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Integrated Language Teaching

PROFESSIONAL PAPER

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The aim of this paper is to investigate the needs and competences of students in terms of language skills in the context of teaching English to foreigners as well as the roles of teachers who take part in the teaching process.

Integrated language teaching is a term used to refer to teaching a foreign language through a content-based subject. That way language is integrated into the natural context and taught through real life situations in order to motivate students to acquire language for the sake of communication. Therefore, integrated language teaching gives preference to natural language acquisition rather than forced language learning (Brown 224-6).

This paper will discuss the nature of language in general, its function and purpose in real life, the constituent parts of language, and various language teaching methods. It will also analyse the approaches and attitudes that both teachers and students should be able and willing to assume, as well as the steps that they should take before and during the teaching and learning process. Additionally, I will inquire into the constructivism theory as a teaching and learning approach as well as examine the 5E model, a linear model based on the constructivist approach, which can be very helpful in acquiring new knowledge or understanding more deeply the already existing one.

KEYWORDS
integrated language teaching, 5E model, constructivism theory, teacher roles, student learning approaches

INTRODUCTION

The concept of the "teacher" has changed according to the needs and environmental factors of our age. Nowadays, the teacher cannot be defined as a person who only possesses certain knowledge and transfers it to others, as it was the case in the past. Today, when sources of information are not limited to teachers and the individual has extremely quick access to information, the teacher has assumed the roles of "leader", "source of inspiration" and "person who teaches learning".

In light of the findings of psychology, sociology and educational sciences, the concept of a student has also changed. Students are no longer passive recipients of knowledge and no one can teach a person who does not want to learn. A student who does not take responsibility for the learning process cannot be expected to learn anything, and the miracle of teaching such a student cannot be realized by the teacher (Brown 218-22). In this case, it is highly important that the teacher is aware of the role change. The teacher should be a guide that will help the student gain independence and become motivated to enter the learning process and for taking responsibility for it (Driscoll 23-6).

There have been radical changes in the theory of language teaching. Language is a communication tool. In real life, people do not use language with the purpose of using language elements (such as grammar, phonetics, vocabulary, etc.). The purpose of using language is achieving communication, be that verbally or in written form (Brown 329-42). Therefore, language should be taught as a skill-based tool of communication.

WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF LANGUAGE LEARNING?

All definitions left aside, language is essentially a communication tool. The aims of language use can be summarized as follows:
expressing feelings, needs, wishes and desires;

- expressing thoughts, ideas, and opinions;
- searching for, accessing, and sharing (receiving and giving) information;
- influencing others, inducing a change in attitudes, using others (for business);
- socializing with our surroundings and maintaining our social self (Brown 226-7).

Linguistic competence covers four basic skills: listening and speaking (natural skills), and reading and writing (skills acquired by teaching). In order to use these skills successfully, the individual needs some information on the language system and its internal rules. On the other hand, language is also a living organism: its rules will change over time and it will be put to different uses by its users.
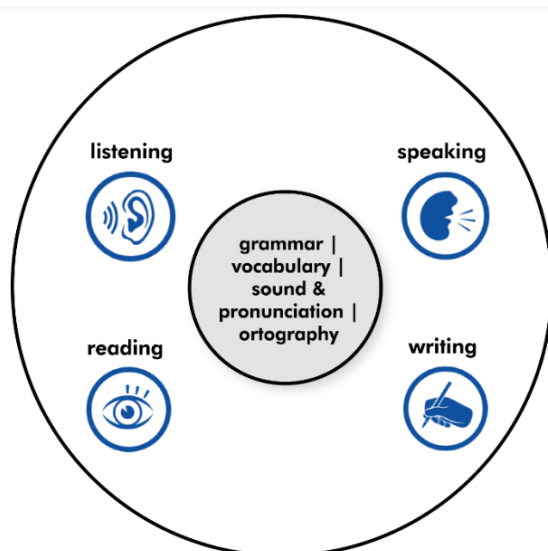

Figure 1: Basic language skills and sub-skills
(core) that serve the use of basic skills.

As shown in Figure 1, the language functions as a whole. Basic language skills and sub-skills serve the purpose of communication only when they act together. They do not mean anything standing on their own. Furthermore, the core cannot avoid being shaped by its users while serving the use of language skills. For example, a word which has a positive meaning in a dictionary can assume an extremely negative meaning due to a user's change of tone. This shows that language cannot be isolated from the context in which it is used. The type of users, the nature of the relationship between them, the topic, place, environment, time, and purpose of communication can change the meaning of the message completely. In addition, the essential aspects of language such as body language, intonation and emphasis, as well as eye contact, have a significant role in the meaning and the purpose of the message (Jordan et al. 195).

Therefore, attempting to teach only the core of a language (sub-skills) as a single subject is impossible. Teaching someone vocabulary or orthography without covering the four basic skills is absolutely unimaginable. Language is not a single field of studies such as

mathematics or science. Language has no subject. Language is present everywhere and in everything. Considering the fact that language does not have limited content, language teaching is not something that can be accomplished solely by the transfer of knowledge (Jordan et al. 199-201). The approaches that are used to teach language by means of separation or isolation focus mostly on grammar (Oxford). In such approaches, the teacher illustrates a grammar subject with examples which are followed by numerous mechanical activities. In this type of activities, meaning and context are insignificant, i.e. only structural accuracy is important. The aim of these approaches is to serve grammar to students in small bites. The idea is that a student who memorizes grammar rules uses the language by applying these rules when necessary. Unfortunately, this is not the case in actual practice. The result is a frustrated individual who "knows the language but cannot use it" (Oxford).

Moreover, due to the nature of language, grammar explanations tend to be extremely long and complex. These explanations can trick the teacher into relaxing by thinking that they have managed to provide a summary of the grammatical rules, but in effect, this serves no purpose. Instead, it creates despair, confusion and weariness in a student (Echevarria et al. 139-40). Grammar is too abstract and complex to be simplified, and students can only learn the language when the meaning and context come into play.

According to the constructivism theory, learning arises out of thinking and comprehension. These activities encourage students to explore and make inventions using their own minds (Brown 353-60). Learning can begin after understanding is achieved, as something that is understood thoroughly is no longer part of memory but of the knowledge base. In addition, the student can easily acquire what they discover or find by themselves.

All individuals are active creators of their own knowledge. In order to learn something, one needs to be curious, to ask, investigate and evaluate. A person should learn for their own sakes and not because someone else wants that. All individuals should have their own ways and methods of learning and should not learn according to the exact instructions of someone else (Driscoll 17-21).

A teacher is not an artist or an art master, and students are not raw material for the teacher to shape according to their liking. However, a teacher who displays appropriate teacher behaviour can help their students in this challenging process. According to Echevarria and Vogt, correct teacher behaviours can be summarized as follows (121-8):

- listening to students, empathizing with them, and addressing their interests and needs;
- working in harmony with the students, having a collaborative and supportive role;
- creating a climate of respect and trust in the learning environment;
- making lessons interesting and enjoyable;
- creating intriguing activities suitable for students and allowing them to demonstrate their skills and talents by using challenging but achievable activities;
- evoking in students the feeling that they can achieve anything if they work hard enough;
- promoting the idea that exams are also learning tools instead of using them as a threat and an ultimate goal;
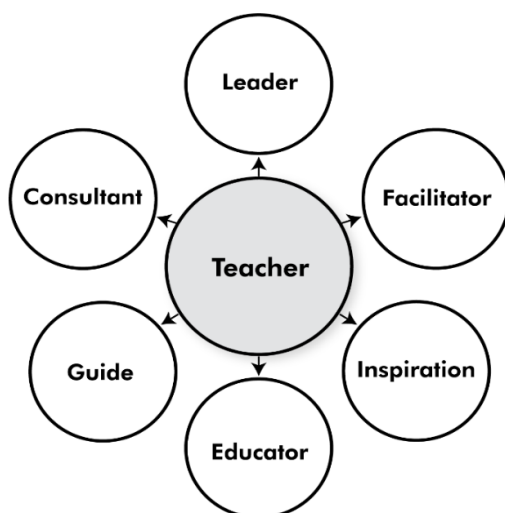- doing their job with respect and enthusiasm.

Figure 2: Teacher's roles

INTEGRATED LANGUAGE TEACHING AND THE 5E MODEL

The essence of integrated language teaching is teaching the main and sub-skills of language as a whole. This approach covers communication-based and skill-based teaching methods. The meaning and the context are the most important elements. This is widely accepted by the constructivism theory (Jordan et al. 189-190).

Language learning is not product-oriented but process-oriented. Language learning is inherently a long and slow process. The teacher's efforts to accelerate this process and disrupt the natural language learning process create more harm than good.

Since the student's readiness to learn is extremely important, the first step is preparation – emotional, cognitive and linguistic (Oxford). Before starting to learn new content, it is necessary for each student to revise what is already present in the knowledge base (both general knowledge and experience, as well as linguistic competence) as new knowledge will be based on the existing foundation.

The 5E instructional model was designed and developed in order to promote the process of the constructivist approach in education. Its purpose is to interconnect the activities envisaged for a particular unit and to record the progress of foreign language learners during the learning process. According to Ballone Duran et al., the steps of the 5E model can be applied in language teaching as follows (51-57):
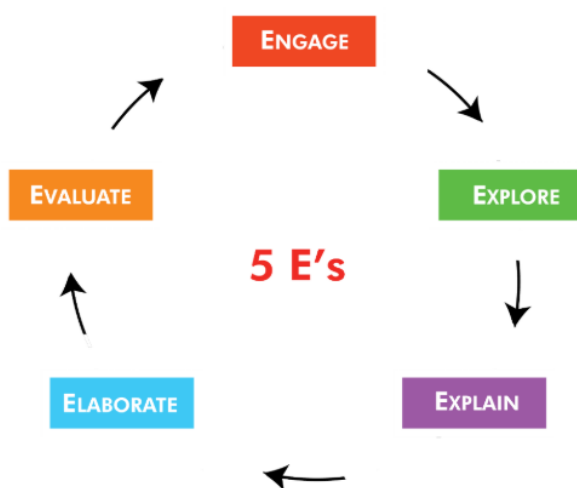

Figure 3: The steps of 5E model

Below are explained five stages of the 5E model along with examples of how this model can be applied through the subject of family and family relations by using previously taught language skills:

1) Engage: At this stage, pre-activities are carried out to attract students' attention and to help them recall the already existing knowledge in the knowledge base. The aim is to prepare students from the linguistic, cognitive and emotional aspect so that they can acquire new content and understand the existing one. Some of these activities include brainstorming, talking about images, sharing personal experiences and views, etc.

Example: See the pictures in front of you. Answer the questions.

Who are the persons in the picture?

What is the relationship between them?

How do they feel? What makes you think so?

Why are they in this situation? Take a guess.

2) Explore: At this stage, the students work on a text or activity which is purely meaning- and context-oriented. Text-oriented activities are also used in this step, including activities such as finding the main idea by skimming through a text or listening, selecting an appropriate title for the text, skimming or listening to find the specific details, etc.

Example: Read the following text. Write down things that may cause the parent-child conflict mentioned in the text.
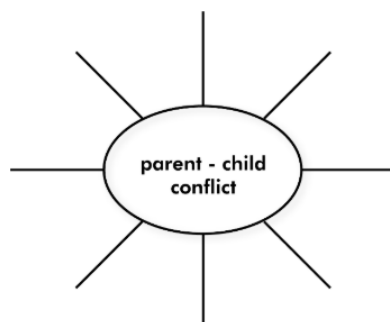
3) Elicit or explain: At this stage, students concentrate on a particular structure in the text or activity that enables the creation of meaning and context. They find out how the structure, which is being focused on with the help of the teacher's questions, gains meaning in the context. Some of the activities that can be used in this step are guessing the meaning of a word from the context or extracting certain syntactic structure from the text and understanding its contribution to the comprehension of the text.

Example: Look at the sentences from the text and answer the questions:

Parents try to change that behavior which they find unacceptable and they do it by using physical or psychological strength.

1. Who is the subject in the above sentence?
2. Is this subject general?
3. Which word(s) is/are displaying action?
4. What is the function of this sentence?
   a) creating characters to tell the story
   b) talking about an observed common attitude

c) dreaming and creating imaginary heroes
d) putting forward a different opinion and arguing

4) Elaborate/expand: At this stage, students try to use the language element on which they worked or focused in new (but similar) contexts. Any further activities must fit the context on which the student has worked so far and should create the opportunity for the student to use their knowledge.

Example: Answer the following questions.

Do you have these types of problems at home?

What is the most common problem?

How do you feel when there is a conflict going on?

How do you solve the problem?

Have you tried the solutions mentioned in the text? Did it work?

Do you have a suggestion for the solution? If yes, what is it?

5) Evaluate: The assessment is continuous and it is used for diagnostic purposes. It helps both the teacher and the student understand whether comprehension and learning actually take place in the student's learning process. The teacher can track the students' progress either through observation or by using assessment tools and can offer assistance when necessary.

Example: If the teacher fails to get an answer to a question, they should redirect it by saying "Read the first paragraph of the text again. Who is mentioned there?", or bring some additional activities to students, etc.

Consequently, as shown in the examples above, the use of the 5E instructional model can help teachers design the lesson plan in order to make the classroom instructions more consistent, coherent and comprehensive. Also, the five cognitive stages of this model enable students to respond accordingly and solve the problem they are assigned, to interact and cooperate with their peers and to recognize their own competences.

CONCLUSION

Language as a communication tool can only be taught as a whole, for communication and skill-based purposes. Any of the opposite approaches cannot quite produce the desired outcome. The constructivist approach advocates that knowledge is created only by individuals and focuses on learning by doing. One of the fundamental principles of integrated language teaching is the active engagement of students in a content-based subject through the use of a target language. The integrated language teaching approach and the 5E model have largely contributed to the teaching of English as a foreign language. Having such teaching and learning resources enables teachers to concentrate on their leadership and guiding roles, which in turn enables students to enter the learning process with consciousness and responsibility and realize that they cannot learn anything without their own engagement and activity.

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