11.   INTEGRATING THE FOUR SKILLS: CURRENT AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

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In the contemporary world of second and foreign language teaching, most professionals largely take it for granted that language instruction is naturally divided into discrete skill sets, typically reflecting speaking, listening, reading, and writing, and usually arranged in this order. That is, the primacy of speaking skills has remained unquestioned, at least in North America, for almost the entire past century, since the rise and preeminence of structural linguistics in second and foreign language teaching (*Language Teaching*, 2007). Based on the principles of Bloomfieldian linguistic analyses and their applications to language pedagogy, the structural division of language teaching in the four skill areas has the learning objective of imitating the native speaker. The continual separation of the four skills lies at the core of research and testing in speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Some current approaches to teaching language, however, strive to integrate the four skills in pedagogy whenever possible. Integrated language teaching and various integrated pedagogical paradigms are usually associated with outgrowths of communicative teaching. Relative to its predecessor, the audiolingual method, integrated teaching of the four skills represents a central innovation. On the other hand, in the U.K., the path toward integrated teaching of the language skills did not derive from a strong audiolingual focus but rather from an evolution of older situational and functional teaching methods that were developed prior to and concurrent with the structural method in the U.S. Current models of integrated language teaching are not without their shortfalls. Nor is integrated instruction appropriate in all contexts of language teaching and for all purposes of language learning. The advantages and

disadvantages of integrated teaching may crucially determine its usefulness in second or foreign language contexts.

This chapter begins with a brief look at the historic and methodological reasons for the continual separation of the four skills in teaching. Modern-day perspectives on skill integration and integrated curriculum designs will also be discussed, together with problems and issues typically associated with integrated teaching. The chapter will then address the highly idiosyncratic and limited designs of major English language tests in the U. K. and the U. S., as well as the indelible effect of tests on the separation of the four skills. The chapter concludes with an overview of the pedagogical and methodological currents in integrated language instruction.

How the Four Skills Became Separated

Contemporary methods for teaching second and foreign languages in the U. S. and the U. K. have followed two distinctly different routes, primarily due to the divergent histories of the two countries during the second half of the 20th century. The reasons for separating or integrating the teaching of the four skills in the U. S. and the U. K. are reviewed in turn and in their historical contexts.

In the early 1940s and during World War II, a group of specialists under the auspices of the Linguistic Society of America were called on to develop effective, efficient, and intensive language teaching to members of the U. S. Armed Forces. Based on methods for linguistic field studies, and in keeping with the outline developed by Bloomfield (1942), the program worked with a wide range of languages, such as Chinese and Hungarian, and was designed for target language instruction in small classes of specially selected learners who were highly motivated.

The students were tutored by native-speaking informants together with linguists whose task was to interpret the structural, lexical, and phonetic patterns of the language for teaching purposes. The learners then drilled the elicited systematic patterns of spoken language to replace their first-language "habits" with second language behaviors (Mitchell & Vidal, 2001).

In this way, following the principles of structural linguistics in conjunction with the prevailing behaviorist learning theories, the primacy of speaking skills was established in a famously successful language-teaching program. The instruction in, and the learning of, spoken patterns was accompanied by similar structure-based teaching and learning of listening skills, needed for conversing in a target language. Learning to read -- or write -- in another language was not a focus of the linguistic analyses or of teaching simply because these skills were not expected of the learners in their practical and required language uses in the field.

In a parallel development and in conjunction with teaching English as a second language in the U. S., Charles Fries and his successor, Robert Lado, undertook to design a similar program – one solidly rooted in structural linguistics -- designed to teach English as a second or foreign language. The implementation of the English language courses at the University of Michigan led to the creation of the first North American set of teaching materials incorporating the English sound system, common grammatical structures, and lexical patterns, excerpted from the available linguistic analyses (Fries, 1945; 1952). In accordance with the principles of structural linguistics, linguistic knowledge was methodically arranged for instruction in the first North American course of its kind. The structural separation of second language skills and the primacy of speaking served as a model for course and materials development. In later years, Robert Lado (1957; 1964) formalized methods for contrastive and structural analyses of languages and their application to the teaching and testing of discrete language skills. Lado's study (1957) was the

first systematic application of contrastive analysis to curriculum development, preparing teaching materials and the discrete testing of such incremental language skills as phonemic discrimination, vocabulary, and grammar.

The structural and behaviorist approach to language teaching and learning, with an almost exclusive focus on speaking and grammar drills and listening comprehension, became known as the "oral method," the "aural-oral method," the "structural method," and in the 1950s as the "audiolingual method." Ellis (1990, p. 21) comments, however, that "audiolingualism was very much an American method. In its purist form it was never very popular in Britain and Europe, where less attention was paid to teaching the formal patterns of the second language and more to their situational uses." Ellis continues, however, that "many of the audiolingual assumptions regarding the way language is learnt can be found in pedagogical prescriptions of British and European methodologists writing at this time."

In the U. K., the separation of the four skills had to do with the utilitarian purposes of language teaching, rather than with matters of a particular methodology. According to Howatt and Widdowson (2004), in the U.K., the period immediately after World War II was characterized by "continuation and consolidation rather than change" in English language teaching (ELT). Generally speaking, prior to the late 1950s, much of the British work in second or foreign language pedagogy was devoted to teaching English to school-age children in the colonies. Thus, teaching efforts were largely directed toward learners outside the U.K. without much prominence attached to listening and speaking skills, but with a primary instructional focus on learning grammar needed for translating written texts. The teaching of English as a second--rather than a foreign--language was conducted primarily in London, and second language

teaching and learning there required listening and speaking skills, essential in basic communication and routine interactions.

In the 1960s, however, with the influx of foreign workers and students, as well as former colonials, British perspectives on ELT began to change. One of the top priorities in teaching English as both a second and foreign language lay in the need for specialized instruction for technical and highly trained personnel, for academic linguistic skills for college students, as well as for grade school teachers of the children of immigrants. The emerging learning needs of these new populations of learners brought about curricular and methodological work in two novel directions: English for specific purposes for technical and professional learners and English for academic purposes for university students. Thus, the language learning needs of specific groups of learners led to pivotal shifts in the types of language that were taught, but not necessarily in the specific skills that were taught. Howatt and Widdowson (2004: 247) comment that in the 1960s "history intervened in a somewhat dramatic way in the U. K., creating a wholly new professional alignment." New and urgent demands arose for teaching the language needed in technical and academic fields, as well as for integrated teaching of the discrete skills.

To this end, in the U. K., the emphasis on situational, rather than structural, language skills became predominant in the curricula, similar to the syllabuses developed by A. S. Hornby in the 1950s. The "situational approach" (also called the "situational-structural method," the "structural-situational approach," or "situational language leaching") resembled the pragmatic -- and situationalized -- version of the audiolingual method, with a primary emphasis on speaking and listening skills. These were, however, socially, rather than structurally driven. According to Howatt and Widdowson (2004: 299-300), the principles underlying language instruction between

the 1950s and 1970s postulated, "all four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) should be taught, but the spoken skills should be given priority."

Real-world situational contexts of instruction, with lessons built around specific topics, such as "at the post office," "at the doctor's," or "a visit to the theater," served as a backdrop for teaching language "chunks" and contextually relevant grammar and vocabulary. The emergence of the "situational approach" also gave rise to the classroom teaching technique currently known as *PPP* (Presentation, Practice, Production). The PPP model of instruction implies that learners can be guided from controlled practice of language features to free and automatic production of language in any or all of the four skills. By the end of the 1960s, however, many linguists and ELT methodologists arrived at the conclusion that the situational method was somewhat limited in scope and its interactional foci -- i.e., speaking and listening -- and did not provide clear principles that could guide curricula and instruction (Strevens, 1977).

While Stern (1983: 167) called the 1960s "disorienting" in language teaching and new theories about language, the 1970s and 1980s ushered in humanistic approaches to language pedagogy in North America and in Europe. It should be noted, however, that in the U. K. the strongly pragmatic goal-orientation in teaching the four skills and the impact of social factors on language usage continued to occupy a prominent place in ELT. (See, e.g., the work of Stevick and Widdowson published in the 1970s for thorough discussions.)

The introduction of the concept of "communicative competence" (Hymes, 1971; 1972) brought about a change in the perspectives on how language skills were to be taught and used for communication inside and outside of the classroom. Although not directly associated with language teaching per se, Hymes' work emphasized the key role of the social context in communication and the centrality of the socio-linguistic norms of appropriateness in speech

communities and their cultures. Hymes was particularly interested in language as social

behavior. New perspectives began to emerge that authentic representations and uses of language

in the classroom were nearly impossible -- particularly so within the established models

associated with the audiolingual method. The structural separation of the four skills, pattern

practice, error avoidance, and native-speaker imitation in second and foreign language

production contrasted markedly with teaching language as a means of communication.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) places a great deal of value on

teaching language skills with the goal of enabling learners to communicate meaningfully

both inside and outside of the classroom, as in, for example, asking for information,

seeking clarification, relying on circumlocution when necessary, and in general,

negotiating meaning by all linguistic and non-linguistic means at one's disposal. In their

seminal publication on learners' coping strategies, Canale and Swain (1980) developed a

three-component framework of language competence that learners needed to achieve:

communicative competence, grammatical competence, and sociolinguistic competence.

Canale's and Swain's empirical findings demonstrated convincingly that practicing a

range of language skills simultaneously and in the context of communication allowed

learners to attain levels of grammatical competence similar to those achieved by students

who concentrated on audiolingual structural patterns. In addition, however, the

communicative competence of the learners who practiced their skills in interaction,

measured in terms of language fluency, comprehensibility, and effort, substantively

exceeded that of learners without comparable practice. As an outcome of this and other

studies published at the time (e.g., Paulston, 1974; Savignon 1972; 1983), CLT and its

subsequent methodological offshoots have presently come to dominate integrated

approaches to teaching of the central four skills. (See also Chapters 22 on Content-based

language teaching and 23 on Task-based language teaching.)

Linguistic and Methodological Bases for Integrating the Four Skills

As early as the 1970s, many researchers and methodologists noted that the teaching of

language skills can not be conducted through isolable and discrete structural elements (Corder,

1971; 1978; Kaplan, 1970; Stern, 1992). In reality, it is rare for language skills to be used in

isolation; e.g., both speaking and listening comprehension are needed in a conversation and, in

some contexts, reading or listening and making notes is likely to be almost as common as having

a conversation. The central innovative characteristic of the communicative approach in second

or foreign language teaching was the integration of the four macro-skills and their components.

Widdowson (1978) was one of the first linguists to call for integrating the four language

skills in instruction to raise learners' proficiency levels and enable advanced language learning.

In his proposal for integrated and communicative language teaching in general and in particular

in English for specific purposes, Widdowson emphasized that virtually all language uses take

place in the form of discourse and in specific social contexts. Although he notes that the

separated teaching of language skills is probably more administratively convenient, as in "divide

and rule" (1978: 144), language comprehension and production does not in fact take place in

discrete "units." Thus, to attain proficiency, learners need to develop receptive and productive

skills in both spoken and written discourse. Widdowson's (1978) strong emphasis on the

integration of the four skills, as well as discourse-based teaching, have had a considerable impact

on the emergence of discourse-oriented curricula and teaching methods in English for specific

purposes and English for academic purposes. Widdowson's (1978) and Halliday's (1978) early

work and their insights into the importance of discourse in language usage provided highly influential theoretical foundations in linguistic analyses and language teaching. These works have led to the subsequent rise and prominence of content-based and integrated language instruction, especially in English as a second language in Australia, in the U. K., and, to some extent in North America.

In the 1980s and 1990s, a great deal of elaboration and refinement took place in communicative and integrated teaching of the four skills. In light of the fact that opportunities for meaningful communication in the language classroom are limited -- particularly so in the regions where English is taught as a foreign language -- a great need arose for integrated communicative activities. These had to be interaction-centered and as authentic as possible to enable students to use the language for purposeful communication (Savignon, 1983; 1990). The need for integrated activities led to the evolution of task-based instruction that gained currency in the early to mid-1980s. (See Chapters 22 and 23 for additional discussion.) At present, the ubiquitous language practice exercises for groups or pairs of learners typically combine listening and speaking, reading and speaking, or reading, writing, and speaking. Such integrated classroom activities (also called tasks), include, for example, listening to language tapes, playing games, or working on information gap and problem-solving exercises. These types of practice require learners to engage in interaction and integrated language usage because group- or pair-work can be carried out only if the participants share and discuss, or read and pool their information. Task-based teaching is probably the most widely adopted model of integrated language teaching today, and it is often considered to be the closest classroom simulation of real-life interaction.

In his highly acclaimed book, Nunan (1989) outlines the principles that should guide the design of teaching materials and modules for integrating a variety of language skills. (See also Willis, 1996, for another set of such principles.) According to Nunan, effective integrated modules are characterized by uses of authentic language models and exemplars, continuity of language work from comprehension to production, explicit connections of classroom language practice to real world uses (e.g., a business presentation or a job interview), and a systematic language focus that enables learners to identify and analyze language regularities. In his later work on designing integrated syllabuses, Nunan (2001) explains that the first step is to identify the contexts and situations in which learners will need to communicate. After the communicative events are identified in general terms, the next phase should work toward learners' functional goals along with the linguistic elements required to achieve them. According to Nunan, in integrated instruction, language skills are taught and practiced depending on the students' learning objectives, rather than in the context of the four separate instructional areas.

Key Considerations in Integrated Language Teaching and Curricula

Richards, Platt, and Weber (1988: 144) define the teaching of integrated skills in the *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics*: "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." There are several principled models for integrating the teaching of two or more language skills. Such models can vary substantially in their complexity and in the types of skills that can be integrated to benefit learning, and virtually all have their advantages and disadvantages in particular contexts.

The simplest and most basic type of integrated teaching incorporates the skills in the same language medium, either spoken to include listening and speaking, or written to include reading and writing. A typical instructional paradigm found in many locations around the world deals with employing learners' receptive skills to provide input and modeling for productive skills. For instance, in the spoken medium, listening selections are used as models for speaking, interaction, or pronunciation skills, and in the written medium, reading input supplies models for writing.

More complex integrated curricula combine a range of language skills. For instance, instructional activities can bring together listening and reading input to promote speaking or writing, or to facilitate both speaking and writing. In complex integrated teaching methods, such as "text-based" (also called "genre-based") language input materials are usually organized thematically. In this way, theme, register, and language content can be made consistent and cohesive to expose learners' to contextually linked vocabulary, relevant grammar constructions, and discourse organization features. For example, if the theme of the instructional materials has a focus on, say, weather, climate, or geography, then in speech or writing, the register is likely to be somewhat more formal than it would be in a module on friends and family. The vocabulary on weather and geography is bound to include common climate-related terms, and the grammar constructions are likely to deal with the present (but not the past) tenses, several kinds of adverb clauses, and locational prepositions.

In practically all methods and techniques geared toward integrated teaching, curricula typically include at least two essential teaching and learning objectives:

- language features needed for communication and used in the context of

communication;

- thematic and cohesive stretches of discourse for language input, rather than a focus

    on discrete vocabulary items, patterns, or grammar points.

Discourse-based approaches to instruction afford learners an opportunity to focus on the linguistic and sociocultural features of organizing and presenting information in particular contexts. (See Kaplan 1997; 2001; 2005 for a more thorough analysis.) Teaching the language with a discourse focus also greatly facilitates an integration of a broad range of skills when incremental skills can be transferred from one aspect of language to another. For example, learning to organize and explain one's ideas in writing can prove to be highly useful in structuring oral presentations. Similarly, the language features -- e.g., vocabulary and grammar, associated with the formal register in speech -- can also be applicable to constructing semi-formal written text, such as an email to a colleague. McCarthy (2001: 54) comments that transferability of skills from one type of discourse to another provides for "a greater integration of the traditional four skills in language teaching, where writing tasks might be 'spoken' in their mode, and vice versa…."

It should be noted, however, that the teaching of integrated language skills can also have a number of disadvantages (e.g., McDonough and Shaw 2003; Widdowson, 1978, 1993; 2003). To begin with, a curriculum that concentrates on a single language skill at a time can permit more focused teaching and more intensive learning. Furthermore, in various regions and cultures where the instruction in discrete language skills is highly valued, both teachers and learners have been known to resist skill

integration (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In such settings, integrated instruction may not be well suited to the local traditions of how teaching and learning are to be conducted.

Additionally, complex integrated instruction with more than two language skills addressed in tandem places greater demands on both the teacher and the learner. Curricula and syllabi that integrate a range of language skills require the teacher to be reasonably versatile and well-trained. In most cases, the teachers need to be at least somewhat familiar with discourse-based instructional models, such as those noted earlier. At the same time, teachers can be expected to devote more time and effort to preparing materials appropriate for integrated instruction. In many regions around the world, where teachers are required to teach very large classes, the teaching of integrated skills may not be a very practical option.

Another notable disadvantage of integrated instruction is that many (if not most) learners have unevenly developed proficiencies across the four macro-skills (Hinkel, 2002; 2003; Stern, 1983). For example, second language learners who live in English-speaking countries may have stronger skills in listening and speaking than in reading and writing. Conversely, English as a foreign language learners are likely to be better readers and writers than listeners and speakers. For this reason, the teaching of integrated skills can become complicated, when instructional materials and practice have to account for a considerable variance in learners' abilities. In complex integrated teaching, a frequent tendency is for a particular language skill or set of skills to receive less attention than learners' proficiencies might require. In light of the fact that the integrated curricula concentrate primarily on purposeful communication and meaning making, typically, the teaching of grammar and vocabulary, as well as accuracy in learner language production,

may receive less emphasis than they should (Richards, 2005). Some experts and

methodological authorities also contend that integrated language teaching with its main

focus on the learning process tends to overlook the quality of the learning product (e.g.,

Swan, 2005; Widdowson, 1990; 2003).

Language Tests and Testing of the Four Skills

It seems reasonable to expect that the methodological currents in language testing would

follow those prevalent in language teaching. However, the evolution of major standardized tests

has not coincided with the shifts and developments in teaching. In the 1960s, the newly

emerging standardized tests of English as a foreign language were constructed in keeping with

the prevailing influence of structural linguistics and the audiolingual method. At that time,

standardized English language tests were designed to assess learners' proficiencies in the skills

considered to be important for the overall mastery of the language. These incremental skills

included sound discrimination and listening comprehension, conversational and idiomatic

expressions, grammatical and structural knowledge, and vocabulary needed for reading

comprehension. In line with the standards in psychometric measurements of the time, to ensure

their reliability and validity, language tests consisted of large numbers of discrete-point multiple-

choice items.

Generally speaking, the design of discrete-point tests (also called discrete item tests)

assumes that language proficiency and its measurements encompass an array of components,

such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing and their smaller increments -- e.g., the sound

system, vocabulary, clause- and phrase-level grammar, or morphology (word forms and word

grammar) (see, e.g., Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Brindley, 2001; for earlier

discussions, see Jones & Spolsky, 1975; Harris, 1969; Lado, 1961; NEC, 1962; Oller & Perkins, 1978; Valette, 1977). These incremental units of language -- i.e., the discrete points -- have been the backbone of language testing for the more than a century in practically all regions of the world.

In the U. K., the shift in the prevailing methodology was prominently reflected in the design of language tests. The British English language examinations, such as that of the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), were revised to make them communicative and integrated. However, these tests were famously unreliable and error-prone. According to Spolsky (1995), for example:

- written compositions were marked subjectively,

- listening comprehension was scored by clerical personnel according to a key, and

- the speaking segments of the examinations were rated locally wherever they were administered across several dozens of examination sites around the world.

In fact, Spolsky refers to three sources of measurement error:

i. a lack of consistency in the discrete-point listening and reading comprehension sections with consistency coefficients so low as to make them statistically invalid,

ii. subjective marking of compositions without a means of establishing rater consistency, and

iii. a high degree of variation in different forms of the test and of examiners' scoring methods.

To some degree, the complex integrative and communicative nature of the examinations, the complexities of their interconnected design, and the administration and scoring procedures also caused a substantial amount of variation in test scores. As a result, UCLES examinations scores

were frequently seen as markedly unreliable and inconsistent (Bachman & Palmer, 1990). After several studies and attempts to make Cambridge examinations more consistent and equivalent across the forms and ratings, the integrative connections between the reading and the speaking segments were removed in 1989, and between the reading and the writing modules in 1995. According to the examination flyer, "both changes were widely welcomed by teachers and students."

Spolsky (1995, p. 341) notes sardonically, "UCLES managed for a long time to resist the claims of objective testing," just as the Educational Testing Service that constructs, administers, and scores language tests in North America "managed to hold off the claims of integrative communicative testing for some decades." Test design in North America did not adapt to the shift from discrete-point testing of vocabulary, grammar, and listening comprehension until 2005, and even then, the integration of vocabulary testing went only as far as being incorporated in the reading comprehension section. As an outcome, since the 1970s, important philosophical and practical disparities have remained between the objectives of integrated language teaching and the methods of language testing; that is, if the goal of communicative language teaching is to enable learners to communicate meaningfully and appropriately in various contexts then, clearly, discrete-point tests are inadequate and unsuitable for measuring learners' communication abilities. For example, Paulston, and Bruder (1975) argued that, in real-life interaction, there is always more than one way of effectively accomplishing a speaker's communicative goals. On the other hand, even in carefully designed test items, there is only one correct answer, and such an approach to testing that seems to resemble "the cue-response pattern" (1975: 15) conflicts with the very purpose of teaching language for communication.

When communicative language teaching became the gold standard, the disconnect between the foci of integrated instruction and the means of testing language proficiency as well as the mastery of communicative skills gave rise to strong demands for similarly integrative tests and testing. It was at that time that innovative types of language tests were created for the purposes of institutional or local assessment; e.g., dictation tests that integrate listening and writing abilities, or cloze tests that integrate vocabulary, grammar, and discourse skills (see, for example, Oller, 1979; Oller & Perkins, 1978; 1980). In the 1970s and 1980s, a number of integrative testing models were proposed for indirect measurements of learners' overall general proficiency and communicative competence. However, after a series of experimental studies, such test designs did not prove to be valid in different contexts for a variety of reasons.

For instance, research on proficiency measurements in various regions of the world -- e.g., Brazil and the Philippines -- demonstrated convincingly that language proficiency was not a unitary trait, but that proficiency consists of complex and multi-faceted linguistic and communicative components (e.g., Cohen, 1994; Farhady, 1982). Research in students' language performance found that the mastery of one language skill does not necessarily translate to competencies in any other skills. Furthermore, a great deal of evidence was obtained to show that overall language proficiency cannot be adequately assessed by means of indirect tests; e.g., a successful performance on an integrative vocabulary and grammar test has little to say about a learner's writing abilities. Consequently, the separation of the four skills and the reliance on testing discrete skills has been considered essential for accurate measurements of learners' language proficiency -- or subsets of proficiencies. For example, an individual can have excellent listening comprehension skills but a comparatively low speaking ability, and, as most

teachers know from experience, having had a great deal of grammar practice does not necessarily lead learners to writing well.

Language tests and assessment instruments have remained largely unaltered in their separation of the four skills since at least the 1960s. In the 1990s and early 2000s, a few modifications have been made to provide at least some degree of integration in writing, grammar, and vocabulary in North American standardized tests. For instance, overt and direct testing of discrete grammar points has been eliminated, and assessments of grammar mastery are now embedded in the essay tests, similar to the incorporation of vocabulary testing in reading comprehension tests. By and large, however, language testing methods and test designs have continued to rely on the separation of the four skills and skill subsets probably because a better model for measuring language abilities has not yet been discovered. A fundamental issue in language testing is that the skills needed for communication and communicative competence seem to be enormous in their range and scope. There is little doubt, however, that the dichotomy between communicative -- and integrated -- language teaching and discrete-point language testing has had an indelible effect on the continued separation of the four skills in pedagogy, research, curricular models, and teacher training (e.g., Hinkel, 2004; Hughes, 2003; Stern, 1992). One of the greatest ironies associated with integrated teaching is that language proficiency testing -- and hence much of the administrative gate-keeping -- has remained discrete-point-based. Not surprisingly, though, not all learners set out to learn another language in order to do well on tests.

Current Perspectives on Integrated Teaching

With the spread of English as a lingua franca and as the medium for world-wide dissemination of information and knowledge, in many cases, the pragmatic objectives of language learning underscore the importance of integrated and flexible instruction. In many regions around the world, learning English has the objective of enabling learners to gain access to social, vocational, educational, or professional opportunities (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Kaplan, 1986; 1988; 1991). In common perspectives on contemporary language curricula, teaching reading is typically connected to instruction on writing and vocabulary, teaching writing can be easily tied to reading and grammar, and speaking skills readily lend themselves to teaching listening, pronunciation, and cross-cultural pragmatics (Hinkel, 1999; 2001).

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001: 165), integrated language instruction that engages learners in meaningful communication and enables them to attain their learning objectives can be found in an "unlimited" array of models, teaching materials and techniques. A few examples of such integrated models with a communicative and contextualized focus are: content-based (sometimes also called theme-based), task-based, text-based (also called genre-based), discourse-based, project-based, network-based, technology-based, corpus-based, interaction-based, literature-based, literacy-based, community-based, competency-based, or standards-based.

With the current emphasis on both fluency and accuracy in language production, it seems clear, however, that integrated language teaching and learning, as well as integrative instructional models, will need to continue to be refined and developed (e.g., Breen, 1991; Swain, 1991). For instance, exposure to and experience with L2 speaking and meaningful interaction, but without the benefit of explicit and focused instruction,

leads to learners' developing high degrees of fluency but not necessarily of accuracy and advanced L2 proficiency (e.g., Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Swain, 1991).

In regard to communication-oriented principles that guide much of integrated language teaching, critics have contended that with its focus on communication-in-interaction, second or foreign language instruction frequently lacks depth and substance. As Howatt and Widdowson (2004) note, naturalistic and integrated language learning tends to meet the communicative needs that people would have as tourists in, for example, simple service transactions and casual conversational exchanges. Widdowson (2003: 24) explains, for instance, that "coping with written language is also a communicative objective," but the contemporary focus on face-to-face encounters lacks a teaching focus on "an understanding of writing, literary and otherwise, of the past." He also points out that, outside English-speaking areas where English is taught as a school subject, current methodologists would do well to consider "what kind of language is to be specified for the subject to fulfill its educational objective" (2003: 27).

On the other hand, in recent years, standards- and outcomes-based language teaching curricula have become one of the foremost educational priorities in a number of English-speaking nations. To this end, innovative integrated methodological models have been proposed to concentrate on advancing learner proficiencies in a range of language skills. Specifically, the objectives of these models are geared toward clearly defined language competencies that students need to achieve within the educational system. Stern (1992) is to be credited with the first set of guidelines for an integrated curriculum that address the major goal of advancing students' language proficiency. His model effectively combines the learning of the central language skills with the

achievement-oriented syllabusi in culture learning, communicative skills, and general education. Stern also notes (1992: 76) that "as useful expressions of proficiency, however, the 'four skills' continue to be important categories in language pedagogy."

In Canada, for example, the instructional model is based on Stern's "proficiency as competence" (1992: 73) and on communicative competence together with "the mastery of such skills as listening, speaking, reading and writing." Canadian Language Benchmarks and common sets of proficiency standards have been a recognized success in nation-wide second language teaching. Canadian language assessments and national achievement standards also account for the fact that many learners' language proficiencies vary from skill to skill. In part, the effectiveness of the Canadian achievement-oriented curriculum can be attributed to its design supporting learners with different levels of mastery in the four skills (Breen, 2001). Other types of integrated syllabusi are currently adopted in national educational movements and in the U. S., Australia, and New Zealand. These standards-based curricula reflect an ongoing work in the refinement and elaboration of integrated instruction that can raise learners' language proficiency and the quality of production in the contexts of real-life communication. (See, e.g., McDonough & Shaw, 2003 for detailed discussion.)

Conclusion

In the past several decades, much evidence has emerged that, in order for learners to attain language competence, teaching needs to integrate linguistic and communicative skills. The overarching goal of integrated instruction is to advance learners' language proficiency required for communication in various contexts. In general, the learning of

language for communication in both speaking and writing entails achieving mastery in discourse, language strategies, sociocultural and interactional norms, and the communicative culture of the people who use the language (Stern, 1992). Today, after decades of research in language teaching and learning, it seems clear that, in many cases and for many purposes, the separation of the four macro skills is likely to be less effective than integrated instruction simply because, in reality, communication does not take place in terms of discrete linguistic skills.

The early models of integrated and communicative teaching largely eschewed explicit instruction in any of the four skills, and in particular in grammar. Typically, the teaching of reading was integrated with writing, and listening with speaking. Classroom instruction concentrated predominantly on activities and interactions -- e.g., on games, role-plays, skits, and problem-solving in groups or pairs of learners. These exercises sought to promote authentic language usage with the goal of developing learners' fluency. The overarching objective of integrated and thematic language input was to facilitate language acquisition naturalistically. At the time, the purpose of engaging with language in classroom interactions was to enable learners to attain communicative competence. By and large, learners' engagement in integrated communicative activities without deliberate teaching led to incidental learning of such various linguistic features as conversational expressions, vocabulary associated with daily and routine interactions, and informal reading and writing skills (Hinkel, 2006).

In the mid-1990s, a number of studies found that many years of exposure to and immersion in integrated classroom instruction does in fact lead to the development of language fluency. It also became clear, however, that learners' productive language

lacked accuracy and sociocultural appropriateness, i.e., advanced communicative competence that the integration of language skills in teaching sought to achieve (e.g., Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Swain, 1991).

The current models of integrated teaching of the four language skills have the objective of developing learners' fluency and accuracy, as well as their sociocultural communicative competence requiring adapting the language from context to context and from genre to genre. In light of the fact that at the present time English is widely employed as the medium of international communication, it seems easy to predict that integrated language teaching will continue to dominate among the various types of pedagogical models. There is little doubt, however, that the evolution and change of integrated teaching models and methods will remain one of the main -- if not the main -- defining characteristic of language teaching around the world.