

## An Integrated Approach to Language Learning

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### Learning a Language is Complicated, This Article Informs Viewers of How to Improve Their Language Skills Quickly and Effectively

Integrating the four main language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) has showed to be very beneficial in the second language classroom. From *The Tapestry of Language Learning* (Robin Scarcella and Rebecca Oxford), it was noted that we rarely use a single skill when communicating, so it makes sense to focus on more than one skill at a time. Considering that communication requires the integration of both the main and the subsidiary skills (grammar, punctuation, pronunciation), it makes sense that language is taught in a communication promoting way.

There are several advantages for using an integrated approach. Not only are learners given the chance to interact in an authentic and meaningful way, but learners are also exposed to the richness and complexity of the language. However, with a segregated approach, it is difficult to use language in a meaningful way. For example, when students are focused on only one skill at a time, such as punctuation, it is not very meaningful or very likely that they will ever be focused on just punctuation while they are communicating.

Another advantage to using an integrated approach is that language is treated as a means of interaction, rather than an academic subject. This also relates to motivation, and it is more likely for students to be motivated to learn a language if they are able to use it to interact, rather than to just have knowledge about the language. A third advantage of an integrated approach deals with the teacher's side of the process. Teachers are able to track students' progress in multiple skills at the same time. Also, skill integration allows for growth in all main skill areas at the same time, this allows students to be able to use their strengths in order to help them grow in their weaknesses. In other words, if a student is particularly strong in reading, they may be able to use this skill to help them with listening. This advantage also relates to motivation, because if the learner is a weak reader, but a very strong speaker, they may be prevented from becoming discouraged and unmotivated to continue learning the language.

An integrated skills approach is obviously a more realistic approach to authentic language learning, whereas a segregated approach does not offer a meaningful understanding of language. Nor does it seem to be a motivating style to learning a foreign language.

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"Language is not merely a set of unrelated sounds, clauses, rules, and meanings; it is a total coherent system of these integrating with each other, and with behavior, context, universe of discourse, and observer perspective." Kenneth L. Pike