



THE INTEGRATED APPROACH IN ESL AND EFL CONTEXTS: THE PRACTICE IN GHANA AND GUINEA-CONAKRY

Sefa Owusu¹ⁱ,

Ekany Maomou²

¹Department of Applied Linguistics,
University of Education, Winneba,
Ghana

²Department of English Language,
University of Labé,
Guinea-Conakry

Abstract:

A key concept of the English language syllabus for both Ghana and Guinea-Conakry is the *integrated approach* (as opposed to the *segregated-skills approach*) to the teaching of language skills. Like the *communicative language teaching* method, the *integrated approach* exposes English language learners to authentic language and challenges them to interact naturally in the language. The designers of English language curriculum in Ghana and Guinea-Conakry believe that the *receptive* (listening and reading) and *productive* (speaking and writing) skills are interrelated and hence complementary, and they must not be taught separately. Teaching language skills separately in a language learning setting has been defined as the *traditional approach* to teaching a second or a foreign language. Teachers of English in Ghana and Guinea-Conakry are expected to move away from the *traditional approach* to the *integrated approach* to language teaching. This paper aims to find out whether teachers of English in Ghana and Guinea-Conakry are familiar with the *Integrated Language Teaching* method and are being employed in the ESL and EFL classrooms in Ghana and Guinea-Conakry respectively. A *classroom observation* and a *semi-structured interview* were conducted with 24 English language teachers from 4 junior high schools and 8 senior high schools in Ghana and 5 teachers of English from Saint-André Catholic School, Guinea-Conakry. The findings showed that there was a disparity between the curriculum developers' expectations and classroom practice in Ghana and that the selection of teaching methodology was highly influenced by the thought that the students had to sit for high-stakes tests but not that they had to attain communicative competence. However, in Guinea-Conakry, teachers used the *Integrated Language Teaching* method because *speaking* is tested.

ⁱ Correspondence: email sowusu@uew.edu.gh, maomouekany83@gmail.com

Keywords: segregated-skills approach, communicative language teaching, authentic language, communicative competence

1. Introduction

An integrated approach in language teaching is a teaching method that calls for the combination of two or more language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in a lesson. In the process of language teaching and learning, language learners are expected to acquire all the four basic skills in order to function well in the target language. For this reason, the designers of English language curriculum in both Ghana and Guinea-Conakry recommend that the receptive skills (listening and reading) and the productive skills (speaking and writing) must not be taught separately because they are interrelated and complementary. The integration of the skills is important for the attainment of communicative competence. Teaching language skills separately in a language learning setting has been defined as the traditional approach to teaching a second or a foreign language. The traditional approach follows an assumption (underlying early approaches to language teaching) that the basic units of language are vocabulary and grammar, which are mostly taught using the grammar-translation approach. The grammar-translation approach focuses mainly on reading and writing with little or no systematic attention to speaking or listening. It mainly prepares language learners to attain linguistic competence. Integrated language teaching focuses on all the four main language skills - *reading, writing, speaking, and listening* through a *communicative language teaching* methodology. It is believed that this approach would lead to *communicative competence*, which is the language user's internalised grammatical knowledge as well as social and cultural knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately.

According to Hinkel (2012), communication would be meaningful if it happens in integrated language skills, not isolated one. It simply means that real or meaningful communication does not take place if people use only one language skill at a time. Therefore, in the context of learning English as a second or foreign language, skills integration remains extremely relevant. Even though in the two situations the types of instructions are a little bit different. As in the context of English as a second language (ESL) the required type of instruction is content-based instruction (CBI), and teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) adopts task-based instruction (TBI).

In Ghana, English is used as a second language and a language of instruction from stage four to the university level. From kindergarten to stage three, teachers are expected to use the learners' mother tongue as a language of instruction but teach English as a subject. In Guinea Conakry, English language is used as an additional or foreign language, after the French language which is the second and the official language and the language of instruction. In the educational system in Guinea-Conakry, English teaching and learning were previously reserved only for junior high schools and few universities. In the past 20 years, the implementation of English programmes (English language departments) in some colleges and universities has significantly increased. However, the

policy is experiencing some challenges like the lack of English teacher training colleges in the country and the lack of appropriate teaching materials. Unlike Ghana where English is used as a second and official language, in Guinea, learners have fewer opportunities to use the language, because chances of being exposed to the English language are also limited. In such situations, the only unique opportunity for the students to be exposed to the language and become fluent in speaking is when the classroom activities are appropriate for communicative instruction. One of the teaching approaches that promote communicative language teaching is the integrated skills approach (ISA). This approach gives opportunity to students to interact not only with one another but also with teachers in the classroom. Horiyama (2012, p.113) states that having opportunity is an essential aspect of successful language learning. Opportunity refers to the chance of learners' exposure to the English language. However, in Guinea-Conakry, since English language is learned as a foreign language, the English-speaking opportunity is restricted only to the English classrooms. It is said that learning a second or foreign language may be difficult, especially for adults who already have a strong foundation in their own native language (Brown, 1994).

To learn any language, one needs to develop the four main language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) and the subskills which are grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc. Developing all these skills remains somehow difficult for anyone who already has a first-language background. Furthermore, to succeed in language teaching and learning as ESL/EFL, language teachers should make use of activities that are designed to combine several language skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking. There are two main approaches to teaching of the four skills: *integrated approach* and *segregated-skills approach* (Oxford, 2001). Some researchers have discussed and accepted that integration of the four skills can develop *communicative competence* (Jing, 2006). That is what usually happens in real-life situations, when we communicate meaningfully, we don't isolate the skills. Jing (2006) again argues that the *integrated approach* focuses on authentic language and can therefore lead to the students' all-round development of *communicative competence* in English.

As pointed out earlier, teaching language skills separately in a language learning setting has been defined as the traditional approach to teaching a second or a foreign language. This traditional approach has become outmoded, as the direction of second and foreign language teaching since the 1970s is now moving towards communicative language teaching. In spite of the established benefits of communicative language teaching, many ESL and EFL teachers still use the traditional approach to teaching of language skills (Pardede, 2019). This situation may not be different in Ghana and Guinea-Conakry where English is used as a second language and as a foreign language respectively. Many Ghanaian ESL and Guinean EFL students complete the English programmes and pass the high-stakes examinations, however, they struggle to communicate orally in the English language. This is not due to the fact that English is used as a second or foreign language, but rather because of the implementation of some

inappropriate teaching methods such as the segregated skills approach in the language classrooms.

This paper attempts to address the problem linked to the causes of students' lack of fluency in speaking English after completing their secondary and tertiary levels. Richards (2006, p.3) argues that "*communicative competence includes knowing how to use the language in a range of different purposes and functions*". In addition, integrating language skills would allow teachers to create a good learning environment in the classrooms, for example by adopting activities like *pair-work, group discussion, problem-solving, critical thinking, etc.*

Teaching English as a second or as a foreign language requires developing the four skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking), in a manner that would help learners to attain communicative competence. The integrated-skills approach is an approach in English language teaching that incorporates the four basic language skills to promote the communicative competence of the learners. Today, this approach is considered as one of the dominant approaches in ESL and EFL teaching contexts. According to Oxford (2001), English language teaching as a second or foreign language can be viewed as a tapestry, where the four primary skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) are the strands that need to be interwoven in positive ways to produce a large, strong, beautiful, colourful tapestry. This is known as the integrated-skills approach (ISA).

There have been many approaches to the teaching of English as a foreign or as a second language. All of them have been replaced by innovative approaches that proposed new ways of helping EFL or ESL students reach a better proficiency in English as a second or foreign language (Bastias *et al.* 2011, p. 4). According to Richards & Schmidt (2002) integrated approach in language teaching is the teaching of the language skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking in conjunction with each other, as when a lesson involves activities that relate listening and speaking, to reading and writing.

Unlike Ghana where English is used as a second language and the language of instruction at all levels of education, in Guinea Conakry, it is used as a foreign or an additional language in the educational system. English is taught at the high school level only and in a few universities in the country. Adopting English as a foreign language implies that the opportunities for English language speaking in such a context is significantly limited in the classrooms. This therefore calls for appropriate and useful foreign language teaching methods for the benefit of learners. The *integrated skills approach* implementation in the Ghanaian ESL and Guinean EFL classrooms would go a long way to help learners to achieve communicative competence. The *segregated skills approach* would only help learners to acquire linguistic or grammatical competence, which would, consequently, help them to answer discrete-point tests. Unlike the *segregated skills approach*, the *integrated approach* exposes English language learners to authentic language and challenges them to interact naturally in the language.

2. Literature Review

In English language teaching and learning, the four skills which are listening, speaking, reading, and writing, are of immense importance. Many studies have been carried out and a broad range of explanations have been proposed in terms of how receptive and productive skills may be handled in both ESL and EFL contexts (Oxford, 2001; Hinkel, 2012; Harmer, 2007; Peregoy & Boyle, 2001; Khosiyono, 2021). In recent times, English language teaching is expected to move away from the traditional approach to the integrated or communicative approach. For instance, in Kenya, the Ministry of Education stipulates that the English language must be taught using the integrated approach; hence, the subject is called Integrated English (Manyasi, 2014). In Ghana, a key concept of the English language syllabus for both junior high school and senior high school levels is the integrated approach. (as opposed to the segregated-skills approach) to the teaching of language skills. Integrated language teaching focuses on the four main language skills - reading, writing, speaking, and listening through a communicative language teaching methodology. It is believed that this approach will lead to communicative competence: a language user's internalised grammatical knowledge as well as social and cultural knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately. For this reason, English language teaching in both ESL and EFL contexts is expected to be done through communicative approaches to develop learners' communicative competence. Before the advent of the communicative language teaching approach in the early 1960s, the Grammar-Translation and Audio-Lingual methods dominated the sphere of English Language Teaching. According to Hall (2011), the previous methods were unable to assist language learners in generating fluent, spontaneous, native-like speech. It is against this background that the designers of English language curriculum in both Ghana and Guinea-Conakry advocate for the integrated skills approach.

The philosophy of integrated-skills instruction is based on the concept that in natural, day-to-day experience, the receptive and the productive skills are not kept separate and isolated from one another. Instead, they often occur together, integrated in specific communication events (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001; Su, 2007). This approach is consistent with communicative language teaching and whole language as both emphasize meaningful and authentic language use and link oral and written language development. According to Larsen-Freeman (2000), the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT) emphasize the importance of using a language to communicate in order to learn it. Hymes (1972) cited in Larsen-Freeman (2000:121) stresses that "*being able to communicate requires more than linguistic competence; it requires communicative competence*".

The *Integrated-skills approach* (ISA) is a teaching approach, that links two or more of the four primary language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) within a lesson. It is a language teaching approach, which uses more than one language skill together, purposefully to create communicative activities in language classrooms. In the words of Oxford (2001), skills are interwoven during instruction. As teachers, we strongly

need to provide maximum learning opportunities for the different students in English language classes.

Listening and speaking involve a process of input and output in oral or spoken language. In communication, they are as important as the other skills since they develop spoken language competence. During the language teaching and learning process, teachers first send the message and learners receive it. In return, learners respond appropriately to the message to show that the message has been understood, because, in the process of listening and speaking, listeners do not simply keep listening. They need to react to the message or to the speakers or interlocutors by asking questions for clarification. This is done to ensure that the information is understood or not. Such an interaction between speaker and listener who also becomes speaker while reacting to the message, automatically creates a *speaking and listening* integration in language classes. When the skills are taught simultaneously, effective communication or interaction takes place in the classroom, thereby enhancing acquisition. This way, the language is not taught the same way other subjects such as Social Studies, History, Mathematics, etc. are taught (Nawab, 2012). Every language classroom activity should be designed in such a way as to push the learners to interact in meaningful communication so that the learning goal can be attained. Reading and writing can be more demanding than listening and speaking. This is because unlike listening and speaking which can be acquired in a speech community, reading and writing normally take place in a formal classroom setting only. Separating or segregating these skills contrasts with the idea of promoting students' language production. When students are engaged in intensive reading activities, such tasks challenge them to work communicatively and collaboratively, to enhance their skills in writing. Integrating reading with writing, not only saves the teaching time but also helps learners to acquire the vocabulary and sentence structures they need for writing activities.

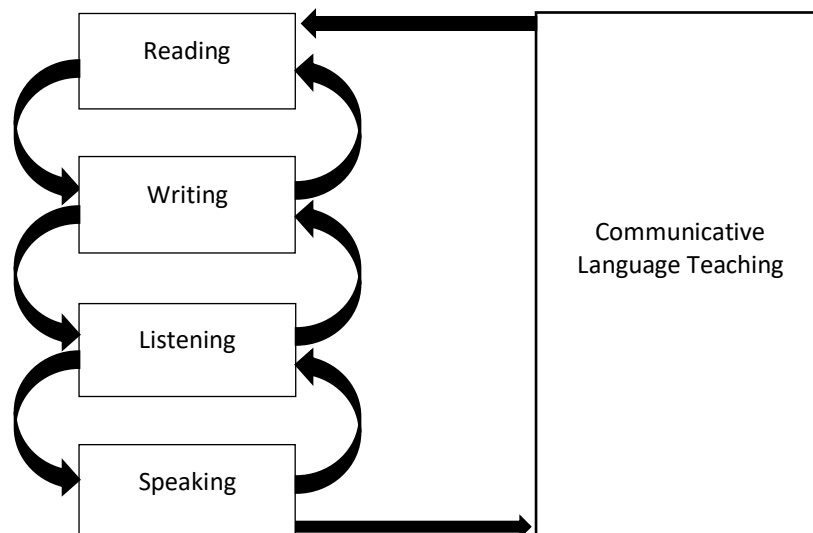
The goal of language teaching and learning these days is no longer the mastery of the language grammar, vocabulary, sentence patterns, etc., as it used to be before the 1970s. Instead, it is the capacity for the proper and effective use of the language in real-life situations. This is because, in real life, speakers use more than one language skill in communication (Akram & Malik, 2010). Integration of the four skills focuses on authentic language use and can help language learners to develop communicative competence. Numerous empirical studies have been carried out to examine how the integrated skills approach (ISA) promotes learners' communicative competence. According to Dweni, Shawesh, and Ellabiedi (2021), since communicative competence is the ability to use language properly, this concept may not be achieved if skills are separated. They added that "*the integration of the four language skills, or even at least two of them, can affect the learners' communicative competence in one way or another*". If the language teaching approaches and methods that were used in the past have been replaced by new ones, the reasons are simply because somehow, they failed to enable learners to attain communicative competence. According to Tajzad and Namaghi (2014, p. 95), "*the ISA focuses on meaning*

rather than form; communication rather than language; fluency rather than accuracy; reading for information rather than mastery of language forms."

The ISA was initiated by scholars and linguists for communicative language teaching. It allows instructors to make their classes students-centred, and that automatically motivates learners to practise receptive and productive skills simultaneously. When the integrated skills approach is well implemented in ESL/ EFL contexts, it mostly affects positively learners' communicative competence. Students attain high levels of language proficiency or communicative competence if the macro skills of the language are taught using the ISA approach. Integrating reading, writing, listening, and speaking develops students' whole achievement in English as well as students' achievement in vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension (Al-Faoury & Freahat, 2014)

The ISA blends communicative and interactive language use in teaching productive and receptive skills. Like the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach, the ISA exposes English language learners to authentic language and challenges them to interact naturally in the language. Integrated language teaching focuses on the four main language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) through a communicative language teaching methodology. Communicative language teaching (CLT) was proposed in the 1970s, its purpose or goal has always been the teaching of *communicative competence*. From the period of the 1970s to the 1990s, the type of CLT that was employed is referred to as *classic communicative language teaching*. At that time, language learning was viewed as being a process of mechanical habit formation. Richards and Schmidt, (2002) assert that communicative language teaching emphasizes the teaching of the four basic skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) within the two models of skills integration, which are content-based and task-based activities. Figure 1 below shows that the ISA has its goal – the learners' *communicative competence* development. Again, communicative language teaching (CLT) requires the teaching of the four skills at the same time.

Figure 1: Integrated Language Teaching



Teachers of English in Ghana and Guinea-Conakry are required to move away from the traditional approach to the integrated approach to language teaching. The traditional approach follows an assumption (underlying early approaches to language teaching) that the basic units of language are vocabulary and grammar which are normally taught using the segregated skills approach. The ISA is an effective and useful way to teach English in an authentic environment as the approach motivates both the students and the teachers (Bozdag, 2014). According to Hinkel (2006), the ISA makes lessons more enjoyable and more authentic, as students learn the target language in real-life situations.

In the area of language skills integration, several works have been done to explore language teaching. For instance, Khosiyono (2021), conducted a study to describe two approaches in the teaching of the four sub-skills in language acquisition. That is discrete and integrated approaches and the implications on language teaching and learning management. He points out that the discrete language teaching approach emphasises teaching and learning a language discretely. This approach deals with the separation of reading, writing, speaking, and listening during classroom activities. It focuses on isolated language that students must master before proceeding to the next level. He describes the integrated approach as being opposed to the segregated approach, as it emphasises the whole language, namely speaking, writing, listening, reading, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. In the teaching and learning process, teachers sometimes focus their teaching on speaking, writing, reading, listening, grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation only. They focus on a single or discrete language skill or element. The researcher analysed the discrete approach and integrated approach in language teaching and learning, and he finally concluded that the discrete approach and integrated approach complement to each other. Discrete learning which focuses on the discrete or single language skill or element becomes the basis for integrated learning. In order to be able to write, students should have sufficient vocabulary to master and understand the sentence structure or grammar rules. When students read, they have to know the meaning of the words and the structure of the sentences as well. In order to speak, students need to master sufficient vocabulary, and pronounce, and stress the words precisely. Sometimes, students listen to the instruction of the teacher, then write it down, then read the written instruction, and ask questions related to the instruction.

Khosiyono (2021) further supports that discrete learning enables students to master a single language skill or element and integrated learning enables them to use the language in real or authentic communication. For successful and effective education and training in second or foreign language courses, these four basic language skills need to be developed and reinforced in accordance with the level and needs of the learners. The aim of this paper was to find out whether the ESL teachers in Ghana and the EFL teachers in Guinea Conakry were familiar with the Integrated Language Teaching method and were being employed in the ESL and EFL classrooms of these countries.

3. Methodology

A classroom observation and a semi-structured interview were conducted with 24 English language teachers from 4 junior high schools (JHS) and 8 senior high schools (SHS) in Ghana. The respondents in Ghana were sampled from categories *A*, *B*, and *C* schools at both JHS and SHS levels. The same instruments were used in Guinea-Conakry with 5 teachers of English from the Saint-André Secondary School in Labé. The qualitative approach was used in both Ghana and Guinea-Conakry. The design used in Ghana was evaluative and multiple case studies. Multiple case studies provide penetrating critical insights into the logical structure of a policy and the manner in which the policy finds expression in the field (Gerring, 2007). However, in Guinea-Conakry, the respondents (5 teachers of English) were selected from a single senior high school (Saint-André Secondary School). A small sample size was used in Guinea-Conakry because French is the official language of instruction and English is taught as a foreign language in a few schools in the country.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1 Language Teaching Methods Used by Teachers

This section analyses the teachers' responses to the language teaching approaches or methods they used in teaching receptive and productive skills. The summary of the responses is shown in Table 1 below. Teachers 1 to 24 are the respondents from Ghana (ESL context) and 25 to 29 are the ones from Guinea-Conakry (EFL context).

As shown in Table 1, 13 of the respondents indicated that they used the *integrated approach*, 9 of them said that they used the *communicative approach*, 6 of them indicated that they had no idea about the language teaching approaches, and 1 indicated that they used *total physical response*. Incidentally, all the teachers in Guinea-Conakry indicated that they used the integrated/communicative approach. This is because all the teachers in that country were formally taken through an integrated/communicative approach. Again, unlike Ghana, speaking is tested in Guinea-Conakry. It can therefore be said that the final examination in Guinea-Conakry is communicative because it tests all four basic skills. The teachers are therefore motivated to use the *integrated skills approach*.

Table 1: Language Teaching Methods Used by Teachers

Item	School	Teachers	Responses
Which language teaching approach(es)/ method(s) do you use?	SHS 1	Teacher 1	Integrated Approach
		Teacher 2	No idea
	SHS 2	Teacher 3	Communicative Approach
		Teacher 4	Integrated Method
		Teacher 5	Integrated Approach
	SHS 3	Teacher 6	No idea
		Teacher 7	Communicative Approach
		Teacher 8	Integrated Method
		Teacher 9	Integrated Method
	JHS 1	Teacher 10	No idea
		Teacher 11	No idea
	JHS 2	Teacher 12	Total Physical Response
		Teacher 13	No idea
JHS 3	Teacher 14	Integrated Method	
	Teacher 15	Integrated Method	
SHS 4	Teacher 16	Communicative Method	
SHS 5	Teacher 17	Communicative Method	
SHS 6	Teacher 18	Integrated Method	
SHS 7	Teacher 19	Communicative Method	
SHS 8	Teacher 20	No idea	
	Teacher 21	Communicative Method	
	Teacher 22	Integrated Method	
	Teacher 23	Integrated Method	
JHS 4	Teacher 24	Communicative Method	
SHS	Teacher 25	Integrated Method	
	Teacher 26	Communicative Method	
	Teacher 27	Integrated Method	
	Teacher 28	Communicative Method	
	Teacher 29	Integrated Method	

The classroom teaching of six of the teachers in Ghana was observed. However, all five teachers in Guinea-Conakry were observed. It was discovered that all the Ghanaian teachers who were found teaching grammatical structures of English isolated those grammatical structures and taught them in isolation, instead of teaching them through *speech, writing, or reading passages* as required by the English syllabus. The official English language syllabus requires that grammar should be taught through *speech, writing, or reading*. The teachers' refusal or failure to use the *integrated approach* in their teaching suggests that they were either ignorant of the *integrated language teaching approach*, or they were just *teaching to the test*. The grammatical structure of English was taught using the *segregated-skills approach*. This is similar to what Nawab (2012) observes in Pakistan. According to Nawab (2012), Pakistani teachers of English do not teach English in order to help students communicate freely in authentic situations; English is rather taught the same way other subjects such as *Social Studies, History, Mathematics*, etc. are taught. One of the reasons behind this approach to the teaching of English (according to Nawab, 2012) is the *memory-driven exam system*.

It can be inferred from the interviews that the teachers' instructional practices were affected by the demands of the high-stakes tests. Interviewee 1 indicated (in Table 2) that he was not using the integrated method because the three-year period was too short, so teaching must be directed towards the high-stakes test, the *West African Senior School Certificate Examination* (WASSCE). Interviewee 6 also indicated that the *integrated language teaching method* was good in helping students attain communicative competence, but it might not be the best approach in preparing students to pass well in the *Basic Education Certificate Examination* (BECE). He continued that his main motivation for teaching was to help his students to do well in the BECE. Interviewee 5 also indicated that whatever language teaching method teachers adopted would be useless if it did not prepare students well to pass the BECE. These responses of the teachers presuppose that the high-stakes tests are not communicative as observed by Owusu (2023).

Table 2: Teachers' Interview Responses on Language Teaching Method if there were no High-Stakes Tests

Item	Responses
Is your language teaching method influenced by the demands of the BECE/WASSCE? Explain.	<p>Interviewee 1: "Yes. I know teachers of English in Ghana are expected to use the integrated language teaching method, but sometimes I don't use it because the three-year period is too short, and students expect you to always direct instruction to the WASSCE."</p> <p>Interviewee 2: "Yes. My language teaching method is somehow influenced by the WASSCE because students learn with past questions, so teaching must also be directed towards helping students to answer WASSCE past questions. This will help them to know that you are not teaching them 'non-sylla'."</p> <p>Interviewee 3: "Yes. Students are always anxious about the WASSCE, so we must use any method that will prepare them well to pass the final exam."</p> <p>Interviewee 4: "I am not aware of any language teaching method because I am not a trained teacher, but I teach with the sole aim of helping my students to do well in the BECE."</p> <p>Interviewee 5: "Yes. I think every serious teacher would have to consider the demands of the BECE before looking at the English syllabus. Whatever language teaching method we adopt would be useless if it does not prepare students well to pass the BECE."</p> <p>Interviewee 6: "Yes. The integrated language teaching method is good in helping students attain communicative competence, but it may not be the best approach in preparing students to pass well in the BECE. As a teacher, my main motivation for teaching is to help my students to do well in the BECE. "</p>

The classroom observation revealed that *grammar* was not taught through *speech, writing, or reading*. This means that there is a disparity between curriculum developers' expectations and classroom practice. The teachers did not integrate the teaching of *grammar* with the language skills of *speaking, reading, or writing*. The teachers' responses to the interview item in Table 1 above showed that 21 of them (72%) used the *integrated/communicative* approach in their teaching. However, the classroom observation showed that all of them used the *segregated-skills* approach instead of the *integrated/communicative* approach. This finding is similar to that of Ahmad & Rao, (2012) who also observed that the teachers of English in their study claimed that they were using

a communicative approach in their teaching, but classroom observation showed that they were rather using the *segregated-skills approach*.

However, in Guinea-Conakry, the situation was different. The EFL teachers were found to be using the ISA in the EFL classroom and they were excited about the approach. While responding to an interview question *What can you say about the integrated-skills approach?* Teacher 1 stated:

Teacher 1:

"I was very impressed by the way the students were interacting with each other, and with the teacher during the presentation of integrated skills teaching, as they did not care about making mistakes. I saw many of my students who hardly spoke in class, reacting to the answers of their classmates, and I found that very interesting. Despite that, students were not used to such a method of teaching, but I found them so comfortable with that teaching method which pushed them to make use of more than one skill at a time. The classroom environment put the children at ease, and they were obviously more engaged in communicating during the lesson than they usually do. I will definitely sustain such a teaching method that leads students to forget about anxieties and stress."

From the answer of the teacher in extract 1, the learners were interacting more with each other, and with the teacher than they would usually do. It obviously implies that ISA creates opportunities for students to interact not only with peers but also with their teachers in classes. From the response from Teacher 1, the students were not used to such a teaching method, they were nevertheless comfortable and encouraged to communicate during that session. The learners demonstrated positive attitudes and the teachers who took part in that presentation.

Similarly, Teacher 2 below tried to express his thoughts about what he thinks about the integrated skills approach. According to him, the integrated skills approach saves time, as it helps language teachers to teach relevant language aspects simultaneously in a single lesson.

Teacher 2:

"In the past, ... I mean before this method I had a view that my students should read and read to develop their grammar and vocabulary knowledge. As can be seen, learning the meaning of words requires too much time for my students. Sometimes I get confused and nervous by the way the time doesn't allow me to achieve what I plan to do. But after this class session with the ISA, where the reading precedes either the speaking or the writing, also where learners don't need to focus time on all the small details of the text that was read, I can, without any doubt say that the ISA saves enough time. After the class, I realised that if we integrate the skills in a session of a lesson, it is possible to cover some relevant language components."

Teacher 2 previously used to focus on a single skill for a large amount of time, just to help his learners to increase their grammar and vocabulary knowledge. And at the end, he noticed that the time was not enough for the planned activities. Therefore, he became sometimes nervous and even confused. However, when that tutor took part in the class where the ISA was implemented, he immediately understood that during integrative skills teaching, for instance, reading activity was sometimes preceded by either *speaking* or *writing*, etc. Due to what he saw with ISA, he supported that ISA saves much classroom time. Therefore, he claimed that this method enabled teachers to cover some relevant language components for a short while. This means that the segregated skills teaching is time-consuming and that frustrates students as they think that there are many details on a mere reading passage. Consequently, learners do not increase their knowledge in the other skills since they spend much time practise a single language skill. This is supported by Teacher 3 below. According to him, *the ISA saves much time as teachers can combine several skills in one lesson. It is like killing two birds with one stone.*

Teacher 3:

"I think the integrated skills approach saves time. I am able to teach more than one skill in a single lesson. I am able to kill two birds with a stone. My students now are able to communicate in English with fun. I used to spend too much time using the segregated-skills approach to teach the language skills separately."

Teacher 4 also said that the ISA enhances the language learners' desire to learn English without feeling bored. According to him, the integrated skills approach makes every student active and take part in classroom interactive activities.

Teacher 4:

"I can say without any doubt that the integrated skills approach gives students the desires to learn the English language. This method not only motivates students, but it also makes learners and instructors to be very active during the lessons. With the ISA, every student becomes active and takes part in the classroom interactive activities."

The integrated skills approach allows students to be engaged in interactive communication and motivates them to learn the target language. It also relates to learners' motivation, and it is more likely for students to be motivated to learn the language if they use it to interact with their peers and their teachers. That is different from having knowledge about the language and not being able to use it for interaction or in real-life contexts. Saint-André EFL teachers considered the benefits of ISA in terms of students' motivation and autonomy in language classes.

Teacher 5 in the extract below also indicated that the ISA helped learners to develop productive and receptive skills simultaneously. Language learners are encouraged to use their skills together in collaborative activities. This is no doubt a way

of making language learning entertaining and engaging, which in effect leads to communicative competence.

Teacher 5:

"I think the integrated skills approach is a very good approach in English classrooms. Simply because it engages every student in the classroom activity. It also challenges students to develop their skills simultaneously. That is why our curriculum developers advise teachers of English in the country to adopt this teaching approach in their teaching. Because all the language skills are examined, students also take all the skills seriously."

According to Teacher 5, the best way to teach language learners to use the target language in authentic situations is to teach them communicatively by using the ISA. The EFL teachers in Saint-André EFL agreed that the ISA deals with the teaching of all four basic skills as simultaneously as possible. It also became evident that, unlike the ESL students in Ghana, the EFL students in Guinea-Conakry are examined in all four basic language skills. Teacher 5 above indicated that because all the language skills were examined, students also took all the skills seriously.

5. Conclusion

The foregoing discussions have shown that as far as the Ghanaian situation is concerned, there was a disparity between the curriculum developers' expectations and classroom practice and that the selection of a teaching method or approach was highly influenced by the thought that the students had to sit for high-stakes tests but not that they had to attain communicative competence. The teachers were aware that they had to adopt the integrated skills approach in their teaching, however, they were using the segregated skills approach because the achievement test that the students wrote at the end of their programme did not test speaking skills. One of them indicated that the integrated language teaching method was good in helping students attain communicative competence, but it might not be the best approach in preparing students to pass well in the final examination. This presupposes that as Owusu (2023) observed, the high-stakes English language tests in Ghana were not communicative enough. It is, therefore, possible for a student to pass well in the achievement tests without being able to communicate fluently in real-life situations.

On the other hand, the situation was different in Guinea-Conakry. The EFL teachers were compelled to teach the target language communicatively using the integrated skills approach because the final examination assessed students on all four basic language skills. The EFL teachers perceived the ISA as an approach that could enable them to create a better classroom environment. The EFL teachers in Guinea-Conakry were found to be familiar with the integrated language teaching method and they employed it in the EFL classroom. However, the ESL teachers in Ghana who were familiar with the ISA refused to use the approach because the English high-stakes tests

in Ghana did not assess students on all four basic language skills. The implication of this is that the ESL teachers were *teaching to the test*, and that the tests can be used as a device to introduce innovations into the curriculum, as teachers always focus their attention on areas or skills that are tested.

Conflict of Interest Statement

Authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

About the Authors

Sefa Owusu is a senior lecturer in the Department of Applied Linguistics, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana. He holds a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Applied Linguistics from the University of Education, Winneba, a Master of Philosophy degree in Linguistics from the University of Ghana, a Post-Graduate Diploma in Education from the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, and a bachelor's degree in Linguistics with Swahili from the University of Ghana. His research interests are second language teaching and testing, language planning and policy, linguistic anthropology, and phonology. <http://pilot.uew.edu.gh/applied-linguistics/staff/profile/sowusu>

Ekany Maomou is a lecturer in the Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences in the Department of English Language, University of Labé (Hafia) Guinea-Conakry. He holds a Master of Philosophy (MPhil) degree in Teaching English as a second language (TESL) from the University of Education Winneba, Ghana. He has a post-graduate diploma in English and French teaching and translation from the University of Labé Guinea-Conakry, and a bachelor's degree in social sciences from the University of Labé Guinea. His research interests are English as a second/foreign language teaching and testing and foreign language curriculum development.

References

- Ahmad, S. & Rao, C. (2012). Examination washback effect: Syllabus, teaching methodology, and the learners' communicative competence. *Journal of Education and Practice* 3(15), 173-183
- Akram, A., & Malik, A. (2010). Integration of language learning skills in second language acquisition. *International Journal of Arts and Sciences*, 3(14), 231-240.
- Al-Faoury, O.H. & Freaht, N.M. (2014). The Effect of an integrative skills program on developing Jordanian University students' achievement in English. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*. 4(10), 2016-2025.
- Bastias, M. Sepulveda, E.E.; Munoz, A.C.S. & Lorena, M. (2011). Integration of the four skills of the English Language and its influence on the performance of Second Grade High School students. *Scientific Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, 1 (1), 45-53

- Bozdag, S. (2014). Teachers' and students' perspectives on the integrated skills approach. *Antalya Ocak*.1(3), 114-180.
- Brown, H. (1994). *Teaching by principles – An interactive approach to language Pedagogy*. Prentice Hall.
- Dweni, L. K. A., Shawesh, E. M. A. & Ellabiedi, I. A. (2021). Language learners' and teachers' perceptions of the integrated-skill approach and its possible impact on learners' communicative competence. *International Journal of Progressive Sciences and Technologies*. 28 (1),321-330.
- Gerring, J. (2007). *Case study research: Principles and practices*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hall, G. (2011). *Exploring English language teaching: Language in action*. Routledge.
- Harmer, J. (2007). *The practice of English language teaching* (4th Ed.): Pearson Education Limited.
- Hinkel, E. (2012). Integrating the four skills: Current and historical perspective. In Kaplan, R. B. (Ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Applied Linguistics*, (110-124). Oxford University Press.
- Hinkel, E. (2006). Current Perspectives on Teaching the Four Skills. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40(1), 109-131.
- Horiyama, A. (2012). The Development of English Language Skills through Shadowing Exercises. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 31(5), 182-245.
- Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*,1(8), 269–293.
- Jing, W. U. (2006). Integrating skills for teaching EFL-activity design for the communicative classroom. *Sino-US English Teaching*, 3(12) 411-497.
- Khosiyono, B. H. C. (2021). Discrete and integrated approach and the implications on language teaching learning management. Prominent: *Journal of English Studies*. 4(1) 19-29.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and principles in language teaching* (2nd ed.): Oxford University Press.
- Manyasi, N. B. (2014). Integrated approach in teaching English language: The practice in Kenya. *International Journal of Education and Research* 2(4), 253-264.
- Nawab, A. (2012). Is it the way to teach language the way we teach language? English language teaching in rural Pakistan. *Academic Research International*. 2(2), 696-705.
- Owusu, S. (2023). Evaluating the communicative nature of high-stakes English language tests in Ghana. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research*.10(4), 12-29.
- Oxford, R. (2001). *Integrated skills in the ESL/EFL classroom*. ERIC Digest: ERIC Clearing house on Languages and Linguistics.
- Pardede, P. (2019). Integrated Skills Approach in EFL Classrooms: A Literature Review. *Research Gate Net. Publication*, 34(11), 147-159.
- Peregoy, S. F. & Boyle, O. F. (2001). *Reading, writing, and learning in ESL*: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Richards, J. C. (2006). *Communicative language teaching today*: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C. & Schmidt, R. (2002). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics* (3rd Ed.): Pearson Education Limited.

Tajzad, M., & Namaghi, S. A. O. (2014). Exploring EFL learners' perceptions of integrated skills approach: A grounded theory. *English Language Teaching*, 7 (11), 92-98.

Creative Commons licensing terms

Authors will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Applied Linguistics Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflict of interests, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated on the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).