EUROPEAN
ACADEMIC
RESEARCH

The Role of Integrated Skill Approach in Improving Students' Achievement in Aural-Oral Skills

ADAM ALBADRY ADAM ALHASSAN

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of integrated skill approach in improving aural-oral skills' achievement for secondary school students at Khartoum State. The study aims to shed the light on the relation between the integration of the skills and the improvement of aural-oral skills in Sudanese Secondary Schools. The sample of the study are (44) Secondary school students. The study adopted the experimental method and the researcher used a treatment (pre-posttest) for collecting data. For data analysis, the researcher used the (SPSS) computer program. The results of this study show that integrated skill approach is effective in improving the achievement of the students in aural-oral skills. Lack of integration of skills affects the students' aural-oral achievement. Therefore, the researcher recommends integrated skill approach to be used in teaching English language in Sudanese secondary schools, and teachers should avoid segregated skill approach in teaching the skills of the language. In addition to that secondary school teachers have to be trained in using the integrated skill approach.

Key words: integrated skill approach, student achievement, control group, experimental group, achievement test.

1.0 Introduction

During the last years there was noticeable deterioration and dissatisfaction of standard of English language in Sudanese secondary schools. Particularly aural-oral skills are seemed to be neglected due to the adopted methods of teaching in Sudanese secondary schools. There is obvious deficiency in

speaking, sound recognition and listening comprehension. The previous studies have investigated this problem from the sides of the teachers, students, school environment and curriculums. The problem of this investigation is the absence of integration of the four skills of the language, which affects the students' aural-oral achievement. The researcher as an English teacher for more than ten years noticed and observed the decline in aural-oral skills in secondary schools. The researcher attributed the problem to the methods of teaching have been used in teaching English language in secondary school. So this study aims to investigate the role of integrated skill approach in the improvement of aural-oral skills' achievement of secondary school students.

The study aims to shed the light on the relation between the integration of the skills and the improvement of students' achievement at aural-oral skills. The study used experimental method to validate the hypothesis of the research, "*there is a significant correlation between the integration of the four skills and the improvement of aural-oral skills' achievement for Sudanese secondary school students*".

1.1 Significance

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 pass an examination, instead, English becomes areal mean of interaction and sharing among people.

This approach allows teachers to track students' progress in multiple skills at the same time. Integrating the language skills also promotes the learning of real content, not just the dissection of language forms. Finally the integrated

skill approach, whether found in content-based or task-based language instruction or some hybrid form, can be highly motivated to the students of all ages and background. So implementation of integrated skill approach provides the teachers with updated methods of teaching English language and students with the importance of the integration of skills in learning/ teaching the language. Also it enlightens English language teachers in the role of integrated skill approach in improving students' aural-oral skills and gives insights and ideas to syllabus designers and English supervisors that may improve textbooks designing and follow up process.

1.2 Definitions of Integrated Skill Approach

1- Richard, Platt and Weber (1988) define the teaching of integrated skills in the long man dictionary of applied linguistics " the teaching of the language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking in conjunction with each other as when a lesson involves activities that relate listening and speaking to reading and writing." There are several principled models for integrating the teaching of two or more language skills.

2-Hungyo, Josephine and Kijai (2009) explain that the "term integrated means language learning where all four skills take place at the same time and with teacher, learner, and setting as playing their roles in the learning".

3- Integrated skill approach a combination of two or more skills within a communicative task. The past-acute of English can be divided into two main groups, receptive and productive skills. Listening and reading are receptive, while writing and speaking are productive skills

.4-The integrated skill approach is one in which learners learn by doing in a learner-centered environment in learner-interest contexts.

1.3 Exploring the Definitions

The definitions show that, integrated skill approach is away of teaching where if the course deals with reading skills, then, it will also deal with listening, speaking, and writing skills. This approach is considered as one in which the language is taught not just for academic but also for communication purpose. In other words, it considers the communicational goal that every language course should achieve by exposing learners to the richness and complexity of the language.

1.4 Second language-Acquisition Theories

The conceptual frame work of integrated skill approach is proposed and well-grounded by three theories of language acquisition:

1.   Stephen Krashen's theory of second Language acquisition

Language acquisition does not require extensive use of conscious grammatical rules, and doesn't require tedious drill. Acquisition requires meaningful interactions in the target language-natural communication, in which speakers are concerned not with form of their utterances but with the message they are conveying and understanding.

The conceptual frame work of integrated approach is proposed to give a true language environment to learners to develop listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in a meaningful context. One of the elements of language is to accomplish social purposes. In a language classroom, teachers build up an authentic environment for social interaction among learners (Lightbown and Spada, 1993; Long and Porter, 1985). The subject and learning exercises must be applicable and fascinating to the learners. The learning of grammatical rules is embedded in communicative activities. So Krashen's theory of second language acquisition is well connected with the basic ideas of integrated skill approach.

2. Sensory stimulation theory

Traditional sensory stimulation theory has its basic premise that effective learning occurs when the senses are stimulated (Liard 1985). Laird quotes research that found that the vast majority of knowledge held by adults (75%) is learned through seeing. Hearing is next most effective (about13%) and all the other senses-touch, smell and taste account for 12% of what we know. By stimulating the senses, especially the visual sense, learning can be enhanced. However, this theory says that if multi-senses are stimulated, greater learning takes place. Stimulation through the senses is achieved through a greater variety of colors, volume levels, strong statements, facts presented visually, use of a variety of techniques and media. The research findings found by (Liard 1985) support the basic ideas of integrated skill approach.

3 .Communicative competence

To those achieved by students who concentrated on audio structural patterns. CLT and its subsequent methodological ofshoots have presently come to dominate integrated approaches to teaching of the central four skills The introduction of the concept of "communicative competence" (Hymes,1971, 1972) brought about a change in the perspective on how language skills were to be taught and use for communication inside and outside of the classroom. Hymes was particularly interested in language as social behavior.

Communicative language teaching (CTL) places a great deal of value on teaching language skills with goal of enabling learners to communicate meaningfully both inside and outside the classroom. In their seminal publication on learners' coping strategies, Canale and Swain (1980) developed a three-component framework of language competence, and sociolinguistic competence. Canale's and Swain's empirical findings demonstrated convincingly that practicing arrange of language skills simultaneously and in the context of

communication allowed learners to attain levels of grammatical competence similar

1.5 Advantages of the integrated skill approach

1. According to Jing (2006 quoted in Hungyo and Kijai, 2009), the importance of using this approach lies on the fact that, when facing areal communicative situation,   more   than   one   skill   is   used   to communicate and integrated skill approach provides opportunities to develop these skills at the same time.

2. Hugyo and Kijai (2009) state that one of the advantages of using this approach is that teachers can build the lesson plan around a theme or atopic based on the learners' interest and also on topics relevant to them, which contributes to make lesson more dynamic and engaging for learners, who participate in different kinds of activities and interaction.

3. According to Oxford (2001), one of the most relevant advantages of using the integrated skill approach is that it exposes English language learners to authentic language and challenges them to interact naturally in the language. She also comments that exposing students to communicative situations helps them to get an idea of the richness and complexity of the English language.

4. Integration encourages simultaneous use of all the language skills and creates conditions that are conducive to real communication as opposed to contrived practice of isolated skills. Skill integration allows mutually supportive growth in all the skills and the subsidiary skills.

5. In an integrated skill format, language instruction promotes the learning of real content rather than the dissection of the language forms.
6. The learning of authentic content through language is highly motivating to the students of all ages and background.
7. Teachers are given the power and the opportunity to track students' progress in multiple skills at the same time. .

1.6. Linguistic and Methodological Base for integrating the four skills

Widdowson(1978) was one of the first linguists to call for integrating the four language skills in instruction to raise learners' proficiency levels and enable advanced language learning. In his proposal for integrated and communicative language teaching in general and in particular in English for specific purposes, Widdowson emphasized that virtually all languages uses take place in the form of discourse and in specific social contexts. Although he notes that the separated teaching of language skills is probably more administratively convenient, as in "divide and rule" (1978), language comprehension and production does not in fact take place in discrete "units". Thus, to attain proficiency, learners need to develop receptive and productive skills in both spoken and written discourse. Widdowson's 1978 strong emphasis on the integration of the four skills, as well as discourse-based teaching, have had a considerable impact on the emergence of discourse-oriented curricula and teaching methods in English for specific purposes and English for academic purposes. Widdowson(1978) and Halliday's (1978) early work and their insights into the importance of discourse in language usage provided highly influential theoretical foundations in linguistic analyses and language teaching .These works have led to the subsequent rise and prominence of content-based and

integrated language instruction, especially in English as a second language in Australia, in the U.K, and to some extent in North America.

1.7Some Characteristics of Integrated Skill Approach

1. It allows students to engage in purposeful, relevant learning.
2. It encourages students to see the interconnectedness and interrelationships between the curriculum areas.
3. Students are able to use their prior experiences to construct learning.
4. Because integrated units are child-centered, they provide opportunities for cross-cultural sharing.
5. It gives opportunities for students to display competence are given rather than relying on a written or oral test.
6. Beneficial for both teachers and students.
7. Provides relevant information to students.
8. It gives Chances to interact in authentic and meaningful way.
9. It allows for growth in all main skill area.
10. Target language is learned for communication
11. High motivation is provided to students.
12. Classroom techniques for receptive skills are often similar.
13. Productive skills lessons also share many similarities.
14. In real life, language skills never occur in isolation. So language skills never taught in isolation.

1.8 Two forms of integrated –skill instruction

Oxford (2001) states that there are two types of integrated skill instruction which are Content-Based Instruction and Task-Based Instruction:

In content-based instruction, students practice all the language skills in a highly integrated, communicative fashion while learning content such as science, mathematics, and social studies. Content-based instruction is valuable at all levels of proficiency, but the nature of the content might differ by proficiency level. For beginners, the content often involves basic social and interpersonal communication skills, but past the beginning level, the content can become increasingly academic and complex.

In Task-based Instruction, students' basic pair work and group work are often used to increase student interaction and collaboration. For instance, students work together to write and edit a class newspaper, develop a television commercial, enact scenes from a play, or take part in other joint tasks. More structured cooperative learning formats can also be used in task-based instruction. Task-based instruction is relevant to all levels of language proficiency, but the nature of the task varies from one level to the other.

1.9 Research Findings Related to Integrated Skill Approach:

Many research findings show that integrated skills

1. Helps learners carry over their skills and declarative knowledge from one skill to another which facilitate and simplifies the improvement of the other skills (Strang, 1972).
2. Creates a dynamic and exciting classroom environment (Richard-Amato, 1996)
3. Enables learners to have a more realistic a access to authentic language learning , where as a segregated approach doesn't offer a meaningful understanding of language or a motivating style to learning a foreign language (Myers and Hilliard, 1997)

4. Leads to focus on realistic language and can therefore lead to students' all-round development of communicative competence in English(Jing,2006)
5. Was enthusiastically accepted by students and most of them had a positive attitude toward this approach (Mitrofanova and Chemezov,2011)
6. Leads to better comprehension of the material by students (Mitrofanova and Chemezov, 2011)

1.10 The Role of the teacher in integrated skill approach
1. A facilitator of learning.
2. Setting learner-centered curriculum related tasks.
3. Setting tasks that are open-ended in order to support problem solving and critical thinking.
4. Developing contextualized activities.
5. Setting tasks that develop collaborative group skills.
6. Using ICT to enhance and stimulate thinking around the issues presented in lessons.
7. Facilitate and manage of learning.
8. Co-learner.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Subjects of the Study
The subjects of the study are 44 secondary school students (for treatment). The students in the treatment are of the same language background, sex and exposure to second language. The students divided into two groups randomly to form experimental and control group.

2.2 Construction of the Test
The present study used the experimental method. The experiment (pre-posttest) was conducted on(44) secondary school students. The study design to investigate the role of the integrated skill approach in developing secondary school

students' aural-oral achievement. For collecting data on the role of integrated skill approach in developing aural-oral skills, the researcher attached a letter to the test to inform the students about the aim of the test which they are going to respond to. The test includes two parts. The first part is listening comprehension and the second part is speaking about general topics. The researcher used the computer program (SPSS) to analyze the tests scores. The data upon which the analyses and discussion are made are obtained via an experiment (pre- and post-test). A pre-test was given to experimental group and control group before the treatment was given. The treatment was given to the experimental group in the form of integrated skill approach. The lessons are designed by the researcher according to the strategies and techniques of integrated skill approach. The experiment last about two months, then the same teachers administered a post test.

3-RESULTS

3.1 Table (3.1) control group –speaking test(pre and posttests)

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Speaking test Control Group (Pre-test)	14.0909	22	6.66125	1.42018
	Speaking test Control Group (Post-test)	15.0000	22	7.40013	1.57771

3.2 Discussion of table (3.1)

The above table shows that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of the students' achievement in pre and post tests. So there are no significant differences in the scores of pre and post- tests. This result confirms the stability of the scores in both tests, because the group did not take any treatment. Hence the second hypothesis is accepted.

3.3 Table (3.2) control group –Listening test(pre and posttests).

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Listening test Control Group (Pre-test)	8.5000	22	4.65730	.99294
	Listening test Control Group (Post-test)	9.6818	22	5.67691	1.21032

3.4 Discussion of table (3.2)

The above table shows that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of the students' achievement in pre and posttests. So there are no significant differences in the scores of pre and post- tests. This result confirms the stability of the scores in both tests, because the group did not take any treatment. Hence the second hypothesis is accepted.

3.5 Table (3.3) Experimental group –Listening test) pre and posttests)

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Experimental Group Listening test(Pre-test)	8.3636	22	3.31728	.70725
	Experimental Group Listening test(Post-test)	32.0909	22	7.04346	1.50167

3.6 Discussion of table (3.3)

The table above shows that there is a significant difference between the mean of pre and posttests. This means the difference is highly significant. So there is a significant difference in the scores between pre and posttests. The results of the two tests show the effect of independent variable (teaching integrated approach skills) on the dependent variable (students' achievement). The result indicates that there is improvement in the students' listening achievement. This confirm the research hypothesis No (1).

3.7 Table (3.4) Experimental group–speaking test (pre and posttests)

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Experimental Group Speaking (Pre-test)	17.2727	22	6.31085	1.34548
	Experimental Group Speaking (Post-test)	31.5909	22	9.30775	1.98442

3.8 Discussion of table (3.4)

The table above shows that there is a significant difference between the mean scores in the posttest. This means the difference is highly significant. So there is a significant difference in the scores between pre and posttests. The results of the two tests show the effect of independent variable (teaching integrated approach skills) on the dependent variable (students' achievement). The result indicates that there is improvement in the students' speaking achievement. This confirm the research hypothesis No (1).

3.9 Table (3.5) control group speaking posttest with experimental speaking posttest.

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Speaking test Control Group (Post-test)	15.0000	22	7.40013	1.57771
	Experimental Group Speaking (Post-test)	31.5909	22	9.30775	1.98442

3.10 Discussion of table (3.5)

The table above shows that there is statistically significant difference between the mean scores in the post test in favor of the experimental group. The result of the two tests shows the effect of independent variable (teaching integrated skills approach) on the dependent variable (students' achievement). The result indicates that there is an improvement to students' speaking skill. This confirm the research hypothesis No (1)

3.11 Table(3.6) control group –listening post test and experimental post tests

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 Listening test Control Group (Post-test)	9.6818	22	5.67691	1.21032
Experimental Group Listening test(Post-test)	32.0909	22	7.04346	1.50167

3.12 Discussion of table (3.6)

The table above shows that there is statistically significant difference between the mean scores in the post test in favor of the experimental group. The result of the two tests shows the effect of independent variable (teaching integrated skills approach) on the dependent variable (students' achievement).The result indicates that there is an improvement to students' listening skill. This confirm the research hypothesis No (1)

3.13 Table (3.7) the mean scores for all tests for both Control and Experimental Groups

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Speaking test Control Group (Pre-test)	22	14.0909	6.66125	1.42018
Speaking test Control Group (Post-test)	22	15.0000	7.40013	1.57771
Listening test Control Group (Pre-test)	22	8.5000	4.65730	.99294
Listening test Control Group (Post-test)	22	9.6818	5.67691	1.21032
Experimental Group Listening test(Pre-test)	22	8.3636	3.31728	.70725
Experimental Group Listening test(Post-test)	22	32.0909	7.04346	1.50167
Experimental Group Speaking (Pre-test)	22	17.2727	6.31085	1.34548
Experimental Group Speaking (Post-test)	22	31.5909	9.30775	1.98442

3.14 Discussion of table (3.7)

The results of the study proved that there is statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental groups for listening and speaking in pre and

posttest and there is no difference in the mean scores of control croups for listening and speaking skills. These results stated that Integrated Skill Approach effective to improve aural-oral skills to secondary school students

4. DISCUSSIONS

This study is concern mainly with the role of integrated skill approach in developing aural-oral skills for secondary school students. So the purpose of the study was to find out how this method is effective and efficient in teaching English and developing aural-oral skills in particular. The study used experimental method (treatment) to generate evidences to the hypothesis of the study. A treatment was (pre-posttests) was designed and administered to representative samples of secondary school students (experimental and control groups) for the purpose of seeing the effectiveness of integrated approach on the experimental group. Based on all previous statistically treated data, the research hypothesis will be examined and judged.

All in all, the practical evidences obtained from these sources of treated data appeared to confirm the hypotheses, formulated in this study that "there is a significant correlation between the integrated skill approach and the improvement of aural-oral skills' achievement in Sudanese secondary schools".

5. CONCLUSION

This research has come out with empirical evidences in the use of integrated skill approach .These results can be generalized to fulfill the overall implied objective of this research, which is the use of Integrated Skill Approach to improve students' achievement in aural-oral skills for secondary school students.

6. FINDINGS

The results obtained from the experiment have shown that there is a statistically significant correlation between the integrated skill approach and the improvement of students' aural-oral achievement at Sudanese secondary schools. Also the experiment has shown that segregated approach has negative effects on the students' aural-oral skills achievement. These results have shown that the objectives have been achieved through the answers of research questions and the validation of research hypotheses.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of these results, the researcher recommends the following

1. The Integrated Approach should be generalized in teaching English for secondary school students.
2. English language teachers have to be trained in using the Integrated Skill Approach.
3. The difficulties that may face English language teachers in applying the Integrated Skill Approach have to be solved.
4. The useless of teaching language skills in isolated way and the encouragement of integrated skill approach.

REFERENCES
1. Brown, J.D (1995) The elements of Language curriculum Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
2. Canal e- Swain 1980, Theory of communicative competence. curriculum development. The internet TESL Journal.
3. Gillian Brown and George Yule, Cambridge L Teaching Library(1983) Teaching the spoken language.

4. Halliday, 1978. Language as social semiotic, London.
5. Hornby, A S. (2005) Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. Oxford Press.
6. Hungyo, Josephine and Kijal,Jimmy (2009). The effect of integrated and segregated skills approach on English language acquisition.
7. Hymes. D. H (1972) On Communicative Competence in J.B Jing, W. U (2006). Integrating skills for teaching EFL-Activity design for the communicative classroom. Sino- U S, English Teaching.
8. Krashen, Stephen D. Principlesand practice in Second language Acquistion.
9. Liard 1985.Theories of learning-Oxford Brookes University.
10. Long and Porter, 1985.Small Groupwork and second language learning.
11. Mohan, B (1986). Content- based language instruction, MA: Addison-Wesley
12. Myers, John W, Hilliard, Robert.Holistic language learning at the middle level.
13. Nunan, D. (1989) Designing tasks for the communicative classroom, Cambridge University press.
14. Oxford Rebecca. (2001) Integrated Skills in the ESL/EFL classroom. ESL magazine. 2001. Larsen.
15. Patsy M Lightbown and Nina Spada-How languages are learned. Oxford University Press Canada.
16. Richard, J. (2006) Communicative language teaching today. Cambridge University Press.
17. Richard- Amato. Synthesize cognitive and sociocultural.
18. Richard, Jack (2001) Carriculum Development in language teaching.
19. Richard, Jack,John Platt, Heidi Weber, 1985. Longman dictionary of applied linguistics, Harlow, Essex, England.

20. Rivers, W.M (1981) Teaching foreign language skills, Chicago, The University of Chicago press.
21. Savgnon, S. J. (2001) Communicative language teaching. Theory into Practice
22. Savignon, S. (2002) Interpreting Communicative language teaching. Contents and concerns in teacher education. Yale University Press.
23. Seliger, Herbert. W and Shohamy, Elana. 1989. Second Language Research Methods. Oxford.
24. Widdoson, H (1983) Learning Purpose and Language Use.