BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO

TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC SƯ PHẠM KỸ THUẬT

THÀNH PHỐ HỒ CHÍ MINH

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NGUYỄN TẤN LỢI

DANH MỤC CÁC CÔNG TRÌNH KHOA HỌC ĐÃ CÔNG BỐ LIÊN QUAN ĐẾN LUẬN ÁN

LUẬN ÁN TIẾN SĨ

PHÁT TRIỂN NĂNG LỰC TIẾNG ANH THEO TIẾP CẬN DẠY HỌC TÍCH HỢP CHO SINH VIÊN ĐẠI HỌC KHỐI NGÀNH KHÔNG CHUYÊN TẠI THÀNH PHỐ HỒ CHÍ MINH

Ngành: GIÁO DỤC HỌC

Mã số: 9140101

Người hướng dẫn khoa học: PGS.TS. BÙI VĂN HỒNG

Tp. Hồ Chí Minh, tháng năm 2025

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An Overview of Integrated Skills and Non-english-Major Students' Communicative Competence

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Abstract. Teaching English to non-majored students to foster communicative competence and to meet learning outcomes standards is the most considerable concern of lecturers, managers, and universities. Currently, students' ability to use listening, speaking, writing, and speaking to communicate to serve their studies as well as their work is still limited. Among many teaching skills approaches, the integrated skills approach is proposed as the most productive one to satisfy these expectations. This article is a review of literature relating to the integrated skills approach and communicative competence. First, the paper will present the rationale for using an integrated skills approach in an English classroom. Then the paper will synthesize the key concepts and highlight the importance of integrating four skills to boost non-English-major students' communicative competence. In addition, the paper will review previous studies in the field of integrated skills approach and communicative competence to indicate the research gap. Last, the implications for further research will also be discussed.

Keywords: Non-English-Major Students · Integrated Skills Approach · Communicative Competence

1 Introduction

People in a globalized world need to be connected, and cooperative, so communicative competence in foreign languages is likely to be a requirement. [1]. English is a widely used language in most countries in the world. Communicating in English well is extremely significant because it is considered the ultimate goal of learning English. Teaching English to non-majored students at higher institutions has recently aimed at developing learners' communicative competence.

In reality, teaching English to non-majored students is still following traditional methods, not focusing on leaner-centeredness. By contrast, teachers put high emphasis on delivering new knowledge without providing learners with opportunities to collaborate and learn from each other. Although the syllabus is designed to teach four skills, lecturers convey knowledge and skills in isolation. As a result, students graduating from universities are still not confident in using English to communicate with managers, colleagues, or clients. Students are embarrassed to organize the sentences, remember

vocabulary, or pronounce words. They find it difficult to talk or share ideas and opinions in face-to-face meetings with managers or clients.

Daily communication has four ways (skills) to convey information: listening, speaking, reading, and writing by the natural order of language acquisition. Within four skills, listening and speaking are called receptive skills, and speaking and writing as named productive skills. To communicate effectively, learners must first equip input knowledge as much as possible to produce the utterances accurately and comprehensively called output. The integrated skills approach, which involves combining four skills into one lesson, has proven to be effective [2]. The integrated skills approach helps students have more opportunities to communicate and interact with teachers and peers, applying English to daily situations [3]. Therefore, this paper covers the theoretical foundation of the integrated skills approach, then highlights the importance of integrating receptive skills and productive skills to boost students' communicative competence, and finally shows the research gaps based on prior studies.

2   Literature Review

2.1   Definition of Key Terms

Integrated Skills Approach
The integrated skills approach links four skills, including Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing, into one lesson [4], and these skills are used for communication purposes [5].

The integrated skills approach is a cognitive process in which relevant topics or contents are requested. Learners use receptive skills to systematize the input knowledge to respond to the tasks through productive skills. Besides, learners use critical thinking to compare and contrast, indicate cause and effect, or confirm the relationship between them [6].

From the two aforementioned definitions, it is concluded that integrating four skills in an EFL classroom is the process of merging Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing systematically coupled with vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation into one lesson and one curriculum. Learners receive information passively and use critical thinking to produce new knowledge.

Communicative Competence
Communicative competence is a two-way interaction between people. Therefore, students must be able to solve problems quickly and listen comprehensively to tackle the issues simultaneously. Under time pressure, learners activate their knowledge the brain about knowledge and vocabulary related to topics to make sentences and consistently arrange ideas. Besides, to pronounce correctly, the voice must have a tone and maintain ideas fluency [7].

To examine how successful learners are in communication, it should be investigated about the component of communicative competence.

Stemming from the concept of "competence", many scholars take turns to deeply comprehend this concept by integrating the new "Communicative competence" concept.

[8] started to claim that "competence" is learners' linguistic competence. This competence is determined as grammatical knowledge, including vocabulary, word form, morphology, pronunciation, or spelling. Specifically, learners can produce sentences based on linguistic knowledge. [8]'s definition limited learners' competence in an area of knowledge and using grammar.

Developed by [8, 9] adjusted and expanded the concept of "competence" to "communicative competence" to describe the learners' competence not only in using knowledge about grammar accurately but also in making use of grammatical knowledge to interact with others, applying it into daily life situations. Such principles are applied to both written and spoken language, but [9] highly emphasizes the ability to interact orally. In [9] 's perspective, communicative competence is coupled with achieving grammatical knowledge, and learners are required to perform sociolinguistic competence well.

Influenced by [8] and [9, 10] proposed the third branch of communicative competence; that is, strategic competence. That is referred to the learners' ability to change themselves to solve unexpected situations like an interruption in communication or misunderstanding. This competence requires students' flexibility to address the situations to communicate effectively.

[11] continually developed the definition of communicative competence by adding one component, namely discourse competence. It is the coherence and cohesion in developing ideas.

[12] later combined and adjusted the component of communicative competence. They considered discourse competence as the key area of communicative competence and the three other components, sociolinguistic competence, linguistic competence, and actional competence, are the circle around to support strategic competence.

In the last version of [13], sociolinguistic, linguistic, and discourse competence are added to formulaic competence. Formulaic competence pays more attention to the flexibility of conversation and pair-up activities, and other factors like phrases, sentences, and vocabulary. The actional competence is transferred to interactional competence. This competence requires learners to understand to respond to the tasks, say sorry to someone, give a suggestion, or exchange information. In addition, interactional competence is related to conversation competence, such as how to start a dialogue, delay a dialogue, or take turns interacting with partners.

To conclude, to measure how learners communicate successfully, it is required that they achieve six components, namely linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, discourse competence, formulaic competence, and interactional competence. Figure 1 represents the components of communicative competence.

2.2 The Role of Integrating Receptive Skills and Productive Skills on Developing Students' Communicative Competence

Language, in general, and English, in particular, are divided into receptive and productive skills. Learners should accumulate knowledge about certain topics through reading and listening to have the plan to address information. The two receptive skills are the base–input knowledge for students to have enough ability to produce language, which is
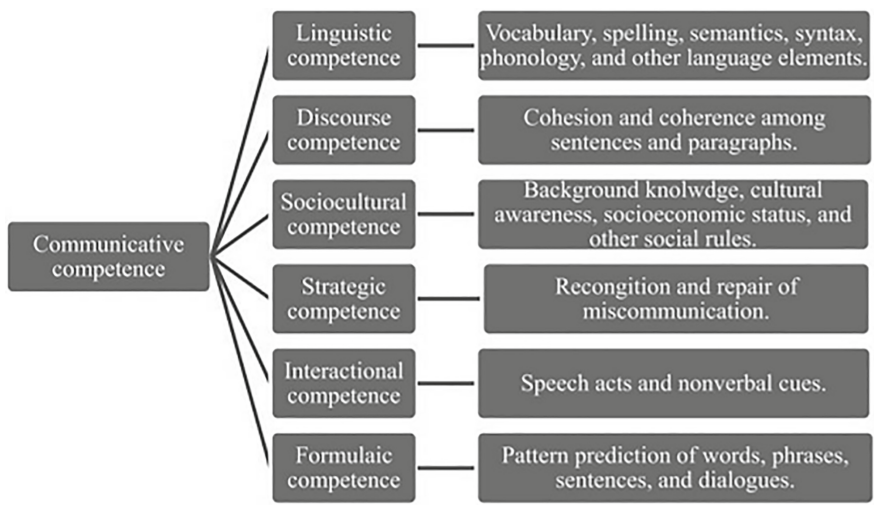
Fig. 1. Components of communicative competence. Note. Source: [14].
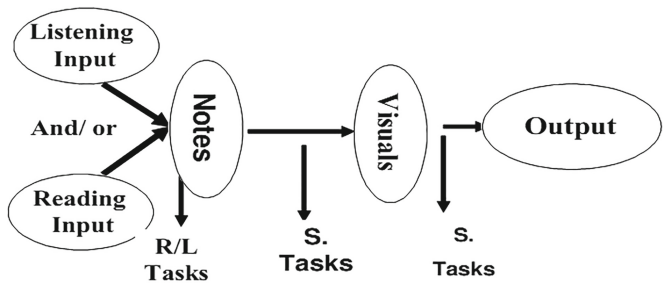
Fig. 2. A model for integrating the four language skills. Note. Source: [18].

called productive competence (output) through speaking and writing. [15] laid a high emphasis on the importance of input knowledge in developing students' communicative competence. The author stated that in teaching languages, the combination of reading and listening is a basic and essential factor contributing to increasing communicative competence for all learners. Teachers should equip learners with enough input knowledge to be ready to participate in reading, listening, speaking, and writing activities in the classroom. [16] also highlighted the role of three factors, including input, interaction, and output, in developing students' communicative competence. They are interrelated to support students in gaining oral fluency in communication. In 2018, [17] reconfirmed the impact of receptive skills on productive skills. Without listening, no speaking takes place. Similarly, with reading, no writing happens. Hence, four skills are connected to support learners to communicate effectively. Figure 2 illustrates the importance of listening and reading skills in developing speaking skills.

2.3   Related Studies

In 1991, [19] argued that attention to three components, including listening, speaking, and pronunciation, is essential to any coherent curriculum design. The author emphasizes that focusing solely on one aspect of oral communication is insufficient. As a result, teachers should incorporate various skills and activities to provide diverse opportunities for developing oral language proficiency for English second language learners.

In 2009, [20] investigated methods for improving learners' ability to speak English. The study discovered that implementing an interrelated skills approach could improve the effectiveness of oral English instruction. Integrating skills gives students the confidence to participate in classroom activities. Furthermore, the article focused on teachers who should conduct group and pair work with more than two skills at the same time. This allows students to increase interaction and practice speaking.

In 2010, [21] conducted a study to examine whether combining listening and speaking skills could improve students' oral communicative competence. This study included 180 students. To collect data, a pre-post test, and various tasks were used. The results showed that the group practicing the skills in integration outperformed the group practicing the skills separately. Furthermore, practicing the skills via information-gap tasks increases student involvement and motivation.

In 2011, [22] examined to what extent students improve speaking skills when participating in integrated skills approach implementation in the classroom. 500 Saudi English major students took part in the event. Data was collected through observations, questionnaires, and discussions with students and professors and analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings revealed that linking skills together in the classroom enabled most students to develop speaking skills effectively. This approach may allow students to interact with teachers and peers more frequently. The amount and length of the students' speech contributions naturally varied. This study suggested that the implementation of this approach could be tested at other universities. Furthermore, more research should be conducted to determine why some students talk more, some less, and some very little.

In 2015, [23] conducted a study to address the process of implementing teaching stages covering skills for integration. The study recommended that teachers balance receptive and productive skills and vary teaching activities in order to teach interactively. Students developed oral communication after completing the following teaching stages: eliciting ideas, highlighting lexis and their meanings, predicting text, ordering jumbled paragraphs, listening, reading comprehension, and acting out the story/speaking in an integrated manner.

In 2018, [24] 's study aimed at analyzing the importance of integrating four skills to enhance students' English skills. The study indicated that skills could not be taught in isolation. They must be closely linked, along with vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. It necessitated proper planning, implementation, post-analysis, and practice based on learner performance. The study also highlights some issues for teachers to consider when implementing an integrated skills approach in the classroom. First, large classroom sizes make it difficult for teachers to pay attention to each learner and organize teaching activities. Second, time management is also well-controlled because four skills are taught in one lesson.

Recently, [25] investigated learners' and teachers' perceptions of the integrated-skill approach and investigated the potential impact of this approach on learners' communicative competence. The study included thirteen English majors and four teachers. The data was gathered through group discussions and interviews. This study's findings revealed some integration of listening and speaking skills, and this integration was beneficial in improving learners' ability to use English properly. The presence of skills integration in classrooms has a significant positive effect on learners' communicative competence.

3   Conclusion and Implications

In conclusion, to enhance students' communicative competence, implementing an integrated skills approach in English lessons proves its effectiveness. Teaching by linking skills together helps students build up their input knowledge to communicate confidently. They can express ideas, collaborate, and interact with peers inside and outside the classroom. However, teaching English to non-majored students in Vietnam has currently taught skills in isolation. The integrated skills approach has not still commonly applied in a Vietnamese classroom. Furthermore, most of the international and national research was conducted with English-majored students who showed good performance in learning English. A study investigating integrated skills approach implementation with non-English majored students to improve communicative competence is still a gap in the context of Vietnam. Therefore, further research should be conducted to explore to what extent this approach can help students enhance their English communicative competence.

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Enhancing English Language Proficiency for Non-majored University Learners: A Proposal for Integrated Skills Approach Implementation

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Abstract. Despite more efforts from educational institutions to improve the teaching quality for non-English majors, learners' language proficiency in Vietnam is still problematic. Thus, finding a solution for teaching to upgrade their language proficiency is now an urgent action. Connecting four skills in an EFL classroom is considered an effective approach to enhancing learners' language achievement. This article provides a comprehensive theoretical basis for implementing an integrated skills approach in a Vietnamese EFL classroom. Specifically, the article first indicates the advantages of implementing the eclectic approach in one single lesson, followed by discussing the characteristics of the target approach, including the types of integration. The article then proposes the feasible procedure of merging skills into classes, namely the order of skills and the transition of skills, involving teaching tasks and activities for teachers to apply in a classroom. In addition, the teacher's and learners' roles in a classroom are discussed. Finally, a teaching testing and assessment covering four skills are mentioned.

Keywords: non-English-majored learners · integrated skills approach · English language proficiency · Vietnam

1 Introduction

In recent years, English language proficiency has been considered a standard to measure how successfully learners can use English to communicate [1]. It is regarded as an essential element for employment and further study. Hence, teaching English, which aims at enhancing English language proficiency, is of major concern to governments, universities, and lecturers [2]. The quality of English teaching in higher education in Vietnam is always a hot issue, constantly receiving discussion and debate from researchers and educators. The educational system has made many endeavors to promote English teaching and learning, but there is still much room for improvement, particularly regarding learners' proficiency levels [3]. It is noted that research investigating how effective teaching

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has been ample for English-majored learners, while for non-English majors, teaching has remained limited. Thus, there needs to be more exploration of pedagogical behaviors for ameliorating Vietnamese non-English majors' language performance.

Teaching general English to non-majored learners in higher education in Vietnam still has existed some weaknesses. In reality, the traditional methods, particularly the grammar-translation approach, are still dominantly used in an English classroom [4]. Learners mostly play the role of passive knowledge receivers, yet teachers always play the role of knowledge transmitters. Learners are not given many opportunities to internalize the target language. Furthermore, four skills are usually taught in isolation [5], with only one or two skills used to express ideas. This teaching style hampers learners' holistic language proficiency. Consequently, these Vietnamese learners' English language ability remains quite low. Especially, despite possessing good linguistic knowledge, the learners' communicative competence is always underestimated [6]. Learners are unable to listen to comprehend, read to get the main information, use English to make sentences, or speak in public. When leaving universities, graduates struggle with applying their English ability for work or high education.

The integrated teaching approach stemmed from the early 1900s but received little attention. It has emerged as a modern approach in educational programs in recent years. It is in harmony with the teaching process, comprehensively developing learners' English proficiency. Specifically, it combines language knowledge and skills into a single lesson, which helps learners easily attain, consolidate, and minimize repeated knowledge.

Integrating skills into one lesson shows many advantages for teachers to apply in an EFL classroom [7]. Firstly, combining more than one skill in the lesson provides learners with input knowledge to produce their output. Learners have opportunities to use multiple skills concurrently; for example, learners read to get ideas to speak or write. Besides, the integrated skills approach helps learners actively engage in classroom activities. In reality, learners are formed in pairs or groups to work with peers to present ideas, explain problems, or suggest solutions.

This article purposely reviews the theoretical basis for implementing an integrated skills approach in an EFL classroom. It begins with presenting (1) the advantages of implementing the integrated skills approach in one lesson, followed by (2) the characteristics of the integrated skills approach, and then discusses (3) the procedure of merging skills into classes along with (4) teaching tasks and activities for teachers to apply in a classroom. Finally, (5) a teaching assessment covering four skills is mentioned.

2   Theoretical Basis

2.1   The Advantages of Implementing the Integrated Skills Approach

Implementing an integrated skills approach in an English classroom brings more merits for both teachers and learners. According to [8] and [9], learners have more exposure to a comprehensive learning environment when engaging in skills-integrated activities. Learners interact with teachers and peers by "giving" and "receiving" communication messages. By practicing one skill, learners can "invite" other relevant skills if they are included in the same unit. Even teachers can corporate four skills and focus on one in-depth skill. For example, the teachers can teach speaking by topics and integrate other

skills like listening, reading, and writing without losing concentration on speaking [10]. Secondly, this approach also provides learners with more chances to develop topical knowledge in depth and breadth. It means learners make use of skills to address a problem or a situation. Interconnecting skills into one lesson helps learners attain language knowledge and apply it to communicative situations naturally [11]. Thirdly, teaching integrated skills pays more attention to content than form. In other words, it emphasizes fluency more than accuracy, facilitating learners to exchange ideas freely rather than memorizing the truth of language solely [12]. Besides, exposing learners to more authentic materials helps them build up more interaction with teachers and peers [13]. By participating in meaningful situations in a classroom, learners become more active and engaged in lessons. They gain more confidence and get more motivated to learn [7].

As for teachers, an integrated approach supports teachers in many ways. First, this approach supports teachers in following learners' progress in four skills at the same time [14]. Second, teaching in an integrated mode saves time compared to teaching skills separately [12]. Third, according to [15], an integrated approach helps teachers renew their minds about the process of teaching, which is not only to memorize vocabulary, analyze grammatical structures, or translate vocabulary but to help learners use it to communicate in specific contexts [16]. Finally, this approach helps teachers revisit their roles in the classroom. Teachers cannot be the central people in a classroom to deliver knowledge. They provide learners with instructions and design lessons by letting learners cooperate with peers [12].

2.2 The Traits of the Integrated Skills Approach

There are two forms of integrated skills approach, including (1) content-based instruction; (2) tasks-based instruction.

Content-Based Instruction

Learners practice all four language skills in a communicative and integrative fashion. Content-based teaching is applied to all levels of English language proficiency, but the nature of this teaching style could vary depending on learners' level [17]. In essence, content-based instruction focuses on the unit's content through languages. For example, as for learners at the beginning level, the content aims at communication skills with personal information and social interaction. However, for learners at a higher level, the content becomes more academic and complex. The suggestions for choosing content for teaching are (1) concepts, or terminologies should be true, remaining unchanged through time; (2) the older information could be accepted, but through time it gains more updated and becomes trendy, which attracts more discussion from learners; (3) the input should have a humorous factor, helping reduce learners' anxiety; (4) content should not perform difficulties for learners to understand [19].

Tasks-Based Instruction

Tasks-based teaching is broadly regarded as a comprehensive approach. Learners learn languages as an overall rather than as separated components. The tasks consist of four language skills (e.g., listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Tasks-based teaching places high emphasis on tasks that require learners to use English to speak or write.

This approach encourages learners to work in pairs or small groups to facilitate dual interaction. Collaborative learning is recommended in tasks-based teaching. Teaching via tasks is used with all levels of English language proficiency, and the tasks are presented in two forms: tasks in one-way interaction and tasks in two-way one [19]. With tasks in one-way interaction, an individual, either teacher or learners, has information and then shares it with the other learners in a classroom. In contrast, with those in a two-way interaction, all learners actively exchange information and share it with other peers to address the problem [20]. The vital factor for tasks is flexibility. One set of activities must be chosen by teachers and relevant to real life and the learners' characteristics. The choice of tasks should be specified, such as how learners work with input.

2.3 The Procedure of Merging Skills into Lessons

Teaching Receptive Skills

Teaching listening and reading skills is a process of learners receiving information. Learners are readers and audiences to achieve specific listening skills and reading skills to get the main ideas. The teacher's role is to instruct learners in these skills to help them comprehend the information they listen to and read. According to [21], the teaching model for receptive skills includes five main stages.

(1) Lead-in: The teacher prepares activities to get learners to guess the topic of a reading or listening text and stimulate their interest in the topic. The teacher's responsibility is to help learners activate their prior knowledge about the topic. The teacher helps learners to guess the content of listening or reading tasks through the clues such as pictures, titles, or short descriptions. This enables them to get the overall picture of the topic and self-reflect to make the questions for them.

(2) Teacher directs comprehension task: The teacher instructs learners to understand the activities, such as responding to the questions, filling in the tables, filling out the passage, or reporting the content they listen to or read. This is the stage teacher needs to explain and get learners from an overall to a specific view by specifying the objective of listening or reading.

(3) Learners read or listen for the task: The teacher organizes activities for learners to listen to or read. The teacher forms learners in pairs or small groups, bringing them more opportunities to discuss and interact with each other.

(4) Teacher directs feedback: After finishing the tasks in class, the teacher checks the extent to which learners complete the tasks and indicates learners' strengths and weaknesses. The teacher conducts this activity in small groups to observe each instead of implementing it with the whole class. The learners exchange their products and check the answer together.

(5) Teacher directs related tasks: The teacher conducts the activities related to the lesson, such as responding the questions about the content of the unit or focusing on some aspects of the linguistics of the lesson. This helps the student gain an in-depth understanding of the lesson.

Teaching Reading

Reading skill is a process of achieving, comprehending, and getting information from reading passages. Reading is also a process of decoding reading passages interactively, purposefully, critically, and analytically [23]. The integrated skills approach does not view reading as a solely passive skill [22].

Reading is universally split into two main types extensive and intensive reading. Extensive reading serves relaxing purposes, so learners can choose books, magazines, or interesting topics to read. On the other hand, intensive reading is likely to be more important, for it challenges teachers to have a specific plan for selecting materials and providing instructions, teaching activities, and references [24]. The teacher plays an important role as an organizer, observer, and feedback provider. The teacher helps learners understand the information and does not focus on unimportant details, such as analyzing word by word. The teacher should be flexible about various teaching techniques to assist learners in understanding the content of reading passages well.

Some teaching activities should be organized in a reading class, such as activating prior knowledge, predicting, and using linkers as well. First, the teacher establishes activities to activate the prior knowledge to attract learners to some information about the topic. Brainstorming and mind-map are useful for doing this step. Whereas brainstorming helps learners get ideas easily, mind-map helps learners systematize ideas. Both those techniques help learners stimulate the vocabulary of the reading passages. Secondly, the teacher organizes predicting activities by eliciting learners to look at the titles, pictures, and phrases that appeared in the reading passages to guess the content of the unit. Next, the teacher organizes activities using linking verbs by indicating the signal to conclude the structure of the reading passage and predict the following information.

Besides, the teacher can instruct learners to use scanning techniques to look for details and skimming techniques to get the overall information. Learners complete the reading task and then express their opinion based on the content of the reading passage, such as expressing agreement or disagreement, raising questions for themselves, comparing with their previous knowledge, or predicting the future based on some reading clues.

Teaching Listening

Listening is a process of interaction that requires learners to actively listen to memorize information in a short time and deliver information at the same time [25]. Learners have to distinguish the sounds, understand vocabulary and grammatical structures, and share information with peers [26]. Listening consists of four chief stages: receiving information, building up information, cooperating to address information, and conveying information.

Like reading skills, [21] divided listening into two types extensive and intensive listening. Extensive listening could be listening to CD, MP3, or on the Internet, where learners can listen for entertainment. On the other hand, intensive learning usually takes place in a classroom with the teacher's support for learners to understand the content.

Teachers conduct listening activities through three stages, including pre-, while-, and post-listening. In the initial stage, the teacher sets up activities to trigger learners' prior knowledge and determines the purpose of listening. Teaching activities include a topic discussion, brainstorming, vocabulary presentation, and relevant information sharing. While listening, the teacher conducts activities directly related to the content

of listening; for instance, listening to get the main ideas and to get details. In the final stage, the teacher integrates listening tasks into other skills like speaking or writing; for example, the teacher can ask learners to write a report.

Teaching Productive Skills

Speaking and writing are considered active skills. Learners need to present languages through spoken or written communication. Speaking requires learners to own great ideas or deep topical knowledge to communicate. Writing requires learners to possess the ability to present their product clearly and consistently [27]. The important factor contributing to this success is the teacher's instruction by designing teaching activities [21].

Like organizing teaching activities with receptive skills, [21] proposed the process of teaching productive skills through five stages, namely (1) lead-in; (2) teacher sets the task; (3) teacher monitors the task; (4) teacher gives task feedback; (5) Task-related follow-up.

(1) Lead-in: The teacher provides instructions and clues for learners to guess the topics by raising questions about personal experiences.
(2) Teacher sets the task: The teacher explains the mission learners have to complete and ensures they understand the tasks. The teacher plays as a model repeating the instructions. S(he) can enact activities either in pairs or groups.
(3) Teacher monitors the task: During the time learners get involved in learning activities, the teacher manages a classroom, supports learners by listening to their product presentation, and providing assistance when necessary.
(4) Teacher gives task feedback: After learners complete the tasks, the teacher should indicate their strengths and weaknesses to help them improve and edit their product.
(5) Task-related follow-up: Like organizing teaching activities with listening and reading, the teacher implements activities related to the content of the unit. The tasks can relate to the content of the unit or focus on some aspects of languages. The learners, therefore, have chances to attain their knowledge better.

Teaching Speaking

Speaking is a complex skill because it requires learners to do many tasks at the same time, like selecting ideas, thinking of sensible vocabulary, and accurate pronunciation. According to [28], the teacher must help learners balance accuracy and fluency. Three key stages for conducting speaking classes are:

In the pre-speaking stage: The teacher provides learners with ideas through learning reading skills to get vocabulary or ideas and stimulate them to think about the topic.

In the while-speaking stage: The teacher forms learners in pairs or groups, giving learners opportunities to use English to not only respond to the questions but also raise the questions at the same time. Learners learn from each other and reduce learning anxiety. Making mistakes and learning from them is a natural process of learning a language. Some activities are suggested with teaching speaking like providing learners ideas through role cards with elicited ideas and suggestions. The other teaching activities are role-play, task fill-in completion, group discussion, interview, or debate.

In the post-speaking stage: The teacher gives feedback on learners' presentations. The teacher should not interrupt learners' speaking because it could affect their fluency [29]. Follow-up activities are normally conducted through writing skills.

Teaching Writing

Writing is the final skill in language learning and appears to be the most difficult of the four because it requires learners to generate ideas, organize them, and decode these ideas into legible texts [30]. To write well, it is necessary to understand the basic system of a language, which includes knowledge of grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, and sentence structure.

There is no correct answer for the best teaching methods of writing. However, there are two well-known types of writing instruction: the controlled-to-free and free-writing approaches. In writing, the control-to-free approach is sequential. Learners are given sentence exercises first, followed by paragraphs to copy or manipulate grammatically. It emphasizes three aspects of syntax, grammar, and mechanics, with a heavy focus on precision over fluency. The free-writing method places more emphasis on quantity than quality. The teacher assigns large amounts of free writing on specific topics, with only minor error corrections.

[31] suggests teaching writing within three sub-processes, namely (1) planning; (2) generation of writing; and (3) revision.

First, learners will plan to present the abstract as the result of the writer's search for ideas and information in his memory. This presentation contains a more or less detailed specification of the text that they wish to write.

Second, during the generation writing stage, learners start generating ideas and organizing them into coherent and meaningful sentences. Learners must convert semantic input into written linguistic sequences. Cohesion, coherence, adequacy, and intelligibility should all be considered.

Last, the revision process involves improving and refining the advances and copies. These sub-processes do not necessarily occur in a sequential form but may appear during the writing simultaneously, cyclically, or recursively. Learners should reread and correct any errors.

The Interrelationship Among Four Skills

Listening and Reading

Listening and reading are receptive skills, but listeners and readers do not receive information passively. By contrast, listeners and readers receive information actively by linking information with each other with prediction, experience, and knowledge activation [32]. Learning these two skills is not only the comprehension of the surface but also deep understanding. Hence, listening and reading support each other mutually.

Speaking and Writing

Speaking and writing are closely linked to each other. Speaking activates writing indirectly [32]. Writing improvement does not merely rely on the development of writing; the learners' speaking acquisition can simultaneously enhance writing performance. Thus, the better of these two skills are the result of operation and support. Furthermore, receptive skills are the root of sharpening productive skills. Until learners develop listening

and reading skills through practice, they gain more confidence to speak under any circumstance. No listening skill happens without speaking [28]. Similarly, no reading skill happens without reading. Above all, four language skills always connect.

Not only do receptive and productive skills exist in close inner relationships but listening, speaking, reading, and writing are also interconnected.

Listening and Speaking

Listening and speaking display a continued and close linkage with each other [32]. It means learners learn speaking through listening. They are able to express their ideas only when they understand the content they listen to. This is an important bridge to indicate their better listening. Learners can understand the content easily by speaking fluently.

Reading and Writing

Reading and writing support each other. Both reading and writing depend on each other to develop knowledge. Writers and readers make use of their knowledge of linguistics, topics, and organization [33]. These factors might help writers foster the ability to read and readers to nurture the ability to write.

To conclude, the four skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing, have a close relationship with each other, supporting each other. Learners can use more than one skill to study and work with peers. Figure 1 represents the model of integrating four skills into courses.

2.4   The Teaching Tasks and Activities for Teachers

The following activities below are proposed for implementing an integrated skills approach in a lesson [35]. It is suggested that teachers need to pick up more than one activity below to manifest the use of all language skills at the same time so that the readers can grasp the role of this section.

– Debates: Learners will think in their heads, change their mindset when they support their opinions, and develop a clear and concise argument.
– Interviews: Learners will work with peers to perform an interview of each other on a topic of their choice. They can then show it in class.
– Role-play/Drama: Learners are given dominant roles and asked to act out specific scenes to the texts from novels, poems, or plays. They can even write and perform their script in front of the class.
– Class discussion: Learners work in pairs or groups to discuss and then present their short oral reports based on the topic they heard or read in the unit of the lesson. They should be persuasive and show critical thought.
– Group mini-lectures: Learners go through the texts they have previously read. They are then asked to give short talks on the content they had read. They are free to speak in front of their group.
– Written dictation/Note-taking: It is used as a reproduction stage when listening and writing skills are being exercised at once. Listening reinforces writing practice and, conversely. Learners' writing will be fortified by listening to correctly write or complete the sentences.
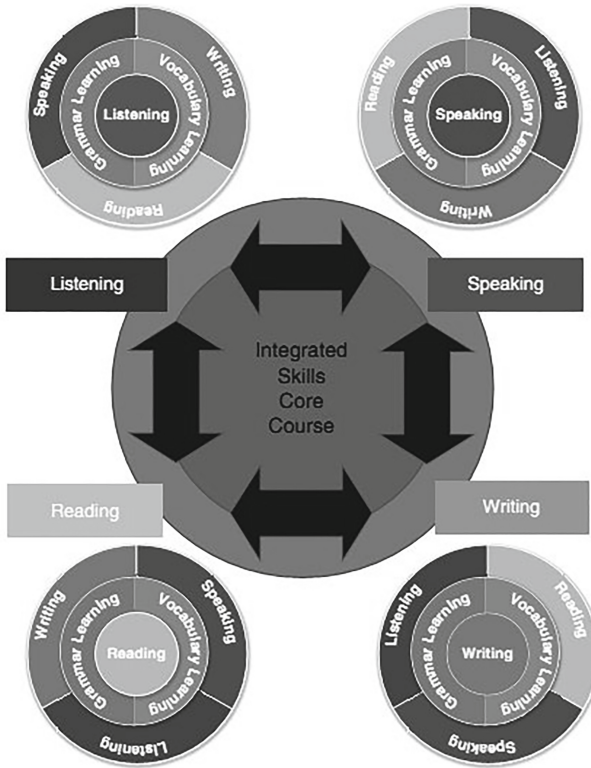
Fig. 1. Integrated four skills model.Note. Source: [34]

Besides, other activities are also suggested for teachers to apply to their integrated skills approach classes, like making posters, writing summaries or reviews, surveys and questionnaires, and information-gap and transfer.

2.5 Teachers' and Learners' Roles in Teaching Integrated Skills

Unlike a traditional approach, teaching English under the integrated approach requires teachers to provide learners with opportunities to discover and create new knowledge during the learning process. Teachers organize activities guiding learners to raise questions, participate in problem-solving activities, and share their thought through speaking and writing. Besides, teachers must trust learners' abilities, show respect, and motivate them to get actively involved in learning activities. The teachers play a central role as managers, organizers, facilitators, and evaluators [36].

Also, learners need to show their active roles in this approach-driven classroom. They learn to communicate and spend more time on interactional patterns. This is a two-way interaction between a speaker and a listener, a reader and writer. They collaborate to

exchange ideas, knowledge, or information. They participate in group discussion activities to express their ideas, persuade their group members, and indicate their weaknesses. To conclude, learners should also act as managers who control learning by themselves [37].

2.6   The Language Testing and Assessment

Assessing learners' learning outcomes is a process of commenting on their levels and ability to meet the teaching goals. This results in determining both strengths and weaknesses of teaching and proposing solutions to improving teaching.

Assessing learners' language proficiency in an integrated way is quite challenging for teachers because all skills are simultaneously assessed. Each learner's skills are different in terms of levels and skill types. Some learners may perform speaking better than writing, and so on. Therefore, to assess learners' performance precisely, the teachers should collaborate intensively and extensively and track learners' progress to design proficiency tests more accurately [38].

Integrative assessment is now a potential solution for managers or lecturers to measure learners' overall general proficiency and communicative competence. Proficiency is determined as competence to achieve multi-faceted linguistic and communicative elements. The language proficiency test must be consistent to the teaching approach of integrated instruction [39]. It should be an integrative test involving vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension, or it could be integrated listening and writing together.

3   Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

The current paper has just presented theoretical fundamentals to develop English language proficiency for teaching non-majored learners. Speaking, listening, reading, and writing are closely linked and mutually supported in real-life scenarios. The improvement of the whole skill relies much on a flexible combination of elements of the system theory of learning. Listening is the basement for speaking, and reading is a source for listening. Listening and speaking facilitate reading and writing, and vice versa. These four skills should be organically connected to ensure the teaching process becomes integrated and comprehensive with "less time, more efficiency." However, this is only the first step to building up the system of theory. A practical study should be further conducted to testify to this theoretical basis. The teaching model could be generalized to other populations and contexts if the study shows positive results.

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LIST OF PAPERS

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF DEVELOPING ENGLISH INTEGRATED SKILLS-BASED LESSONS FOR NON-ENGLISH MAJORS

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Abstract

Teaching general English to Vietnamese non-English majors has been a major challenge for universities, managers, and teachers. Although teachers applied many teaching approaches, they turned out to be less effective. This research proposes an integrated skills-based lesson for non-English-majored students. This instructional approach provides learners with diverse learning experiences and equips them with input knowledge in order to enhance their levels of English language proficiency. However, current teaching procedures have not been fully developed; hence, the results of this approach have not been comprehensively elucidated. This study provides the theoretical framework for skills integration in an EFL classroom. Specifically, the author draws teachers' attention to a more effective teaching procedure. First, the order of skills teaching in a classroom is presented, grounded by the theory of second language acquisition. Second, selecting textbooks and designing supplementary materials for classroom practice is done, then it is followed by using technology tools to teach integrated skills. Finally, factors affecting teaching integrated skills are also included in this paper.

Keywords: General English, skills integration, English language proficiency, Vietnamese non-English majors

1. Introduction

Nowadays, teaching English to non-majored students in universities receives more attention from principals and managers to teachers. Followed by the educational objectives, this is an important activity to equip students with knowledge and skills. This is considered compulsory in the context of the globe. In reality, the level of using English of most Vietnamese students after university graduation is still limited, which affects their work (Lam, 2018; Vu & Burns, 2014). Therefore, the solution to innovate teaching to enhance learning quality for non-majored students is an urgent task.

Teaching English is not about delivering knowledge or skills in isolation just to remember. Teaching English requires students to gather, integrate, synthesize knowledge, and draw conclusions. Hence, the traditional way of teaching English has been replaced by an integrated approach. It is now regarded as an efficient and new method in a teaching curriculum. The term 'integrated approach' refers to the systematic integration of knowledge

or abilities from several areas or fields into one curriculum, one subject, one lesson unit, or one teaching activity (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

In general, the integrated teaching approach is a direction about content and a teaching methodology in which teachers plan activities for students to combine knowledge or skills from various topics or fields to deal with learning tasks, address repeated knowledge, and differentiate between more and less important content. Students build their core competency by acquiring new knowledge or skills. The conclusion drawn from the majority of research papers is that employing an integrated teaching approach has a favorable impact on students' language proficiency. Student attitudes towards the subjects are found to be relaxed. Lessons become more engaging and knowledge is easier for students to assimilate because the amount of information is decreased. To put the lessons into effect in the classroom, however, may not be simple for teachers. Because they do not ensure the teaching processes of carrying out the lessons, teachers currently lack the confidence to employ the integrated skills method in the classroom. Consequently, the purpose of this paper is to give teachers a theoretical foundation upon which they can conduct their instructional activities with better assurance.

2. Literature review

2.1. The order of skills teaching in an integrated classroom

It is necessary to make a connection between writing abilities and the 1965's trend in English teaching of 'reading aloud'. This idea has been a starting point for the innovation of teaching multiple skills in one class. These modifications are successful in offering coordination despite a shaky start amongst several English instruction research studies in a distinct field.

Based on an earlier study about teaching reading skills, it was confirmed in later research studies that teaching writing serves as a communicative act beginning in the year of 1980. As a result, reading proficiency serves as the foundation for writing proficiency. According to Flower et al. (1990), reading and writing integration is a process in which students read books, newspapers, or letters that are related to give them input knowledge for writing. Summary activities, essays, and reports are among the writing-related assignments that link reading and writing.

Many common concepts have been used to connect reading and writing skills such as "*reading for writing*", "*reading while writing*", "*reading-based writing*", and "*writing using sources*" (Hirvela, 2004; Kirkpatrick & Klein, 2009; Plakans, 2009). These concepts are meant to tell the originality of reading skills as the first. Reading should be considered a base for developing writing skill. Therefore, a reading and writing connection is necessary for students to develop thinking and then to improve the quality of writing. Writing enables students to deeply understand stories, to write stories creatively, and reorganize writing such as dense or expanding the writing. To be specific, students read the texts from different passages to link ideas, make a sentence, and reorganize the content. Thus, reading skill has a significant influence on writing skill.

Many theoretical models suggest linking reading and writing skills to teaching. The model indicates that reading and writing skills should be integrated to support the development

of learners' competence (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000). Specifically, using writing as a learning tool in reading comprehension improves reading outcomes (Graham & Hebert, 2010). In contrast, using reading as a tool for learning to interpret ideas improves writing outcomes (Tierney & Shanahan, 1991). Experiencing reading helps readers develop the metacognitive skills needed to understand the writer's intentions. In the classroom, learners engage in writing to improve their ability to retain information, assess their understanding of ideas, and communicate for a variety of purposes (Graham & Harris, 2006).

It can be seen that reading and writing skills are necessary conditions for learning foreign languages, but listening and speaking skills are more necessary conditions for teaching reading and writing skills (Allen & Brown, 1978). According to Teale (1996), reading and writing skills are built on the foundation of the development of listening and speaking skills. Renukadevi (2014) proves the essential role of listening skills in learning English and the researcher states that "*without listening, no language learning*" because there is no communication and no learner interaction. Speaking is also an essential part of listening because speaking involves responding to information learners hear (Gathumbi & Masembe, 2005). Listening and speaking skills are integrated into everyday communication. In the process of communication, learners listen more clearly in specific situations when integrated with speaking skill because listening skill is a two-way interaction process. The most important issues for learners are to understand what they are hearing and be able to give appropriate verbal responses. This goal leads us to integrate listening and speaking in teaching because our primary concern is not only learning the grammar of the language but also communicating in that language. Listening and speaking skills should be taught in an integrated way to guide learners to develop communication capacity.

In conclusion, teachers should start their lessons by teaching listening skills and then speaking, reading, and writing. Integrating listening and speaking is the foundation for integrating reading and writing.

2.2. Selecting textbooks for teaching integrated skills

Choosing textbooks is one of the main challenges for universities and teachers. It is also a gap for teachers to recognize the best students' competence and the least students' competence. Selecting textbooks requires teachers to consider critically the nature of second language acquisition. To be specific, teachers consider choosing what to teach (content) and how to connect and sequence it (Nation & Macalister, 2010). According to Tomlinson (2010), textbooks should be built on the applications of developing the second language and the teaching approach. He highly recommends that textbooks should enable students to be aware of features of comprehensible input, stimulate task engagement, and use input language to produce output. Considering the mentioned features, the writers decide to use the principles of textbooks appropriate for teaching integrated language skills to non-English major students.

2.2.1. The language input and output

Students should be equipped with comprehensible input of language used to make the product through speaking and writing. Scholars have a similar belief that language input is vital for learning English (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). To enhance language skills, students

have to be provided adequate input in a meaningful context to serve communication. Input languages are put in specific contexts to draw students' attention to linguistic elements incidentally when participating in meaningful communication activities. This attention is an emphasis on form instruction. Input-based instruction helps students get exposed to grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, or ideas to communicate (Ellis, 2012). This input-based instruction usually takes the form of textual enhancement or input enrichment. The input materials benefit students a lot if they meet the following criteria: (1) be easy to access and follow, (2) suit students' level, (3) have interesting topics, (4) have enough input language.

However, students could not develop the competence of four skills if they were only provided input (Krashen, 1987). Swain (1985) states that output plays an equal role as input in developing second language knowledge. Output leads students from receiving knowledge to producing knowledge. This helps students take into account the gap between linguistic features and the second language system. Consequently, when it comes to output-oriented practice, Renandya (2011) proposes three main types. First, mechanical practice is defined as a controlled practice in which students are asked to respond to the task, and repeat the questions or statements without an effort to understand the language they are learning. Second, meaningful practice is regarded as an activity in which the language is still controlled. However, students have to master the language to have correct answers. Third, communicative practice whose concentration is mostly based on communication. At the same time, students are forced to have an output that is suitable for a particular situation.

2.2.2. Integrated skills

Oxford (2001) claims that a tapestry is a useful metaphor for teaching English as a foreign language. Further evidence supports the idea that teaching the receptive and productive skills is one of the most important threads in the tapestry of education. Having a solid command of grammar, vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, meaning, and usage is another component of this. When the skills are interwoven throughout instruction, or what is known as an "integrated skill approach", as per the skill stand of the tapestry, ESL/EFL communication is maximized. Task-based teaching, in which students participate in communicative tasks in English, is one type of integrated skill instruction. The term "tasks" is defined as activities that can stand alone as fundamental components and that demand comprehension, generation, manipulation, or engaging in authentic language with more attention to meaning than to form. In this form of training, pair work and groupwork are frequently used. The degree of difficulty of classroom exercises might vary. At higher proficiency levels, tasks are more difficult. Students at beginners' level might be asked to introduce themselves and offer one interesting fact about themselves. Advanced students might complete more complex and difficult assignments, like expressing their thoughts on the difficulties facing the country in a role-playing exercise where they are running for president. The four-stranded language course concept by Paul Nation who suggests a different form of task presentation that elaborates on the display of integrated abilities (2007). A well-rounded language course is said to include four elements, namely meaning-focused input, language focus, meaning-focused output, and fluency practice. First, activities that are meaning-focused offer practice

for receptive abilities like reading and listening where the focus is on the messages. Activities involving language concentration involve paying specific attention to and practicing the linguistic features of the language samples used in the previous activity. Hence, speaking and writing activities where the emphasis is placed on the message and ideas expressed fall under meaning-focused output. The final element fosters the fluent application of the linguistic features of the four language abilities.

2.3. Using digital technologies for teaching integrated skills

Currently, some forms of digital technology integration, such as computers, tablets, laptops, or smartphones, are used to supplement English instruction. Technology lets students learn more deeply about a subject, seek information in a world flooded with data, and identify their interests. They also give them access to more pleasurable tools for searching. When used effectively, technologies have the power to include students in deep learning tasks. The technological applications aim to assist students in developing flexible, confident, and fun information-gathering, analysis, and response skills.

However, teachers are not merely using digital technology to give the impression that they are technologically modern. The most important factor is how technology is used to teach languages in the classroom and how it is connected to students' learning. When an integrated-skills approach are adopted for the General English course, teachers should give top priority to choosing the finest teaching tactics to promote the integration of digital technology. Technology should demonstrate pedagogic integration, and intended teaching approaches should be adaptable to changes in technology. Beyond the technology itself, the need for its use leads teachers to alter the English courses from a macro-level of conceptualization (far from students) to a micro-level of conceptualization (near to students).

Based on the following four questions, Pitler et al. (2007) created learning techniques for technology-based classes "*What will students learn? What strategies will show that they have learned? What approaches will help them integrate what they have learned? What approaches will let them practice, reflect on, and apply what they have learned?*". Students now occupy the center of the classroom, not the teacher. As a result of converting from teacher-centered to learner-centered classes, the roles of teachers and students have changed (Weasenfort et al., 2002).

Furthermore, according to Wenglinsky (2001), technology does not significantly affect students' achievement if teachers are not involved in its integration. Teachers will develop courses apart from instructing students and acting as academic counselors, team facilitators, and information consultants. Access to educational technologies is controlled by teachers. Teachers are essential in bringing about changes in their classrooms and serving as conduits between the goals of the school and the advantages that students gain from accomplishing those goals. Hence, universities should consider incorporating technology into English courses as an essential element of both teaching and learning. Another important consideration for teachers when arranging their lessons is time management. Teachers should create lesson plans and tools that include technology. Instead of only addressing technical issues, the emphasis of these tactics and resources should be on teaching and learning. Technological resources that instructors could use in the classroom include: (1) online lexical maps and dictionaries, (2) recorded pronunciation practice, (3) reading and

writing exercises on WebQuests, (4) Web-based multimedia projects, (5) email exchange and teamwork projects, (6) Wikis and blogs for building online resumes.

The roles that students play in the classroom also have changed as a result of the use of technology. Using technology causes students to go from passive to active roles. Students now have more freedom to engage in authentic language learning thanks to technology, which allows them to learn by their own learning preferences (Volman, 2005). Students who use technology engage in learning and teaching more actively than those who only consume knowledge. They choose, acquire, transfer, and apply technology. Students now have freedom to learn at their rate and ability thanks to technology. Additionally, it enhances students' physical and mental talents, promotes active learning as opposed to passive learning, and engages students in research and data analysis to facilitate higher-order thought processes (Farahani et al., 2015).

2.4. Factors affecting teaching skills integratedly

The teaching and learning processes in the context of learning a foreign language are influenced by a variety of elements, including motivation, attitudes, anxieties, learning accomplishments, aptitudes, IQ, age, and personality (Khasinah, 2014). In this regard, numerous academics concur that there are many barriers to the implementation of teaching integrated language skills. These variables can be divided into three categories: school variables, learner variables, and teacher variables.

2.4.1. Teachers' factors

This aspect can be seen in two ways: the teachers' competence in how to teach integrative skills and their attitudes.

Teachers' knowledge

Teachers have noted that one distinctive quality of teaching techniques is their interactive aspect. Throughout a lesson, teachers must continuously adjust their actions to account for the evolving situation. Teachers' efficacy in the classroom greatly depends on their ability to adjust and vary their behaviors based on how well the lesson is going. Thus, to educate effectively, teachers need to be knowledgeable enough (Muijs & Reynolds, 2005). Shulman (1987) concurred that teacher expertise is a key component of teaching skills in integrated approaches. They include (1) knowledge of the subject matter (content), (2) knowledge of the general concepts and techniques of classroom organization and management, (3) knowledge of the creation and implementation of lesson plans, and (4) the understanding of students' interests and attitudes.

It can be concluded that EFL teachers need to be proactive, skilled, and able to address various issues to accomplish a particular objective. Teachers could also provide integrated activities for their students. Therefore, to enhance learners' skills, teachers must expand and deepen their understanding of the decisions they might make in a given scenario as well as the effective performance of the observable activity.

Teachers' attitude

To adopt various tactics and ways of teaching language skills, teachers' and students' attitudes are crucial (Rogers, 2003). A fixed habit or way of acting that expresses someone's feelings

or ideas is called an attitude. According to this concept, people's beliefs play a significant role in influencing their behaviors. Attitudes are described as the interaction of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Rusch & Perry, 1999). Integration of the four abilities can aid in students' development of communicative competence but can be taxing on the instructors. We must be able to use textbooks creatively and have a solid grasp of discourses. Hence, teachers' attitudes towards putting this strategy into practice and willingness to confront these issues are crucial. We conclude that teachers' attitudes and beliefs continue to be the factors with the greatest guiding influence on instruction. These unfavorable attitudes may be the cause of the challenges teachers encounter when implementing integrative language teaching methods.

2.4.2. Learners' factor

Teachers should be aware that all students have positive and negative attitudes to varying degrees. They also add that the negative attitudes can be changed by thoughtful instructional methods, like using materials and activities that help students understand and appreciate foreign cultures, a fact that might be reflected in the process of learning in the classroom. According to Fakeye (2010), the issue of the learners' attitudes is one of the most crucial variables that affect language learning. Hence, it is believed that one of the most crucial variables affecting the teaching-learning of languages is the development of students' attitudes towards learning. Understanding students' attitudes is without a doubt a crucial component of moving forward with effective language lessons. Their perceptions of the communication elements required in actual instructional activities should direct the pedagogical choices connected to their learning. To develop students' enthusiasm for learning, one of the most important aspects of teaching abilities is involved in creating a favorable classroom environment.

Learning and attitudes are related. The teaching and learning process is mostly influenced by students' attitudes about teachers, the school, and other subjects. Additionally, Chamber (1999) asserted that when a learner has a positive outlook on the language and learning, learning is more likely to take place. As a result, attitudes have an impact on how well people learn. In other words, it either helps or hinders learning. Students' lack of interest in participating in class can be interpreted as a sign that they have an adversarial attitude toward the situation. A successful student has a good attitude towards the material. Moreover, attitudes toward learning a specific language may be either positive or negative. Some students could have a bad opinion of the foreign language and wish to learn it so they can rule the community. Some students could cause indifferent feelings. Students' experiences are likely to have shaped their attitudes regarding language. We might deduce that the participation in classroom activities that are carried out to enhance language abilities is a crucial component of effective instruction. Students' positive attitude toward learning increases their motivation to complete tasks successfully and turns it into a tool for effectiveness.

2.4.3. School factors

When we talk about school factors, we mean things like having enough materials to teach language skills effectively using an integrative method. Nonetheless, universities may not have enough tools (instruments) and resources, such as student textbooks, instructor manuals,

language lab classes, chairs, and tables (Richards, 2001). Furthermore, due to the diverse student makeup and skill levels, issues with learning and individualized attention, the majority of EFL teachers worldwide reject teaching in big groups. Instructors believe that they can achieve greater pedagogical achievements with fewer students. Hence, having too many students in a single class interferes with the usual process of teaching and learning.

3. Conclusion and pedagogical implications

Learning a language naturally involves using an integrated approach to teaching language skills. This approach integrates the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing into one lesson. Specifically, a lesson covers listening skills, and then speaking, reading, and writing skills. The four English language skills are taught collectively in a real classroom setting because they are all seen as crucial to helping students build their communicative competence. The integrative approach concentrates on teaching language skills in an integrated manner to enable students to use them in meaningful ways in everyday situations. One language skill will help to strengthen another when used in conversation. For example, we learn to talk in part by imitating what we hear and we learn to write by analyzing what we can read (Brown, 2001).

Language teachers should also pay attention to selecting topics from textbooks appropriately. It stimulates students' interest. In addition, the lesson provides students with input and output language. Also, teachers should use technological support to make their lessons more interesting and coherent. Lastly, other factors affecting integrated skills teaching, stemming from teachers, students, and schools should be taken into consideration.

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Exploring Vietnamese Teachers' Pedagogical Practices in Integrating Skills in General English Classrooms

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Abstract. The integrated skills approach is widely recognized for its potential to enhance students' English proficiency and foster greater classroom engagement. Despite the growing body of literature on integrated skills, limited research has examined how teachers have implemented this approach in a Vietnamese university context. This study explored the pedagogical practices of English foreign language instructors in integrating skills within General English classrooms. A mixed-methods design was employed, with quantitative data from a closed-ended questionnaire administered to 102 instructors who were selected through convenience sampling in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and qualitative data obtained from structured interviews with 12 purposefully selected lecturers. The findings from both data sources converge, revealing that teachers' application of integrated skills in the classroom remains limited, with their teaching practices characterized by traditional and inflexible methodologies. In the five teaching domains of integrated practice, instructors demonstrated competence in designing follow-up activities and selecting appropriate thematic content. However, they faced challenges in effectively implementing integrated teaching methods, activities, and testing. Furthermore, factors such as student attitudes and teachers' skill levels were found to directly impact the effectiveness of integrated skills teaching. These findings guide the five domains for teachers to apply in classrooms and underscore the need for teachers' training programs to support effective integrated skills teaching. This study advocates professional development programs to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills to implement integrated pedagogies effectively.

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1. Introduction

English is an international language used to connect people in the current era of globalization. Acknowledging the importance of English language skills as a key factor for graduates to develop their businesses worldwide, many nations have promoted innovations in English foreign language (EFL) teaching (Ahmad & Khan, 2023). To promote English as an official language, the Vietnamese government has implemented several policies to enhance proficiency, as outlined in Conclusion No. 91-KL/TW, focusing on educational reform, industrialization, modernization, and global integration (Vietnam Government, 2024). However, at present, Vietnamese students' language proficiency is not at a desired level of language competence (Lap et al., 2022). They experience problems orally conveying their thoughts or holding conversations in university English classrooms.

Language teaching approaches and methods have suffered from many different historical stages, each of which addressed the limitations of previous methods. For example, the grammar-translation and audio-lingual method were effective but lacked adaptability to change educational contexts and failed to foster overall language proficiency (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The communicative language teaching approach aligned with the integrated skills approach by emphasizing meaning-making and communication; however, it has not sufficiently addressed the sequencing of skill instruction, a crucial factor in effective language learning (Nation, 2007). Literature advocates for the integrated skills approach to the study of language (Bresnihan & MacAuley, 2014; Moghadam & Adel, 2011; Newton & Nation, 2020; Onoda, 2013; Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Thornbury, 2017).

Implementing the integrated skills approach in the classroom would help teachers create dynamic lessons that address students' diverse learning styles and involve the students in diverse learning activities or tasks. This integration encourages teachers to vary learning activities, helps students use the language they have learned in a free, vibrant and natural way, enhances their competence for self-expression, and encourages them to take more chances when using the language. The integrated learning approach would successfully raise English learning outcomes (Davies & Pearse, 2000; Kalsum et al., 2023; Neupane, 2024; Usman & Mahmud, 2024) and impact the motivation and engagement level of EFL learners (Azis, 2023).

In Vietnam, despite recognizing the significant influence of integrated skills in language teaching, it has had very little impact. Many students make minimal progress regarding their language proficiency, especially in the four language skills. Wu and Alrabah (2014) claimed that while most English teachers adopted integrated skills instruction, they were ambivalent toward the practical application of it in their classrooms. To explain this issue, Kebede (2014) claimed that although teachers have theoretical orientations, they do not possess the

necessary practical abilities to conduct integrated skills teaching in their classrooms. Therefore, although the integrated skills method has been extensively used in language education, more research needs to be conducted on how to implement it pedagogically in the classroom. Few studies have been conducted to investigate this gap in the context of Vietnamese universities so this study was necessary.

2. Theoretical Framework
2.1 Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Theory
The integrated skills approach is based on Krashen's (1982) theory of second language acquisition, which provided a theoretical framework for this study. The key points for using second language acquisition as the framework for this study are that, first, this theory emphasizes that the order and sequence of acquisition play an important role in teaching and learning English. The acquisition order refers to the sequence in which learners acquire language elements, such as grammatical structures. The acquisition sequence refers to the stages in which learners acquire specific language elements, such as particular grammatical structures. Second, this theory particularly places high importance on the silent period, which is understood as providing comprehensible input. The best teaching provides understandable input in situations that contain messages that learners want to hear. This allows them to produce output when they are ready to demonstrate improvement. Furthermore, four language skills, including listening, speaking, reading and writing, must be taught in a natural sequence with thematic links. This sequence builds a strong positive relationship in acquiring the target language (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). If learners develop their listening and reading skills through specific practice, they are sure to develop the confidence to write or speak in any context.

2.2 Constructivist Theory
Constructivist theory is based on the theoretical assumption that learning outcomes, teaching or learning activities, and assessments must be connected to one another (Vygotsky, 1978). Incorporating constructivism theory into the study allows for a deeper understanding of how teachers' interactions influence their pedagogical practices and how they support student learning.

First, teaching activities in constructivist classrooms must be designed to be interactive and collaborative among the students through questioning, explaining, and offering timely support and feedback (Olusegun, 2015). Teachers must consider their students' prior knowledge and interests when designing teaching activities. Teachers' classroom activities in teaching practice comprise teachers' organizational procedures, time management, and formulation of behavior management plans. Practical classroom activities enable students to participate in positive classroom environments to achieve expectations and learning outcomes.

Second, in constructivist classrooms, teachers must often provide diverse activities as testing methods to match students' learning outcomes, such as students' work or points of view (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Third, learning tools and

materials are the various supportive tools and resources teachers provide to students to help them achieve their learning goals. Guided learning materials based on real contexts have been identified as an effective way to improve student learning outcomes.

3. Literature Review
3.1 Integration Ways
Language skills are classified into two types of integration: semi-integrated and fully integrated (Hirvela, 2013; Myskow et al., 2019). Semi-integrated features restricted combinations of skills, usually between reading and writing or listening and speaking, in which listening serves as input to produce speaking, which is the output of the lesson (Al-Dosari, 2016; Alhujaylan, 2020; Cho & Brutt-Griffler, 2015; Deane & Philippakos, 2024; Gutierrez de Blume et al., 2021; Kim & Zagata, 2024; Mart, 2020; Nguyen, 2022; Park, 2016; Tatsanajamsuk, 2024; Wang et al., 2021; Yerukneh et al., 2023; Zhang & Li, 2023). The presentation sequence of skills must align with the theory of second language acquisition (Krashen, 1982). The second way to integrate skills is the fully integrated skills approach, in which educators aim to have students employ more than two skills when producing discourse (Bresnihan & MacAuley, 2014; Yang & Plakans, 2012). Hajar (2022) suggested that the teacher could use two, three, or four skills during a class period. Notably, Onoda (2013) applied the four strands of language teaching to language learning and compared a three-linked-skills teaching and four-skills integrated teaching approach. This study indicated that teaching with an integrated approach involving four skills is more effective than teaching three related skills.

3.2 Thematic Instruction
Anderson (2019) recommended designing a lesson in a teaching sequence around a theme to reuse language as the students practice the four skills, all related to, or centered around, the same theme. This effort aimed to maximize opportunities for reinforcement, offer repeated exposure to the input, and raise awareness of how language is used in communication (Hinkel, 2010). MacDonald et al. (2011) emphasized that choosing a suitable theme is especially important. Students should be motivated to learn how to interact with the information in English by finding it relevant to them. However, MacDonald et al. (2011) emphasized that although the EFL textbooks are thematic in content, teachers rarely link skills in the textbooks to apply to their lessons. Bresnihan and MacAuley's (2014) study revealed that students appreciated input, output, and interaction because they contribute to improved performance and language skill development.

3.3 Pedagogical Teaching Cycle
According to Celik and Yavuz (2015), successful language acquisition means that "language skills –listening, speaking, reading and writing – are taught in the correct order and are integrated into the learning process in a way that each natures one another" (p. 2137). Burgess (1994) proposed an integrated cycle of skills practice, including four stages: (1) warming up, (2) visual illustrations, (3) speaking skills, and (4) writing skills. Su (2007) later designed an integrated

teaching cycle with four steps: (1) warm-up, (2) follow-up activities, (3) extension activities, and (4) homework. This design did not indicate the three components of input provided by teachers, the interaction and output, which leads to learners' difficulty getting efficient input and ideas to present their product.

Goh and Burns (2012) defined the speaking teaching cycle with seven stages, including (1) speaking skills, (2) providing input, (3) speaking exercises, 4) language practice, (5) repeating speaking exercises, (6) learners' reflection on learning, and (7) feedback. These cycles should be coherently sequenced in the classroom. Similarly, Weber-Fève (2009) stated that teachers should notice how input-to-output can be combined in a lesson, building a continuum from input, interaction, and output so that students can effectively explore the coherent and connected content they are learning. Parrish (2019) suggested that integrated skills classes should use picture stories, mingling activities, group discussion, jigsaw reading, paired reading, role-play, interviews, presentations, and information-gap activities. Parrish added follow-up activities, which provide a good opportunity for teachers to consolidate and expand lessons.

3.4 Teaching Activities
Sevy-Biloon's (2018) study concluded that providing various activities could help students increase their knowledge and improve their listening, reading, writing, speaking, and content skills. Role-play activities could help students act out real-life conversations and situations in the second language classroom (Sevy-Biloon, 2018). Su (2007) indicated that classroom reading and listening activities may dominate. The key to practical lessons is including various practice activities through which students can use language for real-life, meaningful purposes (Parrish, 2019). Parrish (2019) suggested that integrated skills classes should use picture stories, mingling activities, group discussion, jigsaw reading, paired reading, role-play, interviews, presentations, and information-gap activities. Scrivener (2012) claimed that these activities could exist in a lesson but they do not need to happen in a particular order. Bentahar and Cranker (2021) encouraged teachers to let students watch a video clip, design a reading text for students to complete while watching, or allow students to listen to a lecture and take notes.

3.5 Language Testing
Powers (2010) argued that multiple formats and methods should be employed when testing important knowledge, skills, and abilities. For the listening and reading test, teachers may employ multiple-choice questions that require students to select answers from a set of choices. For the speaking and writing test, it is recommended that teachers design a test that helps students produce answers in response to various question items. Idaryani (2013) argued that tests should include various question types, such as multiple-choice and fill-in-the-gap questions. Additionally, students may write about their future expectations after graduating from their studies in one paragraph or they can perform a role play. Testing must reflect students' learning processes, including presentations, role plays, or discussions. Hinkel (2010) suggested dictation tests that integrate listening and writing abilities or cloze tests that integrate vocabulary, grammar, and discourse skills.

3.6 Influencing Factors

There are four factors that influence teachers' pedagogical effectiveness. First, equipment plays a critical role in teaching integrated skills. Pardede (2019) said schools should ensure sufficient resources such as computers, internet connection, and photocopy machines.

Second, having an ideal textbook aligned with instructional goals is important for teaching and contributes significantly to students' communication (Usman & Anwar, 2021). Pardede (2019) recommended that a unit starts with an overview of essential vocabulary, then moves on to a lesson on grammar, a listening passage with comprehension questions, a reading passage with comprehension questions, and a writing assignment.

Third, English teachers may lack the pedagogical understanding and expertise to teach language skills in integrated contexts (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Teachers need to be open to working closely with one another. Fourth, students' motivation and proficiency levels are also significant factors that affect teaching and learning. Gan and Lee (2016) stated that students had low motivation for integrated task participation and low retention of language knowledge due to the inability to complete new communicative tasks and reluctance to participate in communicative-oriented tasks due to limited language proficiency.

Although the literature shows extensive research into the integrated skills approach, studies about how teachers apply the five domains (integrated ways, thematic instruction, pedagogical teaching cycle, testing activities, and testing) remain few. Little attention has been paid to how teachers practice their teaching in the settings of General English classrooms in Vietnam. Therefore, this study reported on teachers' current integrated teaching practices in General English classrooms regarding the five domains of the integrated skills approach. Consequently, the study addressed the central research question: To what degree do EFL lecturers practice integrated skills to make decisions about their teaching process?

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The study followed a mixed-method approach, which involved gathering and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data. A mixed-methods design helps authors collect better data in terms of quality and scope (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The explanatory sequential design allows the author to use quantitative participant characteristics to guide purposive sampling for the qualitative phase (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

4.2 Participants

The study involved 102 full-time and part-time teachers from three public universities (assigned pseudonyms UHVK01, UHTC02, and UHTG03) in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, each representing a distinct academic field, namely social sciences, technology, and transport. The participants were instructors from the

General English program, with ages ranging from 30 to 55 years, and including both male and female educators. Convenience sampling was used to collect quantitative data based on willingness and availability. The teachers had between 5 and 30 years of experience teaching listening, speaking, reading, and writing at universities. In the qualitative phase of the study, 102 teachers who completed the questionnaire were purposefully selected for in-depth interviews. The researchers chose two teachers from each university based on their responses, which were chosen at the lowest and highest scale, so twelve teachers were invited to participate in the interview session.

4.3 Instruments

4.3.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed based on the synthesis of the literature about teachers' integrated skills practice (Celik & Yavuz, 2015; Idaryani, 2013; MacDonald et al., 2011; Onoda, 2013; Pardede, 2019; Parrish, 2019; Powers, 2010). All the items were original. The questionnaire included 36 items. All items were gauged through a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never; Not at all influential) to 5 (Always; Extremely influential). The content of the questionnaire included two parts: personal information and two branches of questions, which are (1) current implementation of teaching integrated skills and (2) other factors influencing teaching integrated skills (Appendix 1). The questionnaire simplified data gathering from the participants to eliminate bias. The order of questions was arranged to rate continuously from 5-4-3-2-1 and to calculate the average. The maximum average was 5.00, and the minimum average was 1.00. Therefore, the fluctuation of the average was 0.8 (Table 1).

Table 1: Distribution of scores for item judgment

	Judgment				
Range	1.00-1.80	1.81-2.60	2.61-3.40	3.41-4.20	4.21-5.00
Corresponding level	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
	Not at all influential	Slightly influential	Somewhat influential	Very influential	Extremely influential

4.3.2 Interview

The semi-interview questions were designed based on the synthesis of integrated skills literature (Goh & Burns, 2012; Hinkel, 2010; Parrish, 2019; Sevy-Biloon, 2018) and the preliminary analysis of the teachers' completed questionnaire. The purpose of the interviews was to elaborate on the quantitative findings. The semi-interview consisted of six questions and included two parts, including a personal introduction and the teachers' previous implementation of teaching integrated skills for non-English major students (Appendix 2).

4.4 Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire was thoroughly evaluated by three EFL teachers to guarantee language accuracy and content validity. Their comments and perspectives were important in improving the survey instrument, increasing its credibility and efficiency in obtaining valuable answers. The reliability of the questionnaire is shown in a pilot test. A total of 20 teachers, who were not the participants in the main study but were comparable in terms of teaching experiences and teaching

contexts, took the pilot questionnaire. The purpose was to ascertain if they understood the survey items appropriately. No concerning comments were raised.

The results from the reliability of Cronbach's Alpha were high (all over 0.8), which illustrates the internal consistency (Table 2). Therefore, the questionnaire data could be officially used for the study.

Table 2: Reliability coefficients for the scale dimensions and the scale as a whole

Dimensions	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Integration Forms	6	0.801
Thematic Instruction	2	0.805
Teaching Cycle	5	0.831
Teaching Activities	12	0.910
Testing	7	0.848
Influencing Factors	4	0.806

The interview guide was validated by colleagues who assessed each question's clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness. Feedback was provided for revision and refinement of the questions. The reliability of the interviews was carried out using member checking, in which the participants were asked to verify the information in the interview transcripts and get their agreement on the accuracy of what was in the transcript.

4.5 Data Collection
The researcher distributed a paper-based questionnaire because this gave the researcher the opportunity to clarify the objectives of the research, explain the instruction, and receive a high response rate. The time for filling in the questions lasted 30 minutes. A total of 102 teachers completed and submitted the questionnaire.

The interview was conducted with 12 teachers from three universities individually and in person, lasting about 30 minutes. The participants gave permission for the interviews to be recorded. The interviewer and interview participants made appointments at a convenient place for them. The interviews followed these steps: (1) self-introducing, (2) focusing on six interview questions and (3) ending the interview. The interviewer used some prompt questions to elicit answers from the participants. The interview participants' names were coded to guarantee confidentiality (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019).

4.6 Data Analysis
Data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data, including frequencies (Freq), percentages (%), mean (M), and standard deviation (SD). The data were presented in tables and grouped in themes.

Data collected from the interviews were collected using Nvivo software. Thematic analysis was used. Audio recordings of the interviews were analyzed

following the grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2014), which involves interconnected collection and analysis of data, allowing the researcher to gather and analyze data concurrently without reliance on pre-existing hypotheses. The procedures of analyzing the interview data followed six main steps: (1) becoming familiar with data; (2) creating code; (3) searching for the content or themes; (4) reviewing the prior content or themes; (5) determining the names of the content or themes; and (6) making a report. Quotations from the participants' responses were selectively extracted for inclusion in the results section to illustrate the themes.

4.7 Ethical Considerations
Information about the research was provided to the participants. Assurances of confidentiality were given, together with information that participation was voluntary and that withdrawal was possible at any time. Written consent was obtained from the teacher participants.

5. Findings
The study addressed the central research question: To what degree do EFL lecturers practice integrated skills to make decisions about their teaching process?

5.1 Quantitative Findings
Domain 1: Integrated Ways
Regarding the first domain of the study, the descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, for each item are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Teachers' responses to integrated ways (N=102)

Items	Valid						M	SD
		1*	2*	3*	4*	5*		
Teaching the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in one lesson for each meeting	Freq	6	91	5	0	0	1.99	0.32
	%	5.9	89.2	4.9	0.0	0.0		
Teaching the three skills of listening, speaking, and writing in one lesson for each meeting	Freq	7	83	12	0	0	2.04	0.43
	%	6.9	81.4	11.8	0.0	0.0		
Teaching the three skills of listening, reading, and writing in one lesson for each meeting	Freq	3	12	68	19	0	3.00	0.65
	%	2.9	11.8	66.7	18.6	0.0		
Teaching the two skills of reading and listening in one lesson for each meeting	Freq	2	4	36	47	13	3.63	0.83
	%	2.0	3.9	35.3	46.1	12.7		
Teaching the two skills of speaking and writing in one lesson for each meeting	Freq	0	6	36	47	13	3.65	0.77
	%	0.0	5.9	35.3	46.1	12.7		
Teaching one skill, including, listening, speaking, reading, or writing in one lesson for each meeting	Freq	0	3	24	69	6	3.76	0.59
	%	0.0	2.9	23.5	67.6	5.9		

(*) Level: 5= Very often; 4= Often; 3= Usually; 2= Rarely; 1= Never

Table 3 summarizes teachers' responses to the frequency of integrating multiple skills in their lessons. The findings indicate that teachers typically integrated two skills during lessons, while making use of three or more skills in one session was rare. Specifically, 89.2% and 81.4% of participants reported "rarely" teaching all four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) or three skills (listening, speaking, and writing) in a single lesson. These practices received average scores of 1.99 and 2.04, respectively, with no responses for "often" or "very often." Conversely, integrating two skills—such as listening and reading (46.1%) or speaking and writing (46.1%)—was more common, with average scores of 3.63 and 3.65, respectively. Similarly, 67.6% of participants indicated they "often" focused on a single skill, such as listening, speaking, reading, or writing, in one session, yielding an average score of 3.76. Nearly half of the teachers (46.1%) reported consistently teaching two skills per session, reflecting a preference for limited integration over fully integrated approaches.

Domain 2: Thematic Instruction
Table 4 presents teachers' responses to thematic instruction in integrating skills.

Table 4: Teachers' responses to thematic instruction (N = 102)

Items		Valid					M	SD
		1*	2*	3*	4*	5*		
In relation to students' daily routines or their future work based on different and various activities within one topic with four skills	Freq	0	0	67	31	4	3.38	0.56
	%	0.0	0.0	65.7	30.4	3.9		
In relation to students' daily routines or their future work based on four different topics with four different skills	Freq	0	0	0	59	43	4.42	0.49
	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	57.8	42.2		

(*) Level: 5= Very often; 4= Often; 3= Usually; 2= Rarely; 1= Never

The results indicate a strong preference for instruction related to students' daily routines and future work. Specifically, 57.8% of teachers reported "often" using thematic instruction involving four different topics and four skills, while 42.2% reported "very often" using this approach, resulting in a high mean score of 4.42. Instruction focused on various activities within a single topic was "usually" applied, with 65.7% of teachers selecting this option, yielding a mean score of 3.38.

Domain 3: Pedagogical Teaching Cycle

Table 5 summarizes teachers' responses regarding their use of pedagogical teaching cycles.

Table 5: Teachers' responses to pedagogical teaching cycle (N = 102)

Items	Valid						M	SD
		1*	2*	3*	4*	5*		
Teaching goes through some procedures: lead-in; teaching listening and reading; grammatical, vocabulary, and pronunciation practice; teaching speaking and writing; feedback and assessment; and follow-up activities.	Freq	4	45	47	6	0	2.53	0.67
	%	3.9	44.1	46.1	5.9	0.0		
Teaching goes through some procedures: teaching reading; teaching speaking; teaching listening; teaching writing.	Freq	0	13	69	18	2	3.08	0.61
	%	0.0	12.7	67.6	17.6	2.0		
Teaching goes through some procedures: warming up with listening or reading skills; visual illustration; teaching speaking; and teaching writing.	Freq	0	0	66	34	2	3.37	0.52
	%	0.0	0.0	64.7	33.3	2.0		
Teaching goes through some procedures: presenting the content of the lesson; completing the task in the textbook; and ending the lesson with comments and assessment.	Freq	1	7	26	57	11	3.68	0.79
	%	1.0	6.9	25.5	55.9	10.8		
Teaching goes through some procedures: leading in; doing and checking assignments; and ending the lesson by giving a summary of the lesson.	Freq	0	6	32	54	10	3.66	0.73
	%	0.0	5.9	31.4	52.9	9.8		

(*) Level: 5= Very often; 4= Often; 3= Usually; 2= Rarely; 1= Never

The results highlight that structured, textbook-based procedures dominate classroom practices. For instance, procedures such as presenting lesson content, completing textbook tasks, and concluding with comments and assessments (Statement 4) were rated "often" by 55.9% of teachers, yielding a high mean score of 3.68. Similarly, leading in, checking assignments, and summarizing lessons (Statement 5) were also rated "often" by 52.9% of participants. More dynamic approaches, such as warming up with listening or reading skills followed by visual aids, speaking, and writing (Statement 3), were "usually" implemented by 64.7% of teachers, with a mean score of 3.37. In contrast, more traditional and rigid cycles, such as lead-in activities followed by specific skill practice (Statement 1), were rated "rarely" or "usually" by the majority, indicating limited use.

Domain 4: Teaching Activities

An overview of the teaching activities used in General English classrooms is shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Teachers' responses to teaching activities (N = 102)

Items		Valid					M	SD
		1*	2*	3*	4*	5*		
Picture stories	Freq	0	92	7	3	0	2.12	0.41
	%	0.0	90.2	6.9	2.9	0.0		
Mingle activities	Freq	0	72	21	5	4	2.42	0.76
	%	0.0	70.6	20.6	4.9	3.9		
Collaborative writing activities	Freq	7	70	23	2	0	2.19	0.58
	%	6.9	68.6	22.5	2.0	0.0		
Group discussion	Freq	0	9	62	24	7	3.28	0.72
	%	0.0	8.8	60.8	23.5	6.9		
Jigsaw reading	Freq	0	65	34	3	0	2.39	0.54
	%	0.0	63.7	33.3	2.9	0.0		
Paired reading	Freq	3	54	34	9	2	2.53	0.77
	%	2.9	52.9	33.3	8.8	2.0		
Interview	Freq	0	23	51	23	5	3.09	0.80
	%	0.0	22.5	50.0	22.5	4.9		
Role play	Freq	0	19	47	28	8	3.24	0.84
	%	0.0	18.6	46.1	27.5	7.8		
Video and reading text	Freq	4	61	32	4	1	2.38	0.67
	%	3.9	59.8	31.4	3.9	1.0		
Information-gap activities	Freq	0	4	24	62	12	3.80	0.68
	%	0.0	3.9	23.5	60.8	11.8		
Presentation	Freq	0	6	21	58	17	3.84	0.76
	%	0.0	5.9	20.6	56.9	16.7		
Lecture	Freq	3	19	57	21	2	3.00	0.77
	%	2.9	18.6	55.9	20.6	2.0		

(*) Level: 5= Very often; 4= Often; 3= Usually; 2= Rarely; 1= Never

Table 6 provides an overview of the teaching activities used in General English classrooms, highlighting varying levels of implementation. The two activities of information-gap tasks (M = 3.80) and presentations (M = 3.84) were rated as "often" used, reflecting their alignment with interactive and communicative teaching approaches. Additionally, group discussions (M = 3.28), role-play (M = 3.24), interviews (M = 3.09), and lectures (M = 3.00) were "usually" implemented, suggesting their versatility and effectiveness in reinforcing language skills across diverse contexts. Conversely, activities such as picture stories (M = 2.12), collaborative writing (M = 2.19), video and reading text (M = 2.38), and jigsaw reading (M = 2.39) were "rarely" employed, potentially due to time constraints or challenges in integrating them into existing curricula.

Domain 5: Testing

The teachers' responses to various testing methods in General English classrooms are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Teachers' responses to testing (N = 102)

Items		Valid					M	SD
		1*	2*	3*	4*	5*		
Listening and note-taking	Freq	0	39	54	9	0	2.70	7.62
	%	0.0	38.2	52.9	8.8	0.0		
Individual presentation	Freq	5	17	45	29	6	3.13	0.93
	%	4.9	16.7	44.1	28.4	5.9		
Role-playing	Freq	12	63	21	6	0	2.20	0.72
	%	11.8	61.8	20.6	5.9	0.0		
Multiple choices	Freq	0	2	10	44	46	4.31	0.73
	%	0.0	2.0	9.8	43.1	45.1		
Answering questions with reading passage	Freq	0	3	46	39	14	3.62	0.75
	%	0.0	2.9	45.1	38.2	13.7		
Sentence-building	Freq	0	1	18	58	25	4.04	0.68
	%	0.0	1.0	17.6	56.9	24.5		
Replying to emails with reading passage	Freq	0	8	43	37	14	3.55	0.82
	%	0.0	7.8	42.2	36.3	13.7		

(*) Level: 5= Very often; 4= Often; 3= Usually; 2= Rarely; 1= Never

Table 7 summarizes teachers' responses to various testing methods in General English classrooms. The findings indicate that four testing types—multiple-choice (M = 4.31), answering questions with a reading passage (M = 3.62), sentence-building (M = 4.04), and replying to emails with a reading passage (M = 3.55)—are "often" or "very often" utilized, reflecting their suitability for assessing students' comprehension and written skills. Role-playing (M = 2.20) was "rarely" selected, suggesting limited adoption due to possible logistical or practicality concerns. Additionally, listening and note-taking (M = 2.70) and individual presentations (M = 3.13) were "usually" incorporated into assessments, highlighting their role in evaluating speaking and listening skills.

Domain 6: Influencing factors

Table 8 summarizes teachers' responses regarding factors influencing the quality of English teaching in General English classrooms.

Table 8: Teachers' responses to influencing factors (N = 102)

Items		Valid					M	SD
		1*	2*	3*	4*	5*		
School facilities	Freq	0	8	64	30	0	3.21	0.57
	%	0.0	7.8	62.7	29.4	0.0		
Textbooks	Freq	0	0	46	43	13	3.67	0.69
	%	0.0	0.0	45.1	42.2	12.7		
Teacher's pedagogy	Freq	0	0	0	27	75	4.73	0.44
	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	26.5	73.5		
Students' awareness and language competence	Freq	0	0	0	0	102	5.00	0.00
	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0		

(*) Level: 5= Extremely influential; 4= Very influential; 3= Somewhat influential; 2= Slightly influential; 1= Not at all influential

The findings highlight that various external and internal factors significantly impact teaching effectiveness; their impact is moderate while they play a role. School facilities (M = 3.21) were rated as "somewhat influential," indicating that while they play a role, their impact is moderate. Textbooks (M = 3.67) were deemed "very influential," reflecting their importance in lesson planning and instructional delivery. Teacher pedagogy (M = 4.73) emerged as a critical factor, with 73.5% of participants identifying it as "extremely influential." Notably, all 102 teachers unanimously agreed that students' awareness and language competence (M = 5.00) are the most significant determinants of teaching success, emphasizing the crucial role of learner motivation and ability in achieving educational outcomes.

5.2 Qualitative Findings

The study identified six key themes that prevented teachers from implementing integrated skills education, including (1) skills integration, (2) skills sequence, (3) integrated cycle, (4) teaching activities, (5) teaching allocation, and (6) teaching follow-up activities.

Skills integration

Among the 12 teachers in this study, almost all teachers (10/12) often used only two skills in their teaching lesson in one meeting. For example, Teacher 4 at University UHVK01 and Teacher 5 at University UHTC02 stated:

> *I cannot use four skills in one lesson because I think it is challenging for me to conduct and may be heavy for students to absorb the knowledge and practice skills. For one lesson in 5 periods, I focus on two skills only* (Teacher 4).

> *Almost all tasks or activities in the textbook combine two skills: Listening and Speaking, Reading and Speaking, and Listening and Writing … Therefore, I definitely use two skills in one lesson hour to conduct the activities in my classroom. I always follow the activities designed in the textbook (Headway level pre-intermediate) with each skill. Besides, I added some activities or assignments in the textbook to help students develop their better skills* (Teacher 5).

The quotes show that teachers are not always skillful in managing time and skills in a lesson. This is because organizing various activities in a single lesson is not easy; it takes time to consider and plan the tasks or activities and get students involved. Therefore, teachers could let students construct knowledge and learn simultaneously as the constructivist theory advocates.

Skills sequence

Most teachers (11/12) showed an opposite answer from the theory of second language acquisition. They had a leading-in or warm-up session with speaking skills and an ending part with reading or listening. This stems from their previous habits; it is also because speaking is an interactive skill that could get students active and involved in the lesson in comparison with the other skills. For instance, Teachers 1 and Teacher 4 from University UHVK01 said:

Every meeting is not similar, but I often begin the lesson with speaking skills and end the lesson with reading or writing skills (Teacher 1).
I usually begin a lesson with speaking or writing skills and end the lesson with listening or reading skills. (Teacher 4).

However, only one teacher from University UHVK01

"begins a lesson with listening or reading skill and ends the lesson with speaking or writing skill" (Teacher 2).

It is evident that Vietnamese teachers' teaching practice is not consistent with the theory of second language acquisition. Their practice is said to allow spaces for improvement in the future. Therefore, the training section of English language teaching has the potential to provide teachers with an understanding of language teaching practice and learners' second language acquisition.

Teaching cycle

All 12 interviewees (12/12) revealed conflicting practices in the teaching cycle. The teachers provided the teaching procedures differently and in general steps without indicating the specific and precise procedures teachers should follow. For example, Teacher 3 at University UHVK01 explained their process of conducting integrated lessons in detail:

I usually use the following teaching procedure or cycle for teaching General English. Stage 1: Introduction. I use many different techniques to attract students' attention, such as giving examples from life or historical events, providing some real-life situations, and raising questions to lead students to the topic of a lesson. Stage 2: The content of the lesson. I teach listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Teacher 3).

Compared to Teacher 3, who conducted integrated skills classes with two stages, Teacher 5 from University UHTC02 reported conflicting practices as follows:

Procedures for each meeting depend on what primary skill I want to focus on. For example, for listening skills, I introduce the task for the topic. I had a warm-up session by giving examples to help students, then listening to the task and letting students work in pairs or groups to listen again to the script. Next, each group noted the tips or techniques for choosing a correct option and noted new words and structures in the listening task (Teacher 5).

The assertion is evidence of teachers' lack of knowledge and practice. Teachers indicated unclear procedures which often means their current teaching is ineffective. The contradiction related to the teaching cycle implies that they need more teaching observation from their colleagues and should attend more classroom practice in the future.

Teaching activity

Almost all the teachers (9/12) reported "games related to a lesson," "questions and answers," and "presentation" were favored in their lesson. The majority of the participants thought that these activities are easy to implement in the

classroom. For example, Teacher 1 at University UHVK01 and Teacher 8 at University UHTG03 presented that:

> *The English language classroom activity I often use is a game because it could help students stimulate their mood in learning. The most crucial factor is choosing the games that are relevant to the lesson and easy to conduct* (Teacher 1).

> *I use the different activities that are easily inserted into many parts of a lesson, such as games, questions and answers, presentations, or practicing conversations based on textbook situations. I usually let students listen individually, finish tasks, and then discuss the topic in pairs* (Teacher 8).

It is evident from the statements that teachers still utilize traditional activities such as games, questions and answers, and presentations, based on their habits and convenience. Teachers struggle to design various activities to conduct in integrated skills classrooms. This also implies that teachers are not ready to adapt to a new environment with students with many different learning styles because it is challenging to handle students' problems in many activities so they keep teaching activities outdated.

Time allocation
All the teachers (12/12) devoted much time to language practice within one lesson or meeting. Some typical examples from University UHVK01 and UHTC02 were:

> *"I use 90 minutes for students to practice vocabulary and grammar for one meeting with 5 periods"* (Teacher 1)

> *"If the time allowance is within 150 minutes, which is equivalent to 3 periods, I usually use 45 minutes to let students practice vocabulary and grammar."* (Teacher 5)

These statements imply that the time allotment for lessons is mostly focused on language. The teachers must ensure all the integrated skills approach procedures and balance time for each stage appropriately. It is suggested that time distribution for other activities should be considered to improve teaching quality.

Follow-up activity
All the teachers (12/12) agreed that this kind of activity plays a vital role in their lesson because it is a way to help them give students opportunities to make a summary of a lesson or assign them more complementary tasks to develop students' competence. Some examples of representative responses from University UHVK01 and UHTG03 are as follows:

> *I use 90 minutes for students to practice vocabulary and grammar for one meeting with 5 periods.* (Teacher 1)

> *If the time allowance is within 150 minutes, which is equivalent to 3 periods, I usually use 45 minutes to let students practice vocabulary and grammar.* (Teacher 10)

The responses clearly indicate that teachers effectively conduct follow-up activities, which contribute to efficient teaching. In line with second language acquisition, which places an emphasis on consolidation, the teachers demonstrated a profound understanding of follow-up activities in teaching language.

6. Discussion

This study explored teachers' pedagogical practices in integrating skills in General English classrooms. The study results reveal that teachers exhibited weak application of skill integration in their classrooms, which was analyzed in the context of two key theoretical frameworks, second language acquisition theory and constructivist theory, and how they align with existing literature. Concerning thematic instruction, the results reveal that teachers emphasized the importance of maintaining a unified topic for the four language skills in a lesson, ranging from themes related to students' daily lives to those preparing them for their future careers.

The results illustrated in Table 4 demonstrate the positive aspects of choosing appropriate thematic instruction related to students' daily lives for teaching integrated skills, consistent with the body of literature (Anderson, 2019). This approach caters to students' interests and needs, enhancing their learning engagement. These findings align with previous research (MacDonald et al., 2011), which advocates designing lessons around a theme or topic to allow students to effectively use the four language skills.

With integrated ways, the results show that teachers usually use two skills to implement during a class session. These results resonated with previous studies (Al-Dosari, 2016; Alhujaylan, 2020; Cho & Brutt-Griffler, 2015; Deane & Philippakos, 2024; Gutierrez de Blume et al., 2021; Kim & Zagata, 2024; Mart, 2020; Nguyen, 2022; Park, 2016; Tatsanajamsuk, 2024; Wang et al., 2021; Yerukneh et al., 2023; Zhang & Li, 2023). The results shown in Table 3 and the interview results about integrated ways, demonstrate the rare application of integrating four skills in a lesson, which is aligned with Onoda's (2013) study about the number of skills that should be used in an integrated skills class. An explanation for this finding is that teachers struggle to manage time and organize logical activities because it requires teachers to plan the lesson and distribute time appropriately.

In terms of the pedagogical teaching cycle, the results indicate that lesson plans, including three different stages, namely introduction, activities implementation based on textbook tasks, and comments and assessments, are still frequently conducted in the classroom. This is significant, as previous studies have pointed out, because teachers still apply traditional instruction in their classrooms. The sequence appeared to be opposed to Celik and Yavuz (2015). It was likely that teachers' sequencing of activities or tasks followed their previous conduct. In addition, teaching goes through procedures, such as lead-in, teaching listening and reading, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation practice; teaching speaking and writing; feedback and assessment; and follow-up activities, which

emphasize the four strands of meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused learning and fluency development (Nation, 2007).

The teachers' practices of sequencing activities in their classroom seemed similar to Weber-Fève's (2009) findings that teachers should notice how input-to-output can be combined in a lesson, building a continuum from input, interaction, and output so that students could effectively explore the coherent and connected content they are learning. This is also supported by the results presented in Table 5 and the interview results with Teacher 3 and Teacher 5. Considering Nation's (2007) notion of pedagogical practices, the findings from this study demonstrate that many English language teachers do not provide clear procedures for conducting integrated skills in their classrooms. This suggests a reinforcing cycle within the non-English major's classroom context.

Regarding teaching activities, the results report that the participants often organize students with gap-filling and presentation activities when they teach language skills in integration. This finding is partially supported by Wu and Alrabah (2014). This could be because teachers' habits of conducting simple and traditional activities are instilled, and teachers are afraid of devoting their time to upgrading more activities to perform in the classroom. In addition, the results from Table 6 and the interviews indicate that the teachers "rarely" used the five activities, such as picture stories, mingle activities, collaborative writing, video and reading text, and jigsaw reading. This finding differs from Parrish (2019), who emphasized that teachers should design various activities so students can use them for meaningful communication. If the teachers fail to get students involved in multiple and realistic contexts, students will lose their confidence because they do not see a direct connection between what they are learning and how they could apply it in their lives. Increased motivation is associated with enhanced learning outcomes and a more positive learning experience, which are highly desirable in EFL education.

Regarding testing, the results presented in Table 7 reveal that most of the teachers in this study often used multiple choices, answering questions with reading passages, sentence-building, replying to emails with reading passages, and usually used listening and note-taking and individual presentations. In contrast, they rarely used role-playing in the classroom. These practices align with Powers (2010) and Idaryani (2013). One plausible explanation for this challenge is that teachers lack time and skills to organize pair work in the testing system. An inadequate variety of testing formats can act as a barrier to measuring effective integrated skills instruction. This article argues for the necessity of designing more pair work skills in the testing.

Relating to influencing factors, the results illustrated in Table 8 indicate that the factors of school facilities and textbooks could not be avoided. Still, teachers' pedagogy and students' attitudes and competence significantly contribute to teaching success. This finding is in line with some previous studies (Gan & Lee, 2016; Pardede, 2019) that, despite many devoted efforts to teaching, teachers could avoid these problems.

Consistent with Krashen's (1982) theory of second language acquisition, this study underscores the importance of sequencing skills in the teaching lesson. Krashen and Terrell (1983) stated that if learners are taught listening and reading skills through specific practice, they are sure to develop the confidence to write or speak in any context. The literature further supports these findings, as studies have shown that the best teaching provides comprehensible input in situations that contain messages that learners want to hear, reinforcing the need for teachers to let students be involved in as many listening and reading activities as possible (Krashen, 1982). Another issue consistent with the constructivist theory relates to constructivist classrooms (Vygotsky, 1978). The teachers' use of the constructivist theory in classroom practice in this study remains unclear and traditional. It requires teachers to consider how students are engaged and whether the learning outcomes are being achieved as student-centered learning (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Olusegun, 2015).

The unique contribution of this study is adding empirical evidence to the practical application of integrating skills. This study reports on an underexplored context, Vietnamese universities. This study contributes to the understanding of effectively integrated instruction for developing the skills of university students. This research addresses the specific challenges teachers face when adopting an integrated skills approach, such as integrated teaching cycles, activities and testing, which have not been explored in depth in the existing literature.

7. Conclusion
This study investigated teachers' current integrated teaching practices in General English classrooms. The teachers' responses revealed that university teachers' competence to customize themes or topics for lessons and follow-up activities indicates their strong understanding and adaptability, which are vital for fostering students' learning outcomes. However, there were several negative findings. First, teachers typically used only two skills during a lesson, with limited integrated skills and unclear sequence of skills. Second, teachers faced difficulties employing integrated teaching cycles, with responses from the questionnaire and interviews indicating a lack of clarity in understanding or applying a clear teaching cycle, particularly regarding the order or sequence of skills. Third, the integration of skills in lessons lacked variety in activities, as teachers relied on traditional activities that were familiar and easy to implement, such as presentations or gap-filling exercises, which did not create strong connections between input and output language. Fourth, the testing formats and items lacked flexibility and variety. Fifth, the teachers' pedagogical competence was the main factor influencing integrated skills teaching.

Vietnamese teachers in General English classes may not be fully equipped to teach integrated skills effectively, suggesting the need to enhance teachers' pedagogy, as it significantly impacts their teaching practices. In summary, the essential conclusions from this study include the importance of adjusting teaching practices regarding integrated cycles, activities, and testing. For the

advancement, it is crucial for further investigation and professional development of teachers to ensure they have the knowledge and resources to implement significant and innovative teaching approaches and methods properly. If teachers focus on these aspects, they can develop and create better student learning processes.

8. Recommendations

Several recommendations emanate from this research. First, concerned bodies, such as the school administration and agencies in the Ministry of Education, should make a concerted effort to arrange training for teachers on practical aspects of the integrated skills approach in EFL classes. This could be done by preparing regular workshops or seminars during teaching periods, allowing teachers to share experiences and receive peer support, reinforcing their professional teaching competence. Second, the university administration should provide adequate teaching aids and instructional materials for teachers to implement the integrated skills approach in EFL classes. Third, teachers overlook the role of technology in teaching integrated skills. Teachers could utilize more AI-driven resources or applications to support teaching. For example, teachers can use AI programs such as Grammarly, ProWritingAid, or TikTok to boost students' creativity and the use of language in authentic contexts and, hence, foster a dynamic learning environment.

9. Implications

The study holds several implications for education practice and research. The study provides the five teaching domains of the integrated skills approach as a framework for delivering an integrated skills class and as a checklist for teachers. Based on the questionnaire and interview results regarding its implementation, the study emphasizes the significance of adhering to the integrated skills cycle when instructing integrated skills classes. The study provides quantitative and qualitative evidence of Vietnamese teachers' current practices regarding integrated skills. Implementation in integrated ways, cycles, activities, and testing are important for teachers to improve.

These results indicate that EFL teachers must receive pedagogical training on teaching integrated skills to become more proficient educators. Educational institutions should create opportunities for teachers to transfer learning from the workshop context to their classroom contexts. Teachers should be given time in groups to discuss how each of the integrated skills practices they had experienced might fit into their lesson plans. They are encouraged to think about specifics, such as how reading texts they already taught could serve as model texts for original student writing and how they could find and use other model texts for teaching writing. This provides teachers with opportunities to reflect, learn, and practice. This way, teachers can handle their practical pedagogical challenges and learn from their colleagues.

10. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite its contributions, the study has some limitations. First, using self-reported questionnaires may introduce response bias as participants might

provide socially desirable answers rather than truthful responses. To mitigate this limitation, the anonymity of the participants was ensured. Second, for the interview data, the researcher usually serves as the data collector and data analyst, which carries the potential for researcher bias. However, this could be reduced by actively involving the research participants in reviewing and validating the findings. Third, this study investigated teachers' responses using a questionnaire and interview instrument. More studies using classroom observations or teaching diaries are suggested to understand the participants' experiences better.

11. Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1

Dear Teachers,

Thank you for agreeing to fill out this questionnaire. I am Nguyen Tan Loi, a graduate student, studying Educational Science major at Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education. The following questions are used to collect data about teachers' implementation of teaching integrated skills. Your answers will greatly assist me in my research journey. Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions. All information collected will be confidential and only used for research purposes. If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at loint.ncs@hcmute.edu.vn.

PART 1. PERSONAL INFORMATION
1. Your university
2. Your years of teaching experience
3. Your highest qualification

PART 2. MAIN CONTENT ABOUT TEACHING INTEGRATED SKILLS
Please tick (✓) on your answer

Question 1. To what extent do you use integrated ways, thematic instruction, pedagogical cycles, teaching activities, and testing in your General English classroom?

	Items	Valid				
		1	2	3	4	5
Domain 1: Integrated Ways						
5= Very often; 4= Often; 3= Usually; 2= Rarely; 1= Never						
1	Teaching the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in one lesson for each meeting					
2	Teaching the three skills of listening, speaking, and writing in one lesson for each meeting					
3	Teaching the three skills of listening, reading, and writing in one lesson for each meeting					
4	Teaching the two skills of reading and listening in one lesson for each meeting					
5	Teaching the two skills of speaking and writing in one lesson for each meeting					
6	Teaching one skill, including, listening, speaking, reading, or writing in one lesson for each meeting					
Domain 2: Thematic Instruction						
5= Very often; 4= Often; 3= Usually; 2= Rarely; 1= Never						
1	In relation to students' daily routines or their future work based on different and various activities within one topic with four skills					
2	In relation to students' daily routines or their future work based on four different topics with four different skills					

Domain 3: Pedagogical Teaching Cycle						
5= Very often; 4= Often; 3= Usually; 2= Rarely; 1= Never						
1	Teaching goes through some procedures: lead-in; teaching listening and reading; grammatical, vocabulary, and pronunciation practice; teaching speaking and writing; feedback and assessment; and follow-up activities.					
2	Teaching goes through some procedures: teaching reading; teaching speaking; teaching listening; teaching writing.					
3	Teaching goes through some procedures: warming up with listening or reading skills; visual illustration; teaching speaking; and teaching writing.					
4	Teaching goes through some procedures: presenting the content of the lesson; completing the task in the textbook; and ending the lesson with comments and assessment.					
5	Teaching goes through some procedures: leading in; doing and checking assignments; and ending the lesson by giving a summary of the lesson.					
Domain 4: Teaching Activities						
5=Very often; 4= Often; 3= Usually; 2= Rarely; 1= Never						
1	Picture stories					
2	Mingle activities					
3	Collaborative writing activities					
4	Group Discussion					
5	Jigsaw reading					
6	Paired reading					
7	Interview					
8	Role play					
9	Video and reading text					
10	Information-gap activities					
11	Presentation					
12	Lecture					
Domain 5: Testing						
5= Very often; 4= Often; 3= Usually; 2= Rarely; 1= Never						
1	Listening and Note-taking					
2	Individual presentation					
3	Role-playing					
4	Multiple choices					
5	Answering questions with reading passage					
6	Sentence-building					
7	Replying to emails with reading passage					

Question 2. To what extent do you think factors can affect the effectiveness of integrated teaching in a General English classroom?

	Items	Valid				
		1	2	3	4	5
Domain 6: Influencing factors						
5= Extremely influential; 4= Very influential; 3= Somewhat influential; 2= Slightly influential; 1= Not at all influential						
1	School facilities					
2	Textbooks					
3	Teacher's pedagogy					
4	Students' awareness and language competence					

Thank you for your cooperation!

Appendix 2

PART 1. PERSONAL INFORMATION
1. Your university
2. Your years of teaching experience
3. Your highest qualification

PART 2. MAIN CONTENT ABOUT TEACHING INTEGRATED SKILLS
Q1. Do you integrate the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) simultaneously in your teaching plans?
Q2. Which skill(s) do you typically use to begin your lesson, and which do you use to conclude it?
Q3. What procedures do you implement in your classroom? Could you please describe them in detail?
Q4. What activities do you typically conduct in your classroom?
Q5. In a typical teaching session, how much time do you allocate for students to practice language skills, such as vocabulary, grammar, or pronunciation?
Q6. What steps do you take during follow-up activities?

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Enhancing Vietnamese Students' English Language Proficiency and Perspectives: Implementing a Proposed Framework of Integrated Skills Approach

Nguyen Tan Loi ⓘ, Bui Van Hong ⓘ

Abstract

Background/purpose. The integrated skills approach has enhanced students' English proficiency and classroom engagement, yet challenges persist in its effective implementation. This study examines the impact of a pedagogical framework, based on six fundamental teaching stages, on students' English proficiency in General English classrooms and explores students' perspectives on participating in integrated skills lessons. Grounded in second language acquisition theory (Krashen, 1982) and the four-strand principles (Nation, 2007), the framework includes six stages: 1) lead-in, 2) meaning-focused input, 3) language-focused learning, 4) meaning-focused output, 5) feedback and assessment, and 6) follow-up activities.

Materials/methods. A quasi-experimental design was used with 90 students divided into control and experimental groups. Forty-five students in the control group participated in isolated skills classes, while forty-five students in the experimental group participated in integrated skills classes following the proposed framework. Data were collected through pre- and post-tests and interviews.

Results. Both groups showed improvement after treatment. However, students in the experimental group (integrated skills) achieved significantly higher post-test scores than those in the control group (isolated skills). Additionally, the integrated skills group demonstrated better overall proficiency and expressed more positive opinions about the lessons compared to the isolated skills group.

Conclusion. This outcome aligns with previous research, demonstrating that integrating skills significantly enhances students' overall language proficiency. However, the results in this study show a higher level of improvement compared to past findings. This highlights the importance of integrating all four skills in General English courses to further boost proficiency and student engagement.

ÜNİVERSİTEPARK®

1. Introduction

English language proficiency has grown increasingly important over the last decade, significantly contributing to effective communication, understanding, and collaboration in science, education, and business (Salomone & Salomone, 2022; Zha & Liu, 2023). Since 1995, Vietnam has focused on improving students' English proficiency for local and international cooperation (Lap et al., 2025). However, many Vietnamese university graduates struggle to use English effectively for exchanging ideas and expressing thoughts (Le, 2020). This issue is often linked to ineffective teaching methods that fail to achieve the desired outcomes. As a result, students struggle to communicate proficiently, highlighting the gap between teaching practices and learning outcomes (Nguyen et al., 2024). Therefore, innovating teaching methods is an essential responsibility of universities and teachers, contributing to improved teaching quality.

Second language literature highlights several advantages of providing students with integrated skills. The integrated skills approach improves "the framework of English instruction, teacher-student communication, and learner interest and motivation for meaningful interaction" (Shago et al., 2024, p.2). This approach benefits both teachers and students by motivating teachers to adapt teaching activities that engage students in a dynamic, natural environment. It also fosters students' ability to generate ideas and express themselves, ultimately boosting learning achievement (Darjati & Başar, 2024; Kalsum et al., 2023; Pardede, 2019). Numerous studies also found that combining listening and reading enhances reading competence, particularly for low-proficiency learners (Aka, 2024; Hui & Godfroid, 2025; Hui, 2024). Additionally, integrating all four skills can improve speaking fluency, especially in English-major classes in Japan, allowing students to perform at higher levels by promoting automatization (Onoda, 2013). Integrated reading directly impacts writing quality by positively influencing literacy development, helping students understand writing genres effectively (Al-Dosari, 2016; Alhujaylan, 2020; Deane & Philippakos, 2024; Kim et al., 2025; Tantipidok, 2025; Yerukneh et al., 2023; Zhang & Li, 2023). Integrating listening and speaking activities also helps students better comprehend messages, improving production practice (Hocaoglu & Ocak, 2024; Sadeghi & Bakhshi, 2025; Mart, 2020).

In Vietnam, the General English program has been implemented in many educational institutions for years, and it is considered compulsory in the context of globalization (Thao & Mai, 2022). General English aims to develop students' skills and ability to use English in their work. The program is designed to ensure that teaching objectives, content, and methods enable students to use English fluently for their studies and future careers. As a result, teaching General English to students is put under pressure how to enhance students' English language proficiency (Lam, 2019).

With a long history of language teaching, English teaching methods in Vietnam have been regularly innovated; however, the outcomes still show significant shortcomings. Teachers are also confronted with various methods currently in use, and there is ongoing debate about the most appropriate teaching approach. In response to these challenges, integrated skills approaches are favored by numerous educational experts and practitioners for their potential to reinforce students' language proficiency across all four skills, provide more authentic communicative experiences, and better approximate the natural way languages are learned compared to separate skills instruction (Neupane, 2024; Owusu & Maomou, 2024; Spiro, 2013). This approach integrates all four language skills - listening, reading, writing, and speaking- and language components, such as vocabulary and grammar, within a single instructional session (Kalsum et al., 2023; Owusu & Maomou, 2024).

While previous studies have been conducted investigating the impacts of implementing integrated skills approach on students' language performance, insufficient studies have been conducted to examine the extent of its impact and how the interconnection of all four skills can be equally enhanced. This study addresses this important gap by examining how much the proposed

pedagogical framework enhances students' English proficiency and exploring students' perspectives on the integrated skills class. Given the usefulness of the integrated skills approach and the lack of a pedagogical framework to facilitate its implementation, this study proposes the development of a teaching framework to improve students' English proficiency. The study will address the following two questions:

RQ1. Are there statistically significant differences in English proficiency (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) between students exposed to the proposed integrated skills framework and those taught English in a traditional classroom setting?

RQ2. What are students' perspectives on learning English through the integrated skills approach?

The significance of this study lies in its theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it is expected to enhance the understanding of language acquisition and English as a Foreign Language education by proposing a pedagogical framework for teachers to apply in their classrooms. This framework integrates all four language skills, addressing the challenges English as a Foreign Language students face in a way traditional methods have failed to achieve. The findings could have broader implications for English as a Foreign Language teaching practices. This study applies the integrated skills framework to enhance students' English proficiency and may assist teachers in Vietnam by providing an effective teaching framework to improve students' language skills.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Review of Related Studies

The integrated skills approach combines the four language skills into teaching activities to develop students' language proficiency (Aljahdali & Alshakhi, 2021; Kalsum et al., 2023). According to Herda et al. (2024), teaching integrated skills requires teachers' attempts to implement activities in a sequenced and coherent way, and they also dedicate their time to designing lessons to help students improve their language performance. The review of related studies shows that applying an integrated skills approach in the classroom fosters students' English proficiency and promotes positive perspectives compared to traditional unstructured methods.

The challenges of integration are clearly raised in language teaching. Yerukneh et al. (2023) stated that teaching one skill helps students develop proficiency in others, as skills are interconnected. For example, teaching reading skills enhances students' grammar and vocabulary, which in turn develops their speaking skills (Mart, 2012). However, Kalsum et al.'s (2023) findings revealed that teachers rarely integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in language teaching. Teachers typically integrate two or three language skills in English, except for one teacher who implemented all four skills in a lesson.

Numerous studies have examined the impact of the integrated skills approach on students' overall English competence and specific listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. For example, Ahmadnattaj and Ostovar-Namaghi (2020) conducted a meta-analysis to synthesize the effects of 22 studies on the impact of the integrated skills approach on language skills. The results showed that the integrated skills approach significantly benefits advanced learners and those at the tertiary level. In addition, Al-Busaidi (2013) analyzed how integrating reading and writing enhances the effectiveness of teaching and learning foreign languages. The study proposed and examined the effectiveness of a linear sequence of tasks, including six stages: 1) discussion and vocabulary work, 2) reading text, 3) comprehension questions, 4) a mix of activities and study tips, 5) writing assignments, and 6) writing tasks with practice on writing processes and mechanics. The findings showed that the way teachers use materials to integrate reading and writing skills was ineffective due to unclear guidelines or criteria for integration. The findings also revealed that teachers' implementation of sequenced tasks lacked interconnection. Furthermore, Park (2015) examined the extent to which

extensive reading can improve students' writing skills. Unlike Al-Busaidi's (2013) findings, this study showed that students who engaged more in listening and reading significantly improved their overall scores on the post-test. Students in the extensive reading class also outperformed those in the traditional class in content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Hadi's (2006) study also found that reading-focused activities boost students' confidence and encourage involvement in listening, speaking, and writing activities related to daily communication.

Mekheimer and Aldosari (2013) investigated the impacts of an integrated skills approach on students' language performance. The participants involved in this study included fifty-two students. Students took the pre-test before treatment and the post-test after the intervention. The findings indicated interconnecting skills helped students develop their language skills in all skills. Notably, although writing is more challenging than other language skills, students improved this skill more in the intervention group than in the control group. This result contributed to the theory of integrating skills; however, the intervention stage did not present the teaching procedure or framework for future teachers to apply in their classrooms. Onoda (2013) later examined the impacts of using integrated skills in Japanese university classrooms, which closely link skills and sequence tasks based on the exact text but use various language skills to improve English fluency. Students were guided to read a newspaper article, then watch a TV news story that covers the same theme, answer fill-in-the-blanks comprehension questions, write a summary, work on dictogloss, and discuss their reactions with partners. The participants included 86 third-year students. The treatment group was designed in an interconnected four-skills teaching format, while the control group was created in a less combined four-skills teaching instruction. The findings indicated that students demonstrated better speaking fluency performance as measured by both tests, thus supporting the integration of adaptation skills. These studies confirmed the effectiveness of integrating skills into the English language classroom.

Regarding students' perspectives, Bresnihan (2014) investigated students' perceptions of the integrated skills approach and how input, output, and interaction helped improve their performance and the development of their language skills. Sixty-six students participated in this study. The questionnaire was used to collect data. Students were first required to read the text at home or in class, write down information, opinions, and ideas related to the material they had read, and finally discuss it with a partner or in groups. The findings indicated the students recognized the importance of all three components of input, output, and interaction activities, which require using all four skills based on the same material to develop their language proficiency. Although investigating students' perceptions toward engaging in integrated skills classrooms is necessary, this study does not measure students' proficiency development.

The recent research from 2020 to 2024 also discusses this topic, reconfirming the importance of integrating skills in the classroom and calling for continuous exploration. Newton and Nation (2020) offered the sequenced skills activity of listening and reading in which students can read and listen to the text simultaneously to perform better for language focus during the activity. This stage enhanced students' listening perspectives and word segmentation skills more effectively than listening-only activities. Mart (2020) further examined the impact of emphasizing listening with top-down and bottom-up processes on developing students' oral production. The participants in this research included forty-five first-year students. Students took the test of four skills before the treatment to confirm the same proficiency and after the treatment to compare the differences in students' performance between the two groups. The findings indicate that combining listening and speaking skills significantly improves students' speech production. Exposure to language input by listening is essential for both conversation skills and language development. In the same year, Ramadhan and Hussein (2020) also evaluated the impact of integrating listening and speaking on students' speaking skills. The results indicated that this integration boosts students' speaking skills and increases their

motivation to communicate and engage in the listening and speaking classes. However, students face difficulties with self-consciousness when speaking in front of the whole class.

Miao (2021) later investigated if integrating listening and reading in dictation helps students improve listening learning results. Seventy-eight Chinese university students participated in the two groups, including the traditional and the integrated listening and reading dictation classes. Students took dictation tests and filled in open-ended questions, serving for collecting data. Students were instructed to complete dictation tasks with two requirements: integrating listening and reading and listening only. The findings showed that reading and listening dictation students demonstrated better performance regarding learning gains from hearing and that their effect was commensurate with dictation text difficulty. The findings also indicated that a dictation that integrates reading and listening skills fosters students' confidence and interest and helps them use strategies possible during listening.

In a subsequent study, Hajar (2022) explored the characteristics of integrating skills in writing class and examined the contribution of skills integration toward supporting students with writing English compositions. Twenty students participated in this study. Tests were used to gather the data. The experimental class with the connected skills sequence includes four skills integration and happened in four phases: 1) Students read and analyzed the materials and then chose one of them to discuss with their peers, 2) Students worked in groups to discuss their topic, answered questions, and wrote down the group's summary, 3) students took turn to read out their conclusion while their peers made notes, and 4) students discussed in the whole class and suggested comments and questions for their classmates. The findings found that 1) this skill integration led students to be involved in learning activities enthusiastically, 2) the skills sequence allows students to exchange ideas about writing topics, and 3) implementing this integrated skills approach positively impacts students' English written ability. The study proved that the intervention of four phases could lead to students' language proficiency. Still, the framework focused on the input stage without clearly indicating language focus practice. This hinders students from collecting grammar and vocabulary to build up for the production stage. In addition, the study examined writing only, while the other three skills were not measured. Therefore, researchers need to explore implementing an integrated skills approach to improving four language skills. Furthermore, the four phases of the treatment did not clearly state the input and output connections.

Carrying out a study in the Vietnamese context, Nguyen (2022) investigated students' perceptions of the impacts of integrating reading and writing on their writing skills. The participants included 103 students. The questionnaire and semi-structured interview were used to collect data. The results showed that students acknowledged the benefits of the reading and writing combination of writing lessons concerning content, communicative performance, language, organization, assessment, and effectiveness. Another study by Tajzad and Ostovar-Namaghi (2014) and Azis (2023) also investigated the effects of connecting skills on students' motivation and involvement. The findings showed that this pedagogical instruction promotes students' learning engagement and motivation. Especially, the study acknowledged the value of making students' learning interconnected and enjoyable. In another study, Elshahawy (2023) investigated the effectiveness of integrated listening and writing skills. The findings indicated that students had outstanding performance regarding developing their listening and writing competence. In addition, students are enthusiastic and motivated to engage in writing paragraph and essay activities.

In a similar line of inquiry, Yerukneh et al. (2023) explored how extended reading strategy training impacted students' writing performance. Sixty-one first-year students participated in the study. The study collected tests from students and then interviewed them to collect the data. The treatment was conducted in four steps, namely 1) involving students in self-study through extended reading, 2) letting students read the text extensively to brainstorm and get ideas from the texts, 3) instructing

students to relate ideas to the writing process, and 4) applying their prior ideas to use and produce language independently. The study indicated that attending extended reading strategy classes helps students enhance their writing performance and boost their motivation toward learning. The findings also showed a powerful connection between students' writing abilities and extended reading strategy training. However, the framework applied in this study may be a challenge for teachers to have time to assess students' performance and provide students with feedback. This is considered a shortcoming for the design of the classroom practice. Additionally, Zhang and Li's (2023) study indicated that collaborative reading for writing positively impacted students' learning by engaging them in developing their reading strategies and enhancing their knowledge and attention to form. However, this study did not indicate the potential in writing skills that the reading process contributes to.

Usman and Mahmud (2024) aimed to address the challenges of low speaking proficiency and motivation among forty-one second-year students by proposing and applying the integrated strategy framework. The framework involved dividing students into small groups to select topics for speaking and a practical application of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation in speaking contexts. The results demonstrated significant improvements in both speaking performance and student engagement.

In a recent study, Wu (2025) explored the main phases and sub-stages during reading-to-write time. Thirty-six Chinese students participated in interviews and reflective journals to collect the data. The results indicated three primary phases, pre-reading, reading for writing, and writing from reading, which were utilized to implement the integrated lesson. Additionally, qualitative findings revealed that a new model was established, providing attention equally to the combination of reading and writing and considering students' agency. While prior models primarily focus on the writing phase, this new model provides teachers and students with balanced weight to the reading and writing phases.

2.2. Proposed Theoretical Framework

The related studies mentioned above call for an ideal framework for teachers to confidently implement in their classroom, contributing to the most effective teaching quality. This study's proposed integrated skills framework shares similarities with Krashen (1982) and Nation (2007). Therefore, the proposed integrated skills framework is developed based on two theories: second language acquisition (Krashen, 1982) and four-strands principles (Nation, 2007). The second language acquisition theory elaborates on the learners' learning process and reminds teachers to follow the teaching framework (Krashen, 1982). The principles of the four strands of language recommend that teachers guarantee the four strands, including input, output, language practice, and fluency development (Nation, 2007). Teaching language has to follow the sequence of activities or how skills are ordered in the lesson, including teachers as organizers or task assigners and students as participants to get involved in the learning activities. English should be taught in order and integrated into a pedagogical framework. Listening serves as a basement for speaking, and reading is a good input for listening. Listening and speaking support reading and writing conversely. The selected theory provides the stages of teaching listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills as presented in the proposed integrated skills framework.

Han and Liddell (2014) indicated the interconnection between an integrated skills approach and an application of second language acquisition in the classroom. In detail, Han and Liddell (2014) emphasized that studies about second language acquisition could be used to design the model or framework for teaching effectively with many stages of learning, learning styles, and learning motivation in a relevant way. Similarly, Bresnihan (2014) also indicated the components of input and output in teaching integrated skills, which is compatible with the second language acquisition

theory's three components of input, output, and interaction. Bresnihan (2014) also mentioned the Nation's (2007) four principles of teaching foreign language, namely 1) meaning-focused input with receptive skills of listening and reading, 2) language-focused learning, 3) meaning-focused output with productive skills of speaking and writing, and 4) fluency practice to provide directions for teachers to follow the stages to conduct in teaching integrated skills lessons. Nation and Macalister (2020) claimed that applying these four principles in teaching foreign languages will support teachers in having a structured and coherent lesson with clear guidelines or a framework, and this also supports teachers in choosing the activities to conduct the lesson better.

In addition to the theory of second language acquisition and four principles of teaching foreign language, the proposed framework was also synthesized from the previous studies about the integrated skills framework (Azis, 2023; Bresnihan, 2014; Hajar, 2022; Mart, 2020; Miao, 2021; Newton & Nation, 2020; Onoda, 2013; Usman & Mahmud, 2024; Wu, 2025; Yerukneh et al., 2023) to develop the new integrated skills framework. The proposed framework integrates the four language skills-listening, speaking, reading, and writing-along with essential language components such as vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar into a cohesive learning experience. The framework covers six stages, including 1) lead-in, 2) learning with meaning-focused input, 3) language-focused learning, 4) practicing meaning-focused output, 5) feedback and assessment, and 6) follow-up activities (Figure 1). The expected outcome of this study is the development of students' English language proficiency.
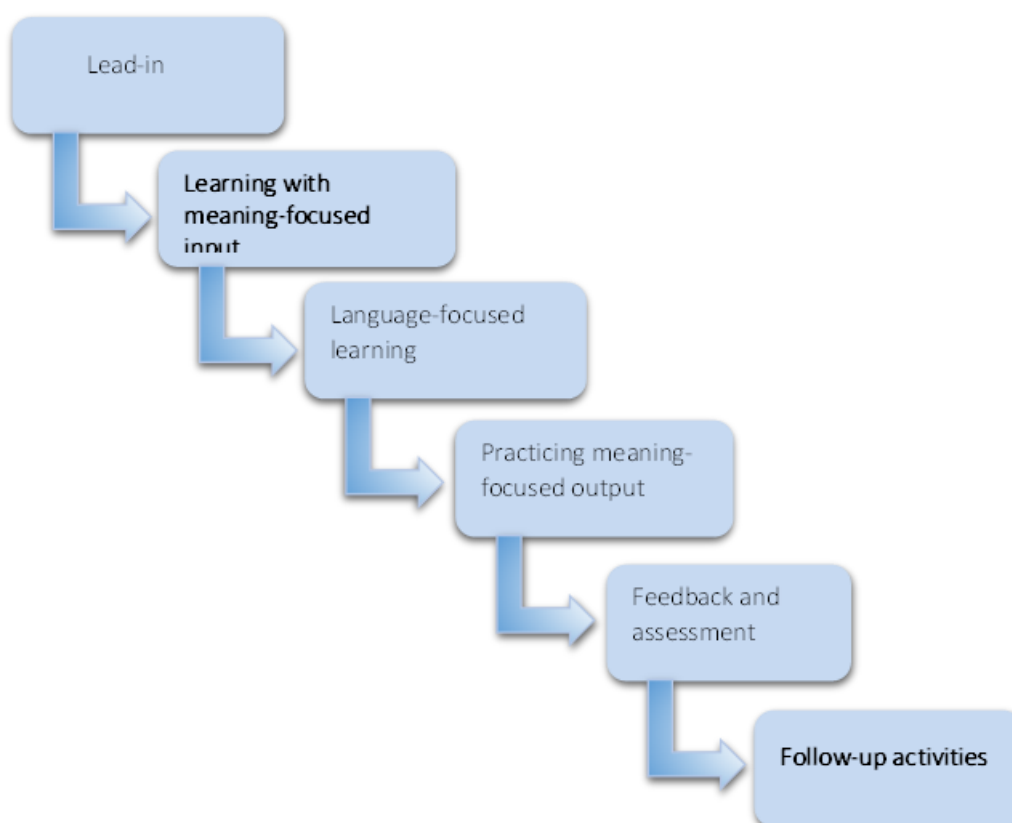
Figure 1. The proposed integrated skills framework

The first stage is the lead-in. In this stage, the teacher and students prepare for the reading and listening theme. The teacher stimulates students' foundation knowledge, which is previous life experience, making them curious about what will happen and enhancing their brains to get them to learn more new things. The teacher encourages students to guess the lesson's topic by providing them with many learning cues such as pictures, titles or book descriptions, songs, classroom facilities, or websites. The teacher could also initiate the group discussion about topics or request students to choose the answer based on the questions. No matter whether the students choose any answers,

students' ability to guess is helpful for teachers to interact with the texts. Lead-in or warm-up is an important activity to begin the lesson; however, the teacher should not spend much time on this part. Bin-Hady & Abdulsafi (2018) recommend that teachers use five minutes for a lesson and forty-five minutes for warm-up activities. Therefore, with a lesson with four periods, the teacher should use fifteen minutes for a lead-in activity.

The second stage is learning with meaning-focused input. The teacher provides students with input through listening or reading to help them get ready and become confident to produce their answers through speaking and writing. This stage equips them with ideas and vocabulary to help them confidently speak and write. Acting as a model, the teacher presents steps for students, which allows them readily to work in independent and collaborative environments. The teacher gives students a short presentation about the topic and then presents a picture or a short video clip followed by questions for discussion. A typical example of this stage is a video and reading text activity. The teacher stimulates students' previous knowledge about video and reading text. The instructions for this activity are that students watch the video clip and answer the questions. Students watch the video clip once without sound, infer the answer based on the pictures they see in the video, and watch it again with sound to complete the answer. Finally, they watch it to check the answer. Within the group of four members, students received reading text and scanned it to collect and share the information with other groups. They received new words and found their relationship without using a dictionary. They later share the results with different groups, which fosters their guessing and scanning skills, learning new words in context, and simultaneously developing their cooperation skills.

The third stage is language-focused learning. This stage helps students practice grammar structures and vocabulary that they learn in meaning-focused input based on stage 2, preparing them for productive activities for the next stage. The teacher designs questions and tasks for students to apply, thereby evaluating students' lesson understanding based on input comprehension. The teacher pays attention to how input will connect with output coherently, maximizing students' learning experience. In terms of vocabulary, based on listening and reading input, the teacher should select words with frequent appearances. The teacher could use real objects, actions, drawings, and pictures or provide synonyms or antonyms. The teacher attracts students' attention by highlighting, coloring, capitalizing the key components of grammar structures, and then finalizing the form or rules of grammar structure. The teacher instructs students to discuss or equip them with essential clues to help them master these structures. The students practice these grammatical structures with controlled accuracy and produce sentences freely.

The fourth stage is practicing meaning-focused output. This stage aims to help students use language from the same topic from input materials through listening or reading. In the second stage, it emphasizes transitions from input comprehension to output production to evaluate students' understanding and signals for students' readiness for speaking and writing. It also leads students from controlled practice to free practice. The suggested activities for this stage include dialogues, discussions and debates, information-gap activities, and dictation. In the dialogue activity, a teacher arranges students in pairs to make a dialogue. The teacher lets them choose their role, practice a conversation, and present their product to the class. In discussion and debate activities, a teacher puts students in groups and assigns them subtopics for discussion. Students work in groups to provide ideas and convince their ideas. Students then take turns to present their product by speaking in front of the class. In information-gap activities, students are allowed to work in pairs to look at pictures that look similar to those of their classmates. Students collaborate with their team members to investigate the differences among their pictures without letting other students see them. Students raise questions and describe at the same time to identify these differences. In a dictation activity, a teacher asks students to listen in pairs and write what they hear. Students could ask their partners in

pairs to repeat or spell the words and take turns practicing with their partners. In this stage, a teacher plays the role of a facilitator to manage the classroom and support the students with language.

The fifth stage is feedback and assessment. In this stage, a teacher provides students with feedback and evaluation to determine the lesson objectives and outcomes. The teacher collects the students' answer sheets, then replies to students with their strengths and weaknesses and recommends that they develop skills.

Follow-up activities are the final stage. This stage allows students to apply what they learn in the classroom to situations outside of school. A teacher asks students to work in pairs or groups to discuss the main idea of the reading passage and then explore extra vocabulary and analyze sentence structure. A teacher can also let students participate in specific events in the reading text to develop reading skills further. The teacher could flexibly allocate the following activities: explaining the difficult words and writing the words on the board, responding to listening, and correcting pronunciation mistakes.

This theoretical framework could bring more beneficial outcomes regarding students' English language proficiency and attitude toward learning. This synthesis ensures that the proposed framework maintains a combination and coherence among language skills, emphasizing practical application in General English classrooms and, thereby, addressing a gap in the previous framework.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The study applied a mixed-methods design, namely an explanatory sequential research design, to obtain and analyze data comprehensively and holistically (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This design connects both quantitative and qualitative data, with the qualitative findings serving to enrich quantitative results (Berman, 2017). The quantitative component consisted of a quasi-experimental design with control and experimental groups. The qualitative section provided insights into students' opinions regarding the effects of the integrated skills approach. Quantitative data were collected through pre- and post-tests to assess the improvement in English language proficiency, while qualitative data were gathered from semi-structured interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the full range of effects of integrated skills teaching on students' language proficiency.

A quasi-experimental design was employed to compare students' English language performance between the experimental and control groups. Quasi-experimental designs are used because it is not feasible or ethical to randomly assign participants to different interventions (Seliger, 1989). To compare pre-test and post-test results, one intact class (N=45 students) was conveniently selected for the experimental group, and one intact class (N=45 students) was selected for the control group. The conditions concerning the school, education level, instructor, and teaching content were kept consistent for both groups. Specifically, students in both the experimental and control groups took the pre-test to ensure an equal baseline level for participation in the experimental study (Ross et al., 2005). The students then took the post-test after 19 weeks of instruction to determine whether they improved their skills. The results from both groups were compared before and after the experiment, and the post-experiment results were also compared between the two groups.

3.2. Research Participants

Convenience sampling was employed, and two intact classes were chosen because the researchers could not randomly assign participants. The two intact classes were randomly assigned to the experimental group (n=45 students) and the control group (n=45 students). Students in the experimental group studied using the integrated skills approach, while students in the control group

were taught using the isolated skills approach. The students were selected conveniently according to the researchers' teaching schedule.

The participants were second-year university students enrolled in the compulsory General English course at a university in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. These students had completed the two previous General English courses. General English is a compulsory subject, and students must pass its exam to meet graduation requirements. The course covers four skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. The sample size was chosen to ensure adequate statistical power and representativeness, allowing meaningful comparisons and reliable conclusions. Based on the study's design and anticipated effect sizes, a sample size of thirty participants per group provides adequate statistical power to detect meaningful effects (Kraft, 2020). Results from both groups were compared before and after the experiment. The students studied once a week for four periods per meeting, lasting 19 weeks with a total of 75 periods. Both classes used the same textbook, PET.

The courses were taught by the same instructor, who also acted as the teacher-researcher for this study at a public university in Vietnam. Both classes followed the same instructional goals and curriculum. The instructor holds a Master of TESOL degree and has seven years of teaching experience. To ensure accuracy and objectivity of the experimental data, the instructor, course materials, teaching schedule, and number of class hours were consistent across both classes. Students were excluded if they failed to attend at least 80% of all class meetings.

3.3. Research Variables

The current study includes the following variables

Independent variables: Teaching Method (Integrated skills approach and Isolated skills approach)

Dependent variables: the students' English language proficiency (listening, speaking, and writing) and students' perspectives

3.4. Research Instrument

3.4.1. English Language Proficiency Tests

Two tests were used to collect data for the experimental study: the pre-test and the post-test. Both tests comprised listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, each weighted at 100%. The purpose of the tests was to measure students' improvement in English proficiency before and after attending the isolated and integrated skills classes. The pre- and post-tests were intentionally designed to ensure similarity in difficulty, featuring the same items to assess consistency in students' knowledge acquisition. The questions in both tests were different but covered the same content and topics. The types of questions and the content of the tasks were chosen from the teaching curriculum, ensuring that the content in both the pre-test and post-test was consistent. The topics for the tasks were familiar to students' life, studies, or future work, helping them communicate confidently. The tests were developed based on the Preliminary English Test (PET) from Cambridge University Press, a globally accepted and popular test. Two teachers holding Master's Degrees in English Language Teaching examined the test.

This test assesses the four language skills at an intermediate B1 level (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). The reading section includes five parts, with 35 multiple-choice questions. The writing section covers three parts, namely five sentences with filling in missing words, one task with writing an email, and one task with completing a letter or story. The listening section comprises four parts, including 19 multiple-choice questions and five questions that involve filling in missing words. The speaking section comprises four parts with both paired and individual answers. Teachers who did not officially attend the treatment process marked the students' tests. The researchers did not reveal the pre- or post-test papers. The tests were measured based on four

criteria: content, organization, language, and grammatical accuracy. Scores were calculated using a 10-point scale to comply with the Vietnamese assessment system. The researchers conducted pilot tests to adjust any errors. These tests showed high reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.72 for the pre-test and 0.86 for the post-test ($p > .05$), indicating strong internal consistency in assessing students' English language proficiency.

3.4.2. Semi-structured Interview

A semi-structured interview was used as the follow-up instrument for this study. Semi-structured interviews allowed researchers to ask participants for additional information. These interviews were conducted with students from both the experimental and control groups to further investigate their opinions and experiences. The interview questions were adapted from Bresnihan's (2014) study with four questions. Based on students' scores in the post-test, six students from each of the three performance levels – high, middle, and low – were randomly selected to participate in the interview. The sample comprised three representatives from each level. The interviews were conducted one week after the intervention. Three teachers in English Language Teaching validated the interview questions using the item-objective congruence index (IOC), which resulted in a score of 0.90, indicating that the instruments were valid. The interviews were conducted in Vietnamese to prevent the second language from negatively impacting participants' thinking processes. Each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes per group.

3.5. Research Procedure

In this study, the proposed pedagogical framework with six stages was used to implement the integrated skills class. The intervention lasted for 19 weeks. The teaching unit consisted of eight units. The topics of the course were selected with students' agreement and colleagues' consultation. Students attended the integrated skills approach classroom based on weekly topics: Week 1 - Course introduction; Week 2 and 3 – Unit 1: Homes and habits; Week 4 and 5 – Unit 2: Student days; Week 6 and 7 – Unit 3: Fun time; Week 8 and 9 – Unit 4: Our world; Week 10: Midterm test; Week 11 and 12 – Unit 5: Feelings; Week 13 and 14 – Unit 6: Leisure and fashion; Week 15 and 16 – Unit 7: Out and about; Week 17 and 18 – Unit 8: This is me!; Week 19: Course review and Wrap-up. The class met once a week for a total of four periods (200 minutes).

The Experimental Group

Students in both the experimental and control groups were taught the same coursebook. The themes for both groups were similar. Students in the experimental group studied using the integrated skills approach, while students in the control group studied using the isolated skills approach. The integrated pedagogical framework was designed and applied in the General English class with the integrated skills approach, including six stages: 1) lead-in, 2) learning with meaning-focused input, 3) language-focused learning, 4) practicing meaning-focused output, 5) feedback and assessment, 6) follow-up activities (Table 1).

<div align="center">Table 1. A proposal of a pedagogical framework of integrated skills approach</div>

Stage	Purpose	Time allocation
1. Lead-in	Establish the context of the lesson and stimulate students with previous knowledge about the topic	15 minutes
2. Learning with meaning-focused input	Provide students with knowledge about the topic and equip them with input through listening and reading, enabling them to obtain adequate knowledge to produce speaking and writing	45 minutes
3. Language-focused learning	Help students learn grammatical structure and vocabulary used in the reading and listening from stage 2 to prepare them for productive activities	30 minutes
4. Practicing meaning-focused output	Transition the input to output, allowing students to use the input from listening and reading to produce speaking and writing both accurately and fluently	60 minutes
5. Feedback and assessment	Comment on and evaluate students' performance, measuring whether students' outcomes satisfy the objectives of the lesson	20 minutes
6. Follow-up activities	Provide students with more opportunities to consolidate the knowledge they have learned	30 minutes

The Control Group

Like the experimental group, students in the control group also attended the General English class for 19 weeks. Each lesson followed the teaching cycle, which included several stages. First, the warm-up usually related to current trends to attract students' attention. The teacher designed games to help groups compete against each other, making the class atmosphere more engaging (30 minutes). Second, the teacher conducted the reading and vocabulary section. The teacher introduced reading strategies and then instructed the students to work on vocabulary in the textbook (80 minutes). Third, the teacher presented grammar and asked students to practice. Specifically, the teacher explained the instructions in the textbook, demonstrated a sample, and let students complete the grammar exercises in the textbook. Finally, the teacher focused on teaching reading and listening. The teacher introduced strategies for the reading and listening sections. After students finished the reading and listening tasks, the teacher explained the answers to the students. Based on the themes of the reading and listening tasks, the teacher designed additional exercises on reading and listening for further practice, helping students relate the content to their lives (80 minutes). The differences between the experimental and control groups were: 1) the order in which the skills were presented, 2) the number of skills combined, 3) the time allocated to each skill, 4) the selection of activities, and 5) the sequencing of the skills.

3.6. Data Collection

The pre-test was administered one week before the intervention, and the post-test was administered one week after the intervention. The students took two different tests of the same level to avoid repetition bias. Students took the paper test and were not allowed to use electronic devices during the test. Data from participants who were absent from some treatment sessions were discarded from the analysis. Accordingly, the number of students in both groups remained at 45 students per group. The researchers' colleagues served as test examiners to observe the testing process, ensuring the reliability and fairness of the two groups. Two teachers worked as raters and

evaluated students' speaking performance. Their ratings showed consistency and agreement without conflicts. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all variables (p > .05) indicated that the raters' scores were highly reliable. One-on-one interviews were then conducted to obtain qualitative accounts of the participants' integrated skills learning. Six students agreed to participate in the interviews. All interviews followed the same guidelines. Each interview lasted about 20 minutes. Follow-up questions were asked when necessary to clarify any ambiguity in the students' responses. The interviews were audio-recorded for future transcription, review, and thematic analysis.

3.7. Data Analysis

To address the objective of the study, methods of both quantitative and qualitative analysis were applied. Quantitatively, after gathering the data through tests, the scores of each group were calculated and compared with each other. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was utilized to analyze the data. First, the researchers ran Levene's tests to confirm the normal distribution of the data. Then, the researchers performed independent and paired samples t-tests to obtain the final results. The analyses involved reporting means, standard deviations (Std. Dev.), Min, Max, Mean Difference, and significance (Sig.) for each within-group and between-group comparison. Qualitatively, Nvivo software was utilized to transcribe and export the interview data. The themes were identified and used for the coding process. Finally, a researcher double-checked the coding to ensure reliability, identifying and summarizing key themes. Representative excerpts were selected to illustrate students' perspectives (Johnson & Christensen, 2024).

3.8. Equivalence of Study Groups

The normality of both the pretest and posttest score distributions was assessed using Levene's test. The results indicated that the distribution of test scores was normal. An Independent Samples T-test was conducted to examine the hypothesis regarding the mean difference between the experimental and control groups (Table 2). The results showed no significant differences in variances.

Table 2. Independent Samples T-test (Pre-test for Both Groups)

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	7.840	.006	-1.291	88	.200
Equal variances not assumed			-1.291	66.211	.201

The results from Table 2 suggest no significant differences in variances between the groups. Therefore, the t-test results assuming equal variances were used. Additionally, the difference between the groups was not significant (p > 0.05). This suggests that both groups were at the same level prior to receiving the treatment.

An Independent Samples T-test was also conducted to examine the hypothesis regarding the mean difference between the experimental and control groups on the post-test (Table 3).

Table 3. Independent Samples T-test (Post-test for Both Groups)

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	19.333	.000	15.018	88	.000
Equal variances not assumed			15.018	63.713	.000

The results from Table 3 indicate that the significance level (Sig = .000) is lower than 0.05, suggesting a significant difference in variances between the two groups. These differences are unlikely to have occurred by chance.

3.9. Ethical Consideration

Participants were assigned anonymously, and the data was used solely for research purposes, without any other intentions. The names of universities and students were kept confidential to ensure ethical standards were upheld.

4. Results

4.1. The Impact of Proposed Integrated Skills Approach Framework

The first research question concerned whether there are statistically significant differences in the English language proficiency (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) between the students who are exposed to the proposed integrated skills approach framework and those who are taught English language skills in a traditional classroom setting.

4.1.1. Initial Differences Between Treatment Groups (Pre-Test)

The independent t-test was used to determine whether there was any significant difference in the pre-test scores between the experimental and control groups before the intervention. The relevant data are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4. Group Statistics between two Groups (Pre-test)

Skills	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Listening	Exp.	45	3.36	0.67	2.00	5.20
	Control	45	4.02	0.51	2.80	4.80
Speaking	Exp.	45	4.42	0.75	3.00	6.50
	Control	45	4.47	0.51	3.50	5.50
Reading	Exp.	45	4.79	0.72	3.50	6.50
	Control	45	4.60	0.69	3.60	6.80
Writing	Exp.	45	4.50	0.97	3.00	7.60
	Control	45	4.43	0.58	3.00	5.60
Total	Exp.	45	4.30	0.60	3.20	6.20
	Control	45	4.43	0.31	3.80	5.20

Table 4 shows that before the intervention, the control group and the experimental group had no significant differences in overall language proficiency (M = 4.43 vs. 4.30). The control group also exhibited greater consistency (SD = 0.31 vs. 0.60), suggesting a more homogeneous participant profile. Skill-specific results indicate that the experimental group was weaker in Listening (M = 3.36 vs. 4.02) compared to the control group and showed little difference with the other skills, including Speaking (M = 4.42 vs. 4.47), Reading (M = 4.79 vs. 4.60), and Writing (M = 4.50 vs. 4.43). Overall, while the two groups were generally comparable, the experimental group and control group were equal in conducting the treatment.

Table 5. Independent Samples T-test between two Groups (Pre-test)

Skills	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean Difference	Sig.
Listening	Exp.	45	3.36	0.67	-0.66	0.00
	Control	45	4.02	0.51		
Speaking	Exp.	45	4.42	0.75	-0.55	0.68
	Control	45	4.47	0.51		
Reading	Exp.	45	4.79	0.72	0.18	0.22
	Control	45	4.60	0.69		
Writing	Exp.	45	4.50	0.97	0.68	0.68
	Control	45	4.43	0.58		
Total	Exp.	45	4.30	0.60	-0.13	0.20
	Control	45	4.43	0.31		

Table 5 presents the results of independent samples t-tests comparing the experimental and control groups prior to intervention. While mean differences were observed across all skills—most notably in Listening (-0.66) and less so in Speaking (-0.55), Reading (0.18), Writing (0.68), and Total scores (-0.13)—the statistical significance levels indicate that, apart from Listening, none of these differences were meaningful. Specifically, p-values for Speaking (p = 0.68), Reading (p = 0.22), Writing (p = 0.68), and the Total score (p = 0.20) were all greater than 0.05, suggesting no significant differences between the two groups in these domains. Only in Listening was a statistically significant difference found (p = 0.00), favoring the control group. This indicates that while participants were largely equivalent across most language skills before the intervention, attention must be taken in interpreting Listening outcomes post-treatment, as the groups were not fully matched in this area at baseline.

4.1.2. Longitudinal Differences Within Each Treatment Group (Pre vs. Post-Test)

To determine whether teaching with proposed integrated framework and traditional current framework have positive impact on students' language proficiency, the researcher conducted a paried samples t-test to compare the mean of the pre-test's and post-test's scores of both the control group and experimental group. The relevant data are presented in Table 6-7-8-9.

Table 6. Paired Samples Statistics of Control Group (Pre-and Post-test)

Pair	Skills	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
1	Listening	Pre-test	45	3.36	0.67	2.00	5.20
		Post-test	45	5.41	0.81	3.20	7.20
2	Speaking	Pre-test	45	4.42	0.75	3.00	6.50
		Post-test	45	7.44	0.84	6.00	8.50
3	Reading	Pre-test	45	4.79	0.72	3.50	6.50
		Post-test	45	7.23	0.56	5.00	8.00
4	Writing	Pre-test	45	4.50	0.97	3.00	7.60
		Post-test	45	7.31	0.65	5.90	8.50
5	Total	Pre-test	45	4.30	0.60	3.20	6.20
		Post-test	45	6.87	0.56	5.10	7.80

Table 6 presents the paired samples statistics comparing the experimental group's pre- and post-test results. Clear improvements were observed across all four language skills and the total score after the integrated instruction intervention. Listening scores rose significantly, with the mean increasing from 3.36 (SD = 0.67) to 5.41 (SD = 0.81), reflecting a noticeable upward shift in both minimum and maximum values. Similarly, Speaking skills improved, as evidenced by the increase in mean scores from 4.42 (SD = 0.75) to 7.44 (SD = 0.84), with a narrowed score range indicating greater overall proficiency. Reading and Writing also demonstrated substantial gains. The Reading mean rose from 4.79 to 7.23, while Writing improved from 4.50 to 7.31. Reductions in standard deviations for Reading and Writing suggest not only mean improvement but also enhanced consistency among learners. The total average score increased from 4.30 (SD = 0.60) to 6.87 (SD = 0.56), confirming that the integrated instruction approach fostered comprehensive advancement in students' English language abilities.

Table 7. Paired Samples T-test of Control Group (Pre-and Post-test)

Pair	Skills	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean Difference	Sig.
1	Listening	Pre-test	45	3.36	0.67	-2.05	0.00
		Post-test	45	5.41	0.81		
2	Speaking	Pre-test	45	4.42	0.75	-3.02	0.00
		Post-test	45	7.44	0.84		
3	Reading	Pre-test	45	4.79	0.72	-2.44	0.00
		Post-test	45	7.23	0.56		
4	Writing	Pre-test	45	4.50	0.97	-2.80	0.00
		Post-test	45	7.31	0.65		
5	Total	Pre-test	45	4.30	0.60	-2.57	0.00
		Post-test	45	6.87	0.56		

Table 7 presents the results of paired samples t-tests examining pre- and post-test differences in the experimental group. Statistically significant improvements were found across all four language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) as well as in the overall proficiency scores. The two-tailed significance values for all skill areas and the total score were p = 0.00, well below the conventional 0.05 threshold, confirming that the observed improvements were highly significant. The mean differences were substantial: 2.05 for Listening, 3.02 for Speaking, 2.44 for Reading, 2.80 for Writing, and 2.57 for the total score, indicating marked gains following the integrated instruction intervention.

Table 8. Paired Samples Statistics of Experimental Group (Pre-and Post-test)

Pair	Skills	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
6	Listening	Pre-test	45	4.02	0.51	2.80	4.80
		Post-test	45	4.68	0.48	3.60	5.60
7	Speaking	Pre-test	45	4.47	0.51	3.50	5.50
		Post-test	45	5.65	0.52	5.00	6.50
8	Reading	Pre-test	45	4.60	0.69	3.60	6.80
		Post-test	45	5.73	0.61	5.00	7.00
9	Writing	Pre-test	45	4.43	0.58	3.00	5.60
		Post-test	45	5.67	0.49	4.50	6.60
10	Total	Pre-test	45	4.43	0.31	3.80	5.20
		Post-test	45	5.47	0.27	4.90	6.00

Table 8 indicates a general improvement in students' performance across all four language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) and overall proficiency in the control group after the intervention period. For Listening (Pair 6), the mean score increased from 4.02 (SD = 0.51) to 4.68 (SD = 0.48), with post-test scores ranging from 3.60 to 5.60. In Speaking (Pair 7), students showed a notable improvement from a mean of 4.47 (SD = 0.51) to 5.65 (SD = 0.52). Reading scores (Pair 8) also rose from a mean of 4.60 (SD = 0.69) to 5.73 (SD = 0.61). Similarly, in Writing (Pair 9), the mean increased from 4.43 (SD = 0.58) to 5.67 (SD = 0.49). Overall, the total average score (Pair 10) improved from 4.43 (SD = 0.31) to 5.47 (SD = 0.27).

Table 9. Paired Samples T-test of Experimental Group (Pre-and Post-test)

Pair	Skills	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean Difference	Sig.
6	Listening	Pre-test	45	4.02	0.51	-0.65	0.00
		Post-test	45	4.68	0.48		
7	Speaking	Pre-test	45	4.47	0.51	-1.17	0.00
		Post-test	45	5.65	0.52		
8	Reading	Pre-test	45	4.60	0.69	-1.12	0.00
		Post-test	45	5.73	0.61		
9	Writing	Pre-test	45	4.43	0.58	-1.24	0.00
		Post-test	45	5.67	0.49		
10	Total	Pre-test	45	4.43	0.31	-1.04	0.00
		Post-test	45	5.47	0.27		

Table 9 shows statistically significant improvements in all four language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing) and the overall proficiency scores among students in the experimental group. Specifically, all five pairs (Pairs 6–10) recorded two-tailed significance values of 0.00, indicating significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores. Mean differences were as follows: Listening (-0.65), Speaking (-1.17), Reading (-1.12), Writing (-1.24), and Overall (-1.04).

4.1.3. Final Differences Between Treatment Groups (Post-Test)

Finally, the researchers ran an independent sample t-test to analyze the difference in the post-test scores of the control and the experimental groups. The relevant data are presented in Tables 10 and 11.

Table 10. Group Statistics between two Groups (Post-test)

Skills	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Listening	Exp.	45	5.41	0.81	3.20	7.20
	Control	45	4.68	0.48	3.60	5.60
Speaking	Exp.	45	7.44	0.84	6.00	8.50
	Control	45	5.65	0.52	5.00	6.50
Reading	Exp.	45	7.23	0.56	5.00	8.00
	Control	45	5.73	0.61	5.00	7.00
Writing	Exp.	45	7.31	0.65	5.90	8.50
	Control	45	5.67	0.49	4.50	6.60
Total	Exp.	45	6.87	0.56	5.10	7.80
	Control	45	5.47	0.27	4.90	6.00

Table 10 shows that the experimental group (integrated skills approach) outperformed the control group (independent skills approach) in all skills. The experimental group had a higher overall mean score (6.87) compared to the control group (5.47), with scores ranging from 6.00 to 7.80 for the experimental group, and 4.90 to 6.00 for the control group. In listening, speaking, reading, and writing, the experimental group also scored higher, with notable differences in mean scores. For example, the experimental group's mean in speaking was 7.44 compared to 5.65 in the control group, and in reading, the experimental group scored 7.23 compared to 5.73 in the control group. Overall, these results indicate that the integrated skills approach had a positive impact on students' English proficiency.

Table 11. Independent Samples T-test between two Groups (Post-test)

Skills	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean Difference	Sig.
Listening	Exp.	45	5.41	0.81	0.73	0.00
	Control	45	4.68	0.48		
Speaking	Exp.	45	7.44	0.84	1.78	0.00
	Control	45	5.65	0.52		
Reading	Exp.	45	7.23	0.56	1.49	0.00
	Control	45	5.73	0.61		
Writing	Exp.	45	7.31	0.65	1.63	0.00
	Control	45	5.67	0.49		
Total	Exp.	45	6.87	0.56	1.40	0.00
	Control	45	5.47	0.27		

The independent samples t-test results in Table 11 demonstrate statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups across all language skills and total scores (p = 0.00 for all comparisons). The experimental group's notably higher mean scores - particularly in Speaking (+1.78) and Writing (+1.63) - suggest that integrated skill instruction fosters stronger language development than traditional isolated-skill teaching. These findings imply that integrated approaches promote not only broader linguistic proficiency but also deeper communicative competence by enabling students to apply multiple skills in authentic contexts. The data provide robust evidence that integrated teaching methods offer substantial educational advantages, better preparing learners for real-world language use.

4.2. Students' Perspectives

The second research question concerned students' perspectives toward learning English through an integrated skills approach. These findings were corroborated by interviews conducted with three students from the control group and three students from the experimental group after the experimental study. The results revealed that students acknowledged that integrating the four skills in the classroom boosted their learning engagement. From the interviews, four key themes emerged: perspectives about the connection between listening, speaking, reading, and writing; meaning-focused input; activities that involved other skills; and a combination of various skill-based activities.

A Connection between Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing

In the interviews, more than half of the participants (4/6) acknowledged that there is a close relationship among the four language skills. For example, one student explained, "The four skills-listening, speaking, reading, and writing-are closely connected. When I read a lot, I learn how to use vocabulary, which helps me write better. When I listen often, I learn pronunciation and how to respond more quickly, which improves my speaking skills. These skills are not separate; they support, complement, and develop alongside one another." Another student stated, "In my opinion, four skills are related, but I think skills should be taught separately to help me learn knowledge in depth. This is because if I learn four skills in the same lesson, knowledge is not focused." This suggests that students understand the skills are closely linked but they still believe that skills should be taught separately to foster deeper knowledge.

Meaning-Focused Input

During the interviews, all participants (3/3) in the experimental group acknowledged the importance of using receptive skills (listening and reading) as a foundation for producing speaking and writing skills, while almost students (2/3) in the control group considered receptive skills as less important for their learning process. For example, student 1 in experimental group stated, "I feel interested because approaching a lesson through listening and reading provides more information about the topic, making it easier to practice and improve speaking and writing skills. This also forms a solid foundation for developing those productive skills." Unlike students in experimental group, student 1 in the control group said, "I think speaking and writing skills are more important for me to learn English because it requires me to think and develop ideas. I feel that it is extremely for me. By contrast, listening and reading skills do not require me to produce a response. As a result, I participate more enthusiastically in class and no longer feel afraid of making mistakes as when speaking or writing. I think teachers could skip listening and reading. It is fine for me." This implies that students who are not taught in an integrated skills classroom, where receptive skills do not come first, are not provided with opportunities to use materials from listening and reading to support their productive skills, which limits their ability to speak and write. By contrast, students in integrated skills classes performed better in listening, reading, writing and speaking skills.

Activities that Involved Other Skills

Among the six interviewees, all students in the experimental group (3/3) and one student (1/3) in the control group reported that activities involving multiple skills were more enjoyable. One participant in the experimental group shared, "Taking part in activities that integrate multiple skills under the same topic helps me understand the lesson more deeply. Combining different skills around one theme is like 'seeing the whole picture' instead of just looking at one clue. When I listen, read, and also practice speaking and writing, I retain the knowledge longer, make better connections between pieces of information, and use English more effectively." One participant in the control group added, "combining various activities from different skills helps me improve my speaking and writing skills much more effectively. When I focus only on practicing speaking or writing separately, sometimes I run out of ideas or feel uncertain about how to express myself. However, when I listen and read beforehand, I gain more data to apply, which makes my speaking sound more natural and my writing more coherent." This feedback suggests that skills are interconnected, and integrating different activities can help students stay engaged and motivated to learn English.

A Combination of Various Skill-Based Activities

Through the interview, all students in the experimental group (3/3) and one student (1/3) in the control group acknowledged the effectiveness of combining various skill-based activities in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. One participant in the control group shared, "I feel that when I combine multiple skills in one lesson, I learn more effectively. Practicing listening and reading helps me learn new vocabulary and expressions, which I can then apply to speaking and writing. Compared to practicing each skill separately, this approach clearly improves my speaking and writing skills." One participant in the control group expressed, "I am interested in studying English for each skill separately because I could deeply understand the lesson and focus on what I want to discover". This feedback suggests that not all students recognize the importance of integrating different activities in the classroom; the value of the integrated skills approach cannot be denied. Therefore, teachers should integrate all four skills into their lessons. Emphasizing the importance of input materials and language practice will support students by providing them with the necessary ideas, grammar, and vocabulary to effectively engage in speaking and writing.

5. Discussion

The study aimed to see if there was a significant difference in overall English language skills enhancement between the proposed integrated skills approach and unconnected skills teaching. The results show that the method applied with the proposed integrated skills achieved higher success in the experimental group, thus determining that the method is effective in language teaching. The experimental group was treated with various integrated skills activities including dialogues, discussions and debates, information-gap activities, and dictation where students had chances to interact with classmates and teachers exchange ideas, present their role in a conversation, express their opinion in front of the class, and receive feedback from the teacher and other classmates.

One possible reason for the significant improvement in students' overall English language skills is the input students are exposed to. Students could watch a video clip and be provided with a reading text. They were then asked to have a short presentation about the topic and then present a picture or a short video clip, followed by questions for discussion. The theories that support this finding are the theory of second language acquisition and the four-strand principles of foreign language teaching, which propose an integrated skills teaching framework as an effective and innovative approach to General English lessons. The outcome is consistent with previous studies (Mekheimer & Aldosari, 2013; Onoda, 2013), which found that integrated skills approaches - using linked tasks across four skills and sequential tasks based on a single text - enhanced English fluency in university classrooms. Similarly, Hajar (2022) found that an integrated skills approach in writing classes facilitated students' ability to compose in English. The positive impact of the proposed framework can be attributed to the inclusion of varied input materials (Busaidi, 2013). These findings reinforce the validity of the framework in enhancing overall language skills in foreign language classrooms.

This study offers two key advantages compared to previous research (Busaidi, 2013; Hajar, 2022; Mekheimer & Aldosari, 2013; Onoda, 2013). First, the proposed framework enhances students' proficiency across all language skills, rather than focusing on just one or two. While many previous studies have concentrated on frameworks that target specific skills, this study's approach supports the development of both receptive and productive skills. Second, the framework provides a foundation that teachers can officially implement in future General English classrooms.

The findings also indicate that the framework positively influences students' engagement in General English classrooms. The students expressed significantly higher levels of satisfaction due to the application of the integrated skills teaching framework. This aligns with the findings of Azis (2023), Bresnihan (2014) and Nguyen (2022), who reported that integrated pedagogical approaches enhance learners' motivation and engagement. Several factors may explain why integrated skills teaching fosters higher motivation and engagement. Students are given opportunities to assume various roles in different activities, participate in conversations, and interact with classmates by changing seats. These activities allow students to continuously engage, think critically, respond, and stimulate their minds. Consequently, students valued the opportunities to practice skills with peers, which they could recycle across different language tasks (Pardede, 2019). As a result, students in the integrated skills class consistently expressed positive opinions about their learning experience. The insights gained from this process could further inform the development of frameworks integrating the four language skills.

Overall, this study supports previous research. By employing an experimental design that compared the proposed framework with a traditional teaching model, the study confirms that the integrated skills framework is more effective in improving students' language proficiency and fostering positive attitudes toward learning English with higher language proficiency. This finding highlights the framework's superiority over traditional instructional models and underscores its value in teaching General English.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to enhance students' English proficiency (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) through an integrated skills approach based on the proposed framework. The findings demonstrate that the framework effectively improved students' overall proficiency, fostering a collaborative and active learning environment. In a General English classroom, receptive skills (listening and reading) alone are insufficient; they must be combined with productive skills (writing and speaking) to create a more meaningful and comprehensive lesson. Post-test results showed that students in the integrated skills group, using the proposed six-stage framework, outperformed those in the independent skills group across all four language skills. This approach not only improved students' language performance but also enriched their learning experience. A semi-structured interview revealed that most students in the experimental group believed the integrated approach - combining listening, speaking, reading, and writing - enhanced both their language performance and engagement while students in the control group did not recognize the importance of learning in integrated skills lessons. Consequently, it is recommended that the proposed framework be implemented in various classrooms, with further empirical studies dedicated to evaluating its potential. These results offer important pedagogical insights for language teachers, highlighting the benefits of the integrated skills approach for students studying English as a general subject.

7. Limitations and Recommendations for Future Studies

The study acknowledges several limitations and suggests several potential directions for future research. First, while the study significantly impacted the proposed integrated skills framework on students' overall language proficiency, it did not examine the long-term sustainability of this effectiveness. Future studies should investigate the permanent effects of this suggested framework on whether students' language performance is sustained over a more extended period. Second, the study utilized a convenience sampling method coupled with a quasi-experimental design to select students for the treatment and control groups, which could limit the power of statistical results. It is suggested that a more comprehensive experiment, which uses a random sampling method with a true experimental design, be conducted to broaden the findings comprehensively. Third, the study was conducted with a small sample size of participants in a single school, which could limit the generalizability of the findings to other research settings. It is recommended that future studies be conducted with larger and more diverse samples.

Declarations

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