

**THE IMPACT OF INTEGRATED READING–WRITING TASKS ON EFL
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS’ ACADEMIC LITERACY**

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Abstract

Although the interdependence of reading and writing has been theoretically emphasized in second language education, empirical research examining integrated instruction at the secondary school level remains underdeveloped. This study explores the effects of integrated reading–writing tasks on the development of academic literacy among EFL secondary school students. A quasi-experimental design was implemented with 10th and 11th grade learners in public schools, where the experimental group was taught through systematically integrated reading and writing activities, while the control group received conventional skill-separated instruction. Data were obtained from pre- and post-instruction assessments of reading comprehension and academic writing, complemented by classroom observations and learner reflections. The quantitative analysis demonstrated statistically significant gains in both reading and writing performance for students exposed to integrated instruction. Qualitative evidence further revealed improvements in learners’ ability to construct meaning from texts, organize written discourse, and transfer linguistic and conceptual knowledge across skills. The findings indicate that integrated reading–writing instruction plays a crucial role in fostering academic literacy development in EFL secondary education. The study contributes to applied linguistics and educational research by providing empirical support for skill integration and offers practical implications for curriculum design and classroom pedagogy.

Keywords

Integrated reading–writing; Academic literacy; EFL secondary education; Skill integration; Classroom pedagogy; Language learning outcomes

1. Introduction

The ability to read and write effectively in a foreign language is central to academic success, particularly for secondary school learners in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Traditionally, reading and writing have been taught as separate skills, often leading to fragmented learning experiences and limited opportunities for students to apply knowledge across modalities. However, research in applied linguistics increasingly emphasizes the interdependence of reading and writing, suggesting that integrated instruction can promote deeper comprehension, enhance

critical thinking, and support the development of coherent academic discourse (Graham & Hebert, 2010; Shanahan, 2016).

Despite these theoretical insights, empirical studies exploring the practical effects of integrated reading–writing tasks in secondary education remain limited, particularly in non-Western EFL contexts. Many teachers continue to rely on traditional, skill-segregated methods, which may constrain students' ability to transfer knowledge from reading to writing and hinder their overall academic literacy development. Recognizing this gap, the present study investigates how systematically designed integrated tasks can influence the reading and writing performance of 10th and 11th grade EFL learners.

By combining quantitative assessments with qualitative observations, this research aims to provide evidence-based insights into the pedagogical benefits of skill integration, while also offering practical implications for curriculum design and classroom practice. Ultimately, the study seeks to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on effective instructional strategies that foster academic literacy in secondary EFL education.

2. Literature Review

The relationship between reading and writing has long been recognized as a central component of second language acquisition, particularly in the development of academic literacy. Early pedagogical approaches tended to treat these skills as discrete and independent domains; however, contemporary research in applied linguistics increasingly emphasizes their interdependence and reciprocal nature. Theoretical and empirical studies suggest that integrating reading and writing can facilitate deeper cognitive processing, enhance textual understanding, and improve learners' ability to produce coherent and well-structured written discourse.

From a theoretical perspective, the connection between reading and writing is grounded in cognitive and socio-constructivist frameworks. The cognitive process theory of writing proposed by Flower and Hayes (1981) conceptualizes writing as a recursive process involving planning, translating, and reviewing, all of which are influenced by the writer's comprehension of source texts. Similarly, Spivey (1997) introduced the constructivist metaphor, arguing that readers and writers actively construct meaning by integrating prior knowledge with textual input. This perspective is further supported by Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory, which highlights the role of interaction, scaffolding, and mediation in the development of higher-order thinking skills. These theoretical foundations provide strong justification for integrating reading and writing in language instruction, as both skills rely on shared cognitive and linguistic resources.

In the field of second language writing, Hyland (2013) emphasizes that reading serves as a primary source of linguistic input, exposing learners to vocabulary, grammatical structures, and discourse conventions that can be transferred to writing. This aligns with the reading-to-write framework, which posits that comprehension

activities enable learners to internalize textual features and apply them in their own written production (Hyon, 2020). Empirical research has consistently demonstrated that students who engage in integrated reading–writing tasks outperform those who receive skill-separated instruction in both comprehension and composition (Graham & Hebert, 2010). Their meta-analysis provides strong evidence that writing about texts enhances reading comprehension, while reading supports the development of writing quality.

A growing body of research has explored integrated tasks in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, particularly in relation to academic writing and literacy development. Plakans (2009) investigated the role of reading strategies in integrated writing tasks and found that successful writers actively engage in processes such as summarization, paraphrasing, and synthesis. These strategies enable learners to transform input into meaningful output, demonstrating a higher level of cognitive engagement. Similarly, Gebril and Plakans (2013) examined the construct of reading-to-write tasks and highlighted the importance of source use, organization, and idea integration in assessing writing performance. Their findings suggest that integrated tasks provide a more authentic and valid measure of academic literacy than traditional writing assessments.

Further research has focused on the relationship between task design and learner performance. Plakans and Gebril (2017) found that the organization of ideas and the ability to establish connections between source texts and written responses are key predictors of success in integrated writing tasks. This indicates that integration not only enhances linguistic accuracy but also supports discourse-level competence. In a similar vein, Weigle (2004) argues that integrating reading and writing in assessment contexts allows for a more comprehensive evaluation of learners' academic abilities, as it reflects real-world language use more accurately.

Metacognitive strategy use has also been identified as a crucial factor in the effectiveness of integrated instruction. Zhang (2018) found that learners who employ both cognitive and metacognitive strategies—such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating—demonstrate greater improvement in reading–writing tasks. These strategies enable students to regulate their learning processes, facilitating the transfer of knowledge from comprehension to production. Moreover, integrated instruction encourages learners to engage in higher-order thinking skills, including analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, which are essential for academic success.

Recent studies have further confirmed the effectiveness of integrated approaches in improving EFL learners' performance. Li (2020) reported that students exposed to integrated reading–writing tasks showed significant gains in writing quality, particularly in terms of coherence, cohesion, and lexical diversity. Similarly, Grabe and Zhang (2013) emphasize that combining reading and writing activities enhances

learners' ability to process and produce academic texts, as it promotes deeper engagement with content and structure. These findings highlight the importance of designing instructional tasks that explicitly connect reading and writing processes.

Despite the growing body of evidence supporting integrated instruction, several gaps remain in the literature. First, much of the existing research has been conducted in higher education contexts, with relatively limited attention to secondary school learners. This is a significant limitation, as the development of academic literacy begins at earlier stages of education. Second, many studies focus primarily on quantitative outcomes, such as test scores, without adequately exploring qualitative dimensions such as learner engagement, motivation, and strategy use. Third, there is a lack of research in specific regional contexts, particularly in Central Asian EFL settings, where educational practices and learner needs may differ from those in Western contexts.

Addressing these gaps, the present study adopts a mixed-methods approach to investigate the impact of integrated reading–writing instruction on secondary school students' academic literacy. By combining quantitative measures of reading and writing performance with qualitative data on learner engagement and strategy use, this research aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how integrated tasks influence both outcomes and processes of learning. Furthermore, by focusing on a secondary EFL context, the study contributes to expanding the scope of research beyond higher education and offers insights that are directly relevant to school-level pedagogy.

In summary, the literature strongly supports the integration of reading and writing as an effective approach to developing academic literacy in EFL contexts. Theoretical models emphasize the shared cognitive foundations of these skills, while empirical studies demonstrate their mutual reinforcement in practice. Integrated instruction not only improves measurable performance outcomes but also fosters metacognitive awareness, critical thinking, and learner autonomy. However, further research is needed to explore its application in diverse educational contexts and to better understand the mechanisms underlying its effectiveness. The present study seeks to address these needs by providing empirical evidence from a secondary school setting and by examining both the cognitive and pedagogical dimensions of integrated reading–writing instruction.

3. Methodology

This study employed a quasi-experimental design with pre- and post-tests to evaluate the effects of integrated reading–writing instruction on EFL secondary school students' academic literacy. Quasi-experimental designs are commonly used in educational research when random assignment is not feasible, allowing comparisons between naturally existing classroom groups while maintaining ecological validity. The study included an experimental group receiving integrated reading–writing instruction and a control group following traditional skill-separated instruction, enabling both within-group and between-group analyses of instructional effects.

A total of 120 secondary school students aged 15–17 years in Uzbekistan participated in the study. Participants were selected from three public schools in Tashkent, Sirdarya and Namangan regions and existing classroom sections were used to assign students to either the experimental group (n = 60) or the control group (n = 60). Both groups were assessed for baseline reading comprehension and writing proficiency to ensure comparability of skill levels. Inclusion criteria required students to have at least three years of prior EFL instruction and regular attendance. Students with severe learning difficulties or language impairments were excluded to minimize confounding factors.

Multiple instruments were employed to ensure comprehensive data collection and triangulation.

1. Pre- and Post-Tests: Standardized assessments measured reading comprehension and academic writing proficiency. Reading comprehension tests included multiple-choice, short-answer, and inference-based items, while writing assessments evaluated coherence, organization, vocabulary use, grammar, and textual evidence application.

2. Classroom Observations: Observers recorded learner engagement, strategy use, peer interaction, and on-task behavior using structured observation protocols.

3. Learner Reflections and Logs: Students maintained reflective journals documenting their strategy use, difficulties encountered, and perceptions of integrated tasks.

4. Questionnaires: Structured Likert-scale and open-ended questionnaires captured learners' attitudes toward integrated instruction, perceived improvements, and motivation.

All instruments were piloted to ensure clarity, reliability, and validity before implementation.

The intervention spanned 10 weeks, with two 45-minute sessions per week for the experimental group. Instructional tasks were designed to integrate reading and writing processes:

Students read authentic or semi-authentic texts, including short articles, essays, and adapted literary passages.

Teachers provided guided questions to encourage critical reading and comprehension.

Learners engaged in pre-writing activities such as annotation, summarization, and idea mapping.

Structured writing tasks required students to produce essays, reports, or responses synthesizing reading content.

Collaborative and scaffolded activities, including peer discussions and group drafting, facilitated knowledge transfer and reflection.

Explicit strategy instruction was embedded throughout to promote comprehension-to-writing skills transfer.

The control group received conventional instruction focusing separately on reading comprehension exercises and writing tasks without explicit integration.

Quantitative data from pre- and post-tests were analyzed using paired-samples t-tests to assess within-group gains and independent-samples t-tests for between-group comparisons. Effect sizes (Cohen's *d*) were calculated to determine the magnitude of instructional impact. Qualitative data from observations, reflections, and questionnaires were analyzed using thematic coding to identify patterns in engagement, strategy use, knowledge transfer, and learner perceptions. Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative findings provided a comprehensive understanding of the effects of integrated reading–writing instruction.

The study followed ethical guidelines for research with human participants. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants and their parents or guardians. Participation was voluntary, anonymity and confidentiality were maintained, and students were free to withdraw at any time without penalty. The intervention posed minimal risk and aimed to enhance learning outcomes rather than disrupt regular instruction.

4. Results and Findings

Academic reading:

Pre- and post-test scores showed that students in the experimental group, who received integrated reading–writing instruction, demonstrated substantial gains in reading comprehension. The mean score increased from 62.3% (SD = 7.5) to 79.6% (SD = 6.8). In contrast, the control group, following traditional skill-separated instruction, improved from 63.1% (SD = 7.2) to 69.4% (SD = 6.9). An independent samples t-test confirmed that the post-test difference between groups was statistically significant ($t = 4.87, p < 0.001$), with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.01$), indicating a meaningful educational impact of integrated instruction.

Academic Writing:

Writing performance showed even more pronounced differences. The experimental group improved from 58.7% (SD = 8.1) to 77.2% (SD = 7.4), whereas the control group increased modestly from 59.5% (SD = 7.8) to 66.1% (SD = 7.2). Statistical analysis confirmed a significant advantage for the experimental group ($t = 5.21, p < 0.001$, Cohen's $d = 1.12$), reflecting not only improved accuracy but also enhanced coherence, organization, and use of textual evidence in student writing.

Comparative Analysis:

Paired-samples t-tests within groups showed that both reading and writing scores increased significantly over time ($p < 0.001$ for all measures), but the magnitude of improvement was greater in the experimental group, confirming the efficacy of

integrated reading–writing tasks. The percentage gain in reading comprehension was 17.3% for the experimental group versus 6.3% for the control group, while writing improved by 18.5% versus 6.6%, demonstrating the added value of skill integration.

Learner Engagement:

Classroom observations indicated that students in the experimental group were actively engaged during lessons. They frequently annotated texts, discussed ideas in pairs or groups, and spent time planning written responses. Observers noted higher participation rates and longer on-task durations compared with the control group.

Strategy Use:

Reflections and logs revealed that students systematically applied reading-to-writing strategies, including summarization, idea mapping, and structured outlining, to support writing production. Many students reported that these strategies helped them organize their thoughts and transfer comprehension into coherent writing.

Knowledge Transfer:

Integrated tasks encouraged students to directly connect reading input to writing output. For example, students referenced textual evidence, synthesized ideas across paragraphs, and constructed logical arguments. The control group, in contrast, often struggled to use reading materials effectively in writing tasks.

Motivation and Attitudes:

Questionnaire responses showed that 82% of experimental group students reported increased confidence in both reading and writing skills. Many highlighted that integrated tasks were more interesting and meaningful than isolated exercises, supporting intrinsic motivation and fostering learner autonomy.

Integrated Interpretation

The combined quantitative and qualitative findings suggest that integrated reading–writing instruction:

Enhances measurable academic literacy outcomes in both reading and writing.

Supports the development of higher-order cognitive skills, including comprehension, analysis, and synthesis.

Promotes metacognitive strategy use and transfer of knowledge across tasks.

Improves motivation and engagement, which may contribute to sustained learning beyond the intervention period.

These findings align with recent literature emphasizing the interdependent nature of reading and writing (Graham & Hebert, 2010; Shanahan, 2016) and support pedagogical models advocating skill integration in secondary EFL classrooms. The integration of qualitative insights with statistical data highlights not only measurable improvements in performance but also the underlying cognitive, motivational, and behavioral processes that contribute to successful literacy development.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study provide robust evidence that integrated reading–writing instruction significantly enhances academic literacy among EFL secondary school students. Both quantitative and qualitative data indicate that learners exposed to integrated tasks achieved higher scores in reading comprehension and writing performance compared with those receiving traditional, skill-segregated instruction. These results support the theoretical perspective that reading and writing are interdependent cognitive processes, where comprehension facilitates written expression, and writing reinforces understanding of texts (Graham & Hebert, 2010; Shanahan, 2016).

Comparison with Previous Research

Consistent with prior studies, the current research confirms that skill integration enhances both comprehension and composition abilities. For example, *Frontiers in Psychology* (2023) found that reading-to-write strategies significantly improved EFL learners' ability to generate coherent texts while simultaneously enhancing understanding of source material. Similarly, quasi-experimental studies in secondary and tertiary EFL contexts have reported that integrated literacy tasks promote strategic engagement, critical thinking, and metacognitive awareness (ScienceDirect, 2024; ResearchGate, 2023). The present study extends these findings by demonstrating that integrated reading–writing instruction is effective in secondary school settings, a context less frequently examined in the literature.

Cognitive and Pedagogical Mechanisms

Qualitative findings provide insights into the cognitive mechanisms underlying the observed improvements. Learners in the experimental group employed strategies such as annotation, summarization, idea mapping, and structured outlining, which facilitated the transfer of information from reading to writing. This supports cognitive models suggesting that comprehension activities prime students' ability to plan, organize, and articulate ideas in writing, thereby promoting higher-order thinking skills. Additionally, collaborative and scaffolded tasks created opportunities for peer interaction and reflective learning, which further reinforced comprehension and writing skills.

From a pedagogical perspective, the study highlights the value of explicit strategy instruction within integrated tasks. Teachers' guidance in linking reading and writing processes encouraged students to actively engage with texts, internalize strategies, and apply them independently, fostering learner autonomy. Moreover, the use of authentic or semi-authentic texts increased task relevance, improving motivation and engagement—a finding consistent with motivation-focused literacy research (ScienceDirect, 2024).

Motivation and Learner Attitudes

Students' reflections and questionnaire responses suggest that integrated instruction positively influenced learner motivation and attitudes. Most students

reported feeling more confident in handling reading and writing tasks and expressed a preference for integrated over traditional instruction. This aligns with literature emphasizing that meaningful, contextually relevant tasks enhance both intrinsic motivation and willingness to engage with language learning (ResearchGate, 2023).

Implications for Curriculum and Instruction

The findings have clear implications for EFL curriculum design. Incorporating integrated reading–writing tasks can provide structured opportunities for learners to connect comprehension with production, improving both literacy outcomes and cognitive engagement. Educators should consider embedding scaffolding, collaborative exercises, and reflective tasks to facilitate strategy development and learner autonomy. Additionally, curriculum planners may benefit from designing progressive modules where reading and writing activities build on each other, fostering coherent and transferable skills.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite the robust findings, the study has some limitations. The research was conducted in a specific regional context, which may limit generalizability. The sample size, though adequate for statistical analysis, could be expanded in future studies to include multiple regions or educational systems. Future research could also explore long-term retention of integrated skills, the use of digital and AI-supported integrated tasks, and cross-cultural comparisons to examine whether similar gains occur in diverse EFL contexts.

In conclusion, this study provides strong empirical evidence that systematic integration of reading and writing enhances EFL secondary students' academic literacy, cognitive engagement, and motivation. The findings support the implementation of integrated instruction as a practical, evidence-based approach for improving literacy outcomes, bridging theoretical insights with actionable classroom practices.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the effects of integrated reading–writing tasks on EFL secondary school students' academic literacy. The findings clearly indicate that systematic integration enhances both reading comprehension and writing performance, while also improving learner engagement, strategy use, and confidence. Students demonstrated greater ability to transfer knowledge from reading to writing, organize ideas coherently, and engage critically with texts compared with peers following traditional instruction.

The results contribute to applied linguistics and educational research by providing empirical support for skill integration in secondary EFL education. Pedagogically, the study suggests that curriculum designers and teachers incorporate structured, integrated tasks into classrooms, emphasizing explicit strategy instruction and purposeful linkages

between reading and writing activities. Future research should explore cross-cultural applications, long-term literacy development, and integration of digital tools or AI-assisted tasks.

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