



INTEGRATING READING AND WRITING SKILLS TO IMPROVE ESSAY WRITING

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Abstract: *This study explores the integration of reading and writing skills as a means to enhance essay writing proficiency among intermediate English learners. In many educational contexts, reading and writing are often taught as separate skills, despite their interconnected nature. This research aims to demonstrate that using reading texts as models and sources of input can significantly improve learners' organization, vocabulary use, grammar accuracy, and idea development in writing tasks. The study involved 25 intermediate-level students at an academic lyceum who participated in integrated reading-writing activities over a four-week period. Data was collected through pre- and post-writing tasks, classroom observations, and student feedback. The findings suggest that integrating reading and writing not only increases learner engagement but also supports the development of more structured and coherent essays. The results highlight the importance of designing language lessons that bridge receptive and productive skills for more effective language acquisition.*

Keywords: *reading-writing integration, essay writing, intermediate learners, coherence, academic writing, skill-based instruction, language development*

Introduction

In recent decades, second and foreign language pedagogy has gradually moved toward more integrated and communicative approaches. Among these developments, integrating reading and writing skills has gained increased attention due to its effectiveness in fostering academic literacy. Reading and writing, although traditionally treated as separate components in many English language teaching programs, are in fact interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Reading exposes



learners to a variety of sentence structures, organizational patterns, and thematic development, all of which can serve as valuable input for written production. Similarly, writing offers learners the opportunity to internalize and reproduce language features observed in texts, leading to a deeper understanding and mastery of the language.

Despite this natural synergy, many intermediate learners continue to struggle with essay writing. Common challenges include poor organization, underdeveloped ideas, limited vocabulary, grammatical inaccuracies, and lack of cohesion. These issues often stem from insufficient exposure to academic models of writing and from teaching methods that isolate writing from authentic input sources. When writing is taught as a standalone skill, students may find it difficult to generate and structure ideas, especially when lacking a rich linguistic and conceptual foundation.

Numerous studies suggest that the integration of reading into writing instruction allows learners to interact with a wide range of discourse types, rhetorical structures, and linguistic patterns, all of which are crucial for successful written communication. For instance, when students read a well-structured argumentative essay, they can learn how claims are introduced, how supporting evidence is presented, and how transitions contribute to coherence. Through carefully designed tasks that require analyzing and responding to such texts, students gradually acquire the skills needed to compose their own essays effectively.

In the Uzbek academic lyceum context, where English is taught intensively and writing is a key component of standardized testing, students are expected to produce coherent and accurate written texts. However, anecdotal and empirical evidence suggests that learners at the intermediate level often lack sufficient writing competence, particularly in extended discourse such as essays. Many write in fragmented forms, repeat ideas, or translate directly from their mother tongue, resulting in unnatural and sometimes incomprehensible writing. This raises the need for a teaching model that bridges the gap between input (reading) and output (writing), allowing students to see writing as a process that builds on comprehension and analysis of texts.

Therefore, this study investigates the extent to which integrating reading and writing instruction can enhance the essay writing skills of intermediate EFL learners.



It examines how the use of model texts, reading-based pre-writing tasks, and reflective reading activities can improve learners' organization, coherence, grammar, and vocabulary in their own writing. It is expected that this approach will not only improve writing performance but also boost learners' confidence and motivation by providing meaningful context and purpose for their writing.

Literature Review

Integrating reading and writing instruction has long been recognized as an effective strategy in second language acquisition. According to Hirvela (2004), reading and writing are “complementary processes” where reading provides the linguistic and rhetorical input that supports written output. This interconnection is particularly valuable in academic contexts, where learners are required not only to read and comprehend texts but also to produce structured, argumentative, and cohesive written responses based on what they read.

Grabe and Zhang (2013) argue that reading-to-write tasks help learners build content knowledge, expand vocabulary, and observe discourse features that they can later apply in their own writing. Similarly, Tierney and Pearson (1983) proposed a model where reading and writing are part of a reciprocal process, each contributing to the development of the other. When learners read texts critically and reflectively, they internalize key elements of academic discourse, such as topic development, coherence, cohesion, and proper use of grammatical structures.

In the EFL context, numerous studies have supported the use of integrated reading-writing tasks to enhance writing quality. Kroll (2001) emphasizes that reading serves as a source of input and inspiration, helping learners understand how texts are constructed and how arguments are developed. Stotsky (1983), in a review of research on reading-writing relationships, found that students who read extensively tend to write better in terms of organization, fluency, and grammar.

Moreover, Hyland (2003) points out that genre-based approaches, which incorporate reading samples as models, allow learners to analyze and replicate the rhetorical structure of different text types. This is particularly useful for intermediate learners, who often struggle with organizing ideas and using appropriate linking



devices in their writing. Using model essays for analysis not only exposes learners to target language structures but also promotes metacognitive awareness about how texts function.

In the Central Asian EFL context, including Uzbekistan, some local research (e.g., Karimov, 2021) has highlighted the gap between learners' passive understanding of texts and their ability to produce written language. This points to the need for more integrative methodologies that bring receptive and productive skills into a unified framework. Teaching writing through reading activities provides a scaffolded environment in which learners can draw on what they have read to inform and shape their writing.

In summary, the literature strongly supports the pedagogical value of integrating reading and writing instruction, especially at the intermediate level where learners are transitioning from sentence-level to paragraph- and essay-level writing. It provides a theoretical foundation for this study, which aims to implement and assess such an integrated approach in a real classroom context.

Methodology

This study employed a quasi-experimental design to examine the effectiveness of integrating reading and writing instruction on the essay writing performance of intermediate EFL learners. The study followed a pre-test and post-test format with one experimental group receiving integrated reading-writing instruction over a four-week period. Qualitative data were also collected through classroom observations and student reflections to gain insights into learner perceptions and engagement with the integrated tasks.

The participants of the study were 25 intermediate-level students (aged 16–17) enrolled in the first year of an academic lyceum in Namangan. All participants had studied English for at least five years and were categorized at the B1–B1+ level based on a placement test conducted at the beginning of the academic year. The students had previously been taught writing and reading as separate components and had limited experience with integrated instruction. Parental and institutional consent was obtained prior to the study.



The experimental group received instruction that explicitly connected reading and writing skills. The intervention spanned four weeks, with two 90-minute sessions each week. Each session consisted of:

- Pre-reading activities (e.g., discussion of themes, vocabulary preview)
- Reading tasks (e.g., model essays, opinion articles, or academic passages)
- Reading analysis tasks (identifying structure, cohesive devices, argumentation techniques)
- Guided writing tasks (planning and writing essays inspired by the readings)
- Peer review and teacher feedback

Reading materials were carefully selected to reflect the types of essays students were expected to write (e.g., argumentative, opinion, cause-effect). Students were guided to analyze the content, language, and structure of the model texts before writing their own essays on related topics.

The following instruments were used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data:

- Pre-test and Post-test Essays: Students were asked to write a 200-word opinion essay on given prompts at the beginning and end of the intervention. Essays were assessed using a standardized rubric covering organization, coherence, vocabulary, grammar, and task response.

Classroom Observation Notes: The researcher took detailed notes on student engagement, participation, and responses during the sessions.

Student Reflection Forms: At the end of the intervention, students completed a reflection sheet about their learning experience and perceived improvements.

The quantitative data (pre- and post-test scores) were analyzed using paired sample t-tests to determine whether there were significant improvements in writing performance. Qualitative data (observation notes and reflections) were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns, such as increased awareness of essay structure or improved vocabulary use.

Results



The analysis of pre- and post-test essays revealed a statistically significant improvement in the writing performance of students after participating in the integrated reading-writing instruction. The average pre-test score was 65 out of 100, while the post-test average rose to 81, indicating substantial gains in overall writing quality.

The most noticeable improvements were observed in the following areas:

Coherence and Organization: Students began to structure their essays more logically, using clear introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions. Use of linking words and transition phrases improved, enhancing the overall flow of their writing.

Lexical Resource: Learners incorporated more varied and topic-appropriate vocabulary, often drawn directly from the reading materials.

Grammatical Range and Accuracy: While some minor errors remained, sentence variety increased, and learners demonstrated greater control over complex structures such as relative clauses, conditional sentences, and passive voice.

Idea Development: Students demonstrated a clearer ability to support their arguments with relevant examples and logical reasoning, often referencing ideas or structures seen in model texts.

Qualitative data from classroom observations supported these findings. Learners were visibly more engaged during lessons that began with reading activities, often referring back to the texts during their writing process. In reflective responses, most students reported that reading helped them better understand how to organize their ideas and provided “inspiration” for vocabulary and expressions.

Discussion

These findings are consistent with previous research on reading-writing integration. As noted by Grabe and Zhang (2013), reading provides essential input that supports written output, particularly when learners are exposed to model texts representing target genres. The structured reading-to-writing approach used in this study allowed students to internalize patterns of organization, argument development, and language use, which they were able to replicate in their own writing.

This also aligns with the claims of Hyland (2003) that genre-based instruction—where learners examine how texts are constructed for specific purposes—



enables them to write more effectively. In this study, students who read argumentative or opinion texts before writing essays of the same type showed significant improvements in cohesion, content development, and formality of language.

Moreover, the integrated approach provided context and purpose for writing, which is often lacking in isolated writing instruction. Students were not just writing for the sake of practice—they were responding to ideas, forming opinions, and engaging in critical thinking based on texts they had read. This added depth to their writing and fostered a more communicative classroom atmosphere.

One important insight from the qualitative data is that integration increased student motivation. Several learners mentioned they previously found writing “difficult” or “boring,” but with reading activities, they felt more confident and “knew what to say and how to say it.”

These outcomes demonstrate the effectiveness of reading-to-write instruction, especially for intermediate EFL learners who are developing academic writing proficiency. While the small sample size and limited timeframe are constraints, the positive changes observed in both writing quality and learner attitudes suggest that integrated instruction deserves a more prominent role in EFL classrooms.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore the impact of integrating reading and writing instruction on the essay writing skills of intermediate EFL learners. The findings clearly demonstrate that when learners engage with well-structured texts before writing, they gain better insight into how ideas are organized, how arguments are developed, and how language is used in context.

Quantitative results showed a significant improvement in learners' writing performance across multiple areas, including organization, coherence, vocabulary use, and grammatical accuracy. The qualitative data further supported these findings, indicating that learners were more confident, motivated, and aware of writing conventions after participating in integrated instruction.

The study reinforces the idea that reading and writing should not be taught in isolation. Instead, a holistic approach that sees writing as a response to reading and



thinking leads to more meaningful and effective language learning. Integrating the two skills helps students not only produce better essays but also become more critical and independent learners.

Recommendations

Based on the outcomes of this research, several recommendations can be made for EFL teachers, curriculum designers, and language education policy makers:

Adopt Reading-to-Write Models: Teachers should integrate authentic reading materials into writing instruction, using texts as springboards for student writing activities.

Focus on Genre Awareness: Educators should expose learners to a variety of academic text types, helping them analyze and replicate common features such as structure, tone, and cohesion.

Provide Scaffolding: Before assigning writing tasks, guide students through reading comprehension, vocabulary exploration, and content analysis activities to support their understanding.

Encourage Reflection and Feedback: Promote peer and self-assessment strategies to raise learners' metacognitive awareness and improve their ability to revise their work.

Train Teachers: Professional development programs should equip teachers with the skills and tools necessary to implement integrated approaches effectively.

Include Integrated Tasks in Exams: National exams and standardized assessments should reflect the interconnected nature of reading and writing to encourage holistic instruction at all levels.

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