

Effectiveness of an Integrated, Holistic Pedagogy of EFL Skills in College Students

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness and appropriateness of the integrated holistic method for teaching EFL skills embedded in the Tapestry courses intended for study at the lower-to-upper intermediate levels of learning EFL in a Saudi university. The study examined a sample of undergraduate students who were enrolled in the introductory college level English offered at the College of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University, Abha. A total of 52 students participated in this study. This study utilized a pre-post-test group to measure the instructional effectiveness of the integrated holistic teaching method. Findings indicate that the treatment in this study, the Integrated Skills Treatment, had a significant effect on student performance in all skills presented instructionally according to an integrated, holistic approach. Further findings indicate an improvement in gains between experimental participants and control participants in the former's performance on related language skills, namely listening and speaking, reading, and writing. Qualitative data from a follow-up questionnaire study asserted the effectiveness and appropriateness of an integrative pedagogy to teaching EFL skills. The paper, in the end, provides a set of relevant implications and recommendations for further pedagogical practice and further research implications.

Introduction

EFL/ESL teachers and researchers acquiesce that there are important interrelationships amongst the skills of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and thinking (Bartholomae and Petrosky, 1986; Elbow, 1986; Moffett, 1983; Tierney and Pearson, 1994; Rosenblatt, 1994; Oxford,

2001; Tsung-Yuan & Oxford, 2002; Moosavi, 2006; Askildson, 2008). Together, these skills are not only important for developing the communicative skills in the English language, but they also foster an integrated teaching of reading, writing, listening, speaking which still remains at the core of literacy development as well (Laine, 1997). Assumedly, production skills (speaking/writing) and reception skills (listening/reading) go together, and they develop consecutively, simply because communicative interaction involves more than one language skill; in this vein, these language skills reinforce each other. Therefore, language instructors, pedagogically speaking, should teach students how to use the language, not just the forms.

The Tapestry® series has been used as an innovative curricular provision to present the four skills of the English language at the English Department of the College of Languages and Translation, KKU; the series presents listening and speaking, reading comprehension, and writing in four levels, while in each course at each level, the Tapestry® book in one skill seeks to present a curricular, integrated approach to all skills; i.e., in any Listening and Speaking book, the emphasis is on these two skills, yet, the course provides tasks and exercises covering reading and writing as well. The course books utilise a CLT approach blending both task-based and content-based tasks designed to promote a learner-centred approach. For example, in the Writing Tapestry, writing skills can be achieved by such tasks as free writing, pre-teaching of vocabulary specific to a particular social context, selected use of vocabulary in cloze test exercises, process writing through learning to brain storm, mind-map, writing outlines and graphic organisers in pre-writing tasks, and reading comprehension to increase learners' awareness about a specific social event or function.

The present study seeks to check the effectiveness of an integrated skills instructional approach in the Tapestry® courses intended for Level I of the students of the English Department, at the College of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia. Integrated language teaching is a relatively new method, grounded in communicative language teaching, content-based and task-based language teaching theories. The evaluation of this syllabus is formative in nature and is intended to identify where an EFL

programme can be improved, looking forward for practical and useful implementation of a theoretically sound curricular design. This type of research “is designed to provide information that may be used as the basis for future planning and action”. (Rea-Dickens & Germaine, 1992, pp, 254). In this vein, it can be rightly pointed out that the language teacher and curriculum developer do not operate in a sheltered area where they are free to experiment and innovate, but they should cooperate together for the sake of an effective implementation of the curriculum.

Context and Statement of the Problem

The researcher felt the effectiveness of this course book was not being fully realised. The results of all skills at level one, especially writing and speaking skills remained around 50% passes in the end-term exam results in five semesters, and most teachers blamed the book for either being too difficult or having too much content to cover in relatively little time. The major reason that became apparent in informal talk with other teachers was that the skills coordinators left out a lot of integrated activities in the term-work course plans, considering them of little relevance to the respective skills they were coordinating. This resulted in a haphazard selection of the course materials done with the chief concern to ‘complete’ all the units, leaving out vital and essential activities, with little consideration to the integration of skills philosophy on which the whole syllabus was based.

Therefore, the researcher resolved to teach most of the contents in all the four skills with the cooperation of two other teachers and purported to implement the integrated skill approach to teaching this syllabus in order to determine its true potential. The innovation has been in terms of teaching the course book in an integrated way, the way it has been designed to be taught. The study addresses the following research question:

How effective is a modified Tapestry® series integrated approach to the development of literacy in freshmen of the English Department, at the College of Languages and Translation, KKU?

Rationale of the Study

A new and generally untried approach to English language skills

instruction in the Saudi Arabian context is described in this study. The overall significance of this study is to check the effectiveness of teaching all the four language skills in an integrative way. The learners in question are those for whom success in the exam seems really difficult. Learners from both of the groups have been identified as lacking the competence in all the four language skills.

This was identified from two sources: the instructors and the students themselves. An information session for students was delivered after an initial meeting with skills' coordinators and the teachers teaching experimental group to demonstrate the materials and philosophy of the course. This approach, known as the integrated language skills method, is an attempt to ameliorate the weaknesses of earlier practices in the Tapestry English language skills programme (mainly done by segregation) by proceeding from sound theory and conclusive research.

An integrated instructional approach to the language skills provides the students with an opportunity to develop a broad range of communication competencies. This approach to language skills education attempts to help the underprepared EFL students become more competent in the communication skills. Thus, the potential for being more successful in basic college-level courses may be increased.

Underlying Assumptions:

The following assumptions underlie the present study:

- 1 - Skill segregation is reflected in traditional ESL/EFL programmes that offer classes focusing on segregated language skills.
- 2 - Language skills, seen as a well-interwoven tapestry, if integrated can lead to optimal ESL/EFL communication and subsequent efficient whole language learning inside and outside the classroom for communicative purposes.
- 3 - Teachers and students are primarily responsible for the disintegration of the skills in the Tapestry® series as taught in the College of Languages and Translation, KKU. This assumption is grounded in anecdotal reports and complaints of the faculty involved in teaching Tapestry courses.

Review of Relevant Literature:

The literature on ESL/EFL language skill development is vibrant with calls advocating the integrated approach to the study of language (Lynch, 1983; Moffett, 1983; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992; Tierney and Pearson, 1994; Rosenblatt, 1994; Allred, 1994; Chamot, et al., 1999; Oxford & Leaver, 1996; Flower and Hayes, 1994; Oxford, 2001; Tsung-Yuan & Oxford, 2002).

However, there is little empirical testimony to evidence these claimed benefits of an integrated approach to language instruction. The integrated language skills approach is thought to be an effective strategy for whole language learning, promoting learning to be used meaningfully in real life contexts for communicative purposes (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992; Daniels et al., 1999; Oxford, 2001). In other words, this approach seeks to teach language as a means of communication to serve the purpose it was originally created for, which can be motivating and realistic as well (Tsung-Yuan & Oxford, 2002; Pennycook, 1989; Brown, 2001). The underlying tenet is that language is the medium of thought, feeling, and communication which enables one to develop self-awareness, to interact with others, and to learn. In this vein, Oxford (2001) notes that:

'The integrated-skill approach, as contrasted with the purely segregated approach, exposes English language learners to authentic language and challenges them to interact naturally in the language. Learners rapidly gain a true picture of the richness and complexity of the English language as employed for communication. Moreover, this approach stresses that English is not just an object of academic interest nor merely a key to passing an examination; instead, English becomes a real means of interaction and sharing among people' (p.5).

There are claims, however, that the integrated skills approach can be an efficient inducement to higher levels of motivation towards language learning in EFL students (Pennycook, 1989; Brown, 2001; Celce-Murcia, 2001; Richard-Amato, 2003).

The traditional separation of language skills instruction with emphasis on skills and drills has failed to bring into the mainstream

underprepared students who are being given access to higher education through open admissions programmes since the 1970s all around the world (King, 1996). Though King's research is related to US college students, we can take his findings into our account because his subjects were not only from the United States but from all over the world.

The segregation of the skills is not consistent with the nature of language development in the first language context. In the first language context all language skills are interrelated. The interrelatedness of the language skills can be deduced from observation of a child's development of oral and written language which follows the sequence of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In this vein, Strang (1972) noted this sequence:

'Listening precedes speaking and reading. Children acquire their native tongue through listening to and imitating the speech of their parents. Speaking is basic to both reading and writing' (p. 291).

The recognition of this sequential growth identifies the language skills as being interwoven and interdependent. It also suggests that a problem in one language skill will usually carry over to another skill, while proficiency in one skill facilitates development of another skill (Strang, 1972).

However, there is always a controversial debate whether L_1 and L_2 are learned in the same way or not. But the use of the integration of skills in L_2 teaching as it happens in L_1 "acquisition", using Krashen's term, is seldom criticized. As the same kind of human brain processes both L_1 and L_2 we can deduce the necessity of the interrelatedness of the language skills in an L_2 classroom from a child's L_1 development in his/her native environment.

Early research findings (e.g. Strickland, 1964; Loban, 1963; Rudell, 1966; Thomas, 1974; Cayer and Sacks, 1979) suggest that a student's ability to use the listening and speaking skills is closely related to the learner's ability to comprehend written language, and further deploy these skills to reading comprehension. Researchers in this area have concluded that an essential foundation for competence in reading and writing reflects a similar competence in oral language; Laine (1997,

p. iv) in an empirical research, has remarked that “Oral language activities may help to develop students’ reading, writing, and thinking strategies. As well, Loban in a longitudinal study, noted that:

“Many pupils who lack skill in using speech will have difficulty mastering written tradition. Competence in the spoken language appears to be necessary base for competence in writing and reading” (Loban, 1963, p. 88).

Modern empirical research (e.g. Heffernan, 2006; Al-Ghamari, 2004; Faydi, 2003; Bose, 2003) also indicated the significance of integrated skill presentation for improved language learning outcomes, especially the integration of writing skills with other language skills such as reading, listening, speaking and pronunciation.

More specifically, in teaching writing, research suggests that segregated skill teaching, the lack of authentic communication that typically exists in EFL contexts, and difficulties with sequencing teaching-learning activities combine to hinder the development of writing skills (Hao & Sivell, 2002). Relevantly, the theoretical work of Rosenblatt (1938, 1978, 1994), Moffett (1983), Flower and Hayes (1994), and Vyqotsky (1986) and the pedagogical work of Atwell (1987) and Elbow (1986), and Bartholomae and Petrosky (1986) assert reading, writing, listening, speaking, and thinking are all involved as readers and writers activate schema to create meaning from their own and others’ texts. Reading and writing are not separate entities but parts in a communicative process.

Segregated skill teaching emanates from the philosophy that sees successful second language learning as a process departing from content learning (Oxford, 2001); however, this philosophy is very much emphasised in the traditional ESL/EFL methodology and curriculum provisioning (Mohan, 1986; Oxford, 2001; Tsung-Yuan & Oxford, 2002). Oxford explains that this philosophy is easier in practice, yet ineffective to warrant later whole language development for communicative purposes:

‘Skill segregation is reflected in traditional ESL/EFL programmes that offer classes focusing on segregated language skills..... Perhaps teachers and administrators think it is logistically easier to present courses on writing divorced from speaking, or on listening iso-

lated from reading. They may believe that it is instructionally impossible to concentrate on more than one skill at a time' (2001, p.2).

She further rebuts segregation claims suggesting that such a methodology is deficient and inadequate for 'later success in academic communication, career-related language use, or everyday interaction in the language' (Oxford, 2001, p.2).

Like Oxford (2001), Hinkel (2006), for an EFL context, and Berninger (2000) and Shanahan (2006), for a language learning in general, have come to the conclusion that the four skill areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing should not be treated as distinct and isolated cognitive domains, as each one - at different times and in different ways because each feeds into each other complementarily.

Given that the integration approach involves either using a task-based approach or a content-based approach, or a hybrid amalgam of both approaches (Oxford, 2001), writing can be developed integratively with other skills for whole language development and for purposes of communicative language teaching. Research fosters the use of writing and reading journals or logs 'a method not only of integrating reading and writing but also for fostering reading and writing development' (Sehlaoui, 2001). In the Tapestry® series, it is strongly recommended for students to use writing journals and reading journals as well as external resources (e.g. newspapers, books, the Internet, etc.) to supplement the writing / reading lessons. So is the case in Tapestry® Listening and Speaking courses where writing and reading are integrated in the lessons to integrally supplement listening and speaking skills development.

In discussing successful learning strategies to facilitate learning, Richards, J.C (1990 p 174) quotes O' Malley et al. (1985a) as observing "...classroom instruction on learning strategies with integrative language skills can facilitate learning" (p.577). Integrated language skills instruction as a teaching approach links together language skills acquisition to the acquisition of other relevant skills more efficiently for teaching whole-language skills in language learning situations (O'Day, 2002; Flora, 1995; King, 1996; Oxford, 2001). In theory, language teachers employing an integrated skills teaching strategy teach the students how

to use the language, not just the forms. In this vein, ELT instructors exploiting an integrated approach utilise both a task-based teaching method as well as a content-based approach.

The underlying tenet is that language is the medium of thought, feeling, and communication which enables one to develop self-awareness, to interact with others, and to learn. In this vein, Breen & Candlin (2001) note...

“The skills are the meeting point between underlying communicative competence and observable communicative performance; they are the means through which knowledge and abilities are translated into performance, and vice versa”. (p. 12).

Furthermore, Knight (2001) highlights the interdependence of language and communication while talking about CLT. He quotes the basic principles of CLT as

“an approach that aims to (a) make communication the goal of language teaching and (b) develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication. (Richards and Rogers 1986: 66)”

Furthermore, the integrated skills approach can be an efficient inducement to higher levels of motivation towards language learning in EFL students (Pennycook, 1989; Brown, 2001; Richard-Amato, 2003). Perhaps instruction after an integrated teaching methodology marks a shift in paradigm from learner-centredness to learning-centredness where in the latter language content goals are integrated with language learning process goals (Nunan & Lamb, 2001, p. 29).

Prior research on ESL/EFL language skill development advocates an integrated approach to teaching language skills in both ESL/EFL contexts (Lynch, 1983; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992; Rosenblatt, 1994; Allred, 1994; Oxford & Leaver, 1996; Flower and Hayes, 1994; Oxford, 2001). Nevertheless, in the Arabian or Middle Eastern context, there is little empirical testimony supporting the claimed benefits of an integrated approach to language instruction referred to in research reports abroad or in scholarly literature.

Early research findings (e.g. Loban, 1963; Ruddell, 1966; Thomas, 1974) indicate that a student's ability to use the listening and speaking

skills is closely related to the learner's ability to comprehend written language, and further deploy these skills to reading comprehension. Furthermore, recent literature on the topic (Hefferman, 2006; Faydi, 2003) recommends integrated skill instruction to ameliorate language learning outcomes.

In this vein, researchers (See for instance, Hinkel, 2006; Shanahan, 2006) have come to the conclusion that the four skill areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing should not be instructionally approached as distinct and isolated cognitive domains - rather, they need to be presented integratively in each and every learning/teaching task or activity.

The role of the teachers in implementing this innovation has been one of a facilitator rather than the sole expert. The researcher tried to balance 'teacher control' and 'learner activity' as Van Lier suggests that every student should be given a realistic chance of success and challenges by a series of choices. In addition the philosophy underlying this innovation has been that language not only determines what we can say but also what we can think, echoing Vygotsky's idea that in acquiring a language, students "gain a tool for thinking" and "When learners learn a language... they are learning the foundations of learning itself" (Halliday, 1993, p 93).

Methods

For greater reliability and validity, data triangulation was achieved by including both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative evidence is in the form of skills test scores of both the sections together with a questionnaire for Tapestry teachers about their perceptions of the integrative teaching. Teachers' diary and interviews form the qualitative evidence. Qualitative data was collected after the tutor pointed out that validity of the study may be increased by including evidence from the teachers of tapestry.

Setting

The study was carried out in the Department of English, Faculty of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia. The subjects were all freshmen enrolled in their first semester of

the university for their B.A. in English. The population of the study was all male (averagely aged 19-20 years) because co-education does not exist in Saudi Arabia for religious reasons.

Participants

The study involved an analysis of the performance of two groups of students. The experimental group (27 students)) was taught the four skills in an integrated approach of instruction. The control group (25 students) completed the same courses with no particular emphasis on skill integration. The two groups were actually two sections assigned to the researcher for teaching Writing I. Usually, students are assigned to different sections at random and there is no pre-entry test to gauge their language competence level. This is a standard procedure followed by all the universities in the Saudi Kingdom.

Two teachers - one teaching reading skill and one teaching both listening and speaking skills were requested to incorporate integrative methodology while teaching the experimental group along with the researcher. The study was conducted after necessary departmental permission and students' consent had been sought out. Teacher journals (diaries) were kept by the three instructors in the study.

The study questionnaire was completed by 26 teachers in the department (18 assistant professors and 8 lecturers). The faculty members who completed the questionnaires were teaching the Tapestry courses at the time the study was conducted or they had at some point in the past taught any of the Tapestry courses.

Procedures

As mentioned previously, the prescribed course book for all the four language skills, namely Tapestry series, has never been taught the way it was meant to be taught. That is through the integration of the skills. So the innovation purported for the present study was to teach it the way it was meant to be taught to the experimental group, through the integration of all the skills and then gauge its effectiveness. In order to achieve this, the three instructors (including the researcher) discussed how to achieve this and at the same time follow the term-work course plans to be followed by all the instructors uniformly. This needed a trimming of the actual course plans for all the skills in such a way as not to affect the overall performance of the students who were supposed

to take a unified end of term exam. The trimming was needed to include the activities which were previously left out of the course plans for all skills. For example in Writing Skill, many of the reading activities which were conducive to writing in a specific genre, say narrating an incident from childhood, were left out in order to save time and include more writing activities. Similarly in Listening, Speaking and Reading only such activities were included which involved specifically using these skills. After a thorough negotiation, it was decided to include most of the activities left out in order to achieve the integration of skills. The problem was managing the classroom time and following the general course plans. For that, we decided to give more homework to the experimental group, whereas the control group and other sections were given normal assignments usually taken during coursework. This entailed more work for the three of us in terms of marking/evaluating the students' assignments, but there was no other way out. Moreover, we also decided to speed up on some class room activities in order to gain time for doing the extra work during the class room time.

Tools of the Study

This integrated approach utilised two models of skills integration: content-based instruction and task-based instruction; specifically, the integrated teaching approach sought to integrate learning subject content with learning of a language and, therefore, it organised the skills' learning around the communicative tasks learners need to engage in and outside of the classroom. In this way, the focus was not only the form of the language, but also the functional purposes for which language may be used in real-life situations. Moreover, classroom activities and learning modules used were geared to incorporate more than just one communication skill. For example, writing assignments were not limited to writing, but rather included prewriting activities which interrelate with listening, viewing, reading, and speaking.

Having decided on this course of action, the researcher set on to experiment this innovation. The course ran smoothly for 14 weeks. During the first week, pre-tests were conducted in all the four skills for both the control and experiment groups. These were marked by their respective teachers and supervised by the researcher in order to mark any marking discrepancies in order to strengthen the reliability of

marking. The results were recorded as data for the study. Before the end of the term exams, both the control and experiment groups took the post-experiment tests in all the four skills. The tests were marked by the same teachers who marked the pre-tests and the results constituted the empirical data to be compared with the pre-test.

Pre-tests and Post-tests

Students from both groups were administered a pre-test and a post-test in all the skills. Both the written and reading tests were for 45 minutes each, while the listening and speaking tests were 15 minutes each. The writing skill tests included questions on writing sentences, writing a paragraph and editing. The reading skill tests included a cloze test, literal and interpretive comprehension and making inferences. The speaking skill tests included speaking formally and informally and discussing current events. Listening skill tests had questions on listening for main ideas, identifying homonyms, remembering information and taking notes in class. The level of difficulty was kept the same for both the pre and post tests. For reliability the conditions for both pre and post-tests were the same. Students were strictly monitored for any misconduct during the test. One class teacher and a TA supervised each group of around 30 students.

Questionnaires, teachers' diaries and interviews

A Questionnaire (the Evaluation of Teaching Materials Checklist) was used for quantitative and qualitative interpretation of the data. The questionnaire was designed to gauge the effectiveness of the course book and the teaching methodology. The questionnaires were completed 'in situ' to achieve 100% return rate and to clarify any point that might arise during filling the questionnaires by informant teachers.

The Evaluation of Teaching Materials Checklist produces two subscales: Part A asks demographic questions about the course, respondents, and the book, and then provides a rating scale about Tapestry series. Part B asks questions about actual classroom situations and then provides a rating scale of how instructors use the Tapestry series. The alpha Cronbach coefficient of reliability averages for the two parts were: Part A $\alpha = .61$ (ranged from .50 to .76), and Part B $\alpha = .80$ (ranged from .77 to .88). Internal consistency for this questionnaire was $\alpha = .82$ (ranged from .81 to .83).

To check the validity of the questionnaire, it was sent out to four experts (two of them were involved in the first review) to review the appropriateness of its format. The panel reviewed on operational issues such as metrics, sentence clarity and sequence, as well as relevant metric to its criteria and factor. Based on the panel judgments, the metrics of Part A were modified to be a numerical scale and in Part B, the metric was modified to a frequency scale to cater to the accuracy criterion. Consequently the revised questionnaire included 26 scaled items.

In addition, the researcher as well as two other teachers kept diaries to record the behaviour of students, any change of attitude, relevant comments and any special or significant events. These were intended to help them complete the questionnaires. Interviews with the two teachers who participated in the study were also conducted, and highlights of their views were included in the quantitative analyses. In the interviews, questions were constructed to reveal not only the instructional practices but also to learn teachers' beliefs and gain insight into which principles guided their decision making. The interview protocol was constructed around the following questions to recognise the teachers' perceptions of and attitudes towards integrated whole language teaching:

- 1 - What are teacher beliefs about and guiding principles for teaching English language learners?
- 2 - What instructional strategies do teachers use to teach writing, reading, listening and speaking skills and to present and develop vocabulary?
- 3 - How is assessment conducted and used?

Experimental Design

T-tests and gain scores were used to compare students' performance on all skills in both the experimental and control groups. Improvement (or gain in achievement or skill acquisition and development) from pretest to posttest can be computed for each participant by subtracting each person's pretest score from his or her posttest score (Gain score = posttest - pretest). The gain score controls for individual differences in pretest scores by measuring the posttest score relative to the each person's pretest score.

Variables

Independent Variables

In this study, one independent variable was the one-academic semester Tapestry integrated courses of listening, speaking, reading and writing, procedurally instructed in an integrated skill instructional approach in a southern Saudi university for the experimental group.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables were the participants' scores in listening & speaking, writing and reading comprehension.

Hypotheses

This study was designed to test the following null hypotheses ($p < 0.01$):

- 1 - There are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of students in all skills in the experimental and control groups on pretesting (to ensure group equivalence).
- 2 - There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of language skills of students who have completed the integrated Tapestry course according to an integrated approach and the mean scores of the students who have participated in the same course with no systematic integration on post-testing in favour of post-treatment.
- 3 - There are statistically significant differences between the experimental and the control students in their gain scores on all skills in favour of post-treatment.

Results

Data were collected from pretesting and posttreatment testing, and analysed by means of t-tests, run by the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS), version 14.

Hypothesis I: Group Equivalence

To test the first null hypothesis in order to make sure that they began the experiment at comparatively similar levels of skills, a t-test was computed to reassure group equivalence; the obtained t-values and their significance levels are shown in (Table 1) below.

Table (1)
Group Equivalence as Measured by All Skills Pretesting

Skills	Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig.
Listening	exp	27	25.2424	1.60137	0.0382	0.937
	cont	25	25.2258	1.60644		
Speaking	exp	27	25.3636	1.22010	0.360	0.641
	cont	25	25.4839	1.17958		
Reading	exp	27	22.3333	.73598	0.0534	0.955
	cont	25	22.3226	.74776		
Writing	exp	27	25.4242	1.34699	0.0131	0.901
	cont	25	25.4194	1.40888		

The table above demonstrates that there were no statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups on pre-assessment. In this way, the first hypothesis was verified, and group equivalence was confirmed.

The other hypotheses of interest are related to the study variables intended to measure students' levels of achievement in all areas of language skills - listening, speaking, reading comprehension, and writing as a result of integrated skills instruction. These dependent measures were obtained after all students, in both the experimental and the control groups, had completed the Tapestry courses with an integrated skills pedagogy and the Tapestry courses with no work purposefully done towards skill integration respectively.

Hypothesis II: Pre/Post-treatment Comparisons

The data presented in (Table 2) show an improvement on pretest/posttest comparisons for all skills; as the t-values indicate, there is a significant difference between experimental and control students ($p = 0.01$) in favour of the experimental class in all skills following exposure to integrated skills instruction.

The second hypothesis is therefore verified.

Table (2)
Pretesting/Posttesting Comparisons of Experimental and Control Group Performances on All Skills

Skills	Group	N	Mean	SD	-value	Sig.
Listening	exp	27	74.1212	1.02340	9.077	0.01
	cont	25	71.6774	.90874		
Speaking	exp	27	87.0909	1.84329	6.932	0.01
	cont	25	83.1613	2.23751		
Reading	exp	27	69.0909	.72300	11.963	0.01
	cont	25	66.7742	.66881		
Writing	exp	27	84.9394	1.22320	8.837	0.01
	cont	25	78.3871	3.63939		

Based on the results in the above table, the hypothesis suggesting that there are significant differences between both research groups on all skills in favour of the treatment group has been verified as well; this finding is commensurate with prior research findings indicating that integrated skills teaching is effective in improving language skills improvement (O'Day, 2002; Flora, 1995; King, 1996; Lynch, 1983; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992; Rosenblatt, 1994; Allred, 1994; Oxford & Leaver, 1996; Flower and Hayes, 1994; Oxford, 2001).

Hypothesis III: Gains in Skill Development

For differences in performance over time between the two groups, the researcher employed gain scores and the independent samples t-test to assess the effect of the treatment on all skills.

Table (3)
Findings of t-test between Experimental and Control Groups in Gain Scores

Skills	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig.
Listening	exp	27	48.8788	1.74567	4.929	0.01
	cont	25	46.5416	1.80442		

Cont/ Table (3)**Findings of t-test between Experimental and Control Groups in Gain Scores**

Skills	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig.
Speaking	exp	27	61.7273	2.38842	5.932	0.01
	cont	25	57.6774	2.53492		
Reading	exp	27	46.7576	1.17341	7.417	0.01
	cont	25	44.4516	1.05952		
Writing	exp	27	59.5152	1.32574	9.100	0.01
	cont	25	52.9677	3.47835		

The statistical analysis in (Table 3) above points to a significant increase ($p < .01$) in the experimental group's gain scores in comparison with those of the control group's. Therefore, the third hypothesis indicating an improvement in gains between experimental participants and control participants is confirmed.

According to the results of the quantitative data which shows a significant increase ($p < .01$) in the experimental group's gain scores in comparison with those of the control group's, it is clear that the integrated language skills teaching yielded better results. Although both of the groups showed improvement suggesting that the contents of the course are appropriate, yet the overall differences across all skills as shown in tables (2) and (3) indicate that a significant difference can be achieved by simply shifting the emphasis from teaching language skills in isolation to teaching them in an integrative fashion. Moreover, the most significant improvement occurred to students' writing skill, chiefly because the researcher's focus was mainly on teaching writing skill and other skills like reading, speaking and listening were utilised to integrate writing skill. Secondly, the two other teachers involved in the study also integrated writing skill into their respective skills of listening, speaking and reading. This accounts for the marked difference in the improvement of writing skill.

The questionnaires have been used to glean qualitative data in order to reveal the trends and perceptions of both the teachers and students. The emerging themes relate to the quality of the Writing Skill

course book, both content and 'teachability'-wise. The teachers involved in the study together with other teachers who taught Tapestry at this level (26 in number) filled the questionnaire.

As it appears from Table 4, teachers involved were satisfied fully with the methodology, approach, organization, sequencing of chapters, effectiveness in terms of teaching the contents and cultural relevance of the book.

Table (4)
Responses to the scaled part of the questionnaire:

No	Items	Statistics	
		WP	Chi ²
1.	Appearance of the Book:		18.538
	Size and Volume	4.58	
	Attractive Outlook	4.65	
	Quality of editing	4.50	
2.	Availability / Clarity of the overall aims and objectives of the entire book	5.00	19.923
3.	Availability / Clarity of the aims and objectives of the individual chapters	5.00	19.769
4.	Organization and sequencing of chapters	4.81	9.846
5.	Organization and sequencing of activities and exercises	3.77	2.615
6.	Overall Approach of the book		9.538
	Learner centered	4.46	
	Teacher centered	4.65	
	Text centered	5.00	
7.	Availability of Methodology	5.00	22.231
8.	Availability of Classroom Strategies and Techniques	3.58	10.923
9.	Availability of Language items for course objectives	4.12	.538
10.	Level of interest in given passages/topics, etc.	4.19	31.308

Cont/ Table (4)
Responses to the scaled part of the questionnaire:

No	Items	Statistics	
		WP	Chi ²
11.	Variety in Activities and exercises	2.85	1.692
12.	Integrated activities	4.85	12.462
13.	Suitability of Exercises and activities	4.46	21.692
14.	Availability of graphs, charts, tables, etc.	4.46	21.692
15.	Availability of Audio-Visual Aids	4.46	21.692
16.	Quality of Audio-Visual Aids, (If any)	4.58	29.692
17.	Utility of these audio-visual aids	1.88	12.769
18.	Effectiveness of these audio-visual aids	5.00	10.923
19.	the book on the whole	1.92	33.692
	the passages / texts in the book	1.46	
	activities and exercises in the book	1.04	
	Language learning Strategies in the book	4.62	
20.	Scope for supplementary materials	4.65	13.000
21.	Scope for Material adaptation (simplification, etc)	4.73	10.692
22.	Scope for Learners' participation	4.73	8.615
23.	Scope for Learners' Talk time	4.65	.077
24.	Expected Teachers' Talk time	4.73	35.615
25.	Overall 'Teachability' of:		26.846
	the language skills / language functions	4.73	
	the language learning strategies	2.73	
	the language items	4.19	
	the chapters	4.50	

Cont/ Table (4)
Responses to the scaled part of the questionnaire:

No	Items	Statistics	
		WP	Chi ²
26.	Overall 'Learnability' of:		18.615
	the language skills / language functions	2.73	
	the language learning strategies	4.58	
	the language items	4.50	
	the chapters	1.73	

Note: WP = weighted Percent

The second theme related to the integrated language skills teaching focus. While the teachers agreed that the contents of the writing skill book were complimentary to the contents of other skill books, yet they thought it could be used complementarily with other skills' books to integrate the skills teaching. The reason for this discrepancy was reported by a teacher as commenting (in the interviews): "Teachers have to cover a lot of syllabus and I concentrate on teaching the one skill I am supposed to teach and follow the course plan".

Interview Analysis: Highlights

In each interview, teachers readily explained their reasons for choosing their instructional techniques geared towards holistic, integrated language teaching. These two teachers did, in fact, thoughtfully articulate the beliefs and principles of integrated language teaching. Clearly, the beliefs common among the teachers can tacitly be summarised in the following points: literacy Instruction...

- * includes listening, speaking, reading and writing
- * uses formal and informal methods
- * is structured and unstructured
- * is developmental
- * is holistic

- * is integrated
- * uses repetition
- * uses patterns

To describe these, the actual words of teachers are given, but the names of the teachers are not used.

Literacy Instruction includes listening, speaking, reading and writing:

Teacher 1: In language development we promote listening, speaking, reading and writing and all are equally important.

Teacher 2: We don't teach receptive skills first, then speaking and writing after that. What I mean is we don't just feature the Natural Method of instruction involving basically reading and writing. We involve the students in listening, speaking, reading and writing, we just move from the simple to the complex.

This is formal education, yes. The students are in college with the expectation to sit in their class and learn. They will study grammar and usage and spelling, indeed.

We want to use language that is lively and common and the flavour of everyday language. We try to use our local culture when we create lessons adapted after the original book. The old system of just grammar and structure of sentences is not the way now. Oh, I can't say we never think of the exams, but we try to be informal - games and social activities.

Literacy instruction is structured and unstructured

Teacher 1: We believe in structured and unstructured curriculum. Depending on the readiness or maturity of the group.

Teacher 2: We follow our planning diaries and lesson plans, but sometimes we are a bit more relaxed.

Literacy instruction is developmental

Teacher 1: We need to give enough time to prepare the ground for the process to become a skill.

Teacher 2: Students are thinking in their mother tongue, so I consider this when I decide whether to repeat the lesson or go on.

Literacy instruction is holistic

Teacher 1: We believe in the holistic approach. You will see that as we go along we have grammar and structure exercises, but also time for dialogue that will be useful in their lives and natural conversations.

Teacher 2: We use a holistic approach for the overall development of a child. Creative activities and cultural activities.

We have a holistic approach. The tapestry book promotes speaking and listening together with reading, more significantly. The tapestry Writing book address the language skills, but has many activities for writing. Free writing, well, a bit of free writing.

Literacy instruction is integrated

Teacher 1: Our philosophy includes integration of reading with writing, listening with speaking.

Teacher 2: There are varied exercises focusing on drawing links between the different threads of language skills in a sequence that is mostly likely inducing to or guaranteeing integration.

Literacy instruction uses repetition

Teacher 1: Listening and Speaking Tapestry courses have planned and repeated listening to stories, music, sounds. And vocabulary and phrases. In the writing book, there are repetitive exercises aiming at linking language skills and drilling skill patterns. A student will often see picture reading and sight reading. Using a few common words needed for stories, repeating over and over again.

Teacher 2: Planned and repeated vocabulary is built up in order to enable them to speak in sentences. This improves fluency in speech, using words to form sentences and patterns of sentences.

Literacy instruction uses patterns

Teacher 1: In writing classes, sentence patterns and paragraph patterns are out there. Before students are asked to speak or present their writings, the teacher demonstrates the sentence pattern several times.

Teacher 2: We use patterns and repetition then students learn with ease and confidence.

One point of clarification is needed. While the teachers in the interview identified their teaching as 'holistic', it appeared this had a

different meaning from what is often referred to as 'holistic'. The constructivist perspective, meaning that students' engagement in a process of learning depends on their background, interest, and abilities (Stainback & Stainbeck, 1992), did not seem to be the point of reference for what they were calling "holistic." Occasionally, "holistic" is used to describe instruction for special education that recognizes multi-modals of learning or focuses on multi-sensory techniques (Daniels, 1999; Oxford, 2001).

Diary Analysis: Highlights

The journals that instructors kept indicated in order to help integrate the language skills and teach language holistically, teachers themselves should model the paradigm for their students, sharing their practices and products publicly in the classroom so that students can experience the thinking and actions of a particular writer, the teacher being a model in this context. One teacher wrote in his diary:

"Drawing on my own experiences as a writer means putting myself on the line, sharing what it is like to go through some of the same struggles and successes the students experience. Using myself as a resource has been helpful in getting me to talk to kids in the voice of a writer, not a "teacher." I'm one of the "guys," one of the writers in the classroom."

Another teacher wrote:

"[My students] know I'll get my hands on, using the board, or handouts I developed at home to set as model pieces for writing, showing them what I know about how to do the work and that the next time around it's likely they'll be able to structure the writing for themselves. They come to trust my interventions because they see that I struggle, too, to figure out what I want to say and that I find my own purposes - and satisfactions as a writer.... I learned that I only have to write a little bit better than my students for them to learn from my demonstrations. And afterward, in writing workshops, students believe I know what I'm talking about when I sit down with them and their writing. I teach them that writing is important, but it is equally important for them that they become competent presenters of their writings - this requires, in reality, developing their speaking and reading

skills diametrically. I can only become their mentor, someone whose advice carries weight and truth, because I know writing from the inside, and I've shown them I do."

Given the importance that these teachers place on using their own literacy practices as teaching models, and a holistic development of the language skills, one might infer that it is important for new teachers in the department, who have not been familiar with the Tapestry series, to receive the same sort of modelling while they present the individual courses of tapestry, thus missing a lot in achieving integration of skills in their teaching. In real practice in the classroom, there appears to be scant evidence that this occurs.

Discussion

The gains of the Integrated Language Skills group in both writing and in the interrelated skills of listening comprehension, speaking and reading comprehension may be attributed to the emphasis placed on presenting the writing skills in integration with other skills and sub skills. The experimental writing course was instructionally designed to provide ample time and integration effort for instructional activities in the various areas of language skills while approaching these skills in an integrated manner in. This finding is compatible with other observations and research findings of some authors and critics (e.g., Oxford, 2001; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992; King, 1996; Landberg, 1993; Laine, 1997; Allred, 1994; Flora, 1997; O'Day, 2002; Hefferman, 2006). The results of this study demonstrate these views. The Integrated Language Skills students, who were found to be deficient in communication skills before the initiation of the study, were able to develop their skills in the most complex area of language - writing - while working on other skills areas. As has been earlier noted, reading and listening before writing all helped to brush up on the skills and linguistic as well as real world knowledge of the students which helped in the overall development of their writing skills.

In other words, writing skill, which is more demanding than other language skills, developed more in the experimental treatment group than the control one because integrated skills teaching helped and supported overall language development for communicative purposes - e.g. the integrated instruction in vocabulary, grammar, reading compre-

hension, listening and speaking all contributed to induced language development by helping learners to use vocabulary well in context, use ideas from reading and listening texts, etc. The use of authentic communication, sequenced teaching-learning activities tasks integrating all skills as being all equally important, use of content-based material, especially in reading before writing, classroom and peer discussions, the use of writing and reading journals, and the use of student-tape recording as well as supplementary cassette and video segments accompanying the course all contributed to the improvement of all skills in the experimental group participants. In this vein, this innovation clearly supports Breen and Candlin's views on the issue of inter-relatedness of skills development and curriculum purposes. "Just as no single communication ability can develop independently of other abilities, so the development of one skill may well depend on the appropriate development of other skills... just as a refinement of the skill of reading, for example, will contribute to the development of speaking and vice-versa." (Breen & Candlin, p 15). This confirms previous research findings and extrapolations in relevant literature on the topic of integrated skills teaching in foreign/second language teaching (Sehlaoui, 2001; Hao & Sivell, 2002; Heffernan, 2006; Al-Ghamari, 2004; Oxford, 2001; Faydi, 2003; Bose, 2003).

The philosophy that underpins integrated skills teaching is also reflected in the ideas in Graves (2001, p 184) discussion of a 'four-skills based approach to syllabus design' to build the proficiency level of the learners. This according to him can be best achieved by teachers who 'find ways to integrate them'. The present study was a step in this direction and demonstrated that the students proficiency level in the experimental group improved significantly by the innovative use of skills' integration.

Finally, as pointed out in the aim of the study, this was meant to be a "formative research" which "is designed to provide information that may be used for the basis for future planning and action". (Rea-Dickens & Germaine, 2001, p 254). Therefore, the findings that integrated skills teaching improved students' overall communication proficiency in all the skills, especially writing, makes this research a valuable reference document-albeit the research was small scale-for the department of English at King Khalid University. It may influence

some policy decision in favour of a shift towards teaching language skills in an integrated way. It should logically lead to a detailed reassessment of the term-work course study programmes of each skill. More integrative skills activities may be included in order to utilise the Tapestry series full potential.

Evaluation of work on the Present Study

In terms of the aims and question of this study, it is believed that the evaluation of the proposed innovation affirmed that integrative skills teaching through the Tapestry series has been successful in significantly improving the skills proficiency of the experimental group students who undertook the course between March and June 2009 in their first term of the academic year.

In terms of professional development, the researcher plans to implement a genre based or text-based approach to teaching writing skills and evaluate its effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the present study and the survey findings done by the involved teachers, the following recommendations and implications are set forth for improving integrated skill teaching of the English language skills, especially as taught in the Tapestry series at KKU:

- 1 - Language skill teachers should be trained to use “integration of skills” even if they are assigned to teach only one skill.
- 2 - For the effective teaching using the “integration of skills” language teachers should be trained to adopt the materials of Tapestry series to make them comprehensible to the underprepared students of KKU.
- 3 - The language teachers should be trained to manage the classroom time efficiently. For using the “integration of skills” a teacher needs more time than teaching a single skill.
- 4 - The department of English should extend each class-time from 1 hour to 2 hours. It can be done easily by decreasing the number of classes.

- 5 - Language instructors should employ language learning strategies and emphasize that a given strategy can often enhance performance in multiple skills, and reflect the integration of the skills in any language evaluation test.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Regarding implications for research, the present study indicates the following as in need for further investigations:

- 1 - Learn more about the various ways to integrate language skills in the classroom (e.g., content-based, task-based, or a combination).
- 2 - Examine potential research on the effects of integration on particular skill development such as speaking and listening or reading and writing; relate such research findings to error analysis of particular skill errors in the EFL students, and examine the interrelated nature of the literacy skills.
- 3 - Explore the incorporation of literature teaching in an integrated skill instructional methodology for developing language skills.
- 4 - Extend culture teaching to integrated skill instruction in the EFL classroom.
- 5 - Examine the effects of integrated skill instruction on the abstinence or controlled use of L₁ in an EFL classroom at the college level.

مدى فاعلية المدخل الكلي، التكاملي لتدريس مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لدى طلاب الجامعة

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المملكة العربية السعودية

الملخص

استهدفت الدراسة تحديد مدى فاعلية وملاءمة المدخل التدريسي الكلي القائم على تحقيق التكامل بين مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، كما يتم تدريسها في سلسلة مقررات تابستري TapestryTM التي تدرس بكلية اللغات والترجمة بجامعة الملك خالد بأبها في المملكة العربية السعودية. وقد فحصت الدراسة الحالية فاعلية تقديم مهارات اللغة وفق هذا المدخل لدى عينة من طلاب الكلية بلغ قوامها ٥٢ طالباً. وقد اعتمدت الدراسة على منهجية البحث التجريبي باستخدام تصميم بحثي يقيس الفروق بين مجموعتين: التجريبية (ن=٢٧) والضابطة (ن=٢٥) في القياس القبلي والبعدي لأدوات الدراسة، كما اعتمدت الدراسة على مقاييس كيفية أخرى كالمقابلات الشخصية، ويوميات المعلمين، والاستبانات. وقد أشارت نتائج التحليل الكمي والكيفي إلى أن أداء الطلاب في المجموعة التجريبية كان أفضل من أقرانهم في المجموعة الضابطة على مقاييس الدراسة (اختبارات مهارات اللغة، وكذا المقاييس الكيفية الأخرى)، كما أفادت الدراسة إلى تحسن الكسب في مهارات اللغة مما يشير إلى فاعلية هذا المدخل في تدريس مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية. وقد انتهت الدراسة بجملة من التوصيات والتضمينات التربوية ذات العلاقة.

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