

## Integrating the 4Cs into EFL Integrated Skills Learning

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### Abstract

The accelerative globalization and digitalization in the 21st century have been growingly changing the way we live, interact, learn and work. Consequently, to thrive in the 21st century, besides knowledge and the basic skills, today's students should also be equipped with what is called the 4Cs (communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity). To meet the challenges, EFL classrooms should not merely focus on students' language skills development but also integrate the 4Cs into the learning process. This article reviews current ideas and research findings on integrated skills learning, the 4Cs, significance of blended learning in the 4Cs and integrated skills the integration, and offers practical tips for integrating the 4Cs into integrated skills learning.

**Keywords:** 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, EFL integrated skills, the 4Cs

### INTRODUCTION

While many English teachers, especially in the EFL context, are still struggling to effectively implement the integrated skills approach, they are now also challenged to promote the 21st century skills in their students. Although the concept of 21st century skills was originally developed in 2007 in the USA as an attempt to prepare USA citizens for the demands of 21st century workplace by improving education outcomes, realizing how beneficial these skills are to students and teachers and how important they are for today's youth future careers, many other nations have also begun to improve their education system by incorporating the 21st century skills into the learning outcomes (Kay & Greenhill, 2011).

21st century skills are classified into three categories: learning and innovation skills, literacy skills, and life skills. Learning and innovation skills refer to the mental processes required to adapt and improve upon a modern work environment. Literacy skills, sometimes called IMT skills (information literacy, media literacy, and technology literacy) concern with how individuals can discern facts, publishing outlets, and the technology behind them. Life skills focus on the intangible elements of every individual's everyday life that include both personal and professional qualities.

This article focuses on learning and innovation skills that are popularly called the 4Cs (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity). These four skills are needed to prepare students for their future because they have been increasingly

acknowledged as the competence that differentiates students who are prepared for more and more complex life and work environments in the 21st century, and those who are not (Partnership for 21st Century, 2009). Although to a certain extent most EFL teachers are familiar with the elements of 4Cs, since these skills integration into the curriculum is a relatively new conception, many teachers are still in doubt about it. This article reviews current ideas and studies as an attempt to introduce the 4Cs and how to integrate them into EFL integrated skills learning and teaching. It begins by discussing the nature of integrated skills and a brief overview of the approaches used to teach them. After that, necessary concepts and research findings on the 4Cs and the significance of blended learning in the integration of the 4Cs into the integrated skills are discussed. The article ends with a list of practical suggestions for integrating the 4Cs into integrated skills learning.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Integrated Skills**

Integrated skills are the teaching approach that incorporates the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) to develop students' communicative competence and their ability to use English to gain access to social, vocational, educational, or professional opportunities. This approach was based on the philosophical view that using a single language skill is very rare in everyday life because daily communication requires people to use the four language skills together, which has motivated researchers, scholars, psychologists, and educators since the 1980s to come to the consensus about the necessity of teaching the four language skills in an integrative mode in language teaching, including the teaching of English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL). Unlike the traditional segregated language skills approach which teaches a language skill discretely from the others, this approach presents all language skills side by side with each other so that, besides knowing the language they are learning, the learners are also able to use it in natural communication. (Pardede, 2019). Hinkel (2010) highlighted that the current integrated skills teaching models aim at developing learners' fluency, accuracy, and socio-cultural communicative competence.

The segregated language skills approach dominated language teaching up to the end of the 1970s due to the predomination of the traditional language teaching methods, such as Grammar Translation Method (GTM), Audio-Lingual Method, Structuralism Approach, Direct Method, Total Physical Response, and Natural Approach. Under the domination of GTM, for instance, an SL/FL language learning was focused on grammatical rules analysis and literary texts translation from the target language to the learners' native language. Therefore, learners were not prepared to use the language as a means of communication in everyday life. Structuralism Approach views language as a complex system of interrelated parts. Under this approach, EFL teaching was directed to assist the learners to master the language elements and learn the rules to see how these elements were combined (Usho-Juan & Martinez-Flor, p.5). Consequently, the learners knew the target language elements and rules but could not use them to communicate.

At the end of the 1970s, the segregated skills approach was challenged by the advent of the communicative language teaching (CLT). Widdowson (1978), the first advocate of language skills integration, designated that language uses do not take place in discrete "units" but in the form of discourse and in specific social contexts. Kurniasih (2011) accentuated "In reality, each language process enhances students' ability to use the others" (p. 73). Thus, to use the target language competently, learners should develop

both receptive and productive skills in both spoken and written discourse and this could be effectively done by learning the four language skills interactively. Hersan (1988) posited that to enable the learners to use English to communicate, English language skills “should be taught in integration in order to arrive at ease in communication” (p. 22). In the integrated skills approach, the learning of a skill leads to the learning of one or more other skill (Brown, 2001).

Various studies have recently been conducted on integrated skills approach implementation in EFL contexts. The studies focusing on integrated skills presentation effectiveness (Hefferman, 2006; Borhany, Tahriri, & Tous, 2015) revealed that if it is managed well, integrated skills teaching is effective to improve students' language skills and pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. Studies focusing on learners' and teachers' attitudes (Richard-Amato, 1996; Zuniga, 2016) showed that the integrated skills approach supports not only learners but also the teachers.

To facilitate the integrated skills approach, teachers can employ two instruction methods: content-based instruction (CBI) and task-based language teaching (TBLT). To create more variations, combining these two methods is also possible. In CBI, students practice language skills while engaging with activities focusing on a specific subject, such as education, culture, literature, or science. By so doing, the students practice all the language skills in a highly integrated, communicative manner while they are studying the contents of the subject at hand. In CBI, a topic or a theme of the subject matter is used as a basic building block to unify language skills. Thus, language skills are interwoven around the common topic/theme being studied (Brown, 2001). In TBLT, students engage with the target language communicative tasks, i.e. activities requiring comprehending, producing, manipulating, or interacting in authentic language while attention is principally oriented to meaning rather than form (Nunan, 1989). To develop their language skills, students are assigned to work in pairs or groups to solve a problem, complete a task, or create a product.

### **The 4Cs**

According to the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (2011a), the 4Cs are the 21st-century learning and innovation skills that students should master in their classrooms to be prepared for life after high school. The 4Cs consist of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. They are also portable skills individuals can transfer from one assignment to other assignments and from one job to another job. Based on the results of some current studies, National Education Association (2015) concluded that the 4Cs need to be fully integrated into learning and teaching to produce citizens and employees adequately prepared for the 21st century.

### **Communication**

Since language is essentially a means of communication and the main objective of teaching and learning a language is to enable the learner to communicate in it, EFL classes have long been acknowledged as one of the most effective environments for enhancing students' communication skills. The advent of CLT in the 1970s and since then becomes a prevalent method in language teaching and learning was a response to the need for accomplishing this objective (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Therefore, EFL teachers are supposed to have no difficulty in integrating communication skills with their language skills instruction.

However, communication in the context of the 21st century skills covers a more complex dimension than it was in the 20th century. Miller (1996) posited that in the 21st Century communication is still the social glue that holds together nations, corporations, scientific disciplines, and families, and some aspects of communication, both oral and written, have not changed. Yet, the increasing adoption of new technologies like video conferencing, multimedia, and internet technologies dramatically changed communication in the 21st Century. Like in the previous era, communication is still defined as the ability to share thoughts and ideas through oral, written and interpersonal forms, but the increasing use of technologies makes today's communication inseparable from Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Partnership for 21st Century Learning (2011b) accentuated that communication competence in a 21st-century world involves digital, interpersonal, written, and oral communication to decipher meaning, including knowledge, values, attitudes, and intentions for a range of purposes (e.g. to inform, instruct, motivate, and persuade) in a variety of forms, contexts, and diverse environments (including multilingual and multicultural) employing multiple media and technologies. Therefore, in addition to the development of their students' conventional oral and written communication in English, EFL teachers should also promote the students' ICT-mediated-communication skills, and this requires the use of ICT as learning tools.

In the teaching and learning process, communication skills can be integrated with the integrated language skills through the student-centered learning approach, particularly the cooperative learning or project-based learning, in which groups of learners work together to complete a task, solve a problem, or create a product. Cooperative learning provides the students with the opportunity to converse with peers, present and defend thoughts, exchange diverse opinions, question other conceptual frameworks, and are actively involved (Srinivas, 2011). Cooperative learning can be implemented by employing either CBI or TBLT methods or their combination.

### **Collaboration**

In a general term, collaboration refers to the practice of working together to achieve a common goal. It is an increasingly important educational outcome because organizations and businesses have increasingly moved to a team-based work environment (Dede, 2009). Unlike most of the works of the 20th century which insisted on individual capacity, works in the 21st century necessitate team works to accomplish. To build solid teamwork, collaboration skills are needed so that the participants' skills, knowledge, and attitudes could be united (Foster-Fishman, et al, 2001).

Collaboration has essentially been widely accepted as a teaching and learning approach implemented by putting students to work in groups to complete a task, to solve problems, or to work on a project (Harmer, 2007). Group work involves frequent learner-learner interaction and provides the students chances to learn from each other. So, it is consistent with the sociocultural approach viewing learning as a social process that occurs through interaction among learners in situated contexts (Ortega, 2009). Yet, various studies (Storch, 2005; Othman & Murad, 2015) reported that although students agreed group work provide some advantages, like enriching ideas, enhancing achievements, improving accuracy, and increasing social interactions, some of the students were reluctant to actively participate, and some others tended to relax and remain silent and let the other members do all the work.

Realizing that collaboration has been increasingly required in education and workplace, it can no longer be only about students getting along and cooperating in groups but about the purposeful engagement accompanying collaboration. In every group work, students should be taught to effectively collaborate by asking their commitment to follow the group work guidelines and thrive to achieve the group's goal. An effective group work is where every member is fully in charge to avoid the group from becoming a slippery slope. For a global 21st-century world, collaboration means students participate in authentic and purposeful cooperative learning opportunities and create new knowledge together (Sharratt & Planche, 2016).

### **Critical Thinking**

The concept of critical thinking was originally acknowledged by Socrates about 2,500 years ago when he introduced the process of questioning, later called the Socratic Method, as a prep mode for increasing human reasoning skills quality. The concept was revived by Descartes in the 17th century and developed and prompted by Dewey to be a prominent component in western educational programs since the mid of the 20th century (Pardede, 2019b). Although it was originally a western concept, critical thinking is now accepted as an essential skill of 21st century education worldwide (Atkinson, 1997; Rear, 2017) and has been recommended as a pedagogical alternative to improve language learning (Atkinson, 1997; Halvorsen, 2005). The promotion of critical thinking in EFL learning seems more crucial by considering results of some current studies (Sadli, 2002; Rashid & Hashim, 2008; Rujivanarom, 2016; Rear, 2017) indicating that most EFL students, particularly in Asia and Africa, lack the required critical thinking skills.

Since critical thinking is a complex mental process involving a diverse and multidimensional cognitive ability, it has been interpreted differently in research articles (Halvorsen, 2005) so that the literature provides various definitions for it. Despite their variety, the existing definitions of critical thinking share overlapping similarities (Halpren, 1993). To get the fundamental principles of critical thinking, we can probably start by considering three notions. The first is Facione's (1990) consensus definition viewing critical thinking as "purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criterion-logical, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based" (p. 2). Derived from a panel of 46 pundits, it covers the cognitive and dispositional dimensions of critical thinking. The second is Bloom's Taxonomy. Originally elaborated by Bloom et al. (1956) and refined by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), it covers the six classes of the cognitive domain representing the main elements of critical thinking—remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create. The third is cognitive activities highlighted by Baez (2004) which complete the elements of critical thinking with interpretation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation.

Every student needs to develop critical thinking because it helps individuals to become active and effective life-long learners, achieve understanding, evaluate different perspectives, improve problem-solving ability which leads to empowerment, take charge of their thinking, and develop appropriate criteria and standards for analyzing their thinking (Elder & Paul, 1994; Lai, 2009). Pardede (2019, p. 169) highlighted that EFL students need to develop critical thinking because it increases their ability "to passionately and responsibly take, apply and control of their thinking skills (question, analyze, criticize, reflect, and synthesize), develop proper principles and standards to evaluate their thinking, and willingly judge, accept or reject new ideas, concepts, and viewpoints". In

the EFL context, Gandimathi and Zarei (2018) found critical thinking integration enhanced students' English language skills.

The literature offers various techniques and strategies to integrate critical thinking into EFL learning. Klynhout (2018) suggests the use of thought-provoking questions, such as, "Why do you think...?", "How do you know...?", "What tells you...?" to promote critical thinking throughout the learning process. Thus, questions with only one right answer or that can be answered with a simple Yes or No should be avoided. These thought-provoking questions allow students to exhibit their understanding and promote analysis and interpretation. Training students to ask the right questions for advancing their ability to react critically to short stories, essays, websites, claims and arguments (Brown & Keeley, 2007) is also an effective strategy. The skills to ask the right questions can promote their abilities to judge discourses, form their arguments, write critical essays and participate in the class, and promote reading and writing skills by letting the students talk about the topic to read or write before and after. Moreover, assigning students to work in small groups to discuss or debate a topic, solve real-life problems, criticize essays, posters, or other media, or conduct a project can perfectly enhance students' critical thinking. While undertaking such activities, the students also develop their integrated language skills for they need to make research, read texts, elicit true information, take notes, exchange ideas, listen to other side carefully and defend their points to persuade the audience to actively participate in the workgroup. Rezaei, et al. (2011) suggested using media analyses, debates, problem-solving tasks, and self and peer assessment.

### **Creativity**

Although creativity is often synonymized with creative thinking, both are two different things. Creativity is the products, processes or interactions that generate new ideas, thoughts, and objects, whereas creative thinking refers to the thinking skills which enable a person to generate creative original or new ideas, thoughts, and objects. Thus, creative thinking is one of the elements which build creativity because creativity is formed by creative thinking skills, motivation, and expertise (Amabile, 1998).

The literature provides various definitions of creativity. Sternberg (2001) defined it as a cluster of skills that are needed to produce ideas that are both original and valuable. For Koestler (1964), creativity concerns with creations, but it should not be always conceived as the creation of something out of nothing. Viewing it as the act of rearranging or regrouping already existing elements is more appropriate. He accentuated that creativity "uncovers, selects, re-shuffles, combines, and synthesizes already existing facts, ideas, faculties, skills. The more familiar the parts, the more striking the new whole" (p. 120). These definitions indicate that creativity is associated with novelty, effectiveness, and ethics in using ideas, products, processes, analogy or tools. Cropley (2001) suggested creativity is associated with novelty, effectiveness, and ethics. Novelty designates that creativity should be products, actions, or ideas which are different from the existing ones. Effectiveness imposes that good and rewarding creativity should work and be useful--be it in the aesthetic, artistic, spiritual, or material sense, such as writing an interesting or making a profit. The aspect of ethics accentuates that creativity should not be destructive, selfish, criminal, and harmful.

The 21st-century world is characterized by global competition and task automation. In such a world a creative spirit and innovative capability are increasingly required for personal and professional success. Maggitti (2013) stated, "Recent trends affirm the need and desire for creativity in the workplace. More and more, creativity is becoming part of

job descriptions. Many of our largest companies—including Google, and Dupont, expect their workers to spend as much as 20% of their time thinking creatively about new business opportunities” (p. 11). To meet the challenge, it is imperative for today’s educators to nurture creativity among the younger generation. Robinson (2011) accentuated “Creativity is as important in education as literacy and we should treat it with the same status.”

Its elements—novelty, effectiveness, and ethics—make creativity can go hand in hand with learning because creative thinking is very compatible with constructivist theory, which views learning as a process of generating understanding and knowledge through experience and reflection on the experience. Viewing from this theory of learning, learning and creative thinking are both a producing process. Similar to a creative thinker who generates something new, a student who learns using the constructivist approach is also an active creator of knowledge, not a passive recipient of knowledge. As a creator, he actively asks, explores, and assesses what he knows during the learning process. In short, creative thinking and learning are two overlapping processes and strengthen each other.

Research findings have also revealed that learning a foreign language significantly enhances one’s creativity, and, conversely, the integration of creativity increases students’ language skills proficiency. Ghonsooly and Showqi (2012) showed that the results of the advanced EFL learners in the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking were significantly higher than the results obtained by monolingual learners. Thus, EFL learning to an advanced level considerably develops one’s creative thinking abilities. Adesope et al.’s (2010) meta-analysis of 63 studies showed that bilingualism is correlated with various cognitive outcomes, including “increased attentional control, working memory, metalinguistic awareness, and abstract and symbolic representation skills” (p. 207). Conversely, creativity also enhances English learning. Vasudevan (2013) found that creative thinking, creative learning, creative teaching, teachers’ attitude, and teachers’ commitment significantly affect students’ English language proficiency.

Cropley (2001) identified three impeding factors for teachers to integrate creativity into their teaching. First, creativity is essentially unknowable mysteries which cannot be developed by the ordinary [teacher]. Many teachers believe that creativity is merely about creating works of art, producing great works like Shakespeare, Mozart, or Edison, or empowering students to be artistic. Such a myth is detrimental to teachers’ efforts to be creative (Xerri & Vasallo, 2016). Even speaking and writing are creativity because both include the act of rearranging, regrouping, and reusing already existing language elements in a new way. Thus, a foreign language learner also employs a lot of creativity as they combine some sounds to produce a meaningful word, uncover sentence patterns, re-shuffle words to arrange sentences, synthesizes some spelling, rhetoric, or pronunciation rules, and so on. According to Oxford University Press ELT (2013), creative activities can refer to tools that allow students to express what they have learned in a new way. Second, because creativity is a special ability that is found only in certain people, its development will create elitism. This is misleading because, in a supportive condition, everyone is capable of being creative, including in using a language. After all, languages enable individuals to create new associations, playful combinations, and new meanings (Maley & Bolitho, 2015). Finally, the development of creativity is feared to lead to the pressure of children so that they become victims of teachers’ and parents’ fanaticism to creativity. This is also misleading. Creativity is an innate quality that everyone possesses (although some people are more creative than others) and can develop. Robinson (in

Sharp, 2004, p. 6) accentuated, “All people are capable of creative achievement in some area of activity, provided that the conditions are right and they have acquired the relevant knowledge and skills.”

### **ICT and the Integration of 4Cs into Integrated Skills Learning**

There are some reasons why ICT plays a significant role in the 4Cs and integrated skills learning integration. First, the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a technology and media-rich environment where people need appropriate ICT skills to access a plethora of digital information. That is why ICT literacy is one of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2011a). Second, communication in the 21st-century is inseparable from ICT use. Partnership for 21st Century Learning (2011b) stated that communication competence in a 21st-century world involves digital, interpersonal, written, and oral communication to decipher meaning, including knowledge, values, attitudes, and intentions for a range of purposes (e.g. to inform, instruct, motivate, and persuade) in a variety of forms, contexts, and diverse environments (including multilingual and multicultural) through multiple media and technologies. Thus, besides developing students' conventional oral and written communication in English, EFL teachers should also promote their ICT-mediated-communication skills, and this requires the use of ICT as learning tools.

The third reason is that ICT use in learning promotes collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. ICT use strengthens and increases the possibilities of communication and reinforces the synchronization and collaboration skills development between peers (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009), has a great potential make lessons more effective, interesting, enjoyable, diverse, motivating and supportive (Nazara, 2019b) for it provides numerous tools for teachers to prepare and deliver multimedia presentations, audio-visual aids, visual resources and end-user software they can easily apply to produce new learning and teaching practices. Voogt and Roblin (2010, p. i) highlighted the importance of ICT for learning in the 21st century by stating, "Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is at the core of 21st century skills. Specifically, it is regarded as both (a) an argument for the need of 21st century skills, and (b) a tool that can support the acquisition and assessment of these skills."

So far, the most effective approach for involving ICT in learning is blended learning which “combines the best of face-to-face instruction and computer-mediated instruction” (Pardede, 2011). In EFL learning and teaching contexts, where English is not used in daily communication, Blended learning can be very effective to compensate for students' lack of exposure to English (Pardede, 2019c). It also develops interest in the learning process, improves language skills, allows them to learn at their own pace, raises their deeper learning and caters their involvement in technology (Abdelhak, 2015) and helps them develop research skills, self-learning skills, self-engagement skills, sense of responsibility, and computer literacy skills.

Due to the accelerating advancement of ICT, various user-friendly learning management systems (LMS) are available. If schools have not yet installed an institutional LMS, teachers can utilize free apps available on the internet, like Edmodo, Google Classroom, Moodle, etc., to facilitate blended learning.

### **Practical Tips for Integrating the 4Cs into Integrated Skills Learning**

Since the 4Cs are learning and innovation skills, their integration into language skills learning should not be seen as additional content that brings extra burdens to both teachers and students. Instead, they facilitate and reinforce students' language skills mastery.



Integrating critical thinking to learning increases students' engagement which in turn will increase learning outcomes. As shown in the previous sections, various studies have revealed the integration of the 4Cs into integrated skills learning improves students' proficiency in integrated skills.

The following section lists some practical learning activities teachers can use to integrate each of the 4Cs into English integrated skills teaching. The list is far from being complete. It is meant to introduce some common learning activities teachers can employ in their classes. Some of the tips may be suitable to use at all educational levels, some may be applicable only at secondary schools and some others may be proper only at students at tertiary education. Teachers, therefore are recommended to select which activities work best for their students.

### ***Communication***

1. Teach the students how to use proper strategies and expressions for starting and ending a conversation, asking questions, responding to prompts, and asking for help. Their mastery of these strategies and expressions will reduce their hesitancy or anxiety to communicate in English.
2. Train the students to properly take notes, paraphrase, quote and summarize. These are very vital elements of effective written communication.
3. Encourage the students to keep on improving their pronunciation by regularly listening to English news, speech, songs, stories from podcasts and videos they can easily access on the internet. They do not need to pronounce like an English native speaker, but an eligible pronunciation is necessary.
4. Ask the students to share ideas regularly during the in-class or online sessions. Employing learning management systems (LMS), the students can interact in the discussion forum any time and from anywhere.
5. Assign the group work to share ideas for creating a statement that summarizes what the members have found or to edit and revise a draft containing errors.
6. Assign the students to work in small groups in which they can share ideas and experiences concerning the lesson they are taking. The points they can share can be about English sounds difficult to pronounce, difficult words or phrases identified in a text, a sentence one found complicated, or a specific interesting thought taken from the text.
7. Assign two group works to debate about a resolution taken from the lesson. One of the group becomes the affirmative team, while the other, the negative team. The other groups' members become audiences. Some students may be assigned as judges.
8. Assign the group work to do a project relevant to the lesson, such as cantillating a poem, a song or an interesting parts of a text, writing a reader response, dramatizing a segment of the lesson, creating an alternative ending to a story, creating a rapid prototype (a drawing, map, model, program, or other forms of representation), and so on. Finishing the project, each group presents the results to the whole class.

### ***Collaboration***

All the elements of the 4Cs are interconnected. When someone is collaborating, he also involves communication, critical thinking, and creativity. Among the four, collaboration and communication are very closely intertwined. Both in a sense, are inseparable because they go hand in hand. Thus, the activities for integrating collaboration into English learning are interwoven with communication integration activities. So, most practical

suggestions for communication and integrated skills integration above are also effective to employ for integrating collaboration. The followings are some additional collaborative activities for integrating collaboration.

1. Assign the students to complete shared tasks in groups, like matching, listing, ranking, sorting and information gap activities (jigsaw activities and barrier games).
2. Ask the students to do the listening triangle in which students work in groups; one of them becomes a speaker, one or more becomes questioners, and another, a note-taker. The speaker explains a topic, the questioners listen carefully and ask for clarification or further detail, and the note-taker observes and takes notes of the process and provides feedback to the speaker and questioners.
3. To let the students have fun without reducing the development of collaboration and integrated skills, have them to carry out interactive storytelling activities, like zoom, story grab bag, co-constructed stories, etc. these activities are effective to let the students actively create, share, debrief, modify, analyze and role-play stories. Guthrie (2017) provides brief practical guidelines to set up those activities.
4. Ask the students to peer review their assignments. Working in groups of three or four members, every student provides feedback on other members' assignments. This activity could also be done effectively online. Everyone uploads his/her paper to his/her group platform in the LMS and then receives feedback on it.

### ***Critical Thinking***

1. When the students finish studying a new lesson, prompt them to think critically by asking thought-provoking questions, like “What is the most/least important ...?”, “Who benefits from this?”, and “What we can change to make this better?” Such questions are also effective to provoke thoughts in group discussions. TeachThought Staff (2019) lists 48 critical thinking questions useable in any content area.
2. Train the students the critical reading sub-skills, such as distinguishing fact from opinion; interpreting connotations of words; discovering the author's point of view; making an inference, recognizing fallacious thinking, and detecting propaganda devices and ask them to apply them anytime they are dealing with a discourse. Pardede (2007) describes how to use these skills and other common critical reading sub-skills (recognizing statistical slips; discovering the author’s competence, intention, attitude, and bias; figuring out the time and policies of publication; and to identifying the target readers). Since these critical reading sub-skills are essentially the application of critical thinking in reading, by practicing them, students will develop some of the major critical thinking competencies, particularly the ability to detect bias, prejudice, misleading opinion, and illogical conclusions, in a discourse.
3. Ask the students to list the potential solution for a problem relevant to the lesson they are taking. For instance, they could be assigned to list as many ways as they can think of how to improve their English pronunciation.
4. Assign the students to complete a sentence in as many ways as possible. For instance, ask them to complete “Online learning helps students to ...” in as many ways as they can.
5. Use fiction (short stories and novels). Reading fictions is very effective to promote critical thinking because (1) fictions are allegorical (include both literal and implied meanings) which necessitates the reader to reflect, infer, analyze, and synthesize the presented information to get the appropriate meaning; and (2) fictions are closely

related to life which presents various characters and viewpoints so that they offer the students an opportunity to explore from various perspectives (Pardede, 2019b), and consider a wide variety of viewpoints is one of the critical thinking sub-skills. Various studies (Van, 2009; Nazara, 2019b) revealed that fictions are effective to promote critical thinking.

6. Employ self-assessment and peer assessment. These techniques enable students to independently assess their own and other students' progress with confidence so that they are not always relying on teacher judgment. They can also increase students' engagement and motivation in the learning process.
7. To help the students optimize the use of ICT, ask them to conduct online research in groups on a topic which is followed by an in-class debate. This will provide an opportunity for them to think independently, construct their arguments, analyze, and synthesize, recognize bias, and evaluate their evidence for strengths and weaknesses.

### ***Creativity***

1. After studying or being introduced to a new lesson, prompt the students' creativity by asking them to define a key term, provide its denotation, synonyms, antonyms, and examples.
2. Assign the students to generate ideas by employing mind-mapping.
3. Assign the students to draw a diagram, sketch, etc. to make a model that represents a concept.
4. To help the students boost their ICT skills, assign them to write online. By using a blog, for example, they can freely write edit, and publish their work. It can be followed by posting comments on peers' blogs. Besides promoting creativity, such online activity also develops critical thinking, communication, and collaboration.
5. Some other activities (including sharing a speech, circles of life, creating a fictional story) and their description can be seen in Avila (2015).

### **CONCLUSION**

Rapid technological advancement has been changing the way we live, interact, learn and work in an accelerative way. The changes make the future more unpredictable and challenging. Success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires more than just knowledge and basic skills. To thrive in such a world, today's students also need what is called the 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills which consist of three categories: learning and innovation skills (4Cs), literacy skills, and life skills. Therefore, schools in general and EFL classrooms, in particular, should facilitate students to acquire and develop these skills.

The 4Cs are acknowledged as a part of the main skills of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Discussion in this paper shows that EFL classrooms, including integrated skills learning, is the most effective environments for promoting the 4Cs (communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity). Languages are basically a means of communication. Thus, by learning English, students are facilitated to acquire and develop communication skills, and by putting the integrated skills learning in a blended learning environment, students will also develop digital communication skills. Integrated skills classroom is also effective to promote collaboration if the classes employ a collaborative learning approach. Learning to acquire language skills necessitates and, at the same time, promotes critical reading. What teachers should do is providing the students with an appropriate learning environment and activities. Integrated skills learning is also an effective means for

developing creativity. Research findings have shown creative thinking affects students' English language proficiency, and integrated skills learning enhances creativity.

Since the 4Cs and integrated skills are two overlapping processes and strengthen each other, and realizing the significance of equipping students with the 4Cs, the objective of EFL integrated skills classroom should not focus on developing English language skills only. EFL integrated skills learning should also encourage students' to think critically and cultivate their communication skills, collaboration, and creativity. To realize this, teachers are recommended to select from learning activities suggested at the end of this paper and employ them by applying the collaborative learning in a blended learning environment.

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