

Integrated Skills in the ESL/EFL Classroom

OXFORD, Rebecca. Integrated Skills in the ESL/EFL Classroom. **The Journal of TESOL France: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages**, Paris, v. 8, p. 5-12, 2001. Available at: https://www.tesol-france.org/uploaded_files/files/TESOL%20Vol%208%202001%20C1.pdf. Access on: Jan. 11, 2023.

Review by Euclides da Silva and Leticia Benjamim (TEAM Members). Feb. 22, 2023.



This TESOL Journal volume 8 approaches various subjects concerning oral skills competence. In this respect, the first article, written by Rebecca Oxford, describes the need to integrate the four skills in the English language classroom. The introduction to the text compares English as a Second Language (ESL)/English as a Foreign language (EFL) teaching to a tapestry, in which the structure of both teacher and learner is woven in many ways. This metaphor explains in a very clear way what the teacher's and the learner's roles are in an ESL/EFL classroom.

Oxford relates the efficiency of the roles of the teacher and the student to a well-sewn tapestry, i.e., all elements of the process must play their part to obtain a good result. The connection made between a tapestry and the individuals involved in a classroom is very helpful to clarify for readers how important it is to sustain this balance.

The text emphasizes that all language skills are connected in an optimal ESL communication situation and this concept makes the reader think about the use of language in a contextualized situation, in which a speaker does not choose which skill will be used in a given communication circumstance.

Oxford affirms that she adopts parts of the concept of language-as-skill (BARTON, 1994)¹, adding that a skill is not something owned as an object. This aspect conveys the reflection on one of the teacher's roles, which is to provide students with ways to develop or even discover their skills.

The "skill strand" of tapestry mentioned by the author encircles the concept of an integrated skill approach, whose primary goal is improving authentic classroom communication. Through this metaphor, we can see the importance of the connection among the skills for better fluidity during the teaching and learning processes. Currently, it is possible to see in general, in English teaching environments, the concept of integrated skills in its most traditional form, but the reality of EFL/ESL teaching is still more similar to the segregated teaching of skills, which may generate failures in the student's learning process. Therefore, reflecting upon such integration may be a good way to contribute to this process.

Oxford does not exclude the importance of segregated skills in the learning environment, but focuses on their greater effectiveness for specific purposes such as the logistics facilitating the present courses. Therefore, despite presenting limitations within a more authentic approach and being very important for training and specific purposes in the educational system, the teaching of skills will always reflect a more integrated view.

In conclusion, *Integrated Skills in the ESL/EFL Classroom* is an essential resource for any English language teacher. Such text provides a comprehensive and practical guide to integrating language skills in the language classroom and offers ideas for using authentic materials. It also has us reflect upon the integration of skills from a no longer theoretical point of view, but from a practical and applicable one. We can say that in contemporary times the steps to achieve the connection presented in the tapestry metaphor is a continuous process that is worth remembering in ESL/EFL teaching.



¹ BARTON, D. **Literacy**: an introduction to the ecology of written language. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1994.