INTEGRATING LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS IN B1-LEVEL EFL CLASSROOMS: A LITERATURE-BASED REVIEW OF COMMUNICATIVE AND TASK-BASED APPROACHES

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Abstract

This literature-based article examines the integration of listening and speaking skills in B1-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Grounded in methodological frameworks, the paper investigates who is taught (intermediate adolescent and adult learners experiencing the "intermediate plateau"), what is taught (receptive-productive macro-skills, interactive discourse strategies, and functional vocabulary), and how it is taught through Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). Drawing upon established scholarly perspectives and practical classroom models, this review highlights how combining listening inputs with structured communicative tasks enhances oral fluency, interactional competence, and learner confidence.

Keywords: Listening and speaking skills, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), B1-level learners, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), integrated skills approach, oral fluency, listening comprehension.

Introduction

In contemporary EFL methodology, the separation of language skills has largely been superseded by an integrated approach, recognizing that natural language use rarely isolates reception from production. For B1-level learners—frequently characterized by intermediate plateau challenges—the transition from mechanical accuracy to spontaneous fluency requires synchronized practice in listening and speaking.

This paper explores a guiding research question: How can communicative and task-based approaches be systematically integrated to enhance listening comprehension and speaking fluency in B1-level EFL classrooms? Adhering to a literature-based review framework, this study evaluates existing scholarly paradigms without claiming uncollected empirical test data.

Theoretical Framework: Who, What, and How to Teach

Methodological choices must originate from a precise understanding of the learner. The target group for this review consists of B1-level undergraduate and adolescent EFL learners (aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages - CEFR).

Characteristics: B1 learners typically possess sufficient vocabulary and structural grammar to express basic ideas, yet they frequently struggle with spontaneous turn-taking, comprehension of fast-paced authentic speech, and pragmatic nuances.

Scholarly Perspective: As Richards and Rodgers (2014) note, intermediate learners often experience a motivational dip due to fossilization risks; hence, instruction must shift from passive knowledge acquisition to dynamic, meaning-focused interaction. Following Ur (2012), learner characteristics are treated as working hypotheses rather than rigid constraints, acknowledging diverse cognitive styles and affective filters.

The curriculum content merges linguistic systems with discourse and sociocultural competences:

Receptive-Productive Integration: Teaching content focuses on moving from transactional listening (extracting specific information) to interactional listening (understanding speaker intent, register, and emotive tone) as a direct springboard for spoken output.

Functional Language & Strategies: Focus areas include active listening cues, clarification strategies (e.g., “Could you elaborate on that?”), conversational repair mechanisms, and thematic vocabulary related to daily academic and social life.

To bridge the gap between input and output, this paper examines two primary frameworks:

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): Emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning (Littlewood, 1981). CLT encourages information-gap and opinion-sharing activities that compel learners to listen for real communicative purposes.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT): According to Willis (1996) and Skehan (1998), TBLT structures lessons around complete communicative tasks. Students listen to spoken models or audio texts to gather tools needed to accomplish a subsequent collaborative speaking task (e.g., solving a problem, planning an event, or reaching a consensus).

Methodological Application: Integrating Listening and Speaking in Practice

To operationalize CLT and TBLT principles, educators can implement a staged instructional sequence: Pre-listening, Listening-for-Task, Planning, and Speaking Task (Reporting).

Example Classroom Application: The "Community Problem-Solving" Task

Context: A B1-level university classroom discussing local environmental or campus issues.

Phase 1: Pre-Listening & Activation: Students brainstorm vocabulary related to campus sustainability. The teacher introduces functional phrases for polite disagreement and negotiation.

Phase 2: Listening Input (CLT Focus): Learners listen to a recorded dialogue or podcast of university students debating waste management solutions. They complete an information-grid listening task to identify key arguments and opinions.

Phase 3: Task Preparation & Scaffolding (TBLT Focus): Working in pairs, students use the arguments heard in the audio as a structural model to prepare their own dialogue addressing a specific campus issue.

Phase 4: Speaking Output & Peer Feedback: Pairs perform a role-play debate, followed by structured peer formative feedback focusing on interactional fluency and active listening responses.

Critical Discussion and Scholarly Insights

Integrating listening and speaking aligns with Swain's (1995) Output Hypothesis, which posits that producing target language forces learners to recognize gaps in their linguistic knowledge, prompting them to pay closer attention to incoming auditory input.

Furthermore, Nation and Newton (2009) emphasize that balanced language courses must provide equal opportunities for meaning-focused input (listening) and meaning-focused output (speaking). When listening is treated merely as an examination tool (testing comprehension through multiple-choice questions) rather than a communicative resource, learners miss out on the natural synergy between hearing and speech production.

However, challenges remain: large class sizes and anxiety in spontaneous speaking environments can hinder participation. Instructors must utilize strategic scaffolding, such as pre-teaching key acoustic features (connected speech, weak forms) during the listening phase, to lower affective filters and build oral confidence.

Conclusion

Integrating listening and speaking skills through Communicative and Task-Based approaches provides a robust framework for B1-level EFL classrooms. By addressing who is taught (intermediate learners overcoming plateau barriers), what is taught (interactive

discourse and listening-speaking synergy), and how it is taught (staged communicative tasks), educators can foster meaningful language acquisition. Future pedagogical discussions should continue to explore how digital listening tools and multimedia podcasts can be further embedded into task-based cycles to maximize learner engagement and oral proficiency.

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