other)
8. Students are given a problem situation about an Uzbek exchange student who has encountered problems and misunderstandings in a foreign country and asked to give possible suggestions for solving them (e.g. Alisher, an exchange student in the USA, says that he does not have enough confidence to try to make friends with Americans and he feels like he "might do something they wouldn't like.)
9. Students listen to a British radio programme or watch a British/American TV show and present an Uzbek /Russian interpretation of it.
10. Students are shown a photo of passengers on a metro train in Tashkent and the underground in London to compare and contrast newspaper reading habits of different nations.

CONCLUSION

We can conclude briefly, through communicative teaching strategies and skill integrating activities the students were also able to learn and practice all EFL skills in an authentic manner. Those above mentioned activities focused on practicing and learning specific skills helped students to reinforce the use of language skills more effectively for intercultural communication and to improve overall in all four skills by following CLT and TBL approaches in order to reach successful outcomes of the course “Integrated skills” which is of the courses of Pre-service Teacher Training (PreSETT) Curriculum in our university.

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