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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	Asilova S. U., Umarova G. S., Nazarov R. B., Sadiyev Bobur Muzaffar ogli	16
	IMPROVED DIAGNOSTIC AND SURGICAL METHODS FOR BENIGN TUMOR AND TUMOR-LIKE DISEASES OF LIMB BONES.	
2.	Cojocaru-Toma M.	18
	AGRIMONIA EUPATORIA L. AS A SOURCE OF BIOLOGICALLY ACTIVE COMPOUNDS.	10
 4. 	Filippov V., Popriaha M.	28
	PROGRESSIVE TECHNOLOGIES AND INFORMATIZATION OF	
	THE ECONOMY AS A FACTOR OF INFLUENCE ON THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT.	
	Gavkalova N., Sierova I.	31
4.	SAMPLING: SPECIFICS OF BUSINESS PROCESSES ANALYSIS.	31
5.	Haidash K. Yu.	37
	SPECIFICS OF RENDERING ENGLISH TERMINOLOGY INTO	31
	UKRAINIAN (ON THE EXAMPLES OF TEXTS IN THE FIELD OF	
	ARCHEOLOGICAL RESEARCH).	
6.	Haievskyi V., Nizhegolenko O.	43
	INFLUENCE OF ADDITIVE MATERIALS ON ELECTRICAL	
	CONDUCTIVITY OF WELDED JOINTS OF ALUMINUM RAILS.	
7.	Herasymenko E.	46
	INTEGRATED APPROACH TO TEACHING A FOREIGN	
	LANGUAGE.	
8.	Hrebeniuk T., Bronytskyi V., Naumenko D.	55
	ANALYSIS OF NEGATIVE FACTS OF EXISTENCE IN WATER	
	FACILITIES OF UKRAINE TRAPA NATANS.	
9.	Indiaminov S. I., Jumanov Z. E.	61
	DYNAMICS OF CHANGES IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE	
	CEREBRAL CORTEX AFTER DEATH FROM MASSIVE BLOOD	
	LOSS.	
10.	Kalnysh Yu. G.	67
	POLITICAL DEFAULT: INTERPRETATION OF THE SCIENTIFIC	
	CATEGORY.	
11.	Indiaminov S. I., Kim A. A.	72
	TANATOGENETIC VALUE OF INDICATORS OF	
	CONCENTRATION OF CARBOXYHEMOGLOBIN IN BLOOD IN	
	COBON GAS POISONING.	
12.	Khaladdin Ja.	78
	DISTRIBUTION OF PRIME NUMBERS.INVOLUTE NATURE OF	
	PRIME NUMBERS.RIEMANN HYPTHESIS.	0.1
13.	Kolyada K. D., Krasnikova L. V. RESTRICTION AND MODIFICATION SYSTEM.	91
	KESTKICTION AND WODJEICATION SYSTEM.	

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INTEGRATED APPROACH TO TEACHING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract: the following article talks about the method in which the process of foreign language learning considerably promoted in comparison to other traditional methods. Author describe the key features of integrated approach using consecutive options that can be easily accommodated in every classroom. Moreover she claim that integrated approach in foreign language teaching methodology merely facilitate the learners with authentic language skills. Integration of the four skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing) is concerned with realistic communication. This means that we are teaching at the discourse level, not just at the level of sentences or individual words and phrases. Integrated language learning can be more motivating, because the students are using the language for a real purpose, instead of, say, just practicing the grammar. Integration requires skillful teaching, but it can bring worthwhile results.

Keywords: foreign language learning, integrated approach, language skills, reading, listening, speaking, writing.

Introduction. The integrated approach is focused on providing an authentic language facilities for learners to develop listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in a meaningful context. The initial function of language is to establish social purposes. In classroom, teachers are able to create an authentic facility for social interaction among learners [1, p. 146]. The prior importance is that the topics and learning activities have to be relevant and interesting to the learners. Through the use of activities the aspects of language can be implemented via integrated approach and

builds new learning upon students' prior knowledge. It trains learners as individual thinkers, apt to demonstrate challenging tasks [2, p. 79]. This approach is dedicated to learn language as a process in which learners will be provided with ample opportunities to understand and practice concepts that are presented to them [3].

The aim of the article is to analyze the use of an integrated-skills approach in teaching a foreign language, paying special attention to the integration of reading with other activities. Because in teaching foreign language for specific purposes most lessons are commonly based on the texts related to students' future profession. Reading offers the largest number of opportunities for language skills integration. Reading aloud, discussing the text, answering the questions and making up dialogues directly connect reading with listening and speaking. Writing summaries and performing exercises or speculating about the text in written form are examples of reading and writing integration.

Presenting main material. For many students, reading is by far the most important of the four skills particularly in a foreign language. If we consider the study foreign language around the world — the situation in which the most readers find themselves — reading is the main reason why students learn the language. Especially it is true about students who are not directly connected with the language, but need it as a source of additional information. In addition, at advanced proficiency levels in a foreign language, the ability to read the written language at a reasonable rate and with good comprehension has long been recognized to be as important as oral skills, if not more important. Quite simply, without solid reading proficiency, foreign language readers cannot perform at levels they must in order to succeed, and they cannot compete with their native speaking counter-parts. Professionals in foreign language education should be vitally concerned with approaches that can improve the reading skills of learners. Integrated approaches to reading hold much promise for our understanding the complex nature of reading, especially as it occurs in foreign language and culture.

That reading as not a passive, but rather an active, and in fact an interactive, process has been recognized for some time in first or native language reading [4, p. 42].

However, only recently foreign language reading has been viewed as an active, rather than a passive process. Problems of foreign language reading and reading comprehension were viewed as being essentially decoding problems, deriving meaning from print. Furthermore, reading in a foreign language was viewed primarily as an adjunct to oral language skills. The strong influence of the audiolingual method dictated the primacy of listening over reading and of speaking over writing. The importance assigned to phoneme-grapheme relationships by structuralists was also responsible for the promulgation and implementation of the decoding perspective on foreign language reading [5, p. 31]. Even among those who had a somewhat broader conception of the foreign language reading process, decoding sound-symbol relationships and mastering oral dialogues were considered to be the primary steps in the development of reading proficiency. Though it is evident that reading occupies a central part since it provides the basis for life-long learning, and reading skills are the ones that predetermine mastery in other areas. Hence, particular attention should be paid to the choice of reading material.

Selecting texts for students a teacher should consider the following aspects [6]:

- 1) text authenticity (which provides connection to the world outside the classroom and shows how the real language is used);
- 2) an appropriate difficulty level (which is determined by such factors, as presence of unfamiliar vocabulary, technical terms, syntactic structure of the text, complexity of ideas etc). Students' language proficiency level is to be taken into account. The text should not be too easy or too difficult, offering an appropriate level of challenge; otherwise students might be bored or intimidated.
- 3) manageable length;
- 4) culture familiarity and content (the text must be interesting and profession-related, thus motivating students to read and learn). In some cases allowing students to choose texts can be a good idea. It helps to personalize learning process and might contribute to students' autonomy and responsibility. Having chosen the right materials a teacher should consider text-based activities.

When teaching students how to approach a text and how to work with it, the teacher cannot develop only reading skills and use just the reading process. The teacher asks his students questions, tells them something, asks them to write something or to retell the text. So he involves reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. By reading, learners will be able to acquire the foreign language in a natural way. No doubt that people learn how to speak by listening, and in the same way, they learn how to write by reading. But if to speak not only about phonetics and pronunciation it is possible to say that we learn how to speak also by reading. When we read we get used to grammatical structures and word combinations, we learn them and then use them in our speech. If using the integrated approach when teaching students, whose education is not directly connected with a foreign language, the teacher will easily achieve his aims and even more, because while teaching reading he will also teach the learners writing, speaking and listening. It is especially important because there is always little time and a teacher can hardly afford spending a whole lesson reading a text.

Though integrated approach helps to develop all the skills, the teacher should choose one skill, to which he wants to pay more attention. The text should match his aims. If it is necessary to help the learners to acquire real reading skills, then a long text with a fair loading of new words will be essential. If the teacher wants to practice a grammar nicety or a usual structure, then a short text will leave time for such practice. If he wants to give listening practice, then he will need a fairy short text (or a part of a longer text) with lots of episodic context. If hearted discussion is his aim, it will be sparked by an interesting and provocative text. The main problem with teaching students writing is to get them used to foreign language ways of expressing themselves. The problems can be connected not only with translation but also with compositions or just expressing thoughts in writing. Reading texts will be of great help here.

It is obvious that students learn how to write by reading. They read to gain information about which they will write. Students come to recognize written conversations both for the purpose of comprehension and in order to reproduce it in their own writing. So reading and writing benefit from the integrated approach. By

fully integrating reading and writing instruction, learners come to understand the ways in which both readers and writers compose a text. There are a great number of writing exercises that can help learners to read and to understand a text better, and at the same time the text and the exercises will help students to write a composition of their own. As the class advances free composition can be introduced. Free composition is the equivalent of free conversation among the writing skills. Another activity, which includes both reading and writing skills, is writing a summary. This includes condensing a long text into a short one. To write a summary a learner must understand the main idea of the text, so here reading and comprehension skills are of crucial importance.

Through reading, students meet and become familiar with new grammatical structures. At the same time, they widen their vocabulary, the meaning of unfamiliar lexis is deduced from the context. Students who are taught to read the foreign language efficiently and independently can remain in touch with it for the rest of their lives. The ability to write well and accurately will improve in direct relationship to the amount of reading they do. Besides, if learners can read and evaluate a text, see it as a whole, if they become independent language users, they will develop the ability to evaluate their own writing. At any proficiency level? Examining and evaluating elements of a text will generally lead to discussions of one's own point of view and the assumptions with which one approaches and evaluates text [7, p. 12]. This evaluation may occur in the course of informal discussion or through the use of more structured formats such as debates, role plays, or even simulated press conferences, in which students portray speakers representing varied perspectives addressed in the reading passage.

Another reading activity, which develops both reading and speaking skills – is a dialogue. No wonder that in many textbooks a dialogue is given in the very beginning of a new topic. It can introduce new vocabulary and grammar and usually a dialogue is easier than a piece of usual text, and hence. A dialogue can be preceded and followed by the same exercises as a text, besides the students can be asked to retell it. In this case, as opposed to the text, at least two students will retell it and they will

have not only to learn and pronounce their part but also to listen to each other and to react if one of them misses a phrase. Here more speaking skills are required and the task becomes more difficult. Thus we can see that the process of reading cannot be separated from the process of speaking, they develop and add much to each other. So we cannot teach students reading without teaching them speaking, and it is a great advantage because we can economize time and show to the pupils all the aspects of a language and the coherence between them [8, p. 119].

Furthermore, reading and listening integrate with each other in dialogues. Unlike reading passages, dialogues are intended to be spoken aloud. In dialogues the writers have tried to use and to represent natural speech forms. To help the learners to read or to retell a dialogue successfully the teacher should give them an example of a real speech. For this purpose audio can be used. Dialogues are to be used selectively. The nature of the passage will influence the aims and approach [7, p. 47]. Where the dialogue is too long or without special merit, it can be treated as a reading comprehension passage. A dialogue that is to be learned by heart should be short, interesting and useful. It is very useful to let the students to listen to a short and interesting dialogue using audio or video. Even if the students will not understand all the phrases, they will be able to copy the intonation, stress and the general manner of speaking when reading the same dialogue themselves. Such an activity will be more truthful, more communicative more useful and more interesting.

Another teaching strategy to integrate language skills is peer composition [8, p. 117]. Peer composition that is a kind of activity that involves student's assistance while writing and giving feedback to improve composition. At the first stage, the teacher defines the evaluation criteria of writing and gives assignment instructions, then divides students into pairs. Students start writing their compositions with making outline of their written work. During this process students in pairs review compositions of their partners, making notes, providing corrections and giving new ideas. Students help each other correct mistakes, improve organization of ideas and restructure sentences. After students finish their writing work, they proofread and make final corrections. The final step is to reread the completed work and grade it

according to the teacher-developed evaluation criteria. Then the teacher asks one of the students to volunteer and read his/her written work in front of the class. The role of the teacher in this process is to give instructions and guidelines, observe students' cooperation and check students' grades. Using peer composition as we can see, focuses mostly on writing but also activates reading while students read their partners' works and speaking while discussion of the writing process; and listening. This activity also increases students' motivation to study a foreign language; includes alternative assessment, when it is done by students themselves; involves pair work that develops social skills and involves content-based study.

The other approach which can be applied for integrating reading and writing activities is doing contrast essays, in which writer concentrates on the organization of ideas, their similarities and differences in the contrast. This activity comprises further elements: comparison of ideas, defining similarities and differences of these ideas and other. For organizing such teaching strategy the following methods can be usefully utilized: brainstorming (students must compare similar and different aspects of both topics), block method (in which each paragraph addresses one topic only from your pair of topics and includes the shared aspects you have chosen to compare to topic number two) and point-by-point method (each paragraph contains details on one aspect of both topics organized in the same order).

Conclusions. From what has been said we can conclude that it is impossible to teach learners one particular skill. Any language is a combination of speaking, listening, reading and writing. The integrated approach will allow teachers to develop all the language skills at the same time using reading as the basis. Hence, teaching students reading, using pre-reading, while-reading and comprehension exercises we teach them writing, speaking and listening. But a teacher should use the integrated approach purposefully, choosing different types of texts for achieving different aims and offering different types of activities which will help the learners to develop all the four skills as soon and as easy as possible. The exercises provided by the integrated approach aim to train learners to monitor what they are doing as they work through the course. There is research that focuses on the integrated approach to

teaching reading. As reading is one of the most important skills in a foreign language it should be paid more attention to. On the one hand, it is very important to develop efficient reading, on the other hand, teachers usually do not have enough time for developing each language skill separately. The integrated approach will allow to teach learners more effectively spending less time. The integrated approach gives the idea of how the language works and gives many possibilities to make the process of studying less time-consuming. Bearing in mind its main advantages a teacher can choose any type of text-based activities and exercises depending on his aims.

To integrate the language skills, teachers should consider these steps [9]:

- 1) learn more about the various ways to integrate language skills in the classroom;
- 2) reflect on their current approach and evaluate the extent to which the skills are integrated;
- 3) choose instructional materials, textbooks, and technologies that promote the integration of listening, reading, speaking, and writing, as well as the associated skills of syntax, vocabulary, and so on;
- 4) even if a given course is labeled according to just one skill, remember that it is possible to integrate the other language skills through appropriate tasks;
- 5) teach language learning strategies and emphasize that a given strategy can often enhance performance in multiple skills.

With careful reflection and planning, any teacher can integrate the language skills.

Thus, the integration approach to teaching a foreign language permits you to create a lesson situation as close as possible to real communication. When we communicate, we often use more than a single language skill. On the telephone, for instance, we listen and speak-maybe we also write down a message and read over what we have written. Integrated approach helps to build new knowledge and skills on to what students already know and can do. So, if students are able to read a short story, this skill will help them to write their own story.

Also, integrating the skills allows you to build in more variety into the lesson because the range of activities will be wider. Instead of just having listening, the students can have speaking, reading and writing practice. This can raise their motivation to learn foreign language. Above all, integrating the skills means that you are working at the level of realistic communication, which provides all-round development of communicative competence in foreign language.

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