

**Integrating reading and writing teaching to improve VNUH-ULIS first year English majored students' writing skills = Dạy tích hợp kỹ năng đọc và viết để nâng cao kỹ năng viết của sinh viên tiếng Anh năm thứ nhất trường đại học Ngoại ngữ - Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội. M.A Thesis Linguistics: 60 14 10 / Trần Thu Hà ; Nghd. : M.Ed. Đỗ Bá Quý**

**PART A: INTRODUCTION**

This part is dedicated to introducing the rationale of the study, the problem to be addressed in the study, the aims and the objectives of the study, and the research questions to be answered. It will also present the scope of the study, an overview of the employed methods, and the design of the study.

**1. Statement of the problem and rationale for the study**

English has been considered as an effective means of communication in social activities. Therefore, teaching English is an important part of Vietnamese education system in order to achieve success in the process of economic development and joining the global community. Reading and writing which are two important skills of language acquisition help us to communicate when the other person is not right there: read what they have written and write to them. Especially, teaching reading-writing is really important as it helps our students learn through what they read and write (Ann Raimes, 1983).

The author is always interested in studying writing instructions and has received the permission and support of the faculty and colleagues; therefore, this study *“Integrating Reading and Writing Teaching to Improve VNU University of Languages and International Studies First-year English-majored Students’ Writing Skills”* has been motivated. It is hoped to provide

educators and teachers with a clearer insight into how the theories of integration of reading and writing can influence and correspond to actual classroom practices.

## **2. Aims of the study**

Firstly, this study is carried out to investigate the theories and findings of the earlier studies and provide more empirical evidence for the effect of integrating reading and writing instruction on learners' writing proficiency to support the tendency of integrated skills teaching in the context of Vietnam and the author's workplace. Secondly, it is an attempt to meet the needs of the first year students in University of Foreign Languages and International Studies (ULIS) to improve their writing ability. Thirdly, it is expected that the results of the study would be useful in some ways for teachers and educators in university who are teaching reading and writing at the same time or anyone who is interested in this field of the English language teaching. Finally, the study is aimed at providing more information for the trend of integrating skills to teach English language learners in the division.

## **3. Research questions of the study**

In order to achieve the above-mentioned objectives, the research questions of the study are set out as follows:

- (1) Is there a difference between the writing performance scores of the control group and those of the experimental?
- (2) What are the students' opinions of the integrating reading and writing instruction program and their suggestions for future research?

The study was conducted to test the following research hypotheses:

$H_0$ :

*There is no difference in writing performance between students who take part in the integrating reading and writing instruction program and those who do not.*

$H_1$ :

*Students who take part in the integrating reading and writing instruction program will make more progress in writing proficiency test than those who do not participate in such a program.*

## **4. Scope of the study**

This study focuses on the present context at English I, Faculty of English Language Teacher Education, University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University. This study investigates the impact of the program of integrating reading and writing teaching on first year students' writing proficiency in 15 weeks. These students' writing proficiency was measured in correlation to the application of an experimental reading-writing integration program.

## **5. Methods of the study**

The research method employed in this study is a quasi-experimental design to propose the research questions and to find out the answers. The method involves the three basic components of experiments as presented by Selinger and Shohamy, that is, the population (HULIS first year students), the treatment (the program of integrating reading and writing teaching) and the measurement of the treatment (t-test) (1989, p.136). It is conducted with the participation of 52 first year students. Data collection instruments include pre and post tests, and a survey questionnaire. More details can be seen in Chapter 3.

## **PART B: DEVELOPMENT**

### **CHAPTER 1 – LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter provides the theoretical background for the study. It includes theories about definitions of reading and writing, teaching reading and writing skills, and previous related research.

#### **1.1. Teaching reading**

##### **1.1.1. Definition of reading**

Foertsch (1998) has suggested three basic definitions of reading. According to the first definition, learning to read means learning to pronounce words. In the second definition, learning to read means learning to identify words and get their meaning. The third definition is that learning to read means learning to bring meaning to a text in order to get meaning from it.

##### **1.1.2. Theoretical background of teaching reading**

With respect to types of reading, there are two types of reading, extensive and intensive reading (Hedge, 2003, cited in Suleiman, 2005). Extensive reading refers to skimming and scanning activities or quantity of material.

Hedge (2003) states that since extensive reading helps in developing reading ability, it should be built into an EFL/ESL programme provided the selected texts are “authentic”, i.e. “not written for language learners and published in the original language” (p. 218)- and “graded”. Moreover, extensive reading enables learners to achieve their independency by reading either in class or at home, through sustained silent reading (SSR).

In intensive reading, students usually read a page to explore the meaning and to be acquainted with writing mechanisms. Hedge argues that it is “only through more extensive reading that learners can gain substantial practice in operating these strategies more independently on a range of materials.” (p. 202). These strategies can be either text-related or learner-related: the former includes an awareness of text organization, while the latter includes strategies like linguistic,

schematic, and metacognitive strategies.

## **1.2. Teaching writing**

### **1.2.1. Definition of writing**

Writing is of fundamental importance to learning, to development of the person in each learner, and to success in the educational system. As teachers, we need to work continually to aid our students in their search for fulfillment as writers (Graham & Harris, 1993).

Lannon (1989) views writing as “the process of transforming the material discovered by research inspiration, accident, trial or error, or whatever into a message with a definite meaning-writing is a process of deliberate decision” (p.9). It means that writing must convey a message with a meaning.

The writing has been defined in a number of ways which reflects the complexity of writing process.

### **1.2.2. Theoretical background of teaching writing**

A few decades ago writing teachers were mostly concerned with the final product of writing: the essay, the report, the story, and what that product should look like. But in due course of time, learners were allowed to focus on content and message and their own individual intrinsic motives were put at the center of learning, the process approach to writing instruction has been developed.

There are different views on the stages of writing process, according to Hedge (1990), the process contains several stages which can be illustrated as follows:

Being motivated to write → getting ideas together → planning and outlining  
 → making notes → making a first draft → revising, replanning, redrafting  
 → editing and getting ready for publication.

*Figure 1. Stages of writing process*

## **1.3. Integrating Reading and Writing**

Reading and writing are regarded as the products of skills acquisition. Classrooms in which reading and writing are integrated are described as using “whole language” (Newman, 1985) or “literature-based” (De Ford, 1986) approaches. Such approaches stress immersion of students in a language-based program that de-emphasizes skill instruction and stress supportive environment in which students are encouraged through different opportunities to develop personally relevant reasons for selecting books or topics about which to write.

Promoting reading comprehension and focusing on writing are considered highly important in Content and Language Integrated Learning methodology (Wolff, 2005, p.16, cited in Loranc-

Paszylk, 2009). Integrated reading and writing activities brings benefits to the learner with respect to both content learning and language learning processes.

For language gains, reading will help students expand their vocabulary and structures so they can enhance their writing skills as well. The advantages of integrated reading and writing activities in reference to content learning are as follows: reading texts provide information that can be later used in written production. Reading is considered as input and writing is output. Besides, readings also supply more new information and provoke students in their writings. Furthermore, the necessity of selecting information in the writing process helps students develop critical thinking skills.

From the similarity between reading and writing process, it is reasonable to consider the effectiveness of integration of reading and writing instruction.

#### **1.4. Overview of previous related research**

It is apparent that there has been little research on the effects of integrated reading and writing instruction in EFL context in Vietnam in general and at FELTE in particular. In the world, integrated reading and writing instruction has been paid attention to for a long time, thus, there have been many research carried out to investigate the relationship between reading and writing skills.

Chen (2006) has carried out a research to study the using children's literature for reading and writing stories. The author used children's magazine of literature to promote EFL university students' narrative thinking and enhance their writing ability through a task of story reading and writing. Results of the study show that students made progress in their writings. Chen also has given benefits of utilizing children's literature for reading and writing stories

Loranc-Paszylk (2009) has tried to explore the potential of integrated reading and writing activities within the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) classroom from the perspective of the students' linguistic achievements. The results showed that the experimental group had made better progress than the control group. This research suggests that systematic text-responsible writing contributed to the effectiveness of the course attended by the experimental (CLIL) group in relation to target language competence gains - the students who attended CLIL classes for 2 semesters had made significant progress in development of academic reading and writing skills, and grammatical competence.

In the light of the literature review, this study on integrated reading and writing instruction at FELTE is worth doing because it is in line with current trends of study on reading and writing integration in the world. Furthermore, it is useful and beneficial as it provides further insights the opinions and attitudes of students about this trend of language teaching at FELTE.

To sum up, in this chapter, the researcher has already reviewed the literature of definitions and teaching of reading and writing skills, the related studies in integration of reading and writing teaching. First, the definitions of key terms including writing, reading, writing teaching and reading teaching have been offered. After that, the researcher has presented the theoretical background of reading and writing integration which serves as the basis for the development in the next chapter. This second main part covered the issue of importance of skills integration and particularly reading and writing integration. Furthermore, the chapter also dealt with the works related to this study which provided theoretical basis and practical experience.

## **CHAPTER 2 – METHODOLOGY**

With a careful consideration, this study has employed a quasi-experimental method to find the answers to research questions. This chapter presents the reasons for the choice of method employed in this study. This chapter also discusses the participants, the data collection instruments and the procedures for data collection and analysis. Besides, it provides the design of the used pretest and posttest, the reading-writing integration program as well.

### **2.1. Rationale for using experimental method**

This study is an attempt to investigate the relationship between the program of integrating reading and writing teaching and students' writing performance; therefore, it is best assisted by an *experimental research method*. The author decided to choose the *quasi-experimental design*. There are a number of reasons for the choice of this method as follows:

In the first place, the researcher has no control over who would be in each group because the students who would take part in the study have already been assigned prior to the study. In this study, two groups of first-year students were assigned prior to the study and to the researcher, the author made no decision in choosing the students or participants. This factor is one of the above mentioned features of the quasi-experimental design "it is conducted under conditions closer to those normally found in educational contexts" (Selinger & Shohamy, 1989, p. 149). The author only chose any two groups, so they were not removed from the normal teaching and learning context. This characteristic helps to increase the validity of the later generalization of the results to the population. Furthermore, because of the features of this kind of method, it is much easier for the author to access to the subject population and thus easier to conduct such research. Consequently, researcher can save a lot time and effort in grouping the participants.

Apart from the quasi-experimental design that acts as the major method of the study, the author also made use of a number of data collection instruments to ensure the validity and

reliability of the research. The pre and post tests reflected the results and progress of the students after the course; nevertheless, they could not show the feedback, the attitude and comments of the students on the course. As a result, a survey questionnaire was designed in order to gain more insight information from the participants towards the program. Through the questionnaire, students expressed their attitude, comments and the suggestions as well for further improvement.

## **2.2. Variables**

In this research, the quasi-experimental design was used to investigate the relationship between readings and students' writing proficiency, in other words, we would have a look at the relationship between different variables, independent variable (the readings) and dependent variable (the test scores).

Firstly, we should discuss the treatment of the study, the readings. The readings here are a number of articles regarded as writing samples. They are taken from a variety of authentic sources with suitable topics. Moreover, they are ensured to be appropriate to the level of students. Secondly, the writing proficiency test score was used to measure the students' progress. To ensure the reliability and validity of the measurement of writing proficiency, a test that is considered to be standard was taken.

## **2.3. Participants**

The participants included two groups of first year students at English I, FELTE, ULIS, VNU. They were selected after having finished the first semester. Two groups that had the most similar writing test results were chosen. The students were chosen in the second semester, they had had some time to be familiar with the new learning environment, teachers, friends and accommodation and they were willing to take a program for overcoming their problems. Two groups were chosen, one group had 28 students, and the other had 27. However, to cross out some difficulties and increase the validity of the study, some male students were not counted, in other words, these guys still took part in two groups but their results were not used to analyze. Consequently, each group had 26 students and all of them were females.

## **2.4. Intervention**

The reading materials were collected from different sources and publishers. Handouts were prepared by teacher with explicit instructions on the given themes. A wide variety of topics were presented in different genres from articles, letters to short stories. Furthermore, students are also provided supplementary exercises about sentence transformation, error correction and various grammar exercises to consolidate students' grammar. Furthermore, the experimental students' work was organized into collaborative tasks and individual activities included doing reading exercises; presenting viewpoints, class debates and discussions, etc.

The text book used to teach writing skill is *Writing Focus* compiled by lecturers at Division I. There are 4 main types of writing in semester 2: Describing a place, Describing a person, Descriptive narrative, Story telling.

The experimental lesson was organized in four stages:

Stage 1. Feedback: Teacher gave feedback and discussed students' previous assignments.

Stage 2. Presentation of the new topic: Teacher introduced a new topic and presented new reading passages. While introducing the new theme, teacher explained new vocabulary.

Stage 3. Practice of content and language elements: Teacher got students to do reading exercises which linked with the given topic

Stage 4. Production: Students discussed writing tasks with each other to explore ideas, thoughts, and language skills.

## **2.5. Data collection instruments**

### **Pretest and posttest**

The instruments used to measure students' academic reading and academic writing skills were the standard tests from respective sections of Cambridge ESOL exam, PET, because PET is used to measure students' proficiency in their end of term exam.

The pretest and posttest used in this study were in fact two tests taken from the Preliminary English Test (PET). The tests were standardized to measure exactly the difference between two groups after taking the treatment. Therefore, the investigator chose this type of tests to increase the validity of the test.

The writing test consists of three parts. Part 1 is sentence transformation which includes five items. In part 2, students are prompted to write a short communicative message in the form of a postcard, note, email etc. In part 3, students are asked to write a longer piece of continuous writing.

### **Survey Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was consisted of four parts with the aim of collecting data regarding respectively students' feelings about the materials used, their thoughts about the quality and activities given by teacher, and their suggestions for future research. All the questions use Likert five-scale ranking: strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree, and strongly disagree to gain information from students.

The first section was designed to find out students' preference in reading materials. The second section was used to collect students' evaluation of the course. The third section of the survey questionnaire intended to gain students' suggestions for future course and research.

## **2.6. Data collection procedures**



The data collection procedure could be divided into two phases as follows: The first phase was preparation. This phase concerned with reviewing literature, working out methodological framework, choosing groups of students. The second phase was intervention and collection. After the semester, survey questionnaire was carried to gain students' opinions and suggestions.

### **2.7. Data analysis methods**

The pre and post tests were administered to both groups of participants before and after the treatment with two writing tests taken from the collection of Cambridge Practice Tests for PET. All of students' answer sheets were marked by two other teachers at Division I. The data from the tests were computed and analyzed by the statistical software SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to find out the differences in students' writing performance of two groups. The analysis was presented in descriptive statistic.

The quantitative data collected from the survey questionnaire were also processed and analyzed in percentages as it was easier to find out the tendency of students' answers to many questioned items.

To sum up, this chapter has presented at full length the methodological framework of the study including the justification for the use of quasi-experimental research in this study, the discussion of the context of the study, the variables and the selection of participants. This chapter also gave detailed explanation of the intervention of the study, the reading selection. The author also discussed the data collection instruments including the two tests, the survey questionnaire and specific steps of conducting the study. The next chapter will present the results of data analysis and discussion on major findings of the study.

## **CHAPTER 3 – DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS**

This chapter presents the results of the study from the collected data of pre and post tests and survey questionnaire. There are two types of data, numeric data from the tests and nonnumeric data from the students' survey questionnaire. The data will be coded and treated by the software SPSS in search of the answers to the research questions.

Firstly, all the tests were marked and scores were computed - experiment reading abilities of all the participants had been predicted to be different, their gains were used for analysis. Each participant' gain was calculated by subtracting the pretest score from the posttest score. Then the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) of each group's gains were calculated for later comparison.

### **3.1. Comparison of the experimental and control groups' writing performance**

Descriptive	Control group (N=26)	Experimental group (N=26)
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Statistics	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Mean	16.23	17.15	16.19	20.50
Median	16.00	16.50	16.00	21.00
Mode	14.00	16.00	16.00	21.00
Std. deviation	2.92	2.60	2.57	2.48
Range	11.00	10.00	9.00	8.00
Minimum	11.00	13.00	12.00	16.00
Maximum	22.00	23.00	21.00	24.00

**Table 2. Descriptive statistics for the pretest and posttest scores of the experimental and control groups**

The table shows the descriptive statistics for the pretest and posttest scores of the experimental and control groups including the means, modes and medians. As can see, the means, modes and medians of the control group are close to one another. However, it is clear to see the difference in the statistics of experimental group between the pretest and posttest. The standard deviation and the range of the experimental group are smaller than those of the control group.

Both groups had higher means in the posttest than ones in the pretest, and the experimental group had higher mean scores than the control one.

### 3.2. Comparison of writing performance between groups

Categories Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Control - Experimental	-3.346	.845	.165	-20.173	25	.000

**Table 3. Mean gains of the experimental and control groups**

The table above compares the mean gains of the experimental and control group to test whether the difference in the mean scores of the two groups was significant or not. It can be seen that the gain standard is 0.84 and the error mean is 0.165, while the t is 20.17, and df is 48,  $p < 0.05$ .

### 3.3. Survey questionnaire

#### 3.3.1. Students' opinions about the provided course

A survey questionnaire was administered to the experimental group to collect data of students' attitudes, comments on the course and also suggestions for future improvements. Therefore, the collected data are divided into three categories: effects of the integrated course on the students' motivation, comments on the course and their suggestions to both overcome the weaknesses and strengthen the good points of the program.

Strongly disagree -----> strongly agree

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
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1. The materials are visually attractive.			13%	<b>60%</b>	27%
2. The materials are authentic.			8%	<b>82%</b>	10%
3. The materials are up-to-date.		4%	12%	32%	<b>52%</b>
4. The materials are appropriate to your level.		10%	6%	26%	<b>58%</b>
5. The materials make you more interested in class activities.		3%	10%	<b>60%</b>	27%
6. The materials make you get involved in learning.			20%	24%	<b>56%</b>
7. The materials encourage you to do homework.		3%	6%	<b>51%</b>	40%
8. You become more confident in writing compositions.			8%	<b>72%</b>	20%
9. The materials don't motivate you to learn English.	8%	<b>88%</b>	4%		
10. If there were another similar course in the following school year, you would like to participate.			8%	12%	<b>80%</b>

**Table 4. Experimental students' opinions about the reading materials**

Table 4 shows the effects of the program on students' motivation and interest. As can be seen from the table, with statements 1,2,3,4, the majority of the students agreed that the materials were attractive (60%), authentic (82%), up-to-date (52%). Results reveal that most of the students strongly agreed that the program made them more interested in class activities, more involved in the lessons. When asked to rate the extent to which they would agree with statement 7, 8, a majority of the participants agreed, while a few disagreed. The students also expressed their wish to continue taking part in another similar program in the future, 12% and 80% agreed and strongly agreed when asked.

In short, in the surveyed students' points of view, the program has positively affected students' attitudes. Most of them presented, to some degree, they found the program appealing, useful and worthwhile learning. The next section will reveal the results of students' evaluation of the program more thoroughly.

### 3.3.2. Students' evaluation of the program

Strongly disagree -----> strongly agree

<b>Section 2: Evaluation of the course</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
11. The materials are related to the theme of each unit.				20%	<b>80%</b>
12. Reading passage length is appropriate.			12%	16%	<b>72%</b>
13. The materials are interesting.		4%	20%	54%	22%

14. Reading passages provide you:					
14.1. ideas				16%	<b>84%</b>
14.2. structures				70%	30%
14.3. vocabulary			6%	30%	64%
14.4. language expressions				28%	72%
14.5. organization of your writing				8%	92%
15. There are enough exercises to help you understand the reading passages thoroughly.			25%	35%	40%
16. Exercises are various.		8%	15%	42%	35%
17. Exercises are too difficult.	53%	28%	10%	9%	
18. There are not enough in-class activities.	<b>70%</b>	13%	7%	6%	4%
19. You like post-writing activities.		2%	12%	<b>64%</b>	22%
20. Reading passages bring you a clearer insight into different types of writings.				45%	55%
21. Reading helps you write better.			8%	35%	<b>57%</b>
22. You can improve					
22.1. Background knowledge				<b>78%</b>	22%
22.2. Syntax	4%	7%	11%	<b>60%</b>	18%
22.3. Word choice		5%	28%	56%	11%
22.4. Expression		3%	21%	42%	34%
22.5. Organization		3%	5%	65%	26%
23. Teacher gives enough instruction.		4%	12%	<b>72%</b>	12%
24. Teacher does not explain clearly enough.	62%	<b>30%</b>	5%	3%	
25. Teacher does not encourage students to learn.	74%	20%	4%	2%	
26. You are satisfied with teacher's feedback.		6%	10%	<b>70%</b>	14%

**Table 5. Experimental students' opinions about the program**

As can be seen in table 5, the students evaluated the program differently. With statement 11, most of the students (80%) strongly agreed that the chosen reading samples were related to the weekly assigned kinds of writings. The students also agreed that the reading length was appropriate (72% strongly agreed), the content of the reading was interesting, useful to them, readings gave them useful ideas and back ground knowledge about the given topic. Besides, most of the students really liked the readings passages as they provided them with necessary structures, appropriate vocabulary, especially language expressions. Another aspect is organization of writing, a majority of respondents (92%) regarded reading passage as a good way to learn the format of each kind of

writing. With statement 20, students again stated an agreement with the use of reading in helping them differentiate types of writings, 55% strongly agreed.

In table 5, statements from 15 to 19 outline the students' beliefs about practice in the classroom. According to the figure, most of the respondents believed that the exercises were enough (40% strongly agreed) and various (42% agreed). Furthermore, 53% strongly disagreed and 28% disagreed that the exercises were too difficult and complicated while 10% had neutral opinion and 9% agreed. When asked about the effect of the program on students' language abilities and progress in Statement 21, 22 the majority of the students asserted that reading helped them write better.

The table also illustrates respondents' comments on teacher's instructions and feedback. Most of the students agreed that teacher gives enough instructions, explain clearly and encourage students, satisfactory feedback. In sum, the results of the second section have shown the respondents' evaluation of the program. Most of them have stated that the program was interesting and useful and it helped them to make progress in their language abilities. Moreover, participants expressed their pleasure and satisfaction with the course and teacher's instructions and feedback.

### 3.3.3. Students' suggestions for the improving of future programs

Strongly disagree -----> strongly agree

<b>Section 3: Suggestions for future programs</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
27. Materials should be more carefully chosen.	12%	48%	25%	15%	
28. Materials should be more challenging.	23%	45%	20%	12%	
29. Teacher should provide more reading materials.		20%	25%	38%	17%
30. Teacher should design more activities.	6%	56%	22%	14%	2%
31. Teacher should give various activities.		14%	18%	<b>56%</b>	12%
32. Teacher should give more detailed feedback on student's assignments.		2%	18%	<b>62%</b>	18%

**Table 6. Experimental Students' suggestions for future programs**

Table 6 shows students' suggestions to improve the course. Students expressed reading selection was appropriate in Statement 27. Being asked about the level of materials, nearly a half of the students (45%) disagreed that the reading should be more difficult. In terms of teacher's instructions, most of the students believed that teacher should give students more supplementary reading materials (38% agreed and 17% strongly agreed), various types of activities and exercises (56%), feedback on students' assignments (62%). However, most of the students disagreed with the statement "teacher should give more activities" while 14% agreed.

In a nutshell, this chapter has provided the results of the data collected with reference to the research questions raised in the introduction. The first part included the results of the pre and post tests of the control and experimental groups. The data of the tests were computed and treated by the SPSS software to explore whether there was any difference in the writing performance of the two groups. The results of the tests were also analyzed and compared with each other to find out if there was any difference in the scores of two groups; the difference was significant. The second part of this chapter presented the results of the students' survey questionnaire and their comments and suggestions for the study. In the next chapter, these results of the study will be discussed and their implications will be presented.

## **CHAPTER 4 – DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

In this chapter, the results of the study in chapter 3 will be discussed in respect of the research questions and based on the findings, relevant implications will be suggested.

### **4.1. Discussion of the study results in respect of the research questions**

The study results presented in the previous chapter are now discussed in relation to the research questions as follows: (1) Is there a difference between the writing performance scores of the control group and those of the experimental?; and (2) What are the students' opinions of the integrating reading and writing instructions program and their suggestions for future research?

#### **4.1.1. Comparison of the experimental and control groups' writing proficiency**

The first question was to find out whether there was a difference between the writing proficiency scores gained by the experimental group who took part in the program and those gained by the control group who did not participate in such a program. The comparison of the scores of the pretest and posttest gained by the two groups shows that the both groups had higher mean scores, or both groups made certain progress. However, the mean score of experimental group' posttest was much higher than that of the control group. It can be concluded that after taking the treatment, the experimental group made better improvements than the control group.

To answer the second question, that is, whether the difference between both groups is significant, table 2 and 3 analyze the mean gains of both groups. The mean of the experimental group is still higher than control and with other statistic we can see that the difference was significant ( $t= 20.17$ ,  $df= 48$ ,  $p< 0.05$ ).

The result of this research supports the conclusion of Loranc-Paszylk (2009). In this study, the author has suggested that systematic text-responsible writing contributed to the effectiveness of the course attended by the experimental (CLIL) group in relation to target language competence

gains - the students who attended CLIL classes for 2 semesters (60 hours in total) made significant progress in development of academic reading and writing skills, and grammatical competence.

#### **4.1.2. Students' opinions about the program**

The results of the first section of the survey questionnaire clearly show that most of the respondents agreed that the program brought them interest and motivation, and they would like to take part in a similar program in the future. Students felt more confident, therefore they were encouraged to practice and create good compositions. Students' interest is one of the important factors which give explanations to students' progress in their test.

The data obtained from the students' answers to the questions in the second section of the survey questionnaire illustrate the students' comments on the quality of the program. Most of the respondents stated that reading provided them with necessary writing materials such as ideas, structures or grammar, vocabulary, and writing skills as well. By acquiring both background knowledge and language skills thoroughly, students could use them naturally in their writings but not copy the ideas and structures of the readings. Therefore, their writing skills were much improved before. When analyzing students' assignments, the author found out that their writing assignments were much more interesting and persuasive than those of students in the control group. The survey questionnaire also revealed that students agreed with the teacher's instructions, feedback, and encouragements. This means that teacher's encouragement was proved as a vital factor for the better performance and improvement of students.

The study results also indicate that the students not only improved their writings skills but they also made progress in other language skills such as reading and speaking skills. Students also reported that they favored the activities like pair work and group work in which they had a lot of discussions and debates. As a result, students can improve both their speaking skills and cooperation in group work. This quantitative evidence therefore supports the empirical evidence about benefits of group work presented in the study of Boughley (1997) and students' positive attitudes towards the use of literature as samples in the study of Chen (2006).

The third section of the survey was to obtain data relating to the students' suggestions for future program. The students suggested that materials should be more carefully selected, as some of the students complained that several reading passage were too long and complicated, while others disagreed with this idea. Students had different opinions because they were at different levels, and it is unavoidable. Maybe, teacher should have provided more explanations to help the weak students. Additionally, students expressed that they wanted to be provided with more reading materials, as they would have more useful references and save a lot of time and effort at the same time. In other words, this requires more teachers' effort and preparation.

When being asked about the amount of activities, a majority of students said that there were enough activities due to the limited time, however, they would like to have more types of activities to get rid of being fed up with learning and feel more excited about writing. Another important point is that, students wished to have more feedback and comments from teachers on their assignments.

In short, all the main findings of the study have been discussed in detail to answer the research questions raised.

#### **4.2. Discussion of the research hypotheses**

The discussion of the study results in the previous part has made it possible to elaborate on the two research hypothesis to decide which one is accepted. As presented in the previous chapter, the scores of the tests were computed and analyzed to find out the answers to research questions. The descriptive analysis of results showed that both groups have made improvement after a semester. However, the experimental group had higher mean scores than the control group; it means that the experimental group had better improvement than the control group. Moreover, the results of the survey questionnaire revealed that the program had positive effects on students' attitude and motivation towards learning the target language. The answers to the research questions allow us to reject the null hypothesis and accept the other hypothesis.

It can be concluded that the integrating reading and writing program helps to enhance students' writing proficiency. The next part, implications of the study will be discussed.

#### **4.3. Implications**

In this section, some theoretical and pedagogical implications of the study would be presented.

##### **4.3.1. Theoretical implications**

This research was conducted in the context of Vietnam where there were not many previous studies in this field, therefore this study also contributes to the literature review of this method in teaching and learning a new language, and again emphasizes the importance of the integration of reading and writing skills in teaching English in particular.

In relation to the target students, the research broadened the context and proved the effectiveness of the theory on Vietnamese students who can improve their language skills by acquiring integrating reading and writing instructions and well-equipped facilities.

When analyzing the outcome of our research, the results of the control group students showed that the progress made by the control group was clearly lower than the progress made by the experimental group in spite of the same time exposure as well as the amount of written production.



Therefore, it is supposed that integrating reading and writing contributes to the effective language learning of students.

To sum up, the results of the study suggests that integrating reading and writing practice into the first year program may enhance the effectiveness of this innovative approach with regard to development of such linguistic skills as reading and writing, as well as the development of grammatical competence in the target language. It is also mentioned by Loranc-Paszylk (2009) that although instructors have not assessed the content learning results, it still may assume on the basis of the theoretical framework that the program facilitated content acquisition.

#### **4.3.2. Pedagogical implications**

The program has proved that it has positive influence on students' language abilities and motivation. It helped students gain more autonomy and make better improvements. It can be concluded that it is necessary for teachers to take the method that gives students self-confidence, interest and creation in second language acquisition. Moreover, the program can be integrated with the given curriculum as a good way to enrich students' background knowledge which is always not adequate to first year students.

The survey questionnaire revealed that students were more excited about writing what they often consider something boring. Moreover, they were more encouraged to read and write assignments weekly. Reading habit is very important for students to improve their language abilities. Reading is always a very effective way for learners to acquire more background knowledge, critical thinking, grammar, vocabulary, etc. and from that students can improve and master their language skills including reading, writing at the same time. Moreover, reading also provides abundant sources of ideas, grammar and vocabulary for students to make progress in other language skills as well like speaking and listening skills.

It is advisable for teacher to pay attention to some following tips to design a good program. First, researcher should investigate students' difficulties, needs, preference and language abilities and levels. Second, instructor is suggested to prepare a variety of good resources and encourage students to use their own different sources to promote their autonomy, patience and incentives. In terms of the context, the university has provided students with a fairly big available library, It is a good idea if the university tries to improve the searching engine to help students find out their needed books and references more easily and effectively. Furthermore, instructors would be greatly helpful if they provided their students with a list of suggested books and references available in the campus libraries and other resources.

There are several things that instructors should consider when designing a program. First, researcher should prepare the materials carefully for instructions. Second, researcher should pay

attention to time and how the program should be introduced. It is recommended that there should be a combination between the existing program and the new one in a flexible way.

In brief, this chapter has provided the discussion of the research questions and the given hypotheses from the results presented in the previous chapter. Regarding the first question, the results of the two tests showed that there was difference in the scores of the two groups involved in the study. The students of the experimental group made more progress than the students of the other group. In relation to the next research question, data analysis of the survey questionnaire was also presented. The results of the survey questionnaire revealed that participants highly appreciated the course they were given.

## **PART C – CONCLUSION**

This chapter presents a brief summary and conclusion of the study. Moreover, the current study cannot be perfect despite the author's effort; therefore, the limitations of the study will be discussed as the basis for the recommendations for further studies on the issue of integrating reading and writing.

### **1. Conclusions**

This study investigated the impact of integrated reading and writing program on students' writing abilities. The results showed that there was a significant improvement in the final writing performance made by the students in experimental group. The findings were further supported by the students' positive opinions in a post-program questionnaire.

The results of the study have showed that integrating writing and reading instruction is useful and necessary to teach English to students. This study suggests some implications suitable for language teachers, managers to consider and apply to their specific context to help students learn more effectively and explore their potential abilities.

The study also has some undeniable limitations, the author wish that these constraints will be solved and improved by future researchers to help students feel more confident and have a better way of learning language and perfecting their language skills, especially writing skills which are always considered difficult to second language learners.

### **2. Limitations of the study**

This study certainly has its limitations. First of all, the study was carried out on a small scale with the involvement of 52 students, the small scale is an obstacle to generalizing a large population. Secondly, the study was conducted at only Division I, ULIS, VNU. This study is

restricted to a small context, that is, first year students in this university. Moreover, students come from different contexts so that they have different levels and interests so that instructor cannot design a program that satisfies all their levels, interest and needs. Another limitation is that the study was done in a limited time, within only 15 weeks or one semester. Therefore, it cannot reflect fully the complex belief system of students or give enough time to students to perceive a new way of teaching and learning as a habit. To sum up, although the author has tried her best, the study still has several limitations which can be experience and suggestions for future similar research.

### **3. Suggestions for further study**

In response to the above limitations of this study, some solutions are needed to have better research in the future. Studies should be conducted with students at different levels and in different contexts. Furthermore, similar studies should be conducted with a larger number of respondents who come from more various backgrounds. It is recommended that various sources should be found out and suggested by teachers if they have enough time. Future studies are suggested to increase the duration of the program. Investigation on the correlation between integrating different skills and students' language ability should be done in the future. With more research into these issues, there are more opportunities to find out problems and possible solutions to improve the teaching of writing skills for students.

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## APPENDIX 1 WRITING TEST

### PART 1

#### Questions 1 – 5

- Here are some sentences about a student who is living in a flat.
- For each question, complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first, **using no more than three words**.
- Write only the missing words on your answer sheet.  
Example:       The flat is near my college.  
                  **The flat is not ...far from ... my college.**

- 1       My friend told me that I could stay in his flat.  
          **My friend said: 'You ..... my flat.'**
- 2       I started living here two months ago.  
          **I have lived here ..... two months ago.**
- 3       This is the first time I've lived in a city.  
          **I've ..... in a city before.**
- 4       The flat has two bedrooms.  
          **There ..... in the flat.**
- 5       My bedroom is too small for all my books.  
          **My bedroom is not ..... for all my books.**

### PART 2

#### Question 6

You have just joined a club in your area and you think your English friend Max would enjoy going there with you.

**Write an email to Max. In your email, you should**

- explain which club you have joined
- suggest Max should visit the club
- say what you could do there together.

**Write 35–45 words on your answer sheet.**

### PART 3

Answer **one** of the following questions (**7 or 8**).

#### Question 7

- This is part of a letter you receive from a friend in the U.S.A.

*I guess there are many tradition festivals in your country. What's the most important one? Why do people celebrate this festival? Write and tell me all about it!*

- Now write a letter, answering your friend's questions.
- Write your letter in about 100 words on your answer sheet.

#### Question 8

- Your English teacher has asked you to write a story.
- Your story must begin with this sentence:  
*Nobody knew what Adam had in his suitcase.*
- Write your story about 100 words on your answer sheet.

## APPENDIX 2 WRITING TEST

### PART 1

#### Questions 1 – 5

- Here are some sentences about a mobile phone.
- For each question, complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first, **using no more than three words**.
- Write only the missing words on your answer sheet.  
 Example:       Katie bought a new mobile phone two weeks ago.  
                   **Katie's had her new mobile phone ...for ... two weeks.**

- 1       It was smaller than all the other phones in the shop.  
       **It was ..... phone in the shop.**
- 2       Her friend has a similar one.  
       **A friend of ..... has a similar one.**
- 3       There's a silver cover on her phone.  
       **Her phone ..... a silver one.**
- 4       She had a really old phone before.  
       **She ..... to have a really old phone.**
- 5       She was given that phone by her brother.  
       **Her brother ..... that phone.**

### PART 2

#### Question 6

You have just spent a weekend with your English friend and his family.

**Write an email to your friend. In your email, you should**

- **thank him**
- **say what you enjoyed most**
- **tell him what you are doing next weekend.**

**Write 35–45 words on your answer sheet.**

### PART 3

Answer **one** of the following questions (**7 or 8**).

#### Question 7

- This is part of a letter you receive from your English friend.

*I'm coming to your country for a week's holiday in August. I want to see as much as possible. Can you advise me where to go? What's the best way to travel around?*

- Now write a letter, answering your friend's questions.
- Write your letter in about 100 words on your answer sheet.

#### Question 8

- Your English teacher has asked you to write a story.
- Your story must have this title:  
*The wrong address*
- Write your story about 100 words on your answer sheet.

### APPENDIX 3 QUESTIONNAIRE

#### Students' Opinion about the course Integrating reading and writing teaching to improve first year students' writing skills

This questionnaire is carried out to collect your opinions and evaluation of the writing course among first year students at English I, ULIS, VNU. Your assistance in completing this questionnaire would be highly appreciated and of great use to the research. All of your information will be used solely for the study purposes and kept confidential. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

#### Part A: Personal information

Age:.....Gender:.....

Group:.....

#### Part B: Opinions about the provided writing course

Please put a tick in the column that corresponds to your degree of agreement with the statement on the left as follows:

1. *Strongly disagree*
2. *Disagree*
3. *Uncertain*
4. *Agree*
5. *Strongly agree*

Strongly disagree -----> strongly agree

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Section 1: Opinions about reading materials</b>					
1. The materials are visually attractive.					
2. The materials are authentic.					
3. The materials are up-to-date.					
4. The materials are appropriate to your level.					
5. The materials make you more interested in class activities.					
6. The materials make you get involved in learning.					
7. The materials encourage you to do homework.					
8. You become more confident in writing compositions.					
9. The materials don't motivate you to learn English.					
10. If there were another similar course in the following school year, you would like to participate.					
<b>Section 2: Evaluation of the course</b>					
11. The materials are related to the theme of each unit.					
12. Reading passage length is appropriate.					
13. The materials are interesting.					
14. Reading passages provide you:					
14.1. ideas					
14.2. structures					
14.3. vocabulary					
14.4. language expressions					
14.5. organization of your writing					
15. There are enough exercises to help you understand					

the reading passages thoroughly.					
16. Exercises are various.					
17. Exercises are too difficult.					
18. There are not enough in-class activities.					
19. You like post-writing activities.					
20. Reading passages bring you a clearer insight into different types of writings.					
21. Reading helps you write better.					
22. You can improve					
22.1. Background knowledge					
22.2. Syntax					
22.3. Word choice					
22.4. Expression					
22.5. Organization					
23. Teacher gives enough instruction.					
24. Teacher does not explain clearly enough.					
25. Teacher does not encourage students to learn.					
26. You are satisfied with teacher's feedback.					
<b>Section 3: Suggestions for future course</b>					
27. Materials should be more carefully chosen.					
28. Materials should be more challenging.					
29. Teacher should provide more reading materials.					
30. Teacher should design more activities.					
31. Teacher should give various activities.					
32. Teacher should give more detailed feedback on student's assignments.					
33. Other suggestions:					
.....					

# **APPENDIX 4** **ERROR CORRECTING SYMBOLS**

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
<b><u>General Items:</u></b>		<b><u>Modifiers:</u></b>	
//	New paragraph	Adj	Use adjective
?	Meaning unclear	Adv	Use adverb
^	Add omitted word/s	poss	Use possessive form
/	Omit word/s; not	<b><u>Prepositions</u></b>	
WF	Right word but wrong	Prep	Add preposition
expr	form		
	Expression (affected by		
	L1)		
<b><u>Punctuation:</u></b>		<b><u>Syntax:</u></b>	
C/CAP	Capitalize	( ) F/ Frag	Fragment error
P	Incorrect punctuation	( ) R/ R-O	Run- on sentence
<b><u>Nouns:</u></b>		S/V	Subject/ verb needed
pro agr	Pronoun agreement	WO	Wrong order
art	mistake	coh	Coherence (one idea does
ger/ G	Article mistake		not lead to the next)
N	Use gerund		Sentence structure
num/ #	Use noun	ss	
pro/PR	Number; singular ↔	<b><u>Connectors</u></b>	
REF	plural)	Conj/ Conn	Incorrect conjunction /
	Use pronoun		connective
	Pronoun reference		Link/combine
	unclear	L	Add relative pronoun
		R/PR	

<b><u>Verbs:</u></b>		<b><u>Lexical</u></b>	
VC	Voice change	<b><u>items</u></b>	
SV agr	Subject/ verb agreement	sp	Incorrect spelling
		wch/ ww	Word choice/wrong word

<i>vt/VT</i>	<i>Wrong verb tense</i>	<u><i>Style</i></u>	
<i>vf/VF</i>	<i>Incorrect verb form</i>	<i>Informl</i>	<i>Too informal</i>
<i>mod</i>	<i>Modal problem</i>	<i>PAR</i>	<i>Faulty parallelism</i>
<i>aux</i>	<i>Auxiliary verb</i>	<i>T/S</i>	<i>Improve topic sentence</i>
<i>inf</i>	<i>Use infinitive</i>	<i>PARA/UN</i>	<i>Lack of paragraph unity</i>
<i>cond</i>	<i>Incorrect use/formation of a conditional sentence.</i>	<i>TRANS</i>	<i>Transition needed</i>

Source : Writing Focus (2006), Division 1, FELTE, ULIS – VNU , Vietnam National University Press.