3

The Importance of Integrated-Skills Approach in Teaching English to Advanced Iranian EFL Learners

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Introduction: Teaching language as communication calls for an approach which brings linguistic skills and communicative abilities into close association with each other. One way to obtain this association is by using an integrated approach which gives the students greater motivation that converts to better retention of all the principles related to language learning (speaking, listening, reading and writing). In other words, a whole language approach wherein all the skills are treated in a more interrelated way should be at the heart of L2 classes and, whenever possible, they should be integrated, as happens in actual language use, if the aim is to develop learners' communicative competence.

As Oxford (1990:5-6) maintains, "acquiring a new language necessarily involves developing the four primary skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing in varying degrees and combinations. These four skills also include associated skills, such as knowledge of vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, syntax, meaning, and usage". Thus, the skill strand of the tapestry, as Oxford put it, can lead to effective EFL communication when all the skills are interwoven during instruction. If these language skills are effectively interwoven, EFL students are likely to become communicatively competent. According to Brown (2000, p. 218), "the richness of integrated-skill courses gives EFL students greater motivation that converts to better

retention of principles of effective speaking, listening, reading, and writing". Cunningsworth states that "in the actual language use, one skill is rarely used in isolation. Numerous communicative situations in real life involve integrating two or more of the four skills. The user of the language exercises his abilities in two or more skills, either simultaneously or in close succession" (1984, p. 46).

We have taken reading and writing skills as the main concern of this study to see whether they have been treated as integrated or segregated. Research has supported the view that developments in reading and writing are closely connected (Tierney & Pearson, 1983; Tierney, Söter, O'Flahavan, & McGinley (1984); Tierney & Shanahan (1991).

The previous scores of a senior group of TEFL students in their reading and writing courses have been collected and defined as general reading and writing test scores. These have been compared with the scores in what we have defined as expository reading and writing test scores (see Method). Based on the results and the literature review, which will follow, the following hypotheses and questions run as:
 Research questions:
1. Do Iranian advanced EFL learners perform equally well in general reading and general writing tests?
2. Do Iranian advanced EFL learners perform equally well in general reading and writing tests and expository reading and writing tests?
3. Do Iranian advanced EFL learners perform equally well in reading (general reading and expository reading) and writing (general writing and expository writing) tests?

Hypotheses:

1. Iranian advanced EFL learners will perform better in general reading than general writing tests
2. Iranian advanced EFL learners will perform better in general reading and writing tests than expository reading and writing tests
3. Iranian advanced EFL learners will perform better in reading than in writing tests

In what follows, the related literature on the importance of integrated approach in general, and the content-based language instruction and task-based language instruction as the two forms of integrated approach will be discussed in particular.

Literature Review: Tapestry is the metaphorical image suggested by Oxford (2001) for teaching English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL). The tapestry is woven from many strands, such as the characteristics of the teacher, the learner, the setting, and the relevant languages. In addition to the four strands, she notes, one of the most crucial of these strands consists of the four primary skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing. The skill strand of the tapestry leads to optimal ESL/EFL communication when the skills are interwoven during instruction. This is known as the integrated-skill approach. If this weaving together does not occur, the strand consists merely of discrete, segregated skills. This is sometimes known as the segregated-skill approach.

Segregated Vs. Integrated Approach: In the segregated-skill approach, the mastery of discrete language skills such as reading and speaking is seen as the key to successful learning, and language learning is typically separate from content learning (Mohan, 1986). Segregated-skill-oriented courses "have language itself as the focus of instruction to the extent that excessive emphasis on rules and paradigms teaches students a lot about language at the expense of teaching language itself" (Brown, 2000, p. 218). Frequently, segregated-skill ESL/EFL classes present instruction in terms of skill-linked learning strategies: reading strategies, listening strategies, speaking strategies, and writing strategies (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001).

The philosophy of integrated-skills instruction is based on the concept that in natural, day-to-day experience, oral and written languages are not kept separate and isolated from one another. Instead, they often occur together, integrated in specific communication events (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). According to Finocchiaro and Bonomo (1973), a good teacher recognizes the importance of integrating discrete language skills in the communicative situations, which simulate or duplicate the real life situations in which students will need to use the foreign language. According to Oxford, Lavine and Crookall (1989), Savignon (1991) and Larsen-Freeman (2000), the principles of CLT emphasize the importance of using a language to communicate in order to learn it. Hymes (1971) stresses that being able to communicate requires more than linguistic competence; it requires communicative competence. Whole language advocates, such as Goodman (1986), Weaver (1990), Edelsky, Altwerger & Flores (1991), Schwarzer (2001), and Brooks-Harper and Shelton (2003), state that language (oral and written) functions to serve authentic purposes by facilitating meaningful communication. In the language learning process, listening, speaking, reading and writing should be treated as integrated, interdependent, and inseparable elements of language. No language process should be separated from the whole

teaching task. Harste, Woodward, and Burke (1984) explain that each time someone reads, writes, speaks or listens, this language encounter feeds into a common data pool. In subsequent encounters with language, the person can draw on this pool. Rather than assuming that speaking, listening, reading, and writing should be kept separate, they stress that all expressions of language support growth and development in literacy. Weaver (1990) explains that when children engage in the complex processes of reading, writing, discussing and thinking, they simultaneously develop language and literacy, learning about and through these processes. Krashen (1993) found that reading exposure or reading for genuine interest with a focus on meaning provides language learners with written comprehensible input similar to oral comprehensible input. He argues that reading contributes to second language acquisition in the same way as listening does, and proposes that reading contributes to competence in writing just as listening helps develop the ability to speak. Peregoy and Boyle (2001) conclude that the teacher should incorporate opportunities throughout the reading for students to develop their own learning by responding verbally as they read, write and learn in English, because it is the integrated use of oral and written language for functional and meaningful purposes that best promotes the full development of second language proficiency. These researchers suggest that reading and writing as well as speaking and listening should be integral parts of all language classroom activities because all these processes interact with one another.

There are at least two forms of instruction that are clearly oriented toward integrating the skills (Oxford, 2001). They are Content-Based Language Instruction (CBLI) and Task-Based Language Instruction (TBLI).

Content-Based Language Instruction: CBLI bases its rationale on the premise that students can effectively obtain both language and subject matter knowledge by receiving content input in the target language. Although it has been recently recognized by authors such as Rodgers as "one of the Communicative Language Teaching spin-off approaches" (2001, p. 2), some authors contemplate the paradigm within an even wider perspective. According to Stryker and Leaver (1997, pp.3-5), for instance, CBLI "is a truly and holistic approach to foreign language education … (which) can be at once a philosophical orientation, a methodological system, a syllabus design for a single course, or a framework for an entire program of instruction".

Brinton, Snow and Wesche (1989, p. 2) define CBI as "the integration of particular content with language teaching aims, or as the concurrent teaching of academic subject matter and second language skills." In CBLI approaches, the second language is the medium to convey informational content of interest and relevance to the learner, rather than the immediate object of study. According to Eskey (1997, pp.

139-40) "for every piece of content recognized, there is a discourse community which somehow provides us with the means to analyze, talk about, and write about that content". Hence, the task for EFL instructors in CBLI is to acculturate students to the specific discourse communities.

Documentation on the original foundations of the paradigm can be found from the late eighties in the pioneering works by Mohan (1986), Cantoni-Harvey (1987), Crandall (1987), Benesch (1988), and Brinton et al. (1989) among others. Despite its short lived presence in the foreign language teaching arena, now, at the beginning of the twenty first century, there exists more than abundant literature recently published both in the form of books (Short, 1991; Krueger and Ryan, 1993; Snow and Brinton, 1997; Fruhauf, Coyle, and Christ, 1996; Stryker and Leaver, 1997; Marsh and Langé, 1999, 2000; Kasper, 2000a; Haley, 2002, among others), and articles in refereed journals (Crandall, 1994, 2006; Short, 1993, 1994; Gaffield-Vile, 1996; Kasper, 1995, 1997; Sagliano and Greenfield, 1998; Snow, 1998; Pally and Bailey, 1999; Dupuy, 2000, among many others).

Research in second language acquisition (SLA) also offers support for CBLI; empirical research findings provide evidence that language learning becomes more concrete. For instance, Genesee (1994) contends that the integration of language and content in instruction respects the specificity of functional language, i.e. students can realize that meaning changes depending upon context, and the fact that more sophisticated language is learned within a framework that focuses on complex authentic context. Oxford (2001, p. 2) maintains that CBLI is "indeed valuable at all levels of proficiency, although the nature of the content may differ according to proficiency level".

On the whole, CBI allows for the integration of language skills, as CBLI is aimed at the development of use-oriented second and foreign language skills and is distinguished by the learning of a specific content and related language use skills (Brinton et al., 1989). As the structure of CBLI classes is dictated by the nature of the subject matter, students are likely to get involved with all the language skills as the instructors have the students reading, discussing, solving problems, analyzing data, writing reports, etc. Thus, students practice all the language skills in a highly integrated communicative fashion while learning content, such as science, math and social studies.

According to Brinton et al. (1989) and Scarcella & Oxford (1992), at least three general models of content-based language instruction exist: theme-based (TB), adjunct and sheltered. "In a theme-based course, the content is exploited and its use is maximized for the teaching of skill areas" (Brinton et al., 1989, p. 26). The TB model

integrates the language skills into the study of a theme (e.g., urban violence, cross-cultural differences in marriage practices, natural wonders of the world, or a broad topic such as change). The theme must be very interesting to students and must allow a wide variety of language skills to be practiced, always in the service of communicating about the theme. This is the most useful and widespread form of content-based instruction today and it is found in many innovative ESL and EFL textbooks.

TB courses do have explicit language aims which are usually more important than the content learning objectives. In the continuum that Brinton et al. (1989) distinguish between what they call weak and strong forms of CBLI, TB courses would constitute the weakest representation of CBLI models. According to this pattern, weaker forms would include language courses whose main aim is to develop learners' communicative proficiency, whereas stronger versions would integrate content courses for L2 speakers in non-language disciplines, in which the primary goal is mastery of the subject matter. Suggestions for designing theme-based units are provided in Gianelli (1997) and Stoller and Grabe (1997) and Stoller (2004). References to successful TB courses or programs are numerous. Lafayette and Buscaglia (1985) report on a study of a fourth semester theme-based course in French civilization which was conducted in French at Indiana University in the U.S. Comparison with students enrolled in a regular fourth-semester section revealed that the students in the content course made significant gains in listening, speaking and writing; students in the traditional course made significant gains in listening and writing. In addition, the experimental (theme-based) group reported more positive attitudes toward the study of French.

Giauque (1987) described a theme-based French course in Greek mythology for third-year university students at Northern Arizona University in the U.S. In this course, students read authentic texts, listened to lectures and took notes in French, participated in discussions, and wrote papers and exams in French, and they were rewarded with general education credit in the humanities and in the language. Klahn (1997), for instance, provides a detailed review of a course for advanced learners of Spanish centered on 'Contemporary Mexican Topics' developed for the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) of Columbia University (New York, US). The course was interdisciplinary in nature and scope for, as the author writes, "students who took the course were graduate students studying for a master's degree at SIPA, Ph.D. students in history, political science, or anthropology, graduate students in Columbia Teachers College, law students, journalism students, and other advanced undergraduate students who met the entrance requirements" (Klahn 1997, p. 205).

 The adjunct model aims at connecting a specially designed language course with a regular academic course. Adjunct courses are taught to students who are simultaneously enrolled in the regular content course, but who lack the necessary competence to follow the course successfully unless some additional aid is provided. The adjunct courses work therefore as support classes for regular subject matter courses, and offer excellent opportunities to develop the academic strategies necessary to cope with real academic content. Detailed examples of the implementation of the model are provided, among others, in Flowerdew (1993) for teaching biology at a university in the Middle East, and in Iancu (1997) for teaching history and sociology at the George Fox University in Oregon (US).

In the sheltered model, the subject matter is taught in simplified English tailored to students' English proficiency level .A sheltered content-based course is taught in a second language by a content specialist to a group of learners who have been segregated or 'sheltered' from native speakers (Brinton et al., 1989, p. 15). The term 'sheltered' derives from the model's deliberate separation of second language students from native speakers of the target language for the purpose of content instruction. Studies of this model at the University of Ottawa showed strong student gains in both subject matter and second language skills. These gains were equal to or better than those of comparison groups taking the course in their first language and students in regular French and ESL classes (Edwards, Wesche, Krashen, Clement, & Kruidenier, 1984; Hauptmann, Wesche & Ready, 1988). In the sheltered subject-matter instruction, the class is commonly taught by a content instructor, not a language teacher; this content instructor, however, has to be sensitized to the students' language needs and abilities, and has to be familiarized with the traits of the language acquisition process. Nevertheless, some authors mention the possibility that the instructor may be a language teacher with subject matter knowledge, or an instructor working collaboratively with a language specialist and a content specialist (Gaffield-Vile, 1996).

Stoller & Grabe (1997) argue that "practically all instruction is theme-based" (p. 7). They argue that sheltered and adjunct instruction are "not alternatives to theme-based instruction [but] rather...two methods for carrying out theme-based instruction. For this reason, [they] see the two terms, content-based instruction and theme-based instruction, as interchangeable" (p. 7). Despite the perceived differences in their orientation and immediate aims, all the models described share the view of language as a medium for learning content, and content as a resource for learning language.

Task-Based Language Instruction (TBLI): Nunan (1991, p. 279) characterizes TBI as an approach which highlights learning to communicate through interaction in the target language, introducing authentic texts to learning situations, enhancing the learner's own personal experiences, and linking classroom language learning with language activation outside the classroom. TBLI is compatible with a learner-centered educational philosophy (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Ellis, 2003, 2005; Nunan, 2004, 2006) and consists of particular components such as goal, procedure, specific outcome (Skehan, 1998; Murphy, 2003; Nunan, 2004), and advocates content-oriented meaningful activities rather than linguistic forms (Carless, 2002; Littlewood, 2004).

Task-based language education starts from the basic idea that students learn a language by performing tasks. The central tenet of task-based approach is the task itself. Many people in the related field have defined task from their particular perspectives. Second language acquisition researchers describe tasks in terms of their usefulness for collecting data and eliciting samples of learners' language for research purposes. For example, Bialystok (1983, p. 103) suggests that a communication task must (a) stimulate real communicative exchange, (b) provide incentive for the L2 speaker/learner to convey information, (c) provide control for the information items required for investigation and (d) fulfill the needs to be used for the goals of the experiment. Similarly, Pica (2005) argues that tasks should be developed in such as way to meet the criteria for information control, information flow and goals of the study.

Others have looked at tasks from a purely classroom interaction perspective. Some definitions of a classroom task are very specific. For instance, J. Willis (1996, p. 53) defines a classroom task as "a goal-oriented activity in which learners use language to achieve a real outcome." Willis also suggests that language use in tasks is likely to reflect language use in the outside world. Other definitions are more general. Nunan proposes that a communication task "is a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form" (Nunan, 1989, p. 10). Long and Crookes (1991) argue that in addition to being meaning-oriented, classroom tasks must also have a clear relationship with real-world contexts of language use and language need. Skehan (1996a, p. 20) views classroom and L2 research tasks as "activities which have meaning as their primary focus. Success in the task is evaluated in terms of achievement of an outcome, and tasks generally bear some resemblance to real-life language use". Skehan (1998) also represents the core features of tasks within four defining criteria: there is a goal to be worked towards; the activity is outcome-evaluated; meaning is primary; and there is a real-world relationship. Candlin and Murphy (1987) assert that tasks can be

effectively organized based on systematic components including goals, input, setting, activities, roles, and feedback. And finally, Ellis (2003, pp. 9–10) lists six "criterial features of a task". He mentions all the aspects listed by Skehan above, and also includes the concept of task as a "workplan for learner activity", which "requires learners to employ cognitive processes", and "can involve any of the four language skills".

To sum up, the basic assumptions of TBLI, based on Feez (1998, p. 17), are as follows:
- the focus of instruction is on process rather than product.
- basic elements are purposeful activities and tasks that emphasize communication and meaning.
- learners learn language by interacting communicatively and purposefully while engaged in meaningful activities and tasks.
- activities and tasks can be either:
  - those that learners might need to achieve in real life
  - those that have a pedagogical purpose specific to the classroom.
- activities and tasks of a task-based syllabus can be sequenced according to difficulty.
- the difficulty of a task depends on a range of factors including the previous experience of the learner, the complexity of the tasks, and the degree of support available.

In line with the principles of an integrated approach, TBLI is a move away from grammar-based approaches where skills are treated as segregated. Armed with insights from SLA research findings and cognitive psychology, attempts have been made at affecting a transition from grammar-based to task-based instruction not just by researchers, but also by language teachers and practitioners (e.g. Bygate, Skehan and Swain, 2001; Ellis, 2000; Gilabert, 2007; Skehan, 1998, 2003; Oxford, 2006; Robinson and Gilabert, 2007).

Apart from highly gifted and motivated students, most learners working within a structure-based approach fail to attain a usable level of fluency and proficiency in the second language (L2) even after years of instruction (Skehan, 1996b, p. 18). In India, Prabhu (1987, p. 11) notes that the structure-based courses required "a good deal of remedial re-teaching which, in turn, led to similarly unsatisfactory results", with school leavers unable to deploy the English they had been taught, even though many could form grammatically correct sentences in the classroom.

As the above review shows, numerous communicative situations in real life involve integrating two or more of the four skills and the user of the language works out his abilities in two or more skills, either simultaneously or in close succession. To see the presence or absence of this segregation of skills we focused on the relationship between writing and reading scores as the main concern of our analysis.

Method:

Participants: Based on a language proficiency test, and comparison of the students' writing and reading scores, out of 200 senior EFL learners from Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, 50 were chosen and defined as more proficient and advanced learners. They were 20 boys and 30 girls aged between 23 and 26.

Apparatus: The participants' scores in the related reading and writing courses who had already been evaluated were extracted. The participants' scores in reading 1 (Elementary), reading 2 (intermediate), reading 3 (advanced), and reading simple prose were calculated and defined as general reading scores. The participants' scores in grammar 1 (elementary), grammar 2 (intermediate), advanced writing and essay writing were computed and defined as general writing scores as well. Then, two expository reading and writing tests were administered. The reading comprehension tests were two multiple-choice item tests each having 20 items designed by the researchers. The texts were taken from a book titled 'Patterns', by Lou-Conlin (1998).The participants were required to read the texts carefully and answer the 40 multiple-choice questions within   60 minute allotted time. The other tests were two expository writing tests. The students were asked to read the tasks carefully and write two expository compositions both in English. The allotted time for writing each composition was about one hour. These two reading and writing tests were defined as expository reading and expository writing tests. The testing process of reading and writing was held in two successive sessions within a one-week period of time.

Procedure: First, the participants' responses in the multiple choice reading comprehension tests were scored. Then, based on Engelhard, Gordon, and Gabrielson's (1992) model, the participants' written data were analyzed and scored. This scale consists of five domains: content and organization, style, sentence formation, usage, and mechanics. Two raters assigned points to each of several aspects of the participants' writings, providing a rating of the overall quality of the written product as well as ratings on specific elements. The inter-rater reliability between the two raters was .85 (Pearson), which is positive and statistically

significant. The overall score of a participant in all types of tests was considered to be 20. Finally, the participants' general reading, general writing, expository reading and expository writing scores were statistically analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 16.0).

Results: To examine the hypotheses, all data were entered into an SPSS database. To show all the scores and the possible variations among them, first a simple descriptive statistics was run (see Table 1).

Table 1:The Descriptive Statistics Showing Participants' Scores in General and Expository Reading and Writing Tests

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Grammar 1	50	11.00	20.00	15.2750	2.78766
Grammar 2	50	12.50	20.00	16.2950	2.18278
Advanced Grammar	50	11.00	20.00	15.9886	2.73691
Essay Writing	50	11.25	20.00	15.7700	2.15877
Reading 1	50	10.00	20.00	16.1500	2.43225
Reading 2	50	11.00	20.00	16.3750	2.29754
Reading 3	50	10.50	20.00	15.9450	2.95601
Simple Prose	50	10.00	20.00	16.5550	2.49197
Expository Writing 1	50	12.25	19.00	15.8200	1.83992
Expository Writing 2	50	12.00	18.50	15.8550	1.64680
Expository Reading 1	50	13.00	20.00	16.7600	1.72538
Expository Reading 2	50	13.00	19.50	16.9050	1.62167
Valid N (listwise)	50				

Before examining the hypotheses, the Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to examine whether the general reading group (reading 1, reading 2, reading 3, and simple prose) had any correlation among themselves or not. This was checked for the general writing group (grammar 1, grammar 2, advanced writing, and essay writing) as well (see Tables 2 and 3). As the tables illustrate, all cases have strong correlation and this correlation is strongly significant. In general reading scores, the highest correlation belongs to reading 2 and simple prose (r=.748, $p < .01$) (Sig. .000) (2-

tailed) and in general writing scores this correlation goes to grammar 1 and essay writing (r=.522, *p* < .01) (Sig. .000) (2-tailed).

Table 2: Correlations between General Reading Scores

		Reading 1	Reading 2	Reading 3	Simple Prose
Reading 1	Pearson Correlation	1	.388[**]	.651[**]	.370[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.005	.000	.008
	N	50	50	50	50
Reading 2	Pearson Correlation	.388[**]	1	.638[**]	.748[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005		.000	.000
	N	50	50	50	50
Reading 3	Pearson Correlation	.651[**]	.638[**]	1	.584[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	50	50	50	50
Simple Prose	Pearson Correlation	.370[**]	.748[**]	.584[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	.000	.000	
	N	50	50	50	50

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3: Correlations between General Writing Scores

		Grammar 1	Grammar 2	Advanced Grammar	Essay Writing
Grammar 1	Pearson Correlation	1	.413[**]	.409[**]	.522[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003	.003	.000
	N	50	50	50	50
Grammar 2	Pearson Correlation	.413[**]	1	.505[**]	.484[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003		.000	.000
	N	50	50	50	50
Advanced Grammar	Pearson Correlation	.409[**]	.505[**]	1	.505[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.000		.000

	N	50	50	50	50
Essay Writing	Pearson Correlation	.522**	.484**	.505**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	50	50	50	50

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Now, to test our first and second hypotheses, Pearson correlation was used between general writing, general reading, expository writing, and expository reading (see Table 4).The results rejected our first null hypothesis meaning that Iranian advanced EFL learners did not perform better in general reading than general writing tests. As table 4 illustrates, there is a strong correlation between general reading and writing scores among these learners (r=.684, p < .01) (Sig. .000) (2-tailed). Our third hypothesis was not proved as well. There was a strong correlation between general writing and expository writing (r=.673, p < .01) (Sig. .000) (2-tailed), but this correlation was not held between general writing and expository reading (r=.170, p < .01) (Sig. .238) (2-tailed). Correlation also existed between expository writing and general reading(r=.661 p < .01) (Sig. .000) (2-tailed).), and expository reading and expository writing ((r=.381, p < .01) (Sig. .006) (2-tailed).), but this correlation was not held between expository reading and general reading (r=.210, p < .01) (Sig. .144) (2-tailed).

Table 4: Correlations between General Writing, General Reading, Expository Writing, & Expository Reading
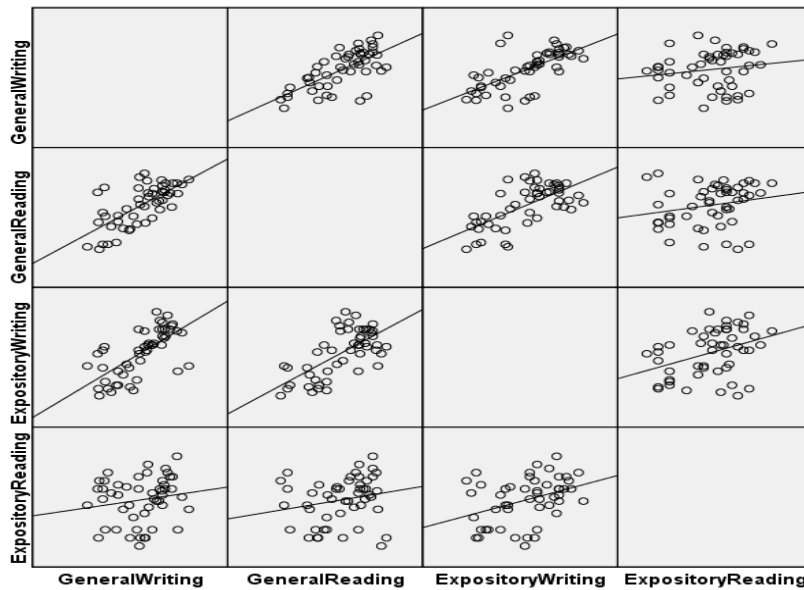
		General Writing	General Reading	Expository Writing	Expository Reading
General Writing	Pearson Correlation	1	.684**	.673**	.170
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.238
	N	50	50	50	50
General Reading	Pearson Correlation	.684**	1	.661**	.210
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.144
	N	50	50	50	50
Expository Writing	Pearson Correlation	.673**	.661**	1	.381**

		.000	.000		.006
	N	50	50	50	50
Expository Reading	Pearson Correlation	.170	.210	.381**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.238	.144	.006	
	N	50	50	50	50

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

 To further show all possible combinations of variables (Var. 1 vs. Var. 2) and also "flipped" (Var. 2 vs. Var. 1), a Scatterplot Matrix along with Fit Lines were used to show the trend of data more explicitly (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: A Scatterplot Matrix with Fit Lines Showing All Combinations of Variables

And finally, all reading variables (general and expository) were defined as reading and all writing variables (general and expository) were defined as writing and to test the third hypothesis whether Iranian advanced EFL learners performed better on reading than writing tests Pearson correlation was used along with a simple Scatterplot having fit line to illustrate the possible relationship. The results (Table 5 & Figure 2)

reject our null hypothesis(r=.709, *p* < .01) (Sig. .000) (2-tailed) meaning that there is strong correlation between reading and writing scores and they have been able to perform equally well both in reading and writing tests. The descriptive statistics (Table 6) also confirms that there is not much difference between mean and standard deviation of scores among these participants.

Table 5: Correlations between Reading and Writing

		Reading	Writing
Reading	Pearson Correlation	1	.709**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	50	50
Writing	Pearson Correlation	.709**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	50	50

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 2: The Scatterplot Correlation between Reading and Writing Scores
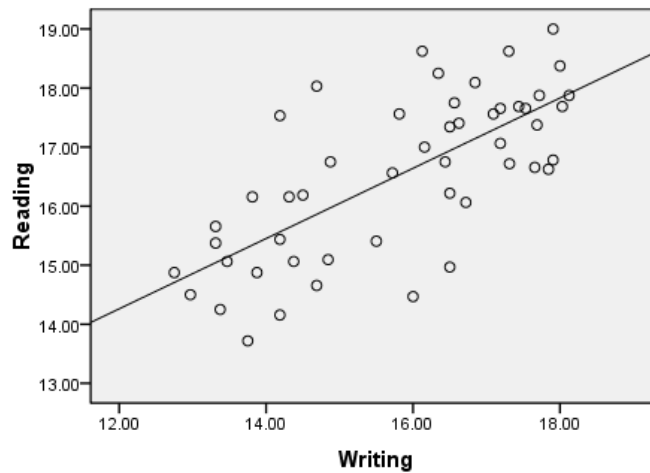
**Table 6: Descriptive Statistics Showing Mean &
Std. Deviation of Reading & Writing Scores**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Reading	16.5444	1.37341	50
Writing	15.8348	1.63656	50

Discussion: With some minor variations among the variables, the overall result confirms the relationship between writing and reading skills. This is a fruitful and promising result supporting the integrated approach advocated by different researches such as Oxford(2001), Mohan(1986), among many others. In line with the principles of the integrated approach, there seems to be a move away from grammar-based approaches where skills are treated as segregated. Skill segregation is reflected in traditional ESL/EFL programs that offer classes focusing on segregated language skills.

It should be pointed out that the correlation between variables in the general reading and writing scores comes as no surprise as these proficient students seem to have the ability to perform well in all these related language courses. But the point is that this ability was shared when they responded both to the writing and reading skills. The high correlation among the general writing and reading scores demonstrate the fact that these two skills have been treated as interconnected as the results show.

The next illuminating point to discuss is that as these learners have been defined as advanced learners, they should be able to respond to other texts as well. Some expository tests, both reading and writing, were chosen to test this hypothesis. As the results show, there were some variations among the learners' responses. This may be explained from the perspective of the nature of expository texts on the one hand and the concept of language proficiency on the other. Expository texts were chosen for these advanced learners because in working with such texts; one needs to analyze information and information analysis is a cognitive demanding task. In Drury's words, "the activity of analyzing the information means that writers must distance themselves from the content more than the activities of observation, description and classification which result in a typical factual, report genre. Such distancing develops a more abstract genre which is removed from its real-world experiential content" (2001, p. 110). In addition, expository texts are characterized by the use of specialized lexicon (related to the topic involved) and by an argumentative structure that requires information ordering that always is related to the topic and the writers' communicative intentions: definition or description of an event, explanation of its origin, description of types or categories involved in a concept, etc. (Boscolo, 1996). We need, therefore, even more advanced learners to handle such texts. Language

proficiency, then, seems to be considered as a relative concept. Stern (1983, p. 46), for instance, describes L2 proficiency, as comprising the intuitive mastery of the forms of the language, the intuitive mastery of the linguistic, cognitive, affective, and sociocultural meanings expressed by the language forms, the capacity to use the language with maximum attention to communication and minimum attention to form, and the creativity of language use. Accordingly, it can then be concluded that the use of language in a number of specific ways is difficult even for native speakers of a particular language.

It should, however, be declared that when we put all variables into one category and define it as reading or writing skill, we see again the strong correlation between the scores. The conclusion and the generalizability of such findings should be treated with more caution. With more variables and a larger sample we may have more reliable conclusions. As pointed out, the metaphorical image suggested by Oxford (2001) and advocated in this study is woven from many strands, such as the characteristics of the teacher, the learner, the setting, and the relevant languages. In addition to the four strands, one of the most crucial of these strands consists of the four primary skills of listening, reading, speaking, and writing. The effect of speaking and listening along with other strands should also be investigated.

Another point is that levels of proficiency and the learning context should be considered as well. The relationship among the four skills should be tested in elementary and intermediate levels with different age groups, backgrounds, needs, interests and abilities and this should be tested in different foreign and second language contexts with various syllabuses and resources that they may follow or make use of.

In line with other researchers, these researchers suggest that reading and writing along with other skills and parameters should be integral parts of all language classroom activities because all these processes interact with one another. Selecting an integrated approach in teaching language whereby all variables work together helps learners develop communicative competence and through the developing of competences, they will be more conscious about their own learning, identifying strengths and weaknesses to be improved. Becoming aware will lead them to take a course of action and make their own decisions about their own learning process, which is, finally, the goal of any language learning process.

It is much better to make the teaching and learning situation come closer to the way we do things in real life to make classes more challenging, motivating and meaningful for the learners of English as a second or foreign language. In line with the integrated approach possible tasks are suggested to help learners learn language by interacting communicatively and purposefully while engaged in meaningful activities.

Finally, it should be asserted that in applying the integrated approach, creativity of the teachers play a fundamental role. If the teacher is creative, a course bearing a discrete-skill title might actually involve multiple, integrated skills. For example, in a course on intermediate reading, the teacher probably gives all of the directions orally in English, thus causing students to use their listening ability to understand the assignment. In this course, students might discuss their readings, thus employing speaking and listening skills and certain associated skills, such as pronunciation, syntax, and social usage. Students might be asked to summarize or analyze readings in written form, thus activating their writing skills. In a real sense, then, some courses that are labeled according to one specific skill might actually reflect an integrated-skill approach after all. The same can be said for ESL/EFL textbooks. A particular series might highlight certain skills in one book or another, but all the language skills might nevertheless be present in the tasks in each book. In this way, students have the benefit of practicing all the language skills in an integrated, natural, communicative way, even if one skill is the main focus of a given volume. Applying an integrated approach is in line with the latest findings in the field of linguistics and there is certainly a need for more research in this area.

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