



An Analysis of Integrating Language Skills in Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers

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Abstract

This study explores the importance of integrating the four language skills- listening, speaking, reading, and writing teaching Arabic to non-native speakers, as opposed to the traditional methods that isolate these skills. The objective of this research is to demonstrate how an integrative approach to language instruction enhances learners' overall proficiency and communicative competence. Using an analytical survey method, an electronic questionnaire was distributed to 120 students enrolled in the Post Graduate and Research Department of Arabic at The New College, Chennai, India. The findings reveal that students benefit significantly from a cohesive approach that mirrors real-world language use, improving their fluency and accuracy across all language domains. Results also indicate that integrating language skills helps learners develop balanced linguistic competence, reinforcing the interconnectedness of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Based on these findings, this paper advocates for the redesign of educational curricula and teaching programs to adopt this integrative method, thereby improving the efficacy of Arabic language instruction for non-native speakers. The conclusion underscores that such an approach is vital for fostering communicative competence and linguistic development among learners.

Keywords: Integration of skills, listening, speaking, writing, reading

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Introduction

Linguistic education has continuously evolved to meet the growing demands of effective language acquisition, particularly in teaching Arabic to non-native speakers. Arabic, with its unique

structure and linguistic challenges, requires teaching methods that cater to diverse learners while ensuring linguistic competency. Over the years, educators and linguists have sought to refine instructional techniques that support comprehensive language learning, where learners develop proficiency not only in isolated skills but across all language domains. Traditionally, language teaching has often focused on discrete language skills-listening, speaking, reading, and writing-as independent components. However, this approach has been criticized for creating imbalances, where learners may excel in one area while struggling in another. To address this, recent pedagogical trends emphasize an integrative approach to language learning, where each skill supports and enhances the others. This method has been increasingly recognized for its effectiveness in achieving holistic linguistic competence.

This study highlights the importance of integrating language skills to provide a more cohesive and effective learning experience. Previous studies, including those by (Qasserras, 2023); (Lingga et al., 2020), have demonstrated the lack of skill isolation in language teaching, resulting in students excelling in one aspect while lagging in others. Furthermore, (Ramadan Elbaoui Shaddad & Jember, 2024); (Kasirzadeh & Gabriel, 2023); (Marzuki et al., 2023); (Yu, 2024), underscores the significance of aligning linguistic output with communicative goals, reinforcing the need for a balanced instructional approach. This research proposes that the integration of linguistic skills-listening, speaking, reading, and writing-not only enhances overall language proficiency but also ensures consistency and fluency in students' performance. The study also addresses the need for teacher training in fostering this integration, as advocated by (Theodorio, 2024); (Panakaje et al., 2024). The primary objective of this research is to examine the efficacy of integrating language skills in teaching Arabic to non-native speakers, to promote balanced proficiency and improve communicative competence across all linguistic domains (Mootoosamy & Aryadoust, 2024); (Zeng & Yang, 2024).

Based on the mentioned questions, the objectives of this research can be outlined as follows: To understand the role of integrating linguistic skills in improving students' linguistic proficiency; To assess the impact of separating linguistic skills in the educational process on students' language proficiency; To examine the effect of discrepancies between linguistic skills on students' performance during the educational process.

Methodology

The study applied a descriptive-analytical and quasi-experimental method to investigate the importance of integrating linguistic skills in teaching Arabic to non-native speakers, as this method was deemed suitable for the study.

Study Population and Sample

The study sample consisted of 120 students from the Post Graduate and Research Department of Arabic, The New College, Chennai, India at the University of Madras during the academic year 2022-2023. The total number of students enrolled in this program was 132, and the questionnaire was distributed among them.

Study Instrument

A questionnaire was designed to collect the study data. It was divided into two sections: the first covered the demographic data of the respondents, while the second contained items that measured the importance of integrating linguistic skills in teaching Arabic to non-native speakers. The questionnaire underwent validity testing by subject matter experts.

Statistical Criterion

To interpret the mean scores of the respondents' estimates for each item in the questionnaire, the following scale was adopted:

- High score: 3.67 - 5.00
- Medium score: 2.34 - 3.66
- Low score: 1.00 - 2.33

This was based on the following equation:

$(\text{Highest value} - \text{Lowest value for response options}) \div \text{Number of levels} = (5 - 1) \div 3 = 1.33$.
This value (1.33) represents the category length, using a five-point Likert scale with responses ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

Reliability and Validity of the Study

The reliability of the study instrument was tested using the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient, yielding a score of 0.87 for the study dimensions, indicating high reliability. The items were suitable for measuring the variables with a high level of confidence. The model's appropriateness was also tested by calculating the skewness coefficient for the variables, using quantitative statistical analysis, which confirmed that the data followed a normal distribution, as the skewness value was less than 1.

Test Study

The values of both skewness and kurtosis tests ranged around 2, confirming that the data distribution was normal. These values indicated that all study variables were normally distributed. The test results showed no statistically significant differences across all axes at the significance level of (0.05), confirming the normal distribution of all axes.

The Four Linguistic Skills

Listening

Before concentrating into listening, it is essential to clarify its concept. Listening is a deliberate human process aimed at understanding, analyzing, interpreting, and then constructing a mental image.

The types of listening are as follows:

1. Superficial Listening: This refers to spontaneous listening without any particular intent.
2. Listening for Understanding: Listening with the purpose of comprehending a text or speech for a specific goal.
3. Analytical and Critical Listening: This type of listening aims to analyze, understand, and formulate responses.

The Importance of Listening

The importance of listening lies in its being the cornerstone of linguistic skills and the first of the linguistic communication skills. It plays a significant role in our lives, being the first communication method a person uses in early stages of life with others. It serves as a gateway to the development of other skills.

Speaking (Conversation)

Before concentrating into speaking, it is essential to clarify its concept.

"Conversation is verbal expression interwoven throughout all lessons, some being lengthy, others brief. It could be a historical event or a geographic inquiry, for example, and it always occurs between the teacher and the student. Conversation comes in two forms: conversation for the sake of conversation and practice, and conversation for the sake of explanation and education". "Conversation is one of the fundamental skills that students aim to master in foreign languages. The need for this skill has intensified in recent times as the importance of verbal communication between people has grown. It is particularly crucial when teaching Arabic to focus on the verbal aspect, as Arabic is a language of communication."

Reading

Before discussing reading, it is necessary to clarify its definition.

"Reading is the complex process of visually perceiving written symbols and translating them into spoken sounds by linking each letter to its appropriate sound."

"It is recognition, understanding, critique, and interaction. It is a mental activity that involves the intervention of the whole personality of a person."

From these previous concepts, the types of reading are evident:

1. Silent reading, which means understanding the material being read without focusing on pronunciation or speed.
2. Oral reading, which means influencing listeners while paying attention to the understanding of the texts being read and delivering them audibly.
3. Analytical reading, which aims to analyze ideas and deduce deeper meanings and themes of the text.

The Importance of Reading

The importance of reading is clear in that it is a fundamental tool for understanding and interacting with texts. It is one of the most important language skills that contributes to enhancing linguistic culture and expanding knowledge. Reading helps the learner acquire new vocabulary, enhances awareness of grammatical rules, and develops critical thinking skills. Additionally, reading is key to academic excellence, as it allows learners access to various sources of knowledge.

Objectives of Reading:

1. Improving text comprehension: The primary goal of reading is to develop the learner's ability to understand and analyze the texts being read, whether educational or literary.
2. Enhancing speed reading skills: Increasing the learner's ability to read texts quickly without losing understanding.
3. Developing critical thinking: Enabling the learner to critique and effectively analyze texts.
4. Acquiring new vocabulary: Enhancing the learner's linguistic vocabulary by exposing them to a wide range of different texts.
5. Oral reading: Improving the learner's performance in oral reading and increasing their confidence in using the language.

Writing

Definition of Writing: "Writing is the process of producing symbols on paper or screen in such a way that these symbols represent specific ideas and words. It is an expressive skill that requires the learner to organize thoughts and express them clearly and accurately."

Types of Writing:

1. Functional writing: Used for formal communication, such as writing letters, reports, and articles.
2. Creative writing: Focuses on personal and creative expression through writing poetry, stories, and literary texts.
3. Academic writing: Involves organizing thoughts and presenting arguments and evidence systematically to support a specific idea or topic.

The Integration of the Four Language Skills

Despite the apparent separation of language skills into listening, speaking, reading, and writing, these skills are intrinsically interconnected through their content and interactive relationships. Language comprises productive skills (speaking and writing) and receptive skills (listening and reading). Dissecting these skills individually distorts the language; one cannot exist without the others, highlighting their ultimate interconnectedness. Thus, teaching Arabic to non-native speakers

should be approached in an integrative and interconnected manner. Any development in one language skill should be accompanied by growth in the other skills, as deficiencies in one area lead to shortcomings in others. Language communication relies on the learning and teaching of language skills in an interconnected and integrative way due to the reciprocal relationships between these skills.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results obtained from the study using appropriate statistical methods and discusses them in the context of theoretical literature and previous studies. Question One: What role does the interconnection of language skills play in improving students' language levels? To answer this question means and standard deviations were calculated for the study sample's responses on the scale measuring the role of the interconnection of language skills in improving students' language levels, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of the study sample's responses

Rank	Item	Mean	Std. Dev.	Degree
1	I do not find difficulty in learning speaking skills after reading skills.	3.79	0.80	High
2	I do not find difficulty in learning writing skills after listening skills.	3.73	0.76	High
3	I think I am better at learning speaking skills compared to other skills.	3.54	0.91	High
4	I think I am better at learning writing skills compared to other skills.	3.31	0.98	Medium
5	I think I am better at learning reading skills compared to other skills.	3.31	0.96	Medium
6	I think I am better at learning listening skills compared to other skills.	3.30	1.03	Medium
7	I learn all four language skills in one classroom lesson.	3.13	1.09	Medium
8	I think I learn all four language skills at the same language level.	2.90	1.16	Medium
	Overall Score	3.38	0.58	Medium

Table 1 shows that the overall mean for the total score of the language skills interconnection scale was medium, with an average mean of 3.38. The means for individual items ranged from 2.90 to 3.79. The item "I do not find difficulty in learning speaking skill after reading skill" ranked highest with a mean of 3.79, indicating a high degree of agreement. The item "I do not find difficulty in learning writing skill after listening skill" ranked second with a mean of 3.73, also reflecting a high degree of agreement. The item "I learn all four language skills in one classroom lesson" was ranked seventh with a mean of 3.13, showing a medium degree of agreement. The item "I think I learn all

four language skills at the same language level" ranked eighth and last with a mean of 2.90, also indicating a medium degree of agreement. The researcher attributes this to the methods used in teaching Arabic to non-native speakers, where each language skill is treated as a separate lesson, almost like a distinct subject in terms of content.

Table 2. Total score on the impact of separating language skills

Rank	Item	Mean	Std. Dev.	Degree
1	In learning speaking skills, I need other language skills.	3.98	0.77	High
2	In learning listening skills, I need other language skills.	3.97	0.78	High
3	In learning reading skills, I need other language skills.	3.90	0.81	High
4	In learning writing skills, I need other language skills.	3.85	0.85	High
5	I learn all four language skills separately, which limits my learning adequately.	3.80	0.85	High
6	I learn reading skills separately in a distinct lesson.	3.75	0.73	High
7	I learn writing skills separately in a distinct lesson.	3.73	0.74	High
8	I learn speaking skills separately in a distinct lesson.	3.67	0.82	Medium
9	I learn listening skills separately in a distinct lesson.	3.66	0.82	Medium
Overall Score		3.81	0.57	High

Table 2 indicates that the overall mean for the total score on the impact of separating language skills in the educational process was high, with a mean score of 3.81. The means for individual items ranged from 3.66 to 3.98. The item "In learning speaking skill, I need other language skills" ranked highest with a mean of 3.98, reflecting a high degree of agreement. The item "In learning listening skill, I need other language skills" ranked second with a mean of 3.97, also showing a high degree of agreement. The item "I learn speaking skill separately in a distinct lesson" was ranked eighth with a mean of 3.67, showing a medium degree of agreement. The item "I learn listening skill separately in a distinct lesson" ranked ninth with a mean of 3.66, also indicating a medium degree of agreement. This indicates that separating language skills into distinct lessons can significantly affect the learning process, as students perceive that they need integration of these skills to enhance their learning experience.

Table 3. Score for the variance effect scale

Rank	Item	Mean	Std. Dev.	Degree
1	The four language skills are the foundation of learning Arabic, which motivates learning them in light of their interconnection.	4.03	0.68	High
2	It is essential to teach all four language skills together to improve the Arabic learner's proficiency quickly and accurately.	4.00	0.80	High
3	Learning Arabic for non-native speakers is more effective when considering the interconnection of language skills.	3.99	0.63	High
4	The Four language skills are connected and combined in a single lesson.	3.62	1.03	Medium
5	The Four language skills are connected in such a manner in our daily life.	3.21	1.07	Medium
Overall score for the variance impact scale		3.77	0.54	High

Table 3, shows that the overall mean score for the variance effect scale was high, with an average of (3.77), while the means for the individual items ranged between (3.21) and (4.03). The item stating "The four language skills are the foundation for learning Arabic, and this is a motivation to learn them in light of their integration" ranked first with a mean of (4.03), indicating a high level. The item stating "It is necessary to teach the four language skills together for the Arabic language learner to improve their linguistic level quickly and accurately" ranked second with a mean of (4.00), also indicating a high level. The item "I learn better when the four language skills are integrated and combined in one lesson" ranked fourth to last with a mean of (3.62), indicating a medium level. The item "I can coherently apply the four language skills in daily life" ranked fifth and last with a mean of (3.21), indicating a medium level. The researcher believes that this result reflects the traditional methods of teaching Arabic, where each skill is taught separately, along with teaching methods based on grammar, translation, or auditory-oral methods, without considering the importance of teaching Arabic to non-native speakers in light of the integration of language skills. This was emphasized by the 2020 study by al-Nuhaibi through its recommendations, which examined the language proficiency of non-native Arabic learners and highlighted the issue of the variation of language skills and their effect on learners' language proficiency (Almelhes, 2024); (Towler, 2024); (Saepudin et al., 2024); (Momani & Al-oglah, 2021); (Segar & Asmawi, 2024); (Muftah, 2024). These results underscore the critical role of integrating all four language skills to enhance the effectiveness of language learning. They align with the findings of previous studies that emphasize the importance of a cohesive approach to teaching language skills, as they collectively contribute to improved language proficiency and learner motivation (Karlen et al., 2023); (Zajac et al., 2021); (Zamecnik et al., 2024); (Zhai & Wibowo, 2023).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research highlights the importance of integrating the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in teaching Arabic to non-native speakers. This integration involves understanding how these skills affect each other and should be reflected in language teaching methods. The learning process begins with listening, followed by speaking, then reading, and finally writing. The goal of the educational process is to achieve oral communication in Arabic, and it is crucial to create educational conditions, situations, and methods that facilitate this goal by utilizing linguistic theories and methodologies. The sequence of skills does not mean that listening should be taught in a separate stage, followed by speaking, reading, and then writing in isolated stages. Instead, the material for speaking should be connected to what the learner has previously heard. Similarly, the reading material should build on the skills developed through listening and speaking. Writing should be based on what the learner has read and practiced in both oral and written expression.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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