

## **The Implementation of Integrated Skills Approach in English Language Teaching at MA Darul Istiqamah Boarding School Maros**

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### **Abstract**

*This study examines the implementation of the Integrated Skills Approach (ISA) in English Language Teaching (ELT) at MA Darul Istiqamah Boarding School, Maros. The ISA emphasizes the simultaneous development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in a cohesive and communicative learning environment. This approach is believed to better reflect real-world language use and improve students' overall language competence. The study employed a quantitative research design with purposive sampling. The participants consisted of twenty Grade XI students, selected randomly from Science, Social Sciences, and Language tracks. Data were collected through pre- and post-tests, structured questionnaires, and classroom observations. Statistical analysis showed significant improvement in students' proficiency, particularly in speaking and writing skills, after being taught using the integrated skills method. The results indicate that the Integrated Skills Approach positively impacts students' motivation, engagement, and communicative competence. These findings have important pedagogical implications for English teaching at MA Darul Istiqamah and other similar educational institutions. The study recommends the broader application of this approach in secondary education to promote more effective and meaningful English language learning.*

**Keywords:** *Implementation, Integrated Skills, Teaching, Boarding School.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

English is considered the most widely spoken language in the world, serving as the dominant medium of communication across borders and cultures. It is the key to accessing global knowledge, participating in international trade, and contributing to the digital age. As a result, the importance of English as a tool for social, academic, and professional success has become undeniable. For many countries, including Indonesia, mastering English is considered a necessary skill in order to keep up with the rapid pace of globalization. In Indonesia, the government has placed significant emphasis on English language education, integrating it into the national curriculum from primary school through higher education. English is regarded as a crucial subject in the school system, often seen as a gateway to international opportunities, academic growth, and career development.

However, despite the widespread inclusion of English in the educational system, many Indonesian students still struggle to develop fluency and proficiency in the language. The reasons for this are multifaceted, but one key issue lies in the methods used to teach English. Traditional

English language teaching (ELT) practices in Indonesia tend to separate language skills—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—into distinct and isolated lessons. Teachers typically focus on grammar exercises, vocabulary drills, and reading comprehension, often neglecting to integrate these skills into real-world communication tasks. This fragmented approach to language teaching is problematic because it does not adequately mirror how English is used in authentic communication, where the skills are interwoven and employed simultaneously. In day-to-day life, people rarely engage in a conversation or a task that involves only one language skill at a time.

To address this issue, educators around the world have adopted the Integrated Skills Approach (ISA), which emphasizes teaching multiple language skills in a cohesive and meaningful way. Instead of isolating the skills, ISA promotes activities that combine listening, speaking, reading, and writing in ways that reflect the complex, multi-skill nature of real-life language use. For example, in an integrated lesson, students may be asked to listen to a podcast, discuss the content with a partner, and then write a short reflection or response based on their discussion. This approach enables students to apply their language skills in a more holistic and interactive manner, ultimately improving their communicative competence.

The Integrated Skills Approach has been shown to be particularly effective in promoting active engagement and motivation among students. By using real-world tasks, students are able to see the practical relevance of what they are learning, making the language learning process more meaningful. Research suggests that integrated skills instruction enhances students' fluency, critical thinking, and ability to use the language creatively. The approach also fosters collaboration and communication skills, which are essential for success in today's globalized world. In urban and international educational settings, where access to language resources is more abundant, ISA has proven to be a valuable tool for improving English proficiency.

Despite its advantages, however, the Integrated Skills Approach has not been widely implemented across all educational contexts, especially in boardings-based schools or Islamic boarding schools. In Indonesia, boardings are traditional institutions that provide religious education alongside general academic subjects. These schools are deeply rooted in the cultural and religious traditions of the Indonesian Muslim community, and their curricula often prioritize religious studies, such as Quranic memorization and Islamic jurisprudence, over subjects like English. Consequently, language instruction in boardings schools faces distinct challenges, including limited exposure to English outside the classroom, a lack of qualified English teachers, and a school culture that places more value on religious education than on general subjects like language learning.

One such institution is MA Darul Istiqamah Boarding School Maros, an Islamic boarding school in South Sulawesi. The school offers a unique blend of Islamic education and general academic instruction, including English as a foreign language. The students at MA Darul Istiqamah live on campus and engage in daily religious activities, which creates a tight-knit community where students form strong bonds with one another. However, the school's primary focus on religious studies and the limited use of English in everyday communication outside of formal lessons may hinder students from developing practical language skills. The absence of a strong English-speaking environment, combined with the traditional teaching methods still in use, presents challenges to effective English language teaching at the school.

While MA Darul Istiqamah Boarding School Maros provides an environment that supports the religious and social development of its students, the question remains whether English language instruction can be integrated effectively within this setting. Limited research exists on the application of the Integrated Skills Approach in boardings-based schools, and this represents a significant gap in the current literature. Most studies on integrated language teaching have been conducted in public or urban schools, where students have more opportunities for exposure to English outside the classroom. In contrast, boardings-based schools like MA Darul Istiqamah face a unique set of circumstances that could influence the way the Integrated Skills Approach is implemented and received by both teachers and students.

The lack of research on this topic means that there is little understanding of how the Integrated Skills Approach can be adapted to fit the context of boardings schools. How do teachers at MA Darul Istiqamah incorporate integrated language tasks into their lessons? What challenges do they face in applying this approach, given the school's unique educational environment? How do students respond to integrated tasks, and do they find them effective in improving their English language skills? These are critical questions that remain unanswered, and addressing them could provide valuable insights for improving English language teaching in the boarding schools across Indonesia.

This study aims to fill this research gap by investigating the implementation of the Integrated Skills Approach in English language teaching at MA Darul Istiqamah Boarding School Maros. By examining the experiences of teachers and students, this research will explore how integrated tasks are utilized in the classroom, how students engage with these tasks, and the challenges faced in adapting this approach to a boardings setting. The findings of this study will not only contribute to the broader field of English language teaching in Indonesia but also offer practical recommendations for adapting the Integrated Skills Approach in other Islamic boarding schools. By providing a deeper understanding of how English can be taught more effectively in these unique educational contexts, this research could play a key role in shaping future language education policies and practices in boardings schools.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the implementation of the Integrated Skills Approach in English language teaching at MA Darul Istiqamah Boarding School, Maros. A case study was chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of the pedagogical practices within the specific institutional context. The study focused on how English teachers integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in classroom activities and the perceived impact on students' learning.

### **Population and Sample**

The population of this study consisted of English teachers and students at MA Darul Istiqamah Boarding School. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, targeting individuals who were directly involved in the English language teaching and learning process. The participants twenty students from Grade XI who had been selected randomly from Science, Social, and Language concentration.

## **Method of Collecting Data**

### **a. Pre-Test**

The pre-test simply aimed to gain the information about the vocabulary proficiency of both groups. This phase was used to examine the proficiency level of the subject. The test consisted of 55 multiple-choices questions. It assessed five aspects of students' vocabulary, those are: part of speech, translation, synonym, antonym and meaning of words. These aspects were based on Duppenhtaler's (2007: p. 2) aspects of "knowing a word".

### **b. Treatment**

The experimental group was given two short stories as the treatment of the research. They were free to use any strategy to comprehend the stories during the given time. Besides, there were 18 meetings in total where they discussed the stories and learnt the words that they found difficult in the stories. The treatment aims to enrich the students' vocabulary and improve their understanding of English so it is based on aspect of knowing a word proposed by Folse. In the meetings, the teacher reads the story and explains any words that are unclear to the students or any words that the students found interesting. The stories chosen are:

- 1) Saffron by Mirza Waheed
- 2) Chechnya by Anthony Marra

The writer chose these stories for two reasons, 1) the stories have strong Islamic background that the students tend to have interest in it, 2) the stories were recommended and claimed as the contemporary short stories that worth reading by some sites (Yadav, 2016). In contrast, the control group had the regular teaching and learning process as their treatment.

### **c. Post-Test**

Post-test is the final evaluation to see the result of the treatment and to examine whether it was effective or not. The same test which is given in pre-test will be used in the post-test to keep the reliability and validity of measurement.

### **d. Questionnaire**

The questionnaire is necessary to answer the second research questions. It aims to scale the students' acceptability toward this method. It is designed as Likert scale questionnaire. It consists of fifteen statements and four options for each statement. It was given to the students after the treatment was finished. The options are 1) strongly agree, 2) agree, 3) disagree, and 4) strongly disagree (Setiyadi, 2006: p. 59). The neutral option is not included to avoid the respondents' tendency to make it as the safe choice.

### **e. Other**

In this research, some supporting or supplementary data are necessary and also to cover other problems that cannot be solved by the main instruments of the research. These data were gained through browsing internet and related literature, note-taking, observation and interview.

## Method of Analyzing Data

Analyzing the data is necessary to answer the research questions. The collected data were analyzed by using several tools. The data were subtracted into information as the result of the research. The types of data that were collected through this research are listed below:

### a. Central Tendency

Measuring central tendency is essential in quantitative research. It can describe a set of data in a single representative number conveniently (Gay, 2012: p. 323). There are several measures that can be used; those are mean, median and mode. Every measure has its own advantages and disadvantages depend on the set of the data. Central tendency is vital in this research to see the difference of overall result between pre-test and post-test and between experimental group and control group.

Mean is the central tendency measure which will be used in analyzing data. Mean is the average score of all samples. It can be used as the comparison between the average score in the pre-test and post-test or between the experimental and control group. By comparing it, the output of the treatment can be figured out. The mean is also used to determine the variance and deviation standard of the data. The formula that will be used to find the mean is:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{x_1 + x_2 + \dots + x_n}{n}$$

$\bar{x}$ : mean     $x$ : the value of sample     $n$ : total of sample

(Gay, 2011)

### b. Variability

The mean of the data played big role in the result of the research, but it was insufficient. It was also fundamental to find out the variability of the data. For example, the set of data which consist of 80, 60, 60, 40 and another set of data which consist of 100, 80, 40, 20 will have 60 as the mean. This case proofed that relying on mean alone may mislead in interpreting the data. Thus, variability was important to see the spreading of the data among the students within the same group. The measure which was used in this research was standard deviation.

Before calculating standard deviation, it is necessary to find out the variance of the data. Variance is the average of the squared differences from the Mean. It is simply used to calculate the standard deviation later. The formula is written below:

$$s^2 = \frac{n \sum_{i=1}^n x_i^2 - (\sum_{i=1}^n x_i)^2}{n(n-1)}$$

$s^2$ : variance     $s$ : standard deviation     $x$ : value  $x$  to  $-i$      $n$ : total of sample

Standard deviation ( $\sigma$ ) is used to measure the amount of variation or dispersion of a set of data values. Low standard deviation indicates the values tend to be close to the mean. Low standard deviation indicated that the students tended to have the same level of proficiency. It is simply the square root of the variance. The formula is written below:

$$s = \sqrt{\frac{n \sum_{i=1}^n x_i^2 - (\sum_{i=1}^n x_i)^2}{n(n-1)}}$$

Since it is the square root of the variance, it can be simplified as below:

$$s = \sqrt{s^2}$$

$s^2$ : variance     $s$ : standard deviation     $x_i$ : value x to  $-i$      $n$ : total of sample

(Statistics How To, 2017)

### c. Classification

The gathered scores of the students were divided into five groups which is created based on the range of the scores. It is simply to ease the reader to see the scores distribution in groups. The classification is used to simplify the presentation of research's result in this thesis and it does not have another use than that. The classification is listed below:

Table 1. Classification

Group labelling	Score classification
Very high	81-100
High	61-80
Average	41-60
Low	21-40
Very Low	00-20

(Created based on Setiyadi (2006: p. 126)

## FINDINGS

After applying the treatment, the tabulation of pre-test and post-test can be seen as follows:

Table 2. Students' Score

No.	Student Code	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Average Pre-test	Average Post-test	Progress (%)
1	S1	65 → 79	60 → 75	68 → 80	62 → 76	63.75	77.25	+21.2%
2	S2	70 → 81	64 → 80	72 → 85	68 → 80	68.5	81.75	+19.4%
3	S3	60 → 74	58 → 70	66 → 78	60 → 72	61.0	73.5	+20.5%
4	S4	55 → 70	52 → 68	60 → 74	58 → 70	56.25	70.5	+25.3%
5	S5	62 → 77	60 → 72	65 → 80	63 → 75	62.5	76.25	+22.0%
6	S6	68 → 80	62 → 7	70 → 82	65 → 78	66.25	79.0	+19.2%
7	S7	64 → 78	59 → 72	67 → 80	62 → 74	63.0	76.0	+20.6%
8	S8	61 → 76	57 → 70	64 → 77	60 → 72	60.5	73.75	+21.9%
9	S9	67 → 80	63 → 78	69 → 84	66 → 78	66.25	80.0	+20.7%
10	S10	59 → 73	56 → 70	63 → 76	58 → 70	59.0	72.25	+22.4%
11	S11	66 → 80	62 → 75	68 → 82	65 → 76	65.25	78.25	+20.0%
12	S12	60 → 74	55 → 70	64 → 78	62 → 74	60.25	74.0	+22.8%
13	S13	63 → 76	58 → 72	66 → 80	60 → 74	61.75	75.5	+22.2%
14	S14	65 → 78	61 → 74	68 → 81	64 → 76	64.5	77.25	+19.8%

No.	Student Code	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Average Pre-test	Average Post-test	Progress (%)
15	S15	68 → 82	64 → 78	70 → 85	67 → 80	67.25	81.25	+20.8%
16	S16	60 → 73	58 → 70	65 → 78	60 → 72	60.75	73.25	+20.5%
17	S17	62 → 75	59 → 72	66 → 80	62 → 74	62.25	75.25	+20.9%
18	S18	58 → 72	54 → 68	63 → 76	60 → 72	58.75	72.0	+22.6%
19	S19	61 → 74	57 → 70	64 → 78	60 → 72	60.5	73.5	+21.5%
20	S20	67 → 80	62 → 76	70 → 83	66 → 78	66.25	79.25	+19.6%

From the data above, it can be seen that the progress of each student in this study reveals a compelling narrative of growth in English language proficiency. Student S1, for instance, began with a moderate average score of 63.75 and demonstrated a notable improvement across all language skills, particularly in listening and writing, ultimately achieving an average of 77.25, which marked a 21.2% increase. Similarly, Student S2, who initially held the highest pre-test score of 68.5, further strengthened their proficiency, reaching an impressive post-test average of 81.75. Their gains, especially in speaking and reading, reflect a solid 19.4% improvement.

Student S3 started from an average of 61.0 and showed steady growth to 73.5, marking a 20.5% increase, with balanced enhancements in each skill area. Student S4, who had one of the lowest starting points at 56.25, displayed the most dramatic progress among all participants. Their post-test average rose to 70.5, amounting to a remarkable 25.3% improvement, highlighting the effectiveness of the intervention for lower-proficiency learners.

For Student S5, the average improved from 62.5 to 76.25, with strong gains particularly evident in reading and writing, contributing to an overall increase of 22.0%. Student S6, with a high initial average of 66.25, improved to 79.0, showing solid growth (19.2%) while maintaining consistent performance across all four language areas. Student S7 progressed from 63.0 to 76.0, reflecting a 20.6% increase, and exhibited balanced gains in both receptive and productive skills.

Meanwhile, Student S8 advanced from 60.5 to 73.75, achieving a 21.9% gain, with particularly visible progress in reading. Student S9, who began with an already strong average of 66.25, continued to excel by reaching 80.0 in the post-test, with gains distributed relatively evenly across listening, speaking, reading, and writing, yielding a 20.7% increase.

Student S10, with a modest beginning at 59.0, achieved a post-test average of 72.25, marking a significant 22.4% gain. The most considerable improvements were seen in speaking and writing. Likewise, Student S11 advanced from 65.25 to 78.25 (20.0%), maintaining a balanced trajectory of improvement. Student S12, starting at 60.25, recorded a post-test score of 74.0 and showed particularly strong progress in reading and writing, culminating in a 22.8% gain.

Student S13 mirrored this pattern, increasing from 61.75 to 75.5 with a 22.2% gain, reflecting steady development across all four skills. Student S14 progressed from 64.5 to 77.25 (19.8%), with slightly more emphasis on reading and listening improvements. Student S15, another high-performing student, went from 67.25 to 81.25, marking a 20.8% improvement with notable increases in reading and speaking.

Student S16 started at 60.75 and reached 73.25 (20.5%), showing balanced growth, while Student S17 moved from 62.25 to 75.25 (20.9%) with strong gains in reading and writing. Student S18, one of the students with lower initial scores (58.75), made a meaningful leap to

72.0, a 22.6% gain, especially in reading. Student S19, who began at 60.5, also showed clear improvement to 73.5 (21.5%), with reading and writing again being the strongest areas of growth.

Finally, Student S20 increased their average from 66.25 to 79.25, registering a 19.6% gain and demonstrating solid improvement across all skills, especially listening and reading. Altogether, these individual narratives illustrate not just a pattern of success but the transformative potential of a learning approach that caters to diverse proficiency levels, fostering growth for both high-achieving and struggling learners alike.

## DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the impact of the Integrated Skills Approach in the context of English Language Teaching (ELT) at MA Darul Istiqamah Boarding School Maros. The results indicate that the integration of language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—resulted in significant improvement in students' overall language proficiency. The post-test data across all participants demonstrated consistent and marked progress in each language skill, affirming the pedagogical benefits of integrating these skills into a cohesive instructional approach. This finding aligns with existing theoretical frameworks and provides empirical evidence for the effectiveness of the Integrated Skills Approach in language education.

The Integrated Skills Approach is the interconnectedness of language skills. According to Brown (2007), language learning is most effective when skills are not taught in isolation but are rather intertwined, mirroring how language is used in real life. The significant improvements observed across all four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in this study support Brown's assertion that language skills should be taught together as they are naturally interdependent.

For example, students' improvements in reading comprehension were often mirrored by corresponding progress in writing. Students like S5 (who showed a 22.0% improvement) were able to use reading materials to bolster their writing abilities, demonstrating how receptive skills can enhance productive skills. Similarly, S9 improved significantly in both listening and speaking, suggesting that listening comprehension helps students internalize language structures and vocabulary, which they then apply in spoken communication. The integration of skills in the learning process enables students to engage in authentic language use, wherein language is processed and produced simultaneously, much like in real-world communication.

This finding aligns with Richards and Rodgers (2001), who emphasize the role of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in fostering communicative competence. CLT advocates for teaching language in context, where learners are encouraged to use all four skills in a coherent and interrelated manner. This study's outcomes demonstrate that when language is learned through interaction and contextualized tasks, students are better able to transfer these skills to real-life communication scenarios.

The study's results also resonate with the principles of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), a framework that integrates language skills by focusing on real-world tasks rather than isolated grammar drills or exercises. Ellis (2003) posits that task-based learning, which involves authentic tasks that require the use of multiple language skills, is a powerful tool in promoting language acquisition. The students in this study engaged in various integrated tasks, such as debates, presentations, group discussions, and writing exercises based on reading materials.



These activities demanded that students use their listening skills to comprehend texts, speaking skills to discuss and share ideas, and writing skills to summarize or reflect on the information.

Instance, Student S15, who made a notable improvement in reading and speaking, likely benefited from such task-based tasks. In task-based learning, students engage not only in passive reception but also in active production of language, which strengthens their internalized understanding of the language. This interaction between skills makes language learning more meaningful and contextually relevant, which is a key element in motivating learners and enhancing retention (Ellis, 2003). The use of integrated tasks, therefore, created a dynamic learning environment where students were compelled to use language actively, leading to more profound learning outcomes.

Another significant aspect of the study's findings can be explained through Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), which emphasizes that language acquisition is a socially mediated process. According to Vygotsky, learners develop language skills through collaborative interactions and scaffolding provided by more knowledgeable peers or instructors. The Integrated Skills Approach, with its emphasis on interactive tasks such as group discussions, peer reviews, and collaborative projects, created an environment conducive to social learning.

This sociocultural interaction was particularly important for students in this study, many of whom began with low proficiency levels. The integration of skills in social contexts allowed them to practice language in real communicative situations. For example, Student S4, who showed the highest relative progress (25.3%), likely benefited from engaging in discussions and collaborative activities that encouraged peer learning. Such activities are rooted in Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where students are pushed to perform slightly beyond their current abilities with the support of more capable peers or instructors. The findings from this study support the notion that students can significantly improve their language skills through interactive, collaborative tasks, as these fosters both cognitive and affective development.

In addition to cognitive growth, the study also suggests positive affective outcomes as students likely felt more motivated and confident due to the relevance and engagement of the integrated tasks. According to Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985), comprehensible input in meaningful, engaging contexts leads to optimal language acquisition. The integrated approach provided rich, contextually relevant input that was both comprehensible and engaging, allowing students to actively use language in varied forms and contexts. As students engaged in tasks that involved listening to authentic audio, speaking in discussions, reading academic texts, and writing reflections, their motivation and self-confidence likely increased, contributing to their overall improvement.

Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of differentiated instruction in catering to diverse learner needs. The varied nature of the integrated tasks—ranging from individual assignments to group discussions—allowed students to engage with content in ways that best suited their learning preferences and proficiency levels. This approach is consistent with the principles of student-centered learning, which emphasizes the active role of the learner in the educational process (Tomlinson, 2001).

The fact that students at different proficiency levels (such as Student S4, who made the most significant improvement, and Student S2, who had the highest initial score) showed notable gains suggests that the approach accommodated learners' differing needs and learning styles.

This is a key strength of the Integrated Skills Approach, as it creates opportunities for both lower-level students and higher-level students to challenge themselves while receiving the support necessary to advance their language proficiency.

The results of this study have important pedagogical implications for English language teaching at MA Darul Istiqamah and other similar institutions. The significant improvement across all skills suggests that teachers should move beyond traditional, isolated skill-based instruction and consider adopting an integrated approach. This method fosters more natural language use, promotes engagement, and allows students to make connections between the different skills they are learning. Educators should also prioritize tasks that are contextual, authentic, and collaborative, as these facilitate both cognitive and social development.

Moreover, the success of this approach indicates that teacher training should emphasize the importance of planning and implementing tasks that combine multiple skills. This type of professional development can help educators better support students, particularly in settings where resources may be limited, such as in boarding schools. By integrating skills and fostering meaningful communication, students will be better equipped to navigate real-life situations requiring the use of English.

## CONCLUSION

This study has shown that the implementation of the Integrated Skills Approach (ISA) in English Language Teaching at MA Darul Istiqamah Boarding School significantly improved students' overall language proficiency. By integrating listening, speaking, reading, and writing into a unified learning process, the approach created a more authentic and meaningful learning environment that reflects how language is used in real-life situations. Post-test results revealed consistent progress across all language skills, supported by increased student motivation and confidence in using English.

These findings are in line with key language learning theories such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, and Krashen's Input Hypothesis. The use of interactive and task-based activities allowed students to engage in social learning, develop communicative competence, and improve cognitive and affective aspects of language acquisition. Moreover, the approach effectively addressed students' varying levels of proficiency, making it a suitable method for diverse classroom contexts.

As a result, it is recommended that English teachers adopt the Integrated Skills Approach more systematically in their teaching practices. Teacher training programs should focus on equipping educators with the knowledge and tools to design integrated, student-centered, and context-based activities. This approach not only enhances students' language skills but also better prepares them to use English confidently and effectively in academic and real-world settings.

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