



How Secondary Students Develop Grammar Skills through Integrated- Skill Activities

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Abstract

Traditional English language pedagogy often treats grammar as isolated units of declarative knowledge, failing to foster real-time communicative proficiency during authentic production. To address this issue, this study investigated the effectiveness of an integrated-skill approach in teaching eight specific grammar patterns and explored student attitudes toward this framework. A quantitative quasi-experimental research design was implemented with twenty Secondary I English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners at a private language center in Myanmar over a three-month instructional intervention. Data were collected using diagnostic pre-tests, identical parallel post-tests, and two multi-item closed-ended questionnaires, and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The empirical findings from a paired-samples t-test demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in overall morphosyntactic competence from the pre-test ($M = 15.05$) to the post-test ($M = 32.55$; $p < .001$). However, granular structural analysis revealed that development was not uniform. Rule-governed structures like the present simple passive and exclamations showed substantial accuracy gains, whereas lexically complex items like past participles experienced a clear performance plateau. Perceptually, the multi-skill task framework generated highly positive attitudes by increasing classroom interaction, though a notable paradox emerged as learners frequently experienced cognitive processing strains during dense receptive input activities. These outcomes imply that the conversion of declarative knowledge into automatic performance depends heavily on structural complexity. Curriculum designers and educators must systematically combine communicative fluency with guided, explicit focus-on-form interventions to ensure that young learners actively notice and process difficult syntactic patterns during multi-skill tasks.

Keywords: Grammar Skills Development, Integrated-Skill Activities, Secondary Students, English Language Teaching, Grammar Achievement

Introduction

According to foundational paradigms in second language acquisition (SLA), the optimal method for developing morphosyntactic competence remains a central focus of empirical and pedagogical debate. While traditional instructional approaches historically treated linguistic structures as isolated units of declarative knowledge, contemporary research emphasizes the integration of grammatical competence within broader communicative frameworks (Ellis, 2023; Nassaji, 2021). This shift in perspective is driven by the realization that explicit knowledge of structural rules does not automatically translate into implicit, real-time communicative proficiency during authentic language production (Sato & Loewen, 2022). As a result, language educators have



increasingly turned to the integrated-skill approach. This framework positions language as a unified, complex system where listening, speaking, reading, and writing function interdependently to facilitate natural communication (Larsen-Freeman, 2023).

As argued by Harmer (2007), providing students with opportunities to engage multiple modalities simultaneously maximizes learning opportunities and facilitates more effective language acquisition. This multimodal perspective aligns with interactionist and input-processing frameworks, which suggest that structural forms are acquired most efficiently when learners encounter them within rich, meaningful, and contextualized communicative input (Long, 2021; VanPatten, 2020). When grammatical markers are taught in isolation, learners frequently experience severe difficulties in internalizing and applying these structures during actual interaction. By embedding target patterns within integrated-skill activities, educators create an instructional environment that closely mirrors real-life communication. This approach encourages students to actively map linguistic forms to their communicative functions.

In line with the assertions of Kalend (2011), grammar provides the essential structural architecture required for accurate language comprehension and production. Without a solid foundation in grammatical structures, both spoken and written communication can become ambiguous, disorganized, and highly susceptible to breakdowns in meaning. For younger learners, such as secondary school cohorts, developing this competence is critical because it directly influences their academic literacy and performance across all macro-skills (Spada & Lightbown, 2021). Grammatical knowledge plays an especially vital role in written literacy. It enables learners to produce clear, coherent, and comprehensible texts. Consequently, identifying pedagogical frameworks that successfully foster both structural precision and communicative fluency remains an indispensable goal within international English language teaching (ELT).

Expanding upon the foundational pedagogical models established by Harmer (2007), a substantial body of empirical research has consistently supported the integration of language skills during grammar instruction. This approach allows learners to develop accurate grammatical knowledge while concurrently engaging in listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities. According to Oxford (2001), integrating skills ensures that language learning remains an authentic process rather than an exercise in memorizing fragmented rules. Furthermore, recent classroom-based research demonstrates that when grammatical structures are taught through communicative tasks that require active reading, listening, writing, and speaking, learners show higher levels of cognitive engagement and long-term retention (Nassaji, 2021; Sato & Loewen, 2022). This synergy helps bridge the traditional gap between explicit instruction and meaningful language use.

As documented in international historical overviews, numerous previous studies have investigated the effectiveness of integrated-skill instruction across a variety of language learning contexts. For example, Aki Hirahata (2013) conducted an investigation titled "A Study of Integrating the Four Skills and Grammar-Focused Classes in Japanese Public High School," which evaluated the relationship between explicit grammar presentation and four-skill classroom integration. Similarly, Molina (2011) investigated the influence of skill integration on the performance of second-grade high school students, demonstrating that communicative integration positively impacts overall linguistic proficiency. Additionally, research by Kim (2008) and Su (2007) confirmed that integrated approaches enhance learners' motivation, reduce anxiety, and improve general communicative competence in foreign language settings. These studies collectively support the argument that combining skills offers distinct advantages over traditional, isolated instructional methods.

While the general historical and empirical merits of skill integration are widely recognized, a critical review of the existing literature reveals several major gaps that require systematic investigation. First, limited research has focused specifically on the effectiveness of teaching particular grammar patterns through integrated-skill activities among Secondary I students in developing educational contexts like Myanmar. Most prior investigations have treated grammar as a single, uniform concept or focused on general proficiency outcomes rather than tracking the acquisition of distinct morphosyntactic structures. Second, there is insufficient evidence regarding which specific grammar patterns students master successfully and which remain challenging after receiving integrated-skill instruction. Different grammatical structures carry

distinct cognitive loads and varying levels of syntactic complexity (DeKeyser, 2022). For instance, structures like exclamations or the present simple passive may present very different processing difficulties for younger learners compared to complex verb tenses like the present perfect or defining relative clauses. Finally, student attitudes toward learning grammar through integrated-skill activities require deeper investigation, as learner perceptions directly influence classroom engagement, autonomous study habits, and final achievement outcomes.

In order to systematically address these empirical and pedagogical gaps, the present study examines the effectiveness of the integrated-skill approach in teaching selected grammar patterns and explores students' attitudes toward this framework. By evaluating twenty Secondary I students at the Nelson English Language Center (NELC) over a three-month instructional period, this study provides a detailed account of structural development across eight specific grammatical patterns. These structures include the infinitive of purpose, present simple passive, adjectives ending in -ing and -ed, past participles, present perfect with ever/never, present perfect with just/yet, defining relative clauses, and exclamations. By evaluating pre-test and post-test data alongside comprehensive questionnaire feedback, this study provides a nuanced look at how multi-skill tasks impact the learning of specific grammatical structures.

As detailed in our research design, the present study explicitly aims to achieve three interconnected research objectives. First, it aims to find out the extent to which students improve in using target grammar patterns after being taught through the integrated-skill approach. Second, it seeks to identify the grammar patterns that students have mastered and those they still find difficult after receiving instruction through this approach. Third, it investigates students' attitudes toward learning grammar through integrated-skill activities. Grounded in these objectives, the study answers three corresponding research questions:

1. To what extent do students improve their use of target grammar patterns after instruction through the integrated-skill approach?
2. Which grammar patterns are mastered successfully, and which remain problematic for students?
3. What are students' attitudes toward learning grammar through integrated-skill activities?

According to contemporary criteria for academic rigor, this study offers significant contributions to both theoretical SLA literature and practical English language pedagogy. On a theoretical level, it adds to the growing literature on integrated-skill instruction and grammar teaching by offering empirical evidence of how specific English grammatical structures are acquired by secondary school learners. Rather than evaluating general communicative gains, this study contributes to cognitive SLA by highlighting how structural complexity affects a learner's ability to process grammar during multi-skill tasks (DeKeyser, 2022; Spada & Lightbown, 2021). On a practical level, the findings provide English language teachers with actionable, evidence-based insights into selecting instructional strategies that promote both grammatical competence and communicative ability. Furthermore, these results serve as a practical reference for curriculum designers and material developers working to integrate four-skills tasks systematically within grammar syllabi across secondary education contexts.

Literature Review

Foundational theories in second language acquisition (SLA) offer diverse paradigms regarding the development of morphosyntactic competence, ranging from purely explicit structural approaches to entirely implicit communicative frameworks. Within the cognitive-interactionist tradition, language acquisition is viewed as an analytical process where learners transition from declarative knowledge of rules to proceduralized, real-time application (DeKeyser, 2020). Conversely, input-driven and sociocultural theories argue that linguistic competency emerges naturally through meaningful social interaction and exposed contextual input (Long, 2021). Specific to the integration of language macro-skills, Skill Acquisition Theory serves as a prominent explanatory framework, positing that grammatical forms are best internalized when cognitive structures are practiced across multiple receptive and productive modalities simultaneously. Expert opinions within modern pedagogy emphasize that the main criteria for assessing this developmental process are linguistic accuracy, processing speed, and

communicative appropriateness during authentic production (Nassaji, 2021). Various internal and external factors influence the execution of this theory, including individual learner variations, cognitive load capacity, and instructional design. Specifically, factors such as the inherent syntactic complexity of individual target patterns and the background language proficiency of the student cohort heavily dictate the overall rate of grammatical stabilization.

In investigating the operationalization of grammar instruction, language education research has yielded a variety of instructional approaches, theoretical frameworks, and pedagogical models. These paradigms include focus-on-forms (isolated explicit instruction), focus-on-meaning (purely communicative language teaching), and focus-on-form (the systematic integration of formal instruction within a communicative context). To evaluate the systemic impact of these practices, researchers rely on specific theoretical models that outline clear aspects, dimensions, and indicators of progress. The primary aspects under examination typically encompass receptive competence (measured by reading and listening benchmarks) and productive competence (measured by writing and speaking tasks). Within these dimensions, structural indicators include the correct application of specific syntactic properties, error frequencies in written communication, and the conversational fluidity of grammatical markers during oral production. For the purposes of this investigation, these multi-dimensional theoretical frameworks are adapted according to the specific secondary education context, focusing directly on the interplay between integrated-skill instructional tasks and targeted morphosyntactic tracking.

The development of the integrated-skill model originates from early critiques of the structural-functional syllabus, which historically partitioned language teaching into isolated mechanical drills. Over several decades, this paradigm evolved through the communicative language teaching (CLT) movement, culminating in contemporary task-based language teaching (TBLT) and content-based instruction (CBI), which treat the four macro-skills as mutually reinforcing components (Oxford, 2001). Previous researchers have frequently adopted and adapted this integrated approach due to its capacity to bridge the gap between abstract grammar knowledge and communicative application. For example, investigators have integrated cognitive processing models with communicative frameworks to show that multi-modality tasks prevent the compartmentalization of language knowledge. Within specific international contexts, previous researchers have modified this integrated framework to match the institutional limits of centralized school systems, adapting the delivery of grammar lessons to fit standard classroom times while maintaining a focus on communication.

The underlying system of the integrated-skill approach operates on the principle that the linguistic formal object (the instructional method) directly shapes the comprehension and mastery of the material object (the target language structures). This theoretical framework can be utilized to evaluate and resolve specific pedagogical problems, such as the persistent inability of foreign language learners to utilize grammatical features taught during natural communication. By exposing the material object to a continuous cycle of receptive input (reading and listening) followed by productive output (speaking and writing), the integrated-skill model creates a systematic cognitive path for structural stabilization. This systemic methodology forces the learner to actively use target grammatical forms as communicative resources rather than viewing them as static formulas, thereby directly addressing the problem of structural fossilization and low communicative confidence.

In this study, the material object under investigation consists of eight distinct English grammatical patterns that present varying degrees of syntactic complexity and processing demands for second language learners. These specific patterns comprise the infinitive of purpose, the present simple passive, adjectives ending in -ing and -ed, past participles, the present perfect with ever or never, the present perfect with just or yet, defining relative clauses, and exclamations. Each of these structures serves a specific communicative function and possesses distinct morphosyntactic constraints that require different levels of cognitive processing. For instance, mastering the present simple passive requires shifting thematic roles and understanding transitive verb inflections, whereas learning defining relative clauses involves managing structural embedding and noun phrase modification. Examining these eight specific patterns

provides a thorough basis for analyzing how integrated language tasks influence the acquisition of diverse grammatical features.

The subject and focal context of this research is a cohort of twenty Secondary I students enrolled at the Nelson English Language Center (NELC) in Myanmar. This group of young learners represents a critical educational demographic transitioning from basic primary-level English instruction to the more demanding academic literacy requirements of secondary education. Throughout their three-month instructional period, these students participated in an English language program explicitly designed around integrated-skill principles, routinely completing tasks that required them to read and listen to contextualized texts before applying target grammar patterns in collaborative speaking and writing activities. The linguistic development of this cohort, along with their evolving attitudes toward the multi-skill instructional delivery, was monitored from the start of the academic term to its conclusion. This setting offers an authentic example of a private language learning center operating within a developing educational context, where students often seek to improve their communicative fluency alongside their formal academic performance.

Previous research within this domain has predominantly focused on general language proficiency gains, broad communicative competence, or student motivation within tertiary-level institutions and western educational environments. In contrast, the focus of the current study is more specific and distinct, as it isolates the development of eight individual grammatical structures among a secondary school cohort within the unique educational context of Myanmar. Rather than evaluating grammar as a singular, homogenous skill, this investigation tracks the mastery and difficulties associated with specific morphosyntactic patterns taught through multi-skill activities. The urgency of this research stems from the immediate need to update pedagogical methods in industrializing nations, where traditional rote-learning and isolated grammar instruction often fail to prepare students for international academic and professional communication. By identifying which grammatical structures are successfully internalized through integrated instruction and exploring student attitudes toward this methodology, this study provides empirical data necessary to improve curriculum design and instructional efficacy in secondary-level English language teaching.

Methods

Research Design

To investigate the developmental pathways of grammar skill acquisition through integrated-skill tasks, this study adopted a quantitative research design utilizing pre-test and post-test assessments alongside longitudinal perceptual tracking. This quasi-experimental approach allowed the researcher to measure changes in grammatical achievement across a three-month instructional intervention without disrupting the organic composition of the existing student cohort. By comparing empirical scores before and after the targeted pedagogical treatment, the design provided a systematic means to evaluate structural development across eight distinct morphosyntactic patterns. Longitudinal tracking via closed-ended surveys was embedded within this design to assess the students' evolving attitudes and difficulties over the course of the intervention.

Data Source and Participants

The data source for this investigation comprised twenty Secondary I students enrolled in an intensive English language program at the Nelson English Language Center (NELC) in Myanmar. This cohort was selected through convenience sampling based on their institutional enrollment and their shared curricular exposure to the integrated-skill program. The sample size was bounded by the actual enrollment numbers of the language center's secondary department during the academic term. To ensure demographic and linguistic baseline consistency, all participants were profiled according to their educational background and age, representing a homogenous group of young learners undergoing the transition from primary-level English to advanced secondary-level literacy tasks.

Instruments

Three primary quantitative instruments were utilized to collect empirical data for this study: a diagnostic pre-test, an identical parallel post-test, and two multi-item closed-ended questionnaires. The pre-test and post-test instruments consisted of forty blanked sentences targeting eight specific grammatical structures: the infinitive of purpose, present simple passive, adjectives ending in -ing and -ed, past participles, present perfect with ever or never, present perfect with just or yet, defining relative clauses, and exclamations. Each target structure was evaluated through five distinct sentence items. To capture the students' affective variables and processing challenges, two distinct questionnaires were developed. The first questionnaire comprised seventeen closed-ended items evaluated on a 4-point Likert scale to measure general attitudes toward the integrated-skill framework. The second questionnaire featured ten closed-ended items evaluated on a 5-point frequency scale to measure specific processing difficulties encountered during listening, reading, speaking, and writing tasks.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process was carried out across four sequential steps over a continuous three-month period. At the beginning of the instructional term, the diagnostic pre-test was administered under strict testing conditions to establish the baseline grammatical performance of the twenty participants. Following the pre-test, the target grammar patterns were taught through integrated-skill activities over twelve weeks, utilizing the reading, listening, conversation, and composition tasks in English World Student's Book 5. The instructional procedure systematically combined language modalities, requiring students to encounter target forms in reading posters or listening tracks before producing them in interactive speaking tasks and structured writing exercises. At the end of the instructional period, the post-test was administered using the same forty-item structure with differently blanked sentence frames to prevent rote memorization effects. Immediately following the post-test, the attitudinal and difficulty questionnaires were distributed to gather the students' feedback regarding the instructional intervention.

Measurement

The measuring framework was designed to evaluate both morphosyntactic accuracy and perceptual frequencies. For the pre-test and post-test instruments, every correct grammatical completion received a score of one point, while incorrect entries received zero points, establishing a maximum possible score of forty points per test. Individual structural improvement was operationalized by calculating correctness percentages for each of the eight sub-skills across the five items dedicated to each pattern. For the attitudinal survey, the 4-point scale measured the degree of agreement, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, which was converted into frequency counts and total agreement percentages. The difficulty survey utilized a 5-point scale measuring frequency from never to always, allowing the researcher to identify which language modalities and structures caused the highest levels of cognitive strain.

Data Analysis

The collected quantitative data was processed and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods within Microsoft Excel's data analysis toolpak. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores, standard deviations, variances, and percentage gains, were calculated to summarize overall trends in grammatical achievement and questionnaire responses. To determine whether the pedagogical intervention resulted in statistically significant improvement, a paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare the pre-test and post-test scores of the same student cohort. The level of statistical significance was evaluated against standard alpha benchmarks, and the data were subsequently converted into professional tables and graphic presentations to explicitly contrast structural outcomes and perceptual trends.

Findings

This section presents the findings of the study objectively. The results are organized according to the research questions and supported by statistical data obtained from the pre-test, post-test, and questionnaire.

Table 1: Pre-and post-tests marks of each student

Students	Pre-test	Post-test
S1	11	33
S2	14	38
S3	18	34
S4	18	33
S5	12	31
S6	17	32
S7	13	31
S8	21	31
S9	20	29
S10	20	37
S11	21	26
S12	23	38
S13	20	38
S14	9	35
S15	9	37
S16	14	27
S17	13	36
S18	13	29
S19	8	29
S20	7	27

Table 1 shows the comparison of pre-and post-tests scores of all 20 students. According to the finding result, each student's score has increased in post-test. In the pre-test, S20 who got the lowest marks has significantly increased up to 27 out of 40. Some students gradually increased in the post-test. The result indicates that using integrated-skill activities has positive effect on the improvement of students' target grammar skills.

Figure 1: Graphic presentation of pre- and post-tests marks of all students

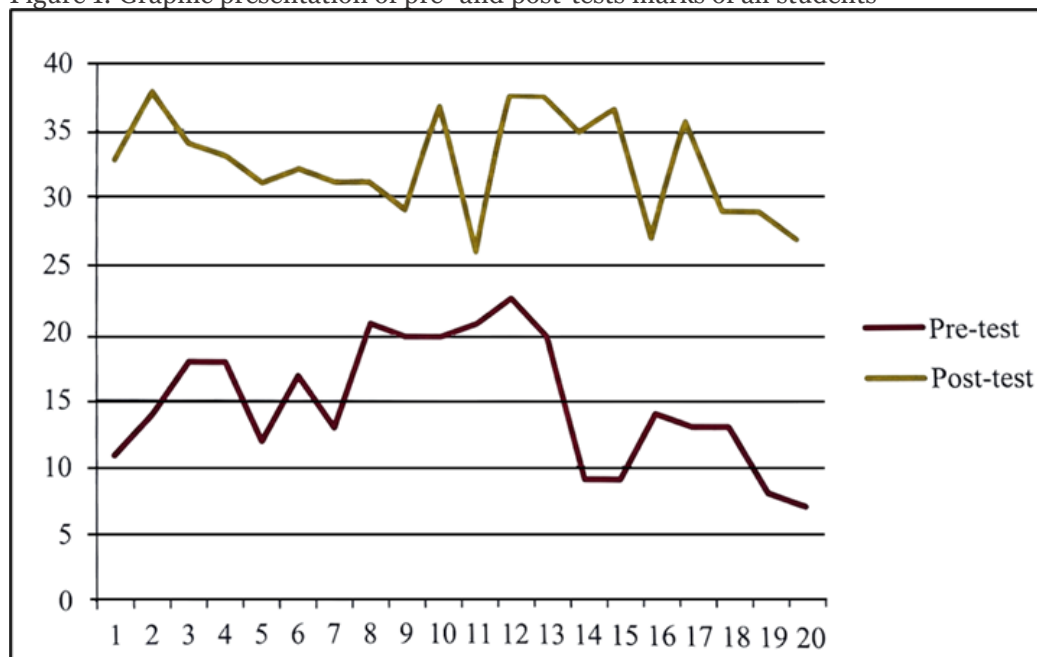


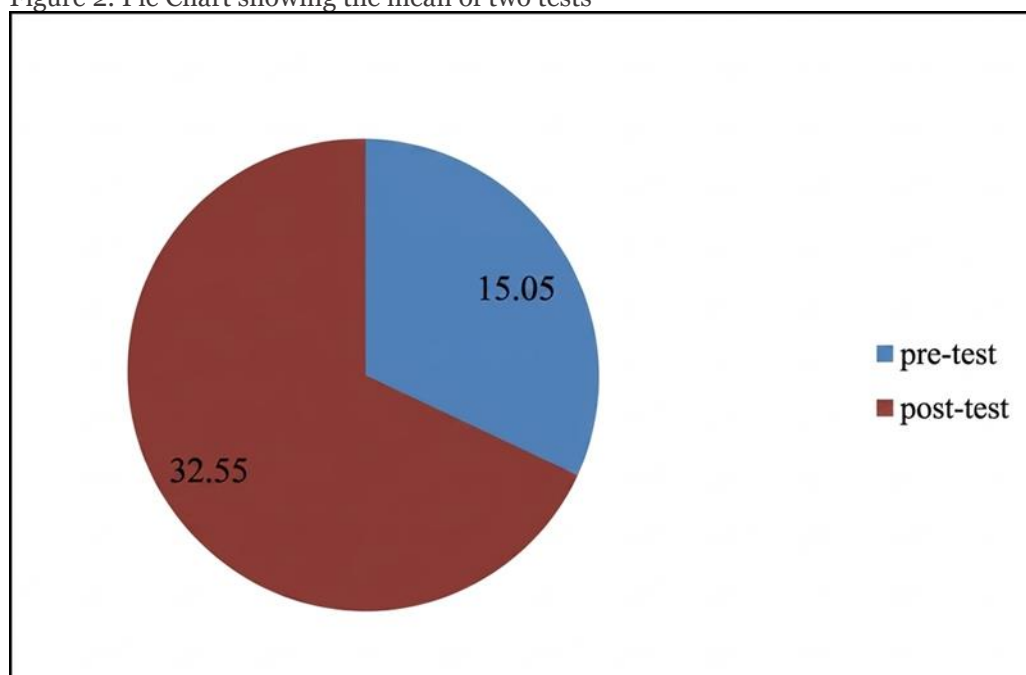
Figure 1 represents pre-test and post-test marks of all students. The two graph lines significantly prove that there are big differences between the students' performance in both pre-test and post-test. It means that teaching grammar skill through integrated-skill activities for three months is effective in developing Secondary I Students' grammar skills.

Table 2: T-Test - Paired Two Sample for Means

	Pre – test	Post – test
Mean	15.05	32.55
Standard Deviation	4.90408	3.966637
Variance	24.05	15.73421053
Observation	20	20
Pearson Correlation	0.177082658	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Degree of Freedom	19	
t Stat	-13.64551208	
P (T <= t) one – tail	1.4365E-11	
t Critical one – tail	1.729132812	
P(T<=t) two – tail	2.87301E-11	
T Critical two – tail	2.093024054	

A paired-samples t-test is conducted to compare pre-test and post-test scores of all students. There is a significant difference in the scores for pre-test (mean=15.05, standard deviation=4.90408) and post-test (mean=32.55, standard deviation= 3.96637); test statistics=-13.64, p=1.436. These results suggest that students really increase their performance. Especially, the results suggest that when students have been taught for three months, their scores have improved in post-test.

Figure 2: Pie Chart showing the mean of two tests



The result of analyzed data on Figure 2 proves that using integrated-skill activities has indeed enhanced the students' performance in each test. After using integrated-skill activities in teaching grammar for three months, students have performed better in the post-test than pre-test. Moreover, the results of the study show statistical differences in the mean scores between pre-test and post-test. The mean scores have significantly increased from 15.05 in pre-test to 32.55 in post-test. Therefore, using integrated-skill activities has great potentials in developing and improving students' grammar skills.

Table 3: The Improvement of Scores in the Post-test

No	Type of grammar skills	Pre – test	Post – test
		Correctness Scores	Correctness Score
1.	Exclamations	20 (20%)	82 (82%)
2.	Infinitive to purpose	78 (78%)	94 (94%)
3.	Adjectives with “ing”, “ed”	51 (51%)	83 (83%)

4.	Past Participle	72 (72%)	74 (74%)
5.	Present Perfect + just/yet	15 (15%)	78 (78%)
6.	Present Perfect + ever/never	26 (26%)	73 (73%)
7.	Present Simple Passive	7 (7%)	80 (80%)
8.	Defining Relative Clauses	29 (29%)	79 (79%)

In this table 3, the result of pre-test and post-test are compared to show the improvement of the students after developing the grammar skills for three months. Analyzing the scores in detail, it is found that students have improved in all grammar skills in post-test. With regard to grammar skills for the exclamations, present perfect-just/yet and present perfect passive, the scores distinctly increased from 20% ,15% and 7% in the pre-test to 82%, 78%and 80% in the post-test. Similarly, in the skills of grammar for adjectives with 'ing', 'ed' and present perfect ever/never, the scores rose from 51% and 26% in the pre-test to 83% and 73% respectively. As a result of this, students got higher scores in these skills in the post-test.

Table 4: Students' attitude towards grammar skills through integrated-skill activities

No	Statements	Agree	Strongly	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	I prefer to use listening skill when learning in the text.	11 (55%)	7 (35%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)
2.	Listening activity motivates me to learn more grammar skills in the classroom.	1 (5%)	10 (50%)	7 (35%)	2 (10%)
3.	I prefer not to use simplified learning grammar method.	10 (50%)	8 (40%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)
4.	Grammar in conversation helps me improve my language proficiency.	10 (50%)	10 (50%)	-	-
5.	I try to notice the new grammar structures that appear in a listening or a reading text.	10 (50%)	5 (25%)	5 (25%)	-
6.	I pay attention to grammar rules when I speak or spoke.	8 (40%)	3 (15%)	8 (40%)	1 (5%)
7.	I believe that I would have no problem in English if I learnt grammar in reading text.	18 (90%)	2 (10%)	-	-
8.	I am interested in learning grammar if the teacher uses writing activity as teaching needs.	7 (35%)	5 (15%)	7 (35%)	1 (5%)
9.	I prefer learning grammar through listening and reading.	10 (50%)	7 (35%)	3 (15%)	-
10.	Integrated – skill activities with the classroom lessons will be fun and entertaining more than the traditional method.	5 (25%)	15 (75%)	-	-
11.	The traditional method in teaching grammar skills is very helpful than the modern method like integrated – skills activities.	-	-	12 (60%)	8 (40%)
12.	Using four skills are a good source for practicing grammar skills ability of real-life conversation.	7 (35%)	13 (65%)	-	-

No	Statements	Agree	Strongly	Disagree	Strongly disagree
13.	Grammar lessons through speaking activities help me to have better participation in the class.	12 (60%)	6 (36%)	2 (10%)	-
14.	While learning grammar section, the classroom becomes more alive of using reading activity as teaching needs.	4 (20%)	13 (65%)	3 (15%)	-
15.	The conversation in listening helps me to understand the grammar usage better.	11 (55%)	9 (45%)	-	-
16.	The comprehension in reading helps me to understand the grammar patterns better	2 (10%)	3 (15%)	15 (75%)	-
17.	I can understand unfamiliar grammar usages and patterns through listening, reading, writing, and speaking.	14 (70%)	6 (30%)	-	-
Total		140 (41%)	122 (36%)	64 (19%)	14 (4%)

The table 4 indicates the statistical analysis of students' attitude towards grammar skills through integrated-skill activities. According to table (2), it is generally found that most of the students agree with the item (17), 'I can understand unfamiliar grammar usages and patterns through listening, reading, writing and speaking', 70% of the students agreed and 30% of the students strongly agreed in this statement. Moreover, according to this table, it can be seen that the students would have no problem in English if they learnt grammar in reading text because the statistics showed that all students (90%) agreed to that item. However, it is also found that only about 40% of the students agreed to the item I pay attention to grammar rules when I speak or spoke.' A majority of them (75%) strongly agreed to the item Integrated-skill activities with the classroom lessons will be fun and entertaining more than the traditional method. Therefore, it is noted that the students could give full concentration on their tests so that they could make much progress. For items No (3), (4), (5) and (9), students made similar agreement 50%. On the other hand, for the item No (16), only 10% agreed whereas more students (75%) disagreed in it. It means that more than half of the students did not understand the grammar pattern in the reading comprehension. However, after developing grammar skills through integrated-skill activities for three months, more students become self-dependent in their lessons and could make progress in their grammar skills.

Table (5) Students' difficulties on grammar skills through integrated-skill activities
N-Never, Sel-Seldom, Som-Sometimes, Oft-Often, Al-Always

No	Statements	Responses				
		N	Sel	Som	Oft	Al
1.	I have difficulty to understand some grammar structures in listening text.	1 (5%)	5 (25%)	11 (55%)	3 (15%)	-
2.	I find difficulty to understand some grammar structures in reading text.	7 (35%)	9 (45%)	3 (15%)	1 (5%)	-
3.	I find difficulty to understand some grammar patterns in a	10 (50%)	8 (40%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	-

	dialogue when I learnt grammar in conversation.					
4.	I have difficulty to use some grammar structures in class composition.	1 (5%)	9 (45%)	4 (20%)	6 (30%)	-
5.	After listening comprehension tasks, I rarely to use some grammar usages in writing.	1 (5%)	5 (25%)	10 (50%)	3 (15%)	1 (5%)
6.	I quickly forget some grammar usages I hear while listening.	2 (10%)	7 (35%)		10 (50%)	1 (5%)
7.	I am not interested in learning grammar from reading text.	11 (55%)	-	2 (10%)	5 (25%)	2 (10%)
8.	I hardly memorize the difficult grammar structure while doing listening text.	1 (5%)	8 (40%)			
9.	I am bored with using grammar in summarizing the paragraph.	4 (20%)	10 (50%)	3 (15%)	2 (10%)	1 (5%)
10	Unfamiliar grammar pattern interferes with my reading comprehension.	2 (10%)	5 (25%)	8 (40%)	5 (25%)	-
	Total	40 (20%)	66 (33%)	47 (23.5%)	41 (20.5%)	6 (3%)

The table 5 indicates the analysis of grammar problems and difficulties encountered by the students during their listening tasks and lessons. When the descriptive statistic are considered, among all the 10 items in the survey, the item related to the students, "I am not interested in learning grammar from reading text, turned out to be the most problematic one for the students, In addition, item No (4), which is also a problem related to the speaker, is accepted as the second most problematic factor that prevents students from understanding of the grammar, This item proves that students find it difficult to use some grammar structures when they are asked to do the class composition. In addition, as for the third most common problem, students' perceptions showed that the item related to the difficult grammar structure in the listening text interfere with their memorizing since 25% of the students find it difficult very often. Moreover, a high percentage of the students agreed that the 4th and 5th most problematic items are items No (1) and (5), I find it difficult to understand some grammar structures in listening text and i rarely use some grammar usages in writing? On the other hand, the students found that items (3) and (6) are the least problematic ones for them since only 5% of them had difficulty in answering grammar in conversation. The other items also show a certain amount of difficulty in their respective area.

Discussion

The first research question sought to determine the extent to which Secondary I EFL learners improve their morphosyntactic performance after receiving explicit grammar instruction through

integrated-skill activities. The empirical findings from the paired-samples t-test demonstrate a statistically significant increase in overall scores from the baseline pre-test ($M = 15.05$, $SD = 4.90$) to the final post-test ($M = 32.55$, $SD = 3.97$; $t(19) = -13.65$, $p < .001$). This robust statistical shift indicates that embedding target structures within systemic, multimodal tasks positively influences general grammatical competence. This primary outcome supports the core tenets of Skill Acquisition Theory, which posits that language skills are mastered most effectively when declarative knowledge is continually practiced across alternating receptive and productive modalities in meaningful communication (DeKeyser, 2022). Furthermore, these findings align with the instructional models of Harmer (2007), who argued that integrating listening, speaking, reading, and writing provides learners with maximum learning opportunities and facilitates optimal cognitive retention.

A fine-grained, item-by-item structural analysis addresses the second research question, which sought to identify the specific grammar patterns that students mastered successfully and those that remained problematic. By looking beyond general summary statistics and inspecting individual sub-skill granular performance, several critical variations emerge across the eight targeted morphosyntactic structures. The data show that the most substantial gains were achieved in *Present Simple Passive* (rising from a baseline accuracy of 7% to 80%), *Present Perfect with just/yet* (improving from 15% to 78%), and *Exclamations* (climbing from 20% to 82%). This dramatic structural growth supports the claims of Nunan (1998), who suggested that younger learners acquire complex formal items more easily when structures are presented within highly contextualized, communicative activities rather than in isolation. When learners trace passive structures or temporal markers through sequential listening and interactive speech tasks, the immediate functional value of the forms becomes cognitively salient, accelerating morphosyntactic stabilization (Sato & Loewen, 2022).

However, an unexpected outcome was identified through this granular investigation regarding the development of the *Past Participle* structure. Despite three months of intensive integrated-skill exposure, correct production of past participles stagnated, showing only a minimal change from 72% to 74%. This distinct lack of progress contradicts the findings of prior researchers like Molina (2011), who reported uniform structural improvement across all measured grammatical features when utilizing integrated task designs.

This specific performance plateau can be explained by examining the cognitive processing differences and morphological loads associated with irregular verb inflections (VanPatten, 2020). Unlike rule-governed structures like *Exclamations* or the *Present Simple Passive*, irregular past participles cannot be generated using simple syntactic formulas. Instead, they require heavy lexical memorization and constant cognitive retrieval. As a result, these forms do not benefit equally from general communicative exposure during integrated-skill tasks. Furthermore, the high baseline score (72%) indicates that while students possessed strong explicit, declarative knowledge of past participles prior to the study, the three-month integrated intervention was insufficient to convert this explicit knowledge into fluent, implicit procedural performance during task production (Ellis, 2023).

The third research question explored the students' attitudes toward learning grammar through integrated-skill activities, revealing a highly positive affective profile. Specifically, 77% of all responses across the 4-point Likert scale fell within the positive range, with a notable 75% of participants strongly agreeing that multi-skill tasks made the classroom more lively, fun, and entertaining than traditional grammar drills. This finding is consistent with previous empirical studies by Hirahata (2013), which showed that four-skill classroom integration significantly increases learner motivation and communicative engagement. From an affective standpoint, these positive perceptions indicate that embedding formal structures within interactive speaking bubbles and peer-group dialogues satisfies the psychological need for meaningful social interaction, which directly lowers the affective filter and encourages active participation.

However, analyzing the survey data at a deeper granularity reveals an important contradiction that requires careful interpretation. While 90% of the students agreed that learning grammar within a reading text helped their general comprehension, a substantial 75% of those same participants reported that they struggled to recognize or understand specific grammar patterns during reading comprehension tasks. This paradox suggests a general hypothesis: young

EFL learners frequently rely on global context clues to capture the meaning of a text while remaining blind to the underlying grammatical structures that create that meaning (VanPatten, 2020).

This phenomenon is further explained by the results of the difficulty questionnaire, where 50% of the students reported that unfamiliar grammar patterns often interfered with their comprehension, and 55% reported persistent challenges in tracking structural forms during listening tasks. This outcome highlights the clear urgency of this research within expanding educational environments like Myanmar. It shows that simply introducing integrated activities is not enough; teachers must include explicit, guided *Focus on Form* interventions to ensure that learners actively notice and process structural rules during communicative input (Long, 2021).

Because this study involved a small sample size of only twenty Secondary I students from a single private language center, the findings must be interpreted with caution and cannot be broadly generalized to all public or national secondary educational contexts. Despite this limitation, the current study offers important theoretical and pedagogical implications for English language teaching. Academically, it shows that the success of integrated-skill instruction depends heavily on structural complexity, meaning that rule-governed forms develop much faster than lexicalized or irregular morphosyntactic items (DeKeyser, 2022). Pedagogically, the data demonstrate that integrating language skills effectively bridges the gap between mechanical accuracy and communicative fluency for many target patterns, providing a practical alternative to outdated rote-learning methods.

Based on these outcomes, several practical suggestions are offered for future research and curriculum design. First, curriculum designers should avoid treating grammar as a single, uniform concept. Instead, they should systematically vary the amount of instructional time and explicit focus provided to structures based on their specific cognitive processing demands (Nassaji, 2021). Second, English language teachers are encouraged to combine communicative activities with targeted feedback to help students notice difficult features like irregular past participles and complex relative clauses.

For future empirical research, it is recommended that larger-scale longitudinal studies be conducted across diverse educational contexts and public institutions to validate these findings on a wider scale. Additionally, future investigators should explore the long-term retention of these structural gains through delayed post-tests, while also examining how individual learner variables, such as working memory capacity, language aptitude, and internal motivation, interact with multi-skill task designs over time.

Conclusion

This study investigated the developmental pathways of grammar skill acquisition and student perceptions through an integrated-skill approach among Secondary I English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The empirical data shows a statistically significant improvement in overall morphosyntactic competence following a three-month instructional intervention. However, a fine-grained, item-by-item structural analysis reveals that this development was not uniform across all language patterns. While rule-governed, highly contextualized structures like the present simple passive, exclamations, and the present perfect with just or yet demonstrated substantial accuracy gains, lexically complex and irregular items like past participles experienced a clear performance plateau. Affectively, the multi-skill task framework generated highly positive student attitudes by increasing classroom interaction and engagement. Nevertheless, granular survey tracking uncovered a notable paradox, as learners frequently experienced cognitive processing strains and structural recognition difficulties during dense receptive input activities.

The empirical variations observed in this study yield crucial implications for second language acquisition theory and English language teaching practice. Theoretically, the findings refine the application of Skill Acquisition Theory by showing that the conversion of declarative knowledge into automatic procedural performance depends heavily on the specific structural nature of the target grammar item (DeKeyser, 2022). Universal communicative exposure alone is insufficient for stabilizing complex, irregular patterns that require a higher lexical memory load. Pedagogically, the study demonstrates that while an integrated-skill framework successfully fosters a lively, low-anxiety learning environment, it must be supported by intentional focus-on-

form interventions. Language educators and curriculum designers cannot assume that global comprehension leads automatically to structural noticing. Instead, they must systematically design multi-skill tasks that explicitly balance contextual fluency with guided formal precision to address individual processing difficulties.

Ultimately, this investigation highlights the necessity of moving beyond traditional rote-learning methods without discarding structural accuracy in developing educational contexts. By demonstrating that language macro-skills can be interwoven with targeted grammar instruction, the study provides a practical blueprint for achieving communicative competence alongside academic precision. While caution is warranted due to the localized sample size, these insights serve as a valuable reference point for modernizing English language curricula in secondary education. Fostering genuine linguistic proficiency requires an instructional approach that treats grammar not as a collection of isolated rules to be memorized, but as a dynamic, functional resource utilized across all modalities of human communication.

Ethics approval

The study was conducted in compliance with the Declaration of Helsinki

Competing interests

All the authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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Underlying data

Derived data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author on request.

Declaration of artificial intelligence use

This study utilized Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, specifically AI-based language models (Gemini AI), to support manuscript writing by refining language elements, such as grammar, sentence structure, clarity, and readability, and assisting with technical writing and the organization of extracted literature and thematic findings for this systematic review. The authors confirm that all AI-assisted processes were critically reviewed to ensure the integrity and reliability of the results; furthermore, the selection of studies, data extraction, interpretation of evidence, synthesis of findings, and final conclusions were conducted and verified exclusively by the authors, meaning all final decisions and interpretations presented in this article remain solely theirs.

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