



RESEARCH PAPER

The Effect of Four Skills Integrated Strategy on Students' Learning of Tenses

¹Dr. Kamran Ali* ² Farzana Sohail ³Naila Rashid

1. Associate Professor, Department of English, Hamdard University, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor, Department of English Govt. College for women, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan
3. Lecturer, Department of English Govt. College for women and Boys, Karachi Sindh Pakistan

***Corresponding Author:** Kamranali.arsal@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The research paper explores the impact of four skills integration approach to teach tenses at the undergraduate level in Pakistani setting. The study puts in use a quasi-experimental research method. Ninety students partook in this study. Four intact classes were designated to draw the sample. A language proficiency test was given to choose the sections which are consistent in terms of English Language proficiency. Two groups were formed grounded on two different teaching approaches. The cluster which was taught in a traditional way was named as control group and the group which received intervention, which was four skills integration, was labelled as treatment group. The data run on SPSS and the result displays that the scores of the treatment group seemed greater than the control in the post-test. This study reveals the signification of integration of reading, writing, speaking, and listening to advance students' ability to use tenses.

KEYWORDS Four Skills Integration, Quasi Experiment, Writing Skills

Introduction

Approaches to teaching grammar have been a matter of discussion in ESL literature since the days Grammar Translation method has been introduced. Though with the emergence of methods which emphasized on communicative competence, the focus on grammar teaching has declined but still grammar teaching is thought to be part and parcel of any English Language course today. In Pakistan GTM is still used in institutions where new pedagogical have been introduced or teachers are not trained. A cursory survey of the syllabi for foundational English subjects on HEC website will reveal that they are grammar centered and use of four skills is badly neglected. It is felt that new approaches to teaching of grammar should be experimented and after obtaining empirical evidence should be included in the available methods of teaching of grammar. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of teaching tenses using four language skills integration. Here four skills integration means combining reading, writing, listening and speaking as a strategy to teach tenses to obtain better results. The study employs quasi experimental approach using pre and post-tests. It involves 90 participants with same level knowledge and use of tenses. The participants were divided into treatment and control groups.

Literature Review

Teaching of grammar has gained prominence as it display the working of language. Learners usually believe that unfolding grammatical rules will allow them the mastery over the target language. Brown (1980) highlights the significance of grammar instruction explaining that if grammar is taught contextually it produces positive effects on learners as it enhance their ability to use grammar correctly in language skills.

Teaching of grammar has relied on approaches to teaching a second language. Therefore, Grammar teaching can be looked at with the lenses of Post communicative language teaching, Communicative language teaching, and traditional grammar teaching. Whatever language teaching approach is taken teaching of grammar is not put aside. It has gained its place in almost all approaches to teaching.

Teaching of grammar is also viewed in two ways: Explicit teaching and implicit teaching. The former method relies on memory, analysis and conscious learning of grammar whereas the later focuses on unconscious learning of grammatical rules with any intervention. Krashen (1982) explains that explicit knowledge is learned consciously and through language it is expressed. On the other hand implicit knowledge is unconscious learning which learners cannot termed.

Broadly speaking they have been driven from Traditional Grammar teaching and communicative approaches to teaching. The literature in ESL is rich when it comes to developing four skills especially the advocates of communicative approaches focus on the use of language employing four skills rather than relying on learning grammatical rules to mater the target language. But not much is available on using four skills to develop learners' grammar which can be taken as a gap in literature. The idea of four skills integration has been purported by (Oxford, DAVID C. LEE, M. ANN SNOW, ROBIN C. SCARCELLA, 1994). They believe that integrating four language skills allows real and expressive communication. Harmer (2007) points out to two important approaches involved in grammar teaching that are inductive and deductive.

Widdowson (1978) points out that in disconnected 'units' language cannot be comprehended and produced, consequently, learners need exposure to both receptive and productive skills to master the target language. Reading, writing, speaking and listening skills have gained prominence since the emergence of communicative approach whereas the latest approaches like task based and content based instructions have highlighted the value of integration of skills. But use of four skills integration to develop grammar has been investigated much.

Teaching grammar also raises a question that which grammar is to be taught. Grammar can be grouped into several types. Cook (2008: 19-24) classifies grammar into 5 types. Ellis (2009: 144) breaks grammar learning difficulties into psychological, linguistic and environmental factors.

Null Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant difference between pre-test scores of grammar of the treatment and control group.
2. There will be no significant difference between pre and posttest scores of the grammar of the treatment group.
3. There will be no significant difference between posttests of scores grammar of the treatment and control groups.

Material and Methods

Pretest-posttest non-randomized control-group design is widely used in research pertaining to language learning. Zyzik (2011) studied the impact of knowledge of lexis and procedural sequencing on learning of Spanish idioms employing pretest-posttest non randomized control-group design. This study uses quantitative data from pre and posttests of two groups. One group is termed as the treatment group which is taught tenses through four skills integration strategy and the other group is termed as control which is taught by a traditional grammar teaching methods. Then their pre and posttests mean scores are

compared to find out the effectiveness of four language skills integration strategy. To select the participants from four intact classes, an IELTS test is administered and two intact sections are selected which have homogenous English Language Proficiency bands. The pilot study of pre and posttests also carried on a group which did not participate in the study and had the score the same IELTS bands as the sections chosen for the study. The consistence of scores of pre and posttests was checked which showed good reliability.

Population

The study is carried out in a university and the participants were studying English at the undergraduate level in the computer science department. The university is located in defense which a posh area but students from varied social and economic background study here.

Participants

Two sections comprised of students of first semester were selected. Each section had 50 students which included both genders, males and females. The total sample involved 100 participants. Their language proficiency ranged from pre intermediate to advanced level. This means each section included students with overall pre intermediate, intermediate and advanced level language proficiency. The data of ten students were discarded as they were not regular.

Sampling

Convenience sampling has been used for this study which is one of the non-probability sampling. Dörnyei considers it as most widely used type of sample in L2. This type of sampling usually involves students of researchers' own institutions. (Dörnyei, 2007).

Instruments

Pre-test

A pre-test (Appendix-A) was constructed for assessing students' ability to use tenses. The pre-test was comprised of two questions. This was done to control effect of content itself as a variable.

Validity and reliability of Pre-test

The test was prepared by consulting ten experienced university teachers and Grammar books from established publishers like Cambridge and oxford. Two questions were kept one was about sentence transformation and other was gap filling question.

Post test

The test was prepared by consulting ten experienced university teachers and Grammar books from established publishers like Cambridge and oxford. Two questions were kept one was about sentence transformation and other was gap filling question. The content of the questions was modified where nature of the question was same.

Syllabus or outlines

Table 1
4 Weeks Plan

S.no	Grammar
1	Present tenses (simple, continuous)
2	Present perfect and perfect continuous

3	Simple past test
4	Past continuous
5	Past perfect
6	The Future—Form Will, Be Going To, or Present Continuous for Future

Books and Resources for Grammar

1. Resource: Grammar in Context 3, Seventh Edition Sandra N. Elbaum Publisher: Sherrise Roe. (Treatment Group)
2. Resource: Grammar in Context 3, Seventh Edition Sandra N. Elbaum Publisher: Sherrise Roe. (Control Group only explanation)

Procedure

After selecting two sections the lesson plans and contents for teaching were drawn. After discussing with the senior and expert teachers it was decided to allocate four weeks to teach tenses. The treatment group was taught through all four skills with tenses as the target in mind. Whereas the control group was taught through traditional method.

Table 2
Add heading of table

Characteristics of Traditional approach	Characteristics of Four Skills Integration Strategy
1. Focus on grammar (tenses) and No integration or minimal integration of Reading, Speaking and Listening. Limited to natural integration of other skills. (Like teacher and students' interaction, information on the board.	1. Uses integration of all four skills (RSLW) order to teach grammar (tenses)
2. Focus on explicit teaching mostly	2. Integration of four skills is done through a common theme for grammar (tenses),
3. Teacher centric mostly	3. Focus on implicit teaching mostly.
4. No use of audio and video	4. Student centric mostly.
5. No speaking tasks included	5. Use of audio and video
6. No listening tasks included	6. Speaking tasks included
7. No reading tasks included	7. Reading tasks included
8. Grammar is taught explicitly	8. Listening tasks included
	9. Grammar (tenses) is taught implicitly mostly.

Controls

Following controls were put in use to minimize the effects of other factors

- The same teacher taught both clusters.
- Both clusters had the same topics
- The objectives for both cohorts were the same
- Teaching timings were the same but days were different.
- Students' and teacher compatibility for both groups was also matched through a discussion with them by a senior faculty member.
- Students were not told that they were participating in a research although after post-test it was revealed.
- Both groups were chosen based on the result of a language proficiency test which showed fair homogeneity.

- The control group was taught in a traditional way with no integration of four skills. That means reading, writing, listening and speaking were not integrated. However, integration of reading and writing minimally employed which was traditionally used in intact classes.
- Same time and sessions were allotted to both groups.
- Exercises and material related to tenses was kept same only approach was different.
- Students’ and teacher compatibility for both groups was also matched through a discussion with students by a senior faculty member.
- Teacher observed (during the class) and chatted with students to identify and control any extraneous variable.

Results and Discussion

**Table 3
Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
Scores	Equal variances assumed	2.802	.098	.249	88	.804	.06667	.26738	-.46470	.59803
	Equal variances not assumed			.249	83.129	.804	.06667	.26738	-.46513	.59846

Table 3 Comparison of pre-test scores of Grammar of the Treatment and Control group using independent sample t test.

Decision Rule: Reject H_0 , if $p \leq \alpha$. If significance (p value of Levene’s test is less than or equal to α (usually.05) then reject the null hypothesis.

Table 3 portrays that $p = .804 > .05$. This indicates that there is no difference in pretests of Grammar of the Treatment and Control groups. The t-test reveals a statistically insignificant difference between the mean scores of pretests of Grammar of Treatment and Control groups. The mean score of pretest of Control group is (4.91) and mean scores of pretest of Treatment group is (4.84).

**Table 4
Relationship of pre and posttest of Grammar of the treatment group.**

Dependent Variable	group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Grammar (Tenses)	Pre-treatment	45	4.844	1.4135	.2107
	Post Treatment	45	6.533	2.106	.31398

The mean scores of pretest of treatment group for Grammar is (4.844) and the means score of posttest of treatment group is (6.533). This infers that there is a significant difference in ability use tenses (Grammar) of treatment group before and after the treatment.

It is concluded that integration of four skills is a better strategy to enhance grammar of the students as compare with traditional teaching method.

**Table 5
Comparison of pre-test and posttest scores of grammar of treatment group using independent sample t test**

Treatment Group: Pre and	Paired Difference		t	df	Sig(2-tailed)
	Mean	Std.			
	95% interval of the difference				

Post Essay Writing			Std. Error mean	Lower	upper			
Pair 1 Pretest	-	2.55683	.38115	-	-.92073	-4.431	44	.000
Treatment Group (Grammar) Posttest	1.68889			2.45705				

Decision Rule: Reject H_0 , if $p \leq \alpha$. If significance (p value of Levene’s test is less than or equal to α (usually .05) then reject the null hypothesis.

Table 5 portrays that $p = .000 < .05$. This indicates that there is significant difference in pretest and posttest of Grammar of Treatment group. The t-test reveals a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of pre and posttest of Grammar of Treatment group. The mean score of pretest of the treatment group is (4.84) and mean scores of post-test of Treatment group is (6.53). The difference in means is 1.68.

Table 6
Relationship of posttest of Grammar of the Treatment and Control group

Dependent Variable	group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Grammar (Tenses)	Post control	45	4.822	.91176	.13592
	Post Treatment	45	6.533	2.106	.31398

The mean scores of posttest of the Control group for grammar is $N=45$; 4.82. The mean score of posttest of the treatment group is $N=45$; 6.53.

Table 7
Comparison of posttest scores of grammar of treatment group using independent sample t test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
Scores	Equal variances assumed	24.076	.000	5.001	88	.000	1.71111	.34214	1.03118	2.39104
	Equal variances not assumed			5.001	59.931	.000	1.71111	.34214	1.02671	2.39551

Decision Rule: Reject H_0 , if $p \leq \alpha$. If significance (p value of Levene’s test is less than or equal to α (usually .05) then reject the null hypothesis.

Table 7 portrays that $p = .000 < .05$. This indicates that there is a significant difference in posttest of Grammar of Treatment and Control group. The t-test reveals a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of posttest of Grammar of Treatment and Control group. The mean score of posttest of the control group is (4.822) and mean score of post-test of Treatment group is (6.53). The difference in means is 1.71.

Findings

The results show that treatment group has progressed as a result of intervention by four skills integrated strategy which support its efficacy as compared to traditional grammar teaching method.

Conclusion

Four skills integration is a better strategy than the traditional teaching method to improve learners’ use of tenses. However, it is important to investigate the underlying

processes responsible for its effectiveness and for that a qualitative study can be carried out. It can be deduced that four skills integration strategy may have some important factors at work that help learners perform better in learning grammar. Qualitative studies are required to unfold such factors.

Recommendations

Teachers, authors and curriculum developers at the undergraduate are recommended to integrate four skills to teach grammar. More empirical research is required regarding four skills integration strategy taking up other grammatical areas.

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