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## THE CONCEPTUAL INTEGRATION OF 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SKILLS INTO ELT 21. YÜZYIL BECERİLERİNİN İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETİMİNE KAVRAMSAL ENTEGRASYONU

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### Öz

Eğitim, bir toplumun gelişiminin temel dayanak noktası olarak ele alınmaktadır. Ayrı bir uzmanlık alanı olarak ortaya çıktığı zamanlardan 19. yüzyıl sonlarına kadar eğitim, içeriğin işlevine odaklanmaktansa içeriğin edinilmesine odaklanmaktaydı. Öğrenciler, sahip oldukları bilgileri iş yaşamlarındaki tecrübelerine adapte etmek zorundaydılar. Bu yüzden, bu durum 21. yüzyıl becerilerinin vurguladığı gerçek hayat tecrübeleriyle okul deneyimleri arasındaki farklılıkları ortaya koydu. Bu doğrultuda; İngiliz Dili Öğretimi alanında, dil becerilerinin öğretiminin detaylandırılması ve bunun devamlı değişen ihtiyaçlar ve teknolojilerle entegrasyonu odak noktası haline geldi. Bilginin inanılmaz bir hızla gelişimi belirli bir alandaki bilginin sınıflandırılmasına neden olur ve bu bilgilerin birbirinden ayırt edilmesi gerekliliğini beraberinde getirir. İngiliz Dili Eğitiminde de bu hızı ayak uydurma adına beceri gelişimi ve materyal seçimi farklı bir boyut kazandı. Buna ek olarak; öğretimin muhtemel sonuçları, dil öğretimi pedagojisi ve doğal olarak öğrenenler tarafından talep edilenleri karşılamak durumundadır. 21. Yüzyıl becerilerinin eğitime çok yönlü bir şekilde uygulanmasında karşılaşılan teori ve uygulamadaki farklılıklar sonucunda bu çalışma; küresel modernleşmenin yeniliklere ve gelişmelere ayak uydurmak için aradığı eleştirel düşünme, dijital okuryazarlık ve bilgi teknolojilerinin özünü oluşturduğu 21. yüzyıl becerileri ve İngiliz Dili Öğretimi arasında doğrudan ilişkiler kurmak amacıyla genel bir perspektif çizmektedir. Bu çalışma, ayrıca İngiliz Dili Öğretimindeki proje bazlı öğrenme ve göreve dayalı öğrenme metodlarının 21. Yüzyıl becerileriyle doğrudan ilişkilerini ele alacak ve Halverson'un 4C'si gibi farklı kavramsal ifadeleri İngiliz Dili Öğretimi potasında eritecektir. Sonunda, çalışma farklı türdeki 21. Yüzyıl becerilerini gözden geçirerek özellikle İngiliz Dili Öğretimi alanında 21. Yüzyıl becerilerinin gerekliliği sonucunu çıkarabilecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İletişim, İşbirliği, Yaratıcılık, Eleştirel Düşünme, 4C, Dijital Okuryazarlık.

### Abstract

Education is presented as a basis of the development of a community. From the time when education emerges as a separate profession to the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, it centered upon the acquisition of the content by learners rather than highlighting the function of the content. Learners had to adapt their background knowledge into their experiences at work; therefore, it revealed the distinctions between school experiences and real-life experiences that are elicited by 21st century pedagogies. So, in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), the elaboration of teaching language skills and its integration with ever-changing needs of language learners and technologies have become primary focus. The growth of information with an unpredictable pace causes to the categorization of information in a specific area and necessitates the distinction of information in that specific area. In ELT, the development of language skills and material selection takes on a unique dimension on behalf of keeping up with that pace. Additionally, the possible outcomes of teaching ought to satisfy what has been demanded by the pedagogy and naturally by learners. As a consequence of the differences between theory and practice that are experienced in the process of sophisticatedly carrying out the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the field of education, the paper draws a conceptual sketch in order to illustrate the direct relation between ELT and the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills rooted in the info-technology, critical thinking and digital literacy that education looks for in keeping up with the innovations and developments. Besides, it will discuss the direct relations of project-based and task-based learning taking an important place with the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, and will melt the different conceptual expressions such as Halverson's 4Cs in the same pot with ELT. In the end, the paper will be able to conclude the necessity of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills especially in the area of ELT thereby reviewing different sorts of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

**Key Words:** Communication, Collaboration, Creativity, Critical Thinking, 4Cs, Digital Literacy

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## **INTRODUCTION**

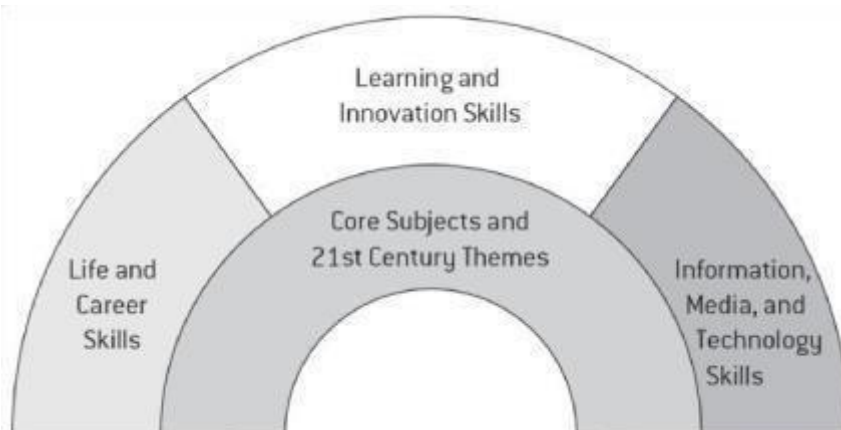
Information and communication technology (ICT) has begun to gain more long-reaching ground in respect to language teaching. Tapio Varis (2007) tells us “The idea is to remove barriers to access and connectivity, support professional development, accelerate e-Learning innovation and content development, address the ICT skills shortage, promote digital literacy and lifelong learning, and explore sustainable public private partnership” (p. 23). Along with the globalizing world in which technologies dominate every field from education to daily life with its pros and cons, the necessity to be able to communicate and collaborate with people far away from each other have caused considerable changes in relations among the people. These alterations and new necessities of people led to the re-identifying the terms of language learning and language teaching. In the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), different sorts of methods and strategies have been modified to keep up with the changes in the ways and styles of communication and collaboration. With the emergence of communicative language teaching that William Littlewood (1981) defines as “one of the most characteristic features of communicative language teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language, combining these into a more fully communicative view”, the requirement to fulfil the linguistic tasks in the language classroom based on the memorization of language rules and the domination of the teacher in the classroom has disappeared. Not only teachers but also learners are required to use the target language communicatively. The integration of communicative activities such as brainstorming, debating, etc. that underlies the ability of critical thinking have outweighed the conventional language mastery.

In the light of the relation between English and globalizing world which alters the requirements and expectations from language learning, the dynamism in the nature of technological advancements has inevitably embodied English language teaching. The lack of success in satisfying and corresponding the soaring demands and literacy in a constant state of flux thereby integrating language itself with culture, media and technology is supposed to be handled with the integration of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in ELT. When all these changes have been taken into account, is it possible to set the theoretical framework based on changing necessities and changing materials types for English language teaching within the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills? This paper aims to elaborate and lay emphasis on the integration of the 21st century skills into foreign language teaching practices thereby elaborating the key terms of 21st century skills. In this respect, it intends to discuss the concepts such as communication, digital literacy, collaboration under the head of language teaching.

### **The 21st CENTURY SKILLS**

The emergence of the 21st century skills in the field of ELT has been seen as a hybrid model concerning content of a language, information and communication technology, the ability to innovate and perform the school experience in the real-life situations by activating critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Leddwart and Hirata (2011) specify that these skills enable learners to “access, synthesize, and communicate information; work collaboratively across differences to solve complex problems; and create new knowledge through the innovative use of multiple technologies” (as cited in Albahlal, 2019, p. 146-147). These challenging goals have underpinned the language learning. In this respect, some models have emerged to be able to formalize these skills. One of the most remarkable models has been asserted by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory and the Metiri Group. In this model, Cherly Lemke (2002) categorizes the skills in four subtitles: digital-age literacy, inventive thinking, effective communication and high productivity. (p. 5) Digital-age literacy subsumes “the competence to find, evaluate, and make use of information appropriately” (p.

15) whereas inventive thinking encompasses the inclination and competence to come up with fresh ideas or more importantly questioning skills by means of cognitive abilities such as adaptability, risk-taking, higher-order thinking and self-direction. On the other hand, Lemke (2002) states the effective communication covers the ability not only to be able to communicate face to face but also to be able to communicate and collaborate through the medium of the tools technology has brought (p. 47). According to her, high productivity, the last section of the model, refers to the continuous production of a high-quality content promoted by abilities such as managing, planning and prioritizing (p. 59). There are also other sources and models to categorize and label the skills but all of these models have consistently converged on the same four points such as I mentioned. If needed to extend the scope of examples, the 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge and skills rainbow asserted by Bernie Trilling and Charles Fadel (2009) discusses 21<sup>st</sup> century skills as three separate themes: life and career skills, learning and innovation skills and information, media and technology skills (p. 48). As it can be seen in *Figure 1*, three components underpin the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Learning and innovation skills includes critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, collaboration, creativity and innovation that are crucial to sustain the success to be able to surmount the difficulties. On the other hand; information, media and technology skills involves digital literacy enabling people to use technology faster and more effectively. As a last category, life and career skills are described by means of flexibility, adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural interaction, productivity, accountability, leadership and responsibility that are vital to gain a seat in social relations, to maximize the time and effort with valuable personal qualities.



**Figure 1.** The 21st Century Knowledge-and-Skills Rainbow (Trilling &Fadel, 2009)

As a result, these concepts have emerged as a guideline for ever-changing demands of business world and brought along the necessity that learners are required to be equipped with these skills in the field of education. The changes in the ways we communicate, the ever-changing concept of media literacy and ever-growing information technologies necessitate the responding of questions like what to use in the context of language teaching and how to use language actively to provide better learning chances. Thus, English language teaching has to adapt itself in accordance with the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in terms of language use, material selection or organization and planning of teaching.

### **THE INCORPORATION OF 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SKILLS INTO ELT**

Following the increase in importance of the communicative base in language use, the scholars studying on methodological aspect of teaching English have mostly agreed on the inevitability of the eclectic approach enabling teachers reorganize the teaching methods which regard the contextual factors and globalizing role of English. Learner-centeredness, cooperation and active use of language have weighed favorably against the memorization and rote learning. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century in which the multimedia content has supplanted the print-based texts such as

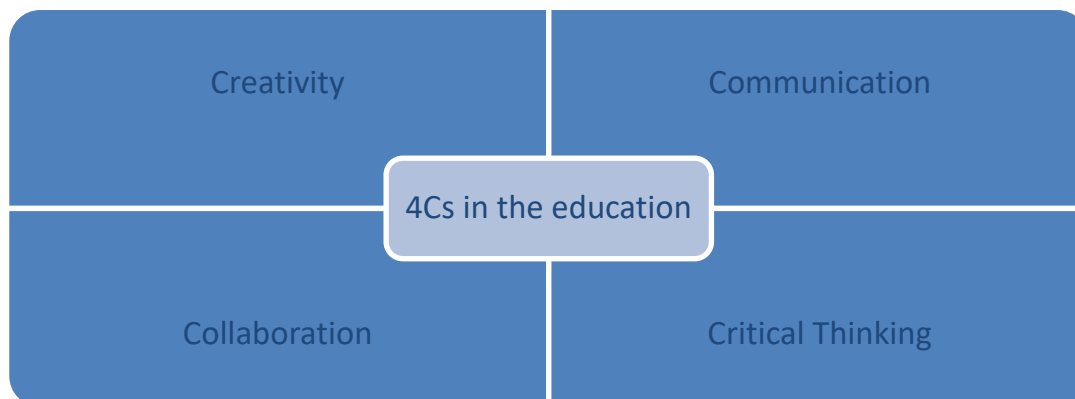
course books and other sources; as Trilling and Fadel (2009) state, the literacy has begun to be valued as distinct from standardized encoding and decoding abilities, and it requires the learners to access, interact, evaluate and reinterpret the multimedia content (p. 64).

Black (2009) points out that “It is particularly helpful to this article for understanding how many adolescent ELLs (English language learners) develop language, literacy and social skills to adapt themselves in the digital society. Besides, they effectuate semiotic forms to be able to communicate, share information and negotiate meaning with people around the world” (p. 689). In order to accomplish such kinds of objectives, we must bear in mind the fact that digital age literacy and media literacy take into account the advancements in the field of technology and information, and also in the context of computer-mediated language classrooms. Through the agencies of work-based e-mail and instant messaging; school-based wikis, blogs, and websites; and out-of-school social networks, learners may be able to keep up with innovative communication technologies and improve the feeling of collaboration. At this juncture, Pardede (2012) details the tools to assist the learning contexts such as e-mails, blogs, mobile phones (p. 12). However, defining this controversial issue emphasizing the technology use and teaching language at the same time necessitates the proper integration of them within the context of the relation between teaching English and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Black (2009) indicate that “What makes skills and literacies ‘new’ is how ‘they mobilize very different kinds of values and priorities and sensibilities than the literacies we are familiar with.’ ” (p. 694). Hence, teachers ought to tender the opportunities to use their imagination and creativity so as to possess adaptability and accountability.

In addition, learners are supposed to demonstrate their creative thinking and problem-solving skills within the boundaries of educational contexts when the tasks and challenges that learners are necessitated to perform have been regarded. They, also, need to feel free in order to create and collaborate with their peers from the same or another country to get better learning chances. In that case, Chang and Tung (2009) underlie the significance of project-based learning that gives opportunity to think critically and creatively. (p. 273) It reveals the fact that project-based learning and task-based learning that expand metacognitive awareness and disclose the metacognitive capacity of learners are served as the tools to embody the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Besides, multimodal information technologies bring advantages for teachers such as facilitating the interactive, visual, auditory materials to interpret, analyse and re-create for learners. That facilitation may be ensured through explicit instruction that emphasizes different literacy practices and communication opportunities to be able to be a literate of media and active user of technology. Through the agency of that kind of innovative approach of the teachers, learners would be familiar with the spoken and written discourse at the same time. Moreover, the tasks given under the title of project-based learning promote the motivation level during the lessons. With the help of these pros, the project-based learning gives opportunities to maintain the success. In that sense, Maija Aksela and Outi Haatainen (2019) remarks that “It (project-based learning) promotes social learning as children practice and become proficient with the 21st century skills of communication, negotiation, and collaboration” (p. 11). They underlie the relation of project-based learning with the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. The So, as a model, project-based learning and task-based learning have been seen as an example of integrated language teaching model through 21<sup>st</sup> century skills including better communication and collaboration, promoting problem-solving skills and critical or creative thinking.

Even though the integration of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills into English language teaching may be wide-ranging and it looks as if they have been deprived of an outline or specific approach to be followed, the main guideline is to melt these two areas in the same pot and to syncretize in order to be informative and instructive. In this respect, 4C model propounded by Plucker, Kaufman, Beghetto (2016) functions as a medium to clarify the place of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in ELT. It accentuates four phases: communication, collaboration, critical thinking and

creativity. As they assert, Halverson (2018) expresses the convenience and practicality of critical thinking in most communicative language curricula. (p. 1) He highlights the same 4Cs in Figure 2 (p. 1)



**Figure 2.** 4Cs in education (Halverson, 2018)

One of the most advantageous sides of that integration is the affordance to provide a range of environments for each age or language learning level. As a distinct term from critical thinking, Halverson keynotes that designing a lesson with an eye towards learner differences makes the teaching fruitful and prompts the learners' minds to display a performance thereby fulfilling their potential. The other two concepts "communication and collaboration" are the terms that modern language teaching pedagogy uses as a base so that teaching may meet the requirements of the globalizing world. As one of the proper methods providing the integration of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills with teaching English; the project-based learning, working in pairs or groups helps to develop the abilities to communicate and collaborate competently and effectively. In the study enucleated in his paper, Halverson designates a project directly relevant to 4Cs. Building a background knowledge through, coming to a conclusion, creating final products, presenting the final product are served as the steps and named as 'Cs' in the project. Those steps make the activation of the 4Cs convenient at the same time. That example demonstrates us that every idea and every type of activities nurtured by online settings and of course 4Cs are quite likely to ensure the competent learners in every aspect of life beyond the education to be able to be responsible and innovative member of a society with family or business life. In the field of ELT, 4Cs or other terms like problem-solving, digital literacy etc. must be focal point determining the essential points of ELT curricula. Designing the language teaching atmosphere, principles or materials by regarding those key terms of 21<sup>st</sup> century will be very innovative and useful for further studies.

## CONCLUSION

In brief, the 21<sup>st</sup> century underscores the integrated education approach that is learner-centered and lays emphasis on innovativeness, critical thinking and digital literacy. Furthermore, the curricula and teachers need to adapt themselves to changing objectives and goals incorporating the communication and literacy and also to advancing technology diversifying the learning contexts and carrying the communication one step further. So, for English language teaching, regarding every aspect of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills becomes a requisite to foster students' needs and learning differences. Teachers are supposed to recognize the latest technology and align their approach with that technology. The ever-changing role of teachers has brought various responsibilities such as leading students to develop online literacy, to collaborate with people different from each other and nurturing them to be qualified in the future's world. Consequently; the methods like project-based learning and task-based learning that have been perceived as motivating and supportive

methods to reveal learners' potentials, techniques, approaches may have to be re-identified with the help of specific 21<sup>st</sup> century skills especially when today's world, which attaches considerable importance to the possession of good relationship and adaptation skills with specialization in various fields, has been taken into account.

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