

INTEGRATION OF LANGUAGE SKILLS IN ESL/EFL LEARNING

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Abstract: This research examines the approach of integrating language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in the context of learning English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The integration of language skills has proven more effective than teaching skills separately as it reflects real-world language use. This study discusses practical strategies for integrating language skills, with a particular focus on the integration of listening-writing and reading-writing skills. This research applied descriptive qualitative research approach to investigate the integration of language skills in ESL/EFL learning contexts. The research seeks to understand not only what integration strategies are being implemented but also how they function in authentic classroom environments and why teachers make specific pedagogical choices regarding skills integration. Research findings indicate that the integrated approach enhances students' understanding of language structure, accelerates literacy development, and prepares students for effective communication in various contexts.

Keywords: *Integrating language skills, Learning English, EFL*

INTRODUCTION

Traditional approaches to English language teaching often separate the four main language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—into distinct courses or lessons. However, in real-life communication, language skills are not used in isolation but rather in an integrated manner. For example, in academic discussions, participants must listen carefully, take notes (write), read relevant references, and speak to respond. Therefore, an integrated approach to language learning better reflects authentic language use. The focus of teaching and learning a foreign language has generally changed from emphasizing the final output to focusing on the teaching and learning process and the classroom environment. The importance of the classroom setting in fostering each student's unique learning preferences and drive to pick up the language, abilities, and components is emphasized by this advancement in foreign language teaching technique. Therefore, it is crucial that every language lesson be designed to take into account the requirements and interests of the students while providing them with the linguistic strategies they need to become proficient. To improve their students' hearing, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammatical skills, teachers are constantly searching for new and innovative methods (Kadwa & Alshenqeeti, 2020).

English has been entered to the curriculum as one of compulsory subjects, which is usually called EFL or English as a Foreign Language. The question of whether English dialect would be best for Indonesia is further raised by the unique position of English as a worldwide language with numerous possible variants that could serve as models for the nation (Lauder, 2008). The history of language teaching has been characterized by a search for more effective ways of teaching second or foreign languages. Although much has been done to clarify these and other important questions in language teaching, the teaching profession is continually exploring new options for addressing these and other basic issues and the effectiveness of

different instructional strategies and methods in the classroom.

Methods and approaches are needed in teaching especially for teaching English as a foreign language in order to meet the students' need of English. Today, there have been many methods and approaches that used in teaching English as a foreign language. Those methods and approaches are changing and following the development of educational system as the time goes by. If in the past, educational system recognized grammar-translation method as the common used and the only method in reaching the teacher's target of TEFL, so that, today we recognized communicative approach and integrated skills approach (listening, speaking, reading, writing).

Teachers play a crucial role in creating environments to facilitate and motivate learners to take responsibility for their learning, develop good learning habits, and become independent learners. As we know, technology has greatly influenced our modern age, and has allowed us to access great amounts of information. Teachers should be aware of the unique differences among their pupils, including their motivation, attitude, and learning styles, in order to increase their expectations and their desire to learn English (Mattarima & Rahim, 2011). Integrating skills in teaching English is not a hard choice for teachers. If a teacher is creative and highly motivated, any given material can be well exploited for integrating all the skills and sub-skills of language learning.

Integrated skills approach (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) is approaches which integrate between the two, three, or even four skills at once. It is mostly used in teaching English as a foreign language or TEFL classroom. Listening and reading have been known as receptive skills while speaking and writing are productive skills. These four skills can be integrated one another. In fact, we usually find these skills are not integrated in the classroom. Sometimes, a teacher just focuses on one skill only. For instant, if a teacher focuses on reading, so that he or she will focus his or her teaching on reading only. Thus, the teacher does not integrate those skills but used segregated skill approaches which focus on one skill only.

This research examines how ESL/EFL teachers can effectively integrate language skills in the classroom to enhance students' ability to communicate comprehensively. Special focus is given to the integration of listening-writing and reading-writing skills, which are frequently used combinations in academic and professional contexts.

METHODOLOGY

This paper applied descriptive qualitative research approach to investigate the integration of language skills in ESL/EFL learning contexts. This methodological approach was selected for its appropriateness in exploring complex educational phenomena in natural settings, allowing for rich descriptions of teaching practices, learning experiences, and contextual factors that influence language skills integration. The research seeks to understand not only what integration strategies are being implemented but also how they function in authentic classroom environments and why teachers make specific pedagogical choices regarding skills integration.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The integration of language skills is based on the principle that language functions as an integrated communication tool. Communicative language learning theory emphasizes the importance of exposing students to authentic and meaningful language use. By integrating language skills, students can develop comprehensive communicative competence that

encompasses linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic aspects.

To integrate language skills in ESL/EFL instruction, teachers need to expand their knowledge about various approaches to skill integration, such as content-based learning, task-based learning, or a combination of both, reflect on their current teaching approach and evaluate the extent to which language skills have been integrated, select instructional materials, textbooks, and technologies that support the integration of listening, reading, speaking, and writing, as well as related language components such as syntax and vocabulary, integrate other language skills through appropriate tasks, even in courses that focus on a single skill, and of course teach language learning strategies, emphasizing that certain strategies can enhance performance across various language skills. It is in line with the findings stated by Hibatulloh et.al (2024) that there have been reported issues with time limits, pronunciation, and occasional boredom. Positive opinions are typically held by students, who report gains in vocabulary, pronunciation, and general enthusiasm for studying English. Despite recognizing the benefits, teachers report that they require more training and struggle to identify assignments that are appropriate for a variety of student backgrounds.

1. Integration of Listening and Writing Skills

a. Listening Skill Development Strategies

Developing effective listening skills requires consistent exposure to the target language. Some strategies that can be applied include listening to native speakers as often as possible, listening to various accents, tuning into English language programs on radio and TV, and learning to distinguish between words that sound similar (e.g., "quiet/quite" or "thirty/thirteen"). The same idea from previous researchers mentioned that learners usually face numerous difficulties when trying to become proficient in the English language, especially when it comes to speaking and listening. The application of a study that makes use of Spotify's podcast feature. The ability of this program to improve listening skills in the context of learning English is one benefit of using it. Additionally, its intuitive interface makes it possible to access and use it conveniently at any time and place (Andayani et al., 2024).

b. Connecting Listening with Writing

The integration of listening and writing can be achieved through activities such as; taking brief notes while listening, focusing on important details, learning the features of common text types (letters, memos, reports, etc.), learning the conventions of letter writing, including how to begin and end a letter, understanding the differences between formal and informal writing, planning writing with attention to language and style, and practicing self-proofreading and checking for grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors. According to the analyzed previous studies, students' proficiency in language learning and knowledge elaboration would improve if writing and listening skills were integrated with specific activities in an EFL or ESL classroom. These demonstrate how the two abilities are integrated to support the growth and enhancement of competence needed for higher education. It sharpens the skills required for academic success because most student assignments are in the form of scientific writing, which reflects information and knowledge processing (Maru et al., 2020). Therefore, it is needed to pay more attention to this connection of listening with writing in integrating language skills in English teaching.

2. Integration of Reading and Writing Skills

a. Integrated Reading-Writing Approach

Integrated reading strategies are learning programs that combine learning to read with learning

to write to help students better associate the two and increase literacy. Given the complex information age in which effective reading abilities are essential for obtaining and using information, the study emphasizes vocabulary learning, interactive reading strategies, prior knowledge activation, and reading fluency as critical elements (Lailan Fadila et al., 2024). This approach is particularly popular at the elementary school level because it helps students to better understand what they read and write, increase reading speed and comprehension and increase the amount of reading students do.

b. Benefits of Reading-Writing Integration

The integration of reading and writing skills provides several important benefits, such as; helps students understand the origin of words and sentence structures, rather than just seeing them as something that "magically appears" on the page, enables students to see a page as a group of words, not one word at a time, which is beneficial for developing speed-reading skills, and for younger students, this strategy can include an oral component where students say what they read aloud, involving all aspects of human communication. It is in line with the previous research on the importance of integrating reading and writing for the EFL teaching which mentioned that there are several advantages to using an integrated-skills approach when teaching and studying English as a foreign language (Pysarchyk & Yamshynska, 2015). Gaining integration of primary receptive and productive abilities increases language learning efficacy by reinforcing one another. since some of the activities in the article involve cooperative learning, group and pair work, and other activities that promote improved language retention, the integrated-skills approach facilitates the use of real language in task-based learning and fosters social relationships. Another benefit of integrating skills is that they enable students to demonstrate their language proficiency through written or spoken texts, guarantee success in professional or academic communication, or in daily interactions.

c. "Say It Out Loud" Technique

The technique of speaking aloud is not only beneficial for young students but is also used in speed-reading instruction to improve speed and comprehension. One option for a reading strategy is speed reading. The school should think about the application of programs and the choice of teachers in addition to the resources that have been selected. Since the school serves as a foundation for the field of education, success can only be attained if all parties concerned support one another (Martiarini, 2013). The ability to see an entire page, rather than one word at a time, is a skill developed through intensive learning and can be considered a very advanced communication skill. is in line with

CONCLUSION

The integration of language skills is an effective approach in ESL/EFL learning as it reflects language use in real-life contexts. By integrating listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, teachers can help students develop comprehensive communicative competence. The integration of listening-writing and reading-writing skills provides specific benefits in developing literacy and effective communication skills. Mastering the basics of all aspects of communication is essential for every student. If students aspire to read and comprehend all materials at a high rate, they need to understand the fundamentals of communication first. The ability to communicate effectively is a valuable skill and provides power in various life contexts.

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