25 Integrating skills

A Warm-up

1 Your trainer will give you an activity to do. Work with a partner to complete the activity.

2 Answer the questions.

a What skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) did you personally practise in this activity?
b What skills did your partner practise?
c Did you enjoy the activity?
d Would you be able to use this type of activity with a class you are teaching?
e Could the activity be used in both virtual classrooms and physical classrooms?
f According to the text, why is it a good idea to combine skills in the classroom?

> … we should be looking for opportunities to knit skills together, because this is what happens in real life.
>
> Donn Byrne, 1976

B Combining skills

1 Look at the following activities. Work in groups. Tick the skills that you think would be involved in each one.

	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
a Learners do a 15-minute role play in pairs. Half the class are journalists, who interview the other half of the class, who are environmental campaigners.				
b Learners work briefly in small groups to discuss ideas to put into a piece of writing on animal rights. They then do a piece of writing in the style of a blog post on the subject.				
c Learners read a text about language teaching methodologies and answer multiple-choice questions. They discuss their answers in small groups before reporting back to the teacher.				
d Learners read a short description of a podcast. They then listen to the podcast and answer some true/false questions.				
e Learners work in pairs to write a review of a restaurant they like.				
f Learners make notes as they listen to a short, pre-recorded lecture.				

2 In the above table, choose one of the four skills and look at the activities (a–f) it occurs in. Is it equally central to the activity in each case? What implications might this have for teaching?

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3 Choose a combination of two skills that you feel learners in your TP group would benefit from practising more. Look at the coursebook you are using in teaching practice. Choose some activities that you think would include the two skills you have chosen, and consider the balance of the skills in the activities. Are the skills equally prominent in all cases?

C How teachers combine skills

1 Look at the comments made by teachers on how they combine skills in lessons. Complete each one with a word or phrase from the box.

communicative	give feedback	model text	nodding and asking
read a text	speaking and listening	the transcript	to discuss

a A lot of my writing lessons include reading, because the learners study a _____ before they write.
b Most of my reading lessons contain some speaking and listening because I ask learners _____ their reactions to the text.
c Speaking lessons must include listening or they cannot really be called _____ .
d As learners often talk to each other in lessons, I try to teach active listening skills near the start of the course, such as _____ questions.
e In so-called speaking lessons, I also sometimes _____ on how well the learners have used active listening techniques.
f In some of my listening lessons, we study _____ to highlight features of spoken language. This means that the learners also do some reading, and also their speaking may improve.
g I sometimes _____ aloud to my learners and they follow it. This helps them read more quickly and, of course, includes listening practice.
h My writing lessons often contain _____, because I ask learners to share ideas before they write.

2 Respond to the prompts below.

a Choose one thing from the exercise above that you already do.
b Is there anything from the exercise above that you think you could incorporate into your own teaching?
c Share your ideas with your partner.

D Putting it into practice

Here is a text about an approach to teaching called Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). Think of different ways the text could be exploited so that all four language skills are practised. You can use different activities to practise different combinations of skills.

One way in which skills are very naturally integrated in language teaching is in *content and language integrated learning* (CLIL). This is when the teacher teaches a school subject – such as mathematics or science – *through* the target language (such as English). The aim is to develop both subject knowledge and language skills at the same time. This may result in a teacher deliberately teaching particular items of vocabulary or grammar in order to support learners in understanding and producing the texts that are relevant to the subject area.

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KEY WORDS FOR TEACHERS

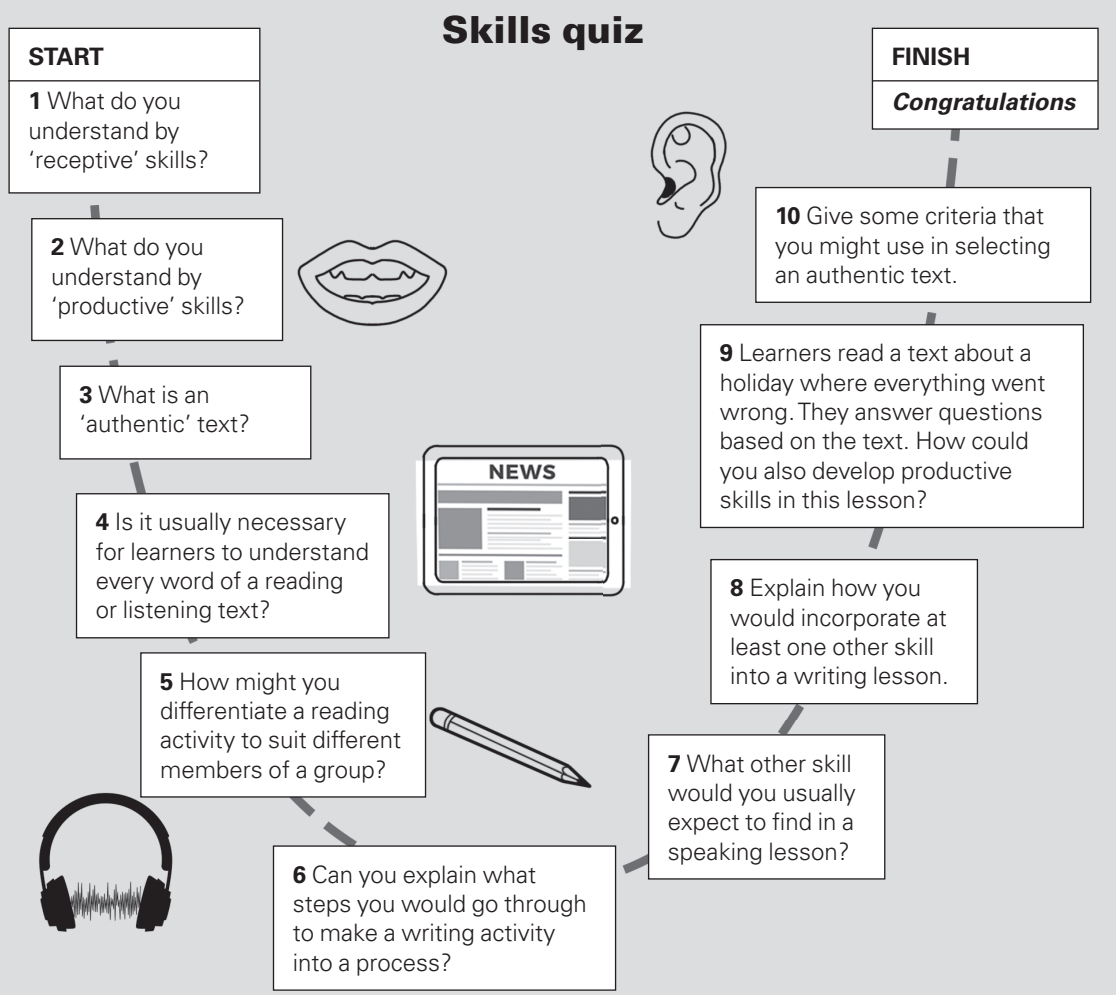
Key words for teachers

Check you know the meanings of these terms.

- *integrated skills*
- *active listening*
- *CLIL*
- *receptive skills*
- *productive skills*

REFLECTION

Play in groups of three or four. Each player needs a counter and should place it on the start line. Players flip a coin. If the coin lands on 'heads' they move one square, and if it lands on 'tails' they move two squares. When a player lands on a square s/he should answer the question to the satisfaction of the other player(s). If s/he does not answer to the satisfaction of the other player(s), s/he must go back to the square s/he moved from.



Reference

Byrne, D. (1976). *Teaching Oral English*. London: Longman.

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