*Integrated Skills Approach improves the communicative competence in EFL students*

*A Abordagem Integrada de Habilidades melhora a competência comunicativa em alunos de EFL*

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## Resumen

El idioma inglés se estudia con fines académicos en las universidades ecuatorianas. El objetivo fue determinar la relación entre el Enfoque Integrado de Habilidades y la Competencia Comunicativa de los estudiantes del 3° nivel de la asignatura de Inglés de la Escuela de Promoción de la Salud de la ESPOCH, ubicada en la ciudad de Riobamba. El estudio fue de tipo no experimental de diseño transversal y de tipo correlacional con enfoque mixto, aplicando investigación de campo y documental a nivel descriptivo. La población fue de 30 estudiantes, 19 hombres y 11 mujeres. Se aplicó la técnica de evaluación oral con su prueba oral como instrumento para recopilar información en el pre y post test. La información fue recopilada en una base de datos y analizada mediante estadística descriptiva. Se aplicó la prueba paramétrica T de Student para muestra par para verificar la hipótesis utilizando el software Jamovi. Los resultados se ilustraron en gráficos con valores matemáticos. Los resultados mostraron que con 29 grados de libertad y con 0,05 de nivel de significación ($\alpha$), p-valor = 0,001 que es inferior a $\alpha$ = 0,05. De manera similar, la t de Student calculada es 6,86, que es superior a 1,6991 de la tabla de distribución de la prueba T de Student. Por lo tanto, se rechaza Ho y se acepta H1. Por lo tanto, el Enfoque de Habilidades Integradas mejora la competencia comunicativa en los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera.

**Palabras Clave:** Enfoque Integrado de Habilidades; Competencia comunicativa; prueba de estudiante T; Propósitos académicos; investigación documental.

## Abstract

English language is studied for Academic Purposes at Ecuadorian universities. The objective was to determine the relation between Integrated Skills Approach and Communicative Competence of the students belong to the 3 level of the English subject from Health Promotion School at ESPOCH, located in Riobamba city. The study was a non-experimental of the transversal design and correlational type with a mixed approach, applying field and documentary research at descriptive level. The population was 30 students, 19 men and 11 women. Oral assessment technique with its Oral test as a instrument were applied to gather information in pre and post test. The information was compiled in a database and analyzed through descriptive statistics. The parametric Student T-Test for pair sample was applied to verify the hypothesis using the Jamovi software. The results

were illustrated in graphs with mathematical values. The results showed that with 29 degrees of freedom and with 0,05 of level of significance ($\alpha$), p-value = 0,001 which is lower than $\alpha$ = 0,05. Similarly, calculated Student t is 6,86 which is upper than 1.6991 from the Student T-Test distribution table. Therefore, Ho is rejected and H1 is accepted. Thus, Integrated Skills Approach improves the communicative competence in EFL students.

**Keywords:** Integrated Skills Approach; Communicative Competence; T Student Test; Academic Purposes; documentary research.

## Resumo

A língua inglesa é estudada para fins acadêmicos nas universidades equatorianas. O objetivo foi determinar a relação entre a Abordagem Integrada de Competências e a Competência Comunicativa dos alunos do 3º nível da disciplina de Inglês da Escola de Promoção da Saúde da ESPOCH, localizada na cidade de Riobamba. O estudo foi não experimental do tipo transversal e correlacional com abordagem mista, aplicando pesquisa de campo e documental em nível descritivo. A população foi de 30 alunos, 19 homens e 11 mulheres. A técnica de avaliação oral com seu teste oral como instrumento foi aplicada para coletar informações no pré e pós teste. As informações foram compiladas em um banco de dados e analisadas por meio de estatística descritiva. O teste t de Student paramétrico para amostra de pares foi aplicado para verificar a hipótese usando o software Jamovi. Os resultados foram ilustrados em gráficos com valores matemáticos. Os resultados mostraram que com 29 graus de liberdade e com nível de significância ($\alpha$) de 0,05, p-valor = 0,001 que é inferior a $\alpha$ = 0,05. Da mesma forma, o Student t calculado é 6,86, que é superior a 1,6991 da tabela de distribuição do Student T-Test. Portanto, Ho é rejeitado e H1 é aceito. Assim, a Abordagem Integrada de Habilidades melhora a competência comunicativa em alunos de EFL.

**Palavras-chave:** Abordagem Integrada de Competências; Competência comunicativa; Teste T Student; Fins Acadêmicos; pesquisa documental.

## Introducción

Nowadays, English is studied by people around the world for different reasons. First, 'target language community' because of people is moving into countries where English is the main language. Secondly, 'English for Specific Purposes (ESP)', people need to use English in a specific

context like tourism, business, banking and others. Afterwards, **'**English for Academy Purposes', students learn English to study at English-speaking university, or because they want to access English-language academic texts, for example, Business English students need to spend a lot of time focused on the language needed for specific business transactions and situations. Next, students of 'general English' often do not have a particular reason for taking English subject, they simply wish to learn to use the language successfully (Harmer, 2010). For this reason, in Ecuadorian Higher Education System Learning English is mandatory for getting a Bachelor' degree and postulate to Master or PhD programs that allow to respond the new technological and scientifically challenge due to the globalization. On the other hand, English is considered a 'lingua franca' since it is used to communicate between two people from different places in the world or to study; and English is leading role in the media. This language is taught all over the world in face to face or online programs.

Previous studies concluded that the integrated teaching of skills enables them to become competent users of language (Gautam, 2019). (Waluyo, 2020) conclude that the 'ISA' create real communication in the class all the time, so English language skills have to learn in integration to improve communicative competence. Other study stablished that the 'ISA' has related with communicative competence because the target language is used naturally into the class (Brunfaut, Kormos, & Michel, 2020).

The pre test applied to the learners from 3 level in English subject from Health Promotion School at ESPOCH was a Speaking Test of the Key English Test from Cambridge Assessment English presented a mean of 5,94/10 points (narrow fail) in 30 learners, so it means that learners get difficulties in understand enough to be able to meet needs of a concrete type, provided people articulate clearly and slowly as well as learners have difficulties generally to identify the topic of discussion around them when it is conducted slowly in agreement with the level A2+ of the CEFR. Therefore, during the semester October 2021 - Abril 2022 the Integrated Skills Approach was applied in English Classroom in order to improve English language communication based on development listening, reading, writing and speaking in holistic form.

This research is relevant because the information gathering allows to the teachers change the teaching methodology breaking the traditional teaching method and guided for the new methodologies according to the time and the students demands.

The objective in this research is to determine the relation between Integrated Skills Approach with the communicative competence of the students belong to 3 level of the English subject from Health Promotion School at ESPOCH, located in Riobamba city. Thus, in order to achieve the objective, the following Null hypothesis was stablished, *Ho*: Integrated skills approach does not improve the communicative competence in EFL students.

**General Objective:**

- To identify the relation between Integrated Skills Approach with the communicative competence of students at Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo.

**Specific Objectives:**

- To identify the level of students' communicative competence at the beginning and at the end of the course.
- To apply the Integrated Skills Approach in the group of study.
- To state the relationship between Integrated Skills Approach and the Communicative Competence.
- To discuss the relevance of formative assessment and its application in English

**Literature Review**

**Integrated Skills Approach**

**Segregated Skill Instruction vs Integrated Skill Approach**

First, Segregated skill instruction focuses on 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). Skill segregation is seen in traditional ESL/EFL programs that offer classes focusing on segregated language skills because teachers and administrators think it is logistically easier to present courses on writing divorced from speaking, or on listening isolated from reading since they could believe that it is not instructionally possible to concentrate on more than one skill at a time. In fact, a good example is the grammar-translation method, which teaches students to analyze grammar and to translate from one language to another using writing restricting language learning to a very narrow and is focused on non-communicative activities that does not prepare students to use the language in everyday life. On the other hand, (Peregoy & Boyle, 2011) mentions that segregated-skill ESL/EFL classes used to present instruction in terms of skill-linked learning strategies: reading strategies, listening strategies, speaking strategies, and writing

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strategies. Learning strategies are strategies that students employ, most often consciously, to improve their learning. Examples are guessing meaning based on context, breaking a sentence or word down into parts to understand the meaning, and practicing the language with someone else. Second, according to (Amalia, 2019) the Integrated-Skill Approach "is a whole language approach where if a course deals with reading skills, then, it will also deal with listening, speaking, and writing skills." This approach is considered as one in which "the English language is taught not just for academic but also for communication purpose." In other words, it considers the communicational goal that every language course should achieve by exposing learners "to the richness and complexity of the language". Likewise, Peregoy & Boyle (2011) claims that instructors should incorporate chances through reading for students to improve their own learning by replying verbally as they read, write, and learn in English, because it is the integrated use of oral and written language for functional and meaningful to promote the development of second language proficiency. Also, 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. Integrated Skills focuses on the four main English skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) through a "Communicative Language Teaching" methodology. New grammar patterns are learned in the context of a conversation or a real-life situation. Students will engage in various activities to practice English including listening tasks, role playing, and stimulating discussions. According to (Oxford, Integrated skills in the ESL/EFL classroom., 2001), language skills are conformed of reading, listening, writing, and speaking, and in order to communicate effectively and accurately in a foreign language, these skills have to be mixed during instruction. The integrated skills approach forces learners to use the target language naturally, enhancing communication. Likewise, Oxford (2001) affirms that two types of integrated-skill instruction are content-based language instruction and task-based instruction. The formal emphasizes learning content through language, while the second focuses on doing activities that require communicative language use. Both benefit from a diverse range of materials, textbooks, and technologies for the ESL or EFL classroom.

## Content-Based Instruction

In content-based instruction, instructors give students the opportunity to practice all the language skills in a highly integrated, communicative way while learning content such as science, mathematics, and social studies. It is relevant at all levels of proficiency, but the nature of the

content might differ by proficiency level. For beginners, the content often involves basic social and interpersonal communication skills, but past the beginning level, the content can become increasingly academic and complex. Therefore, (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992) lists three general models of content-based language instruction. First, 'theme-based model' integrates the language skills into the study of a theme which 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. Second, in the 'the adjunct-model' the language and content courses are taught separately but are carefully coordinated. Third, in the 'sheltered-model' the subject matter is taught in simplified English tailored to students' English proficiency level.

## Task-Based Instruction

In 'task-based instruction' students participate in English communicative activities. Tasks are defined as activities that can stand alone as fundamental units and that require comprehending, producing, manipulating, or interacting in authentic language while attention is principally paid to meaning rather than form (Nunan, Designing tasks for the communicative classroom, 1989). It means that in 'task-based instruction', basic pair work and group work are often used to encourage student to interact in a collaborative way. Students can work together to write and edit a class newspaper; develop a television commercial, act out scenes from a play, or take part in other collaborative activities. More structured cooperative learning formats can also be used in task-based instruction.

## Advantages of the integrated-skill approach

According to Oxford (2001), there are some advantages of this approach as follows: the integrated-skill approach exposes English language learners to authentic language and challenges them to interact naturally in the language. Learners rapidly gain a true picture of the richness and complexity of the English language as employed for communication; this approach stresses that English is not just an object of academic interest and English becomes a real means of interaction and sharing among people; instructors can track students' progress in multiple skills at the same time; promotes the learning of real content, not just parts of language forms; and the integrated-skill approach can be highly motivating to students of all ages and backgrounds.

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**How to integrate the language skills**

In order to integrate the language skills in ESL/EFL instruction, instructors should consider taking these steps. First, learn more about the various ways to integrate language skills in the classroom (e.g., content-based, task-based, or a combination). Second, reflect on their current approach and evaluate the extent to which the skills are integrated. After that, choose instructional materials, textbooks, and technologies that promote the integration of listening, reading, speaking, and writing, as well as the associated skills of syntax, vocabulary, and so on. Then, even if a given course is labelled according to just one skill, remember that it is possible to integrate the other language skills through appropriate tasks. Finally, teach language learning strategies and emphasize that a given strategy can often enhance performance in multiple skills. Consequently, teacher must reflect and plan in order to integrate the language skills and strengthen the "tapestry" of language teaching and learning. When the tapestry is woven well, learners can use English effectively for communication.

**Communicative competence**

**Background of communicative competence**

(Littlewood, 1981) states that Communicative Learning Teaching (CLT) is an approach that helps the EFL teacher to teach EFL learners the relationship between grammatical structure and communicative meaning in order to communicate orally in the foreign language, mastering the components of communication. This approach gives the teacher a useful tool to motivate students and assess their performance in class. Moreover, this author affirms that the CLT approach teaches EFL learners the relationship between grammatical structure and communicative meaning. It thereby helps learners to communicate meaningfully in the foreign language. Then, with CLT, the teacher is a motivator, an assessor, a facilitator, and a corrector of students' performances in the class. Furthermore, teachers have to motivate their learners using CLT-based tasks to the students to successfully acquire a Foreign Language and develop their creativity. For this, teachers need to develop students mental and oral abilities to apply them in the target language within different contexts and social situations.

In Communicative Language Teaching there are different materials that can aid an EFL teacher create a communicative environment. These materials could be exercises, workbooks, cards, and

booklets, as well as material like magazines, newspapers or with graphics like maps, charts, and graphs definitely encourage students to interact with the language (Richards & Rodgers, Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching, 2001)

**Definition of communicative competence**

"What is it that one needs to know and be able to do in order to speak in another language? Of course, one needs to know how to articulate sounds in a comprehensible manner, one needs an adequate vocabulary, and one needs to have mastery of syntax. These various elements add up to linguistic competence. However, while linguistic competence is necessary, it is not sufficient for someone who wants to communicate competently in another language" (Nunan, 1989)

(Savignon, 2018) states that communicative competence is the ability to use language, or to communicate, in an accurate cultural manner in order to make meaning and achieve social activities with efficacy and fluency in long interactions. On the other hand, (Canale, 2014) sees communicative competence as being composed of four sections of knowledge and skills. First, 'Grammatical competence' is the knowledge of features of a language like morphologic, syntactic, phonemic and graphemic in other words the structure and form of a language. Second, 'Discourse competence' is the knowledge of the interrelationship between and logic cross sentences and phrases is characteristic of. An individual with strong discourse competence can recognize the relationship between different thoughts within a message. In addition, (Brinton, 1996) state that "discourse markers are grammatically optional and semantically empty, but they are not pragmatically optional". Elements of organizational structure, in a discourse, could not only achieve the grammatical conditions but also the pragmatic ones. Elements of communicative competence are linked and that developing pragmatic skills should be a necessity when learning a foreign language. Third, 'Sociolinguistic competence' focuses on the recognition and accordance of the rules of interaction, taking turns, appropriate greetings, spontaneity or global native-like language. According to Savignon, 2001 the competence "requires an understanding of the social context in which language is used: the roles of the participants, the information they share, and the function of the interaction". So, this competence deals with the word choice language manipulators make for speech act realization such as expressive, commissive or directives. Fourth, 'Strategic competence' is characterized by the ability to make the most of the language, particularly when compensating for language deficiencies. Therefore, (Brown, 2001) points out that "verbal and

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nonverbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or due to insufficient competence". Likewise, 'strategic competence' is to know how to: recognize and repair communication breakdowns; learn more about language in context; overcome misunderstanding and gasping language skills by implying; paraphrase; analogies; explanations; non-verbal communication

## Student's communicative competence

According to (AlbertaEducation, 2019) 'communicative competence' is the ability to understand and use language effectively to communicate in a wide variety of context and for a variety of purposes. It means that the learner in 'linguistic competence' can understand and use vocabulary, language conventions (e.g., grammar, punctuation, spelling) and syntax (e.g., sentence structure). In 'strategic competence', learners can use techniques to overcome language gaps, plan and assess the effectiveness of communication, achieve conversational and written fluency, and modify text for audience and purpose. In 'socio-linguistic competence', learners can have awareness of social rules of language (e.g., formality, politeness, directness), nonverbal behavior, and cultural references (e.g., idioms expressions, background knowledge). And, in 'discourse competence', learners can understand how ideas are connected through patterns of organization (e.g., ideas can be organized sequentially, by importance, by comparing and contrasting), conjunction (and, or, because), and transition words (first, next, also, however, for instance, therefore, etc.)

Moreover, (Argyle, 1983) adds eight dimensions of non-verbal communication. First, 'facial expression' is extremely communicative, able to convey uncountable emotions without saying a word. So, the facial expressions for happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, fear, and disgust are the same across cultures. Second, 'gaze' is important to state that visual sense is dominant for most people, eye contact is an especially important type of nonverbal communication. In which case, the way you look at someone can communicate many things, including interest, affection, hostility, or attraction in order to maintain the flow of conversation and for gauging the other person's interest and response. After that, 'gestures and other body movements' are true perceptions of people that are affected by the way they sit, walk, stand, or hold their head. Then, the way you move and carry yourself communicates a wealth of information to the world. Therefore, nonverbal communication includes your posture, bearing, stance, and the subtle movements you make. Afterwards, 'bodily contact' refers as humans communicate a great deal through touch. Then, think about the very

different messages given by a weak handshake, a warm bear hug, a patronizing pat on the head, or a controlling grip on the arm. Next, 'spatial behavior' occurs When the other person stands too close and invading your space, individuals feel uncomfortable during a conversation. Individuals all have a need for physical space, although that need differs depending on the culture, the situation, and the closeness of the relationship. Also, it is used physical space to communicate many different nonverbal messages, including signals of intimacy and affection, aggression or dominance. Finally, 'clothes and appearance' have social significance for the audience. Dress includes the things that people wear such as jewelry, ties, handbags, hats and glasses. Clothing conveys nonverbal clues about a speaker's personality, background and financial status.

**Implications of communicative competence in a teaching and learning a language**

Communicative competence is a fundamental part of CLT. It goes far beyond the linguistic competences and involves using language as a tool to achieve a premeditated goal via verbal processing. CLT recognizes language as a functional means of achieving a certain aim and succeeding in interpersonal communication (Harmer , 2007). This communicative approach puts more emphasis on the ability of second language learners to effectively communicate in TL and less attention is focused on precise wording, flawless grammatical structures, correct pronunciation and familiarity with irregular forms. Pragmatics, discourse, language functions and interaction have become the buzzwords of second language acquisition since 1980s and the constructivist movement (Brown, 2001). It means that teaching language not as a set of grammatical rules and an infinite inventory of vocabulary but as a communication tool taking into account context and the fact that pragmatic comprehension and the effect of illocutionary    acts are conditioned by cooperation among discourse participants.

Mcdonough and Shaw (1993) offer a number of reasons why communicative approach is an attractive one that provides a richer teaching and learning setting to develop communicative competence. It includes: a wider consideration of what is appropriate as well as what is accurate; handle a wider range of language, covering texts and conversations as well as sentences; offer realistic and motivating language training; use what learners 'know' about the functions of language from their experience with their own mother tongues. Consequently, it is important to remember that the fundamental concept in CLT is that language has a socio-cultural or communicative dimension which has gained currency.

Littlewood (1982) makes a distinction between functional communication activities and social interaction activities. The former would include activities in which learners have the opportunity to work out the likely sequence of events in a set of pictures or solve a problem from shared clues. The task would include conversation, discussion, role plays, simulation and so on. At the same time, Littlewoods' (1982) model reflects a step-by-step approach in which learners are to gain control over individual skills. Likewise, the cognitive aspect involves the internalization of plans for creating appropriate behavior. Thus, for language use, these plans derive mainly from the language system which includes grammatical rules, procedures for selecting vocabulary, and social conventions speech. The behavioral aspect involves the automation of these plans so they can be converted into fluent performance in real life.

Tasks are fundamental according to (Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1992) a task will be communicative if it is part of a range of different types of tasks. A communicative task contains goal, input, activity, teacher's role, learner's role, and setting. Materials which have these kinds of tasks can contribute to the development of Communicative Competence. And as stated by Richards et al. (1992), a central aspect to task is that learning goals, learning and learning results will be determined by the teacher's choice of tasks. Therefore, to some extend the teacher can also subsidize achievable communicative goals.

As suggested by (Richards & Rodgers, 1982), Communicative Language Teaching is an approach which regards language as communication. LT targets communicative competence. Consequently, native-like language use is not any more the goal in LT, but the development of this productive construct. Richards and Rodgers (1982, p. 73), suggests five potential objectives when using CLT to develop communicative competence. First, An integrative and content level (language as a means of expression). Second, a linguistic and instrumental level (language as a semiotic system and an object of learning). After this, an affective level of interpersonal relationships and conduct (language as a means of expressing values and judgments about oneself and others). Next, a level of individual learning needs (remedial learning based on error analysis). Lastly, a general educational level of extra-linguistic goals (language learning within the school curriculum).

(Dvořáková, 2011) shares some communicative tasks to develop communicative competence such us: 'predefined role play' is a transactional task where students are assigned a certain social role and carry out a dialogue with the teacher and a fellow student. It requires students to impersonate a certain character and consequently invent the details or context of the role play. The achievement

and completion of the task greatly depends on the willingness and attraction of the participants.; 'small talk' is also an interactional task in which students represent themselves and engage in a one-on-one small talk with the aim of fulfilling a social duty. The dialogue will be carried out with the teacher and a fellow student; 'manipulative instrumental function' is a transactional task where the student needs to use his/her language abilities to organize a meeting with a partner. The motivation of the negotiation is established separately before individual recordings so that the conditions would look like the participants' real-life circumstances as much as possible. It can be carried out with a) the teacher and b) a fellow student; 'adjacency pairs activity', in this situation students are read a list of sentences of diverse communicative functions (greeting, inquiries, apologizing, inviting) and are asked to react quickly and appropriately.

## Teacher's Role in communicative class

Richards & Rodgers (2001) states that the teacher has two main roles. Firstly, the role is to facilitate the communication process between all participants in the classroom. Secondly, the role is to act as an independent participant within the learning teaching group. Besides, the third roles are to act as a resource, organizer of recourses, guide, motivator, counsellor, analyst and a researcher. Finally, Minor roles of a teacher include Actor and entertainer"

## Learners Role in a communicative class

The idea of a self-directed learning is the shift from a teacher-centred classroom to a more learner-centred classroom which is established by CLT.  Richards & Rodgers (2001) lists some roles of the students like: communicators; actively engaged in negotiating meaning- trying to make themselves understood and in understanding others; and responsible managers of their own learning. On the other hand, (Anjum, 2013) lists some activities that are designed for students to be engaged in a collaborative process in which they discussed the various aspects of language learning. These activities would help them to become self-directed and autonomous learners. Various activities are performed basically to improve four language skills- Reading, writing, listening and speaking. These activities include acting from the script; watching movie; listening to podcasts/songs; language Game / Grammar practice; giving speech/presentation, role play; learning Vocabulary; and reading in groups.

In the same way, it is important to list some of the theoretical underpinnings of CLT such us: First, language is a system for the expression of meaning. Second, the primary function of language is for interaction and communication. Third, the structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses. Finally, the primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features. Although CLT is the dominant paradigm in language teaching today it is by no means the end of the road. Innovations may emerge in the future, and whatever researchers in fields related to linguistics may discover, any new developments in language teaching would take place against the background of the changes brought by CLT.

According to the Common European Framework of Reference for language (CEFR), students at level A2+ for foreign language proficiency stablish three scales. First, 'overall oral comprehension' students can understand enough to be able to meet needs of a concrete type, provided people articulate clearly and slowly. Secondly, 'understanding conversation between other people students', students can follow in outline short, simple social exchanges, conducted very slowly and clearly. Third, 'understanding as a member of a live audience', students can follow a very simple, well-structured presentation or demonstration, provided it is illustrated with slides, concrete examples or diagrams, it is delivered slowly and clearly with repetition, and the topic is familiar. Finally, 'oral production', students can give a simple description or presentation of people, living or working conditions, daily routines. likes/dislikes, etc. as a short series of simple phrases and sentences (Council of Europe, 2022)

**Methodology**

The research design was 'non-experimental of the transversal design' and 'correlational' type. According to (Palella & Martins, 2012), 'non-experimental' research design is performed without any kind of manipulation in any of the variables. Therefore, the work of the researcher is to observe the facts such as they present in their real context and in predetermined time or not in order to analyze them (p. 87), and the data collection is developed in an only moment. It is the 'correlational' type since the researchers measure two variables and establish a statistic relation between them (correlation) to reach relevant conclusions where external variables are not needed. In fact, the main goal of this research design is to measure the level of relation that could exist

between two or more concepts or variables, so this can be determined by the analysis, quantification, and entailment of the variables. Consequently, this process is made to sustain the hypothesis that has been previously established.

The research approach in this study was carried out using mixed methods since it combines a qualitative-quantitative perspective, also it integrates post-positivism and interpretivism interweaving data from both in such a way that research issues are meaningfully explained. In this study, both methods were used along the process to collect and analyze data and information in the research (Maxwell, 2016). Thus, it is possible to say that the researched followed a more quali-quatitative method since more written information was used in the process to support the two variables of the research: 'Integrated Skills Approach (ISA)' and 'Communicative Competence', and the quantitative method was just used in the statistical part to analyze the data that was gotten with the instruments and to prove the hypothesis.

The basic Research modality performed in this study was 'field' and 'documentary' research. First, 'field research' is a data collection method which main goal is to observe and understand people and their reaction while they are in their own environment. This kind of research involves the use of observation, interviews or surveys to analyze and interpret the behavior of the subject. Secondly, the main principle of the 'documentary' research is to gather information to support the investigation through traditional published materials such as: books, magazines, journals, reports and so on; and, by the use of electronic media and resources for instance websites, blogs and bibliographic databases (Quishpe, Emotional Intelligence and its relationship with English Language Learning in children 4 to 5 years of age in preschool, 2021).

The level of the research belongs to the descriptive level due to exist a relationship between two variables and its goal is to know the predominant customs and attitudes through the exact description of the activities, process, and people. Then, this kind of investigation just not focus on data recompilation but to the prediction and identification of the relationship or relations that between two variables. Researchers, in this kind of investigation, collect data about one hypothesis or theory; they expose and sum up carefully the information and to then analyze the results in order to get meaningful generalizations that may contribute to reach new knowledge (Hernández, Fernández, & Baptista, 2014)

According to (Andrade, Cabezas, & Torres, 2018), 'population' is "the total of the individuals or elements to which the investigation refers, that is, all the elements that we are going to study", for

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this reason it is also called the 'universe'. At the same time, 'a sample' is "a representative part of a population, whose characteristics must be produced in it, as exactly as possible". Therefore, in this study the 'sample' is the 'population' because it is considered as a small and finite population. The experimental group was conformed for a 'population' of 30 belonging to 3$^{rd}$ level in English subject, Class B from Health Promotion School of the Public Health Faculty at Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo-ESPOCH, located in Riobamba city during the academic semester October 2021 – April 2022. Thus, the 'sample' was of the stratified type by gender (men=19 & women=11) and the level of foreign language proficiency was A2+ according to the CEFR. Therefore, this group was assigned to apply the Integrated Skills Approach in this study.

The technique applied for gathering information in this research was 'oral assessment' that examines to which extent the student has achieved the pre-established goals, based on a conversation between the examiner and the student. Oral exams mainly include open questions. It means that an 'oral assessment' is a direct means of assessing students learning outcomes by questioning them. Unlike interviews which usually have a structured question list, oral assessment does not usually have a structured list of questions; assessors ask questions and request responses depending on the circumstances (Chan, 2022). And the instrument was 'oral test', which was applied in a 'pretest' and a 'posttest' in order to compare participant groups and measure the degree of change occurring as a result of treatments or interventions (Shuttleworth, 2019). Then, the instrument was a Speaking Test' from Key English Test series of the Cambridge Assessment English. This test has 2 parts with the following tasks: Part 1, students can respond to questions, giving factual or personal information for 3 to 4 minutes; Part 2, students can discuss likes, dislikes and give reasons for 5 to 6 minutes (Cambridge English Qualifications, 2020).

The results were described based on the responses of the study variables applying the triangulation methods, understood as a method that involves the use of multiple data collection methods on the same phenomenon to be studied (Flick, 2014). Therefore, the analysis and interpretation of the results, as well as the statistical 'Student T-Test for Paired Samples' were developed through the software Jamovi, whose results were interpreted with the contribution of the theoretical framework related to each of the variables of hypothesis with theory and praxis.

Finally, the results were interpreted by the relationship between the theory and the praxis during the teaching learning process of the target language according to each variable

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## Results

The results in this study showed that the development of the communicative competence of English language is related with the Integrated Skills Approach (ISA) applied in the classroom during the teaching-learning process.

According to the statistic descriptive, there is a significative difference of (2.44 points) in the 'mean' of the 'post-test' above the mean of the pre test in the speaking skill performance. Likewise, the 'median' keeps up a difference of 2.33 points in relation with the pre test. Finally, the 'maximum' and 'minimum' score in post test hold a difference in relation with pre test (see figure 1). Therefore, the ISA applied in English classroom improve the communicative competence of the students.

**Figure 1:** Post Test and Pre-Test descriptive

**Descriptives**

|            | Post Test | Pre-Test |
|------------|-----------|----------|
| N          | 30        | 30       |
| Mean       | 8.38      | 5.94     |
| Median     | 8.57      | 6.24     |
| Minimum    | 5.66      | 3.53     |
| Maximum    | 9.40      | 8.59     |

**Author:** Researchers

**Note:** Students' difference descriptives from Oral test in post test and Pre test

## Hypothesis Testing

The calculation of the verification of the hypothesis in the present research was carried out though the parametric 'Student T-Test' where the independent variable is 'Integrated Skills Approach', and dependent variable is 'communicative competence'

**Null Hypothesis H₀:** Integrated skills approach does not improve the communicative competence in EFL students.

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**Alternative Hypothesis H₁:** Integrated skills approach improves the communicative competence in EFL students.

According to the mathematical model of the hypothesis, the Statistical test observed for one sided (one tailed) where '$\mu_1$ = population average in the pre-test for experimental group' and '$\mu_2$ = population average in the post-test for experimental group'.

**H₀:** $\mu_2 \leq \mu_1$

**H₁:** $\mu_2 > \mu_1$

**Conclusion:** the results showed that with 29 degrees of freedom and with 0,05 of level of significance ($\alpha$), p-value = 0,001 which is lower than $\alpha$ = 0,05. Similarly, calculated Student t is 6,86 which is upper than 1.6991 from the Student T-Test distribution table. Therefore, the null hypothesis **Ho** is rejected due to the 'mean' of the difference of the post test is different of the pre test, hence the alternative hypothesis is accepted. **H₁** "Integrated Skills Approach improves the communicative competence in EFL students" (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2:** Paired Samples T-Test

Paired Samples T-Test

| | | | statistic | df | p | Mean difference | SE difference | 95% Confidence Interval | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Post Test | Pre Test | Student's t | 6.86 | 29.0 | < .001 | 2.44 | 0.356 | 1.84 | Inf |

Note. $H_a \mu$ Measure 1 - Measure 2 $> 0$

**Author:** Researchers

**Note:** Value of the p<0.05 with 29 df

In the following graphic, the difference of the mean at 95 % of confidence Interval is significant, because the mean of pre test and post test are separated with a 95 % of the confidence interval. At the same time, the median from the post test is different of the pre test (see Figure 3)

**Figure 3:** Mean difference
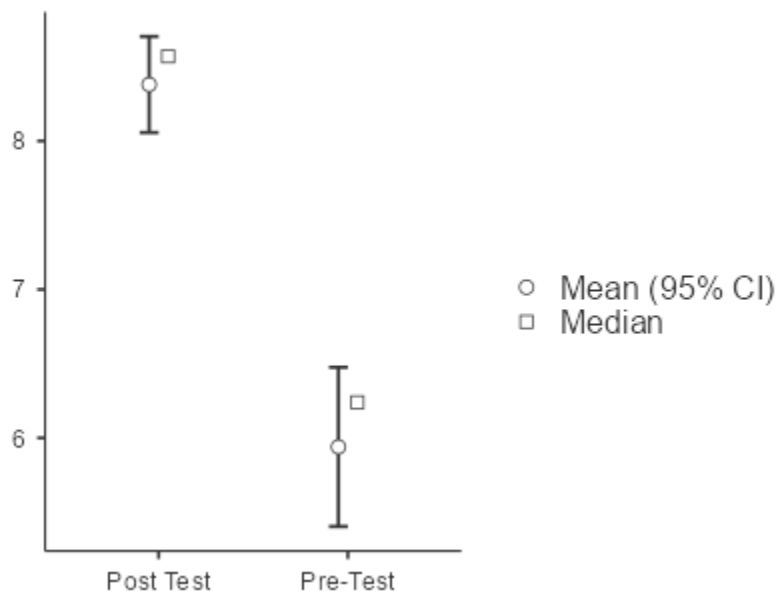


**Author:** Researchers

**Note:** Significant difference of the Mean from Post test and Pre-Test

**Discussions**

The result of this study sustains the hypothesis that learners' performance Integrated Skills Approach predict the improvement of their communicative competence as well as they improve the ability to use target language among English speakers in particulars situations into the daily life in natural communication supported in their self-confident increase because of the authentic tasks of communication (Quishpe, 2022). Then, Integrated Skill Approach (ISA) is a modern practice in EFL pedagogy where learners are exposed to authentic language and challenges them to interact naturalistically in the language (Oxford, 2001). Additionally, this approach provides the students with a true picture of the richness and complexity of the English language as is naturally employed for communication because English is a real means of interaction and sharing in actual communicative events.

Understandably, teaching language through integrated skills approach is more beneficial than teaching through segregated skills approach. Integrating the skills permits the learners to learn them simultaneously during communication inside and outside the classroom. The simultaneous use of skills can be very rewarding to the learners since they can prosper all the four skills uniformly. Besides, the achievements in one skill are sure to pave the way for better hearing in remaining other skills as well. In fact, modern integrated skills approach treats language as a means for communication and interaction which boosts the motivation and confidence of the learners. After learning the skills, they can express their own ideas and feelings without any fear and hesitation in agreement with (Tajzad & Namaghi, 2014) who explains that integrating skills reduces learners' level of stress and anxiety by engaging them in real communication of ideas rather than mechanical practice of skills and components.

The results allow to conclude that the integration of skills leads to reconceptualization of teachers' role by decreasing their talking time and increasing students' talking time. Thus, successful integration of skills can make the lessons dynamic by involving the learners in various activities which gives them the scope for interaction and communication and such a communication makes them motivated to learn. Therefore, ISA focuses on mastery of meaning, fluency and communication as a whole language system (Jing, 2006)

On the other hand, 'communicative competence' is one of the most important notion for teaching and learning English language because it focuses on language users' abilities to communicate

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effectively, or simply get things done in a particular context of communication. It means that the communicative competence has different dimensions, which are interrelated in all forms of language use and learning such as: communicative language competence, context, language activities, language process, text, domain, strategy and task. Then, 'communicative competence' constitutes the ability to use the language in an accurate cultural in order to achieve social activities with efficacy and fluency in long interactions (Yufrizal, 2017). And the key for development communicative competence is 'language activities' that involve the exercise of one's communicative language competence in a specific domain in processing (receptively and/or productively) one or more texts in order to carry out a task. And, a 'task' that is defined as any purposeful action considered by an individual as necessary in order to achieve a given result in the context of a problem to be solved, an obligation to fulfil or an objective to be achieved. This definition would cover a wide range of actions such as moving a wardrobe, writing a book, obtaining certain conditions in the negotiation of a contract, playing a game of cards, ordering a meal in a restaurant, translating a foreign language text or preparing a class newspaper through group work. It means that the teacher role has to facilitate the communication process in the classroom (Hong, 2020)

## Conclusions

The pre test was applied at the beginning of the course and it showed clearly that students committed mistakes in sentence structure, coherence, fluency, vocabulary range and sounds and its production; appropriateness, expressions and cohesive devices were left behind as well for students therefore, it was easy to determine that students had a low performance when developing their communicate competence into the linguistic. At the same time, learners get limited comprehension to understand and follow a series of instructions for familiar everyday activities such as sports, cooking, etc., provided they are delivered slowly and clearly.

After adapting the contents of Integrated Skills Approach in the syllabus as well as the contends of the course book and applying the approach along four weeks; the results of the second evaluation (post-test) revealed that students now were able to use cohesive devices, expressions, they were able to talk with more appropriates. There was also an improvement in other components such as vocabulary, coherence, fluency, word order and pronunciation; consequently, we could conclude that students reached a higher performance when developing their communicate competence in

integrated form. The use of the target language in natural way encourages the students to improve their speaking and other the language skills in holistic way.

Comparing the results that student got in both tests (pre and post), learners improve their communicative competence achievement the A2+ level of the proficiency language domain according to the CEFR. Then, learners showed the ability to interact in a simple and routine task requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. On the other hand, learners could produce a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms family and other people, living condition, educational background and present or most recently activity. Therefore, the results denoted that the development of the Integrated Skills Approach (ISA) in the EFL class has a direct relation with the improvement of the communicative competence of the students.

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