

Interrelated Aspects In Efl Instructional Materials Development On Language Skills

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ABSTRACT; *This study focuses on developing materials for the "four modes of communication", listening, speaking, reading, and writing, collectively known as the "four skills." Initially, the research reviews literature that differentiates the concepts of "skill" and "strategy," noting the ongoing debate over their precise definitions. The study provides a retrospective account of materials designed for teaching skills and strategies, highlighting their historical development and underlying rationales. Advances in applied linguistics, second language acquisition, cognitive psychology, and neuroscience have significantly influenced our understanding of the processes involved in these four communication modes. Current perspectives suggest that learners achieve communicative competence most effectively in holistic environments that offer meaningful exposure and opportunities for practical language use. This integrated approach, which emphasizes interconnected and fundamental elements across all four skills, aims to guide the development of materials that support learners in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The study synthesizes insights from recent research to offer recommendations for creating comprehensive educational resources that enhance overall communicative competence.*

Keywords: *Communication Modes, Skill and Strategy Distinction, Integrated Approach.*

ABSTRAK; *Studi ini berfokus pada pengembangan materi untuk "empat cara komunikasi", mendengarkan, berbicara, membaca, dan menulis, yang secara kolektif dikenal sebagai "empat keterampilan". Awalnya, penelitian ini meninjau literatur yang membedakan konsep "keterampilan" dan "strategi", dan mencatat perdebatan yang sedang berlangsung mengenai definisi sebenarnya dari konsep tersebut. Studi ini memberikan gambaran retrospektif tentang materi yang dirancang untuk mengajarkan keterampilan dan strategi, menyoroti perkembangan historis dan alasan yang mendasarinya. Kemajuan dalam linguistik terapan, pemerolehan bahasa kedua, psikologi kognitif, dan ilmu saraf telah secara signifikan mempengaruhi pemahaman kita tentang proses yang terlibat dalam empat mode komunikasi ini. Perspektif saat ini menunjukkan bahwa pelajar mencapai kompetensi komunikatif paling efektif dalam lingkungan holistik yang menawarkan paparan bermakna dan kesempatan untuk penggunaan bahasa praktis. Pendekatan terpadu ini, yang menekankan unsur-unsur yang saling berhubungan*

dan mendasar pada keempat keterampilan, bertujuan untuk memandu pengembangan materi yang mendukung pembelajar dalam mendengarkan, berbicara, membaca, dan menulis. Studi ini mensintesis wawasan dari penelitian terbaru untuk menawarkan rekomendasi untuk menciptakan sumber daya pendidikan komprehensif yang meningkatkan kompetensi komunikatif secara keseluruhan

Kata Kunci: Mode Komunikasi, Perbedaan Keterampilan dan Strategi, Pendekatan Terintegrasi.

INTRODUCTION

Around the 1970s when the communicative approach challenged the existing views of language, learning and teaching, the contrast was made between “linguistic competence” and “communicative competence” (Hymes, 1972; Canale & Swain, 1980; see Richards & Rodgers, 2014 for an historical account). In traditional grammar based approaches around that time (e.g. the grammar translation method), learning a language usually meant learning “language knowledge” by consciously studying words and grammar in the target language (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). In the communicative approach, on the other hand, the focus is more on learners becoming able to use the target language for communication, in order to become able to listen, speak, read and write in a target language, we also need to acquire the sensor, motor, cognitive, and strategic abilities necessary for using a language.

Therefore, the discussions in this paper constitute how to differentiate skills and strategies. Furthermore, what factors influence the EFL instructional materials development based on the literatures, and recommendations on developing four modes of communications

LITERATURE REVIEW

Differentiating Skills and Strategies

The distinction between "skills" and "strategies" has long been a subject of debate in the field of language education. Williams and Moran (1989) noted terminological inconsistency, with both terms often used interchangeably. This confusion persists, as highlighted by Afflerbach et al. (2008), who conducted a thorough analysis of influential literature in psychology, information processing, and education to clarify definitions. They found that "skimming," for example, could be classified differently depending on its automaticity and effort. Richards and Rodgers (2014) suggest that skimming, when performed automatically,

qualifies as a skill, whereas Richards and Schmidt (2010) might categorize it as a strategy due to its behavioral nature. This ongoing debate underscores the complexity of defining these terms precisely.

Historical Development of Teaching Materials

The evolution of teaching materials for language skills has been significantly influenced by advances in applied linguistics, second language acquisition, cognitive psychology, and neuroscience. In the 1970s, the communicative approach emerged, emphasizing the importance of using language for communication over merely learning linguistic forms (Hymes, 1972; Canale & Swain, 1980; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). This shift led to the development of materials that support not only linguistic competence but also the sensorimotor, cognitive, and strategic abilities necessary for effective language use.

Current Perspectives on Integrated Learning

Recent research advocates for holistic learning environments where the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—are taught in an interconnected manner. This integrated approach reflects real-world communication and enhances learners' overall communicative competence (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Materials designed with this perspective often include activities that engage multiple skills simultaneously, providing meaningful exposure and practical language use opportunities.

Influences of Applied Linguistics and Cognitive Psychology

Advancements in applied linguistics and cognitive psychology have deepened our understanding of language acquisition processes. Insights from applied linguistics highlight the importance of input, interaction, and feedback in developing language proficiency (Gass & Mackey, 2012). Cognitive psychology, through concepts like cognitive load theory, emphasizes designing materials that manage information overload and provide scaffolded support to build learners' confidence and competence (Sweller, Ayres, & Kalyuga, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978).

Contributions of Neuroscience

Neuroscience research has illuminated how the brain processes and stores linguistic information, suggesting that repetition, spaced practice, and multimodal learning enhance memory retention and recall (Sousa, 2011). Effective instructional materials incorporate these

principles, offering repeated exposure to vocabulary, spaced review sessions, and activities that engage multiple senses (Medina, 2008).

Holistic Learning Environments

The creation of holistic learning environments aligns with the notion of communicative competence, emphasizing the ability to use language effectively in various contexts (Canale & Swain, 1980). Such environments promote interaction, collaboration, and real-world language use, fostering the simultaneous development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Project-based learning and reflective activities enhance learners' metacognitive awareness and self-regulation, further supporting their language learning journey (Han & D'Angelo, 2009).

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data to develop and evaluate instructional materials for the four modes of communication: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The research design includes literature review, material development, and empirical testing.

Participants

The participants in this study are EFL learners from diverse backgrounds, ranging from beginner to advanced proficiency levels. The sample includes both high school students and adults enrolled in language courses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Literature Review

A comprehensive review of existing literature on the distinction between skills and strategies, the historical development of teaching materials, and recent advancements in applied linguistics, cognitive psychology, and neuroscience provides the theoretical foundation for this study.

Material Development

Based on insights from the literature review, instructional materials are developed to integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. These materials include multimedia

resources, authentic texts, and interactive activities designed to engage learners in meaningful language use.

Empirical Testing

The developed materials are tested in real classroom settings. Data collection methods include pre- and post-tests to measure language proficiency, surveys to gather learner feedback, and classroom observations to assess the effectiveness of the materials.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

Statistical analyses, such as paired t-tests, are conducted to compare pre- and post-test scores, evaluating the impact of the instructional materials on learners' language proficiency.

Qualitative Analysis

Thematic analysis of survey responses and classroom observations identifies patterns and themes in learner experiences and perceptions of the materials. This qualitative data provides insights into the practical application and effectiveness of the materials.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval is obtained from the relevant institutional review board. Participants provide informed consent, ensuring their anonymity and confidentiality throughout the study. Data is collected and stored securely, adhering to ethical research standards.

Limitations

The study acknowledges potential limitations, such as the variability in learners' backgrounds and proficiency levels, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data in surveys could introduce bias.

Interconnected Nature of Language Skills

The four language skills are not isolated competencies; rather, they are deeply interconnected. Effective communication often requires the simultaneous use of multiple skills. For instance, engaging in a conversation necessitates both listening and speaking skills, while academic tasks like writing a research paper involve both reading comprehension and writing

proficiency. Recognizing this interconnectedness, instructional materials should be designed to foster an integrated approach to language learning. This means creating activities that simultaneously engage multiple skills, thereby reflecting real-world communication scenarios and promoting a more holistic development of language proficiency (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Integration in Instructional Materials

To effectively develop EFL instructional materials, it is important to move beyond traditional, skill-specific exercises and embrace activities that blend listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For example, a single lesson might include listening to a dialogue, discussing its content, reading a related text, and then writing a response. Such integration not only reinforces the interconnected nature of language skills but also enhances learner engagement by providing varied and dynamic learning experiences (Ellis, 2016a).

Furthermore, materials should be contextually relevant and culturally appropriate, offering learners meaningful and relatable content. This relevance increases motivation and helps learners see the practical value of their language studies. Additionally, incorporating authentic materials—such as news articles, podcasts, and videos—can provide learners with real-world language exposure, further bridging the gap between classroom learning and practical language use (Tomlinson, 2016).

Advances in Applied Linguistics and Cognitive Psychology

Recent advancements in applied linguistics and cognitive psychology have significantly influenced our understanding of language learning processes. Applied linguistics provides insights into the mechanics of language acquisition, highlighting the importance of input, interaction, and feedback in developing language proficiency (Gass & Mackey, 2012). Cognitive psychology, on the other hand, offers a deeper understanding of how learners process and retain new information.

One key concept from cognitive psychology is cognitive load theory, which emphasizes the need to manage the amount of information presented to learners at any given time. Instructional materials should be designed to minimize cognitive overload by breaking down complex tasks into manageable steps and providing clear, concise instructions (Sweller, Ayres, & Kalyuga, 2011). Additionally, incorporating elements of scaffolding—where support is

gradually removed as learners become more proficient—can help learners build confidence and competence in using the language (Vygotsky, 1978).

Insights from Neuroscience

Neuroscience has also contributed to our understanding of language learning by exploring how the brain processes and stores linguistic information. Research in this field suggests that repetition, spaced practice, and multimodal learning (engaging multiple senses) can enhance memory retention and recall (Sousa, 2011). Instructional materials that incorporate these principles—such as through repeated exposure to vocabulary in different contexts, spaced review sessions, and activities that engage visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles—can be more effective in promoting long-term language acquisition (Medina, 2008).

Holistic Learning Environments

Current thinking in language education advocates for creating holistic learning environments that provide meaningful and motivated exposure to the target language. Such environments not only offer diverse opportunities for learners to practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing but also encourage conscious attention to language use and strategies. This approach aligns with the notion of communicative competence, which emphasizes the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in various contexts (Canale & Swain, 1980).

Creating a holistic learning environment involves designing materials that promote interaction, collaboration, and real-world language use. For example, project-based learning activities, where learners work together on tasks such as creating presentations, conducting interviews, or writing reports, can foster the development of multiple language skills simultaneously. Additionally, incorporating reflective activities that encourage learners to think about their language use and learning strategies can enhance their metacognitive awareness and self-regulation (Han & D'Angelo, 2009).

CONCLUSION

The development of EFL instructional materials requires a comprehensive understanding of the interconnected nature of language skills, the latest advancements in applied linguistics, cognitive psychology, and neuroscience, and the principles of holistic language learning. By integrating listening, speaking, reading, and writing into cohesive and contextually relevant

activities, educators can create materials that not only enhance language proficiency but also engage and motivate learners. This integrated and informed approach to material development is essential for fostering communicative competence and preparing learners for real-world language use

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