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INTEGRATED SKILLS APPROACH IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

This paper examines the theoretical foundations and practical applications of the integrated skills approach in language teaching. Rather than treating the four language skills—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—as separate domains, this approach acknowledges their interconnected nature in authentic communication contexts.

Language teaching methodologies have evolved significantly over the past century, moving from grammar-translation methods to more communicative approaches. Within this evolution, one of the most significant developments has been the recognition that language skills function not in isolation but as integrated components of successful communication.

Traditional language teaching often compartmentalized instruction into discrete skill areas—students might attend separate classes for reading, writing, listening, and speaking. However, this artificial separation contradicts how language operates in natural settings, where these skills are constantly interwoven (Hinkel, 2022).

The integrated skills approach is strongly rooted in Hymes' concept of communicative competence, which emphasizes that knowing a language involves more than understanding its grammatical rules. Rather, it requires the ability to use language appropriately in various social contexts. This perspective naturally leads to instruction that combines multiple skills, as authentic communication rarely involves just one isolated skill.

Organizing instruction around themes or topics facilitates skill integration. For example, a unit on sustainability might include reading articles, watching

documentaries, participating in debates, and writing position papers—all focused on environmental issues (Brown, 2014).

Kinds of integrated-skills tasks include: reading-into writing; listening-into speaking; reading and listening-into writing; reading and listening-into speaking; productive-into receptive tasks.

The integrated skills approach aligns with our understanding of how language functions in authentic contexts and how language acquisition occurs. Research evidence generally supports its effectiveness, though implementation challenges remain. Future research should focus on optimal balancing of integrated and focused skill instruction for different learner populations, development of appropriate assessment tools, and effective teacher preparation for integrated skills teaching.

As language education continues to evolve toward more authentic and communicative approaches, the integrated skills perspective offers a powerful framework for designing instruction that prepares learners to use language effectively in real-world contexts.

References

1. Brown, H. (2014). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. Pearson Education ESL. Routledge. 416 p.
2. Hinkel, E. (2022). *Handbook of Practical Second Language Teaching and Learning* (ESL & Applied Linguistics Professional Series). 540 p.