

UCUENCA

Universidad de Cuenca

Facultad de filosofía, Letras y Ciencias de la Educación

Carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros

The Effects of the Application of Integrative Tests to Measure English Language Learners' Proficiency

Trabajo de titulación previo a la
obtención del título de Licenciado
en en Pedagogía del Idioma Inglés


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2024-02-28

Resumen

En el área de la enseñanza de una lengua extranjera, las Pruebas Integrativas, que se emplean para evaluar las habilidades del inglés conjuntamente, no son comúnmente aplicadas en el aula de clase. Con el fin de analizar las ventajas y desventajas de las Pruebas Integrativas, esta síntesis de investigación analizó 20 diferentes estudios relacionados con la aplicación de este tipo de evaluaciones desde el año 2002. Se ha considerado los últimos 20 años con el objetivo de que la información y los datos obtenidos para el análisis sea suficiente y relevante. A través del análisis de diferentes artículos tanto cualitativos como cuantitativos se obtuvo como conclusión que las Pruebas Integrativas presentan mayormente ventajas en el desarrollo de las habilidades del lenguaje del evaluado sin embargo se encuentran desventajas, pero en menor número con relación a los beneficios de esta. Además, se logró identificar implicaciones pedagógicas que abarcan al estudiante, evaluador o instructor, así como algunos aspectos de los cuales el profesor debe estar pendiente al momento de crear o aplicar este tipo de prueba como método de evaluación.

Palabras clave: pruebas de lenguaje, implicaciones pedagógicas, aprendizaje integrado, evaluación simultánea



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Abstract

Currently, Integrative Tests, which assess all student skills simultaneously, are not widely applied in the classroom because they are not very popular when they are used as assessment tools. In order to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of Integrative Tests, this research synthesis analyzed 20 different studies related to the application of this type of evaluation. The studies are considered since 2002 in this way enough information is obtained for the analysis of the use of Integrative Tests. Through the analysis of different qualitative and quantitative articles, the main conclusion found was that the Integrative Tests present mostly advantages in improving the language skills of the test taker; however, they also present disadvantages, but in fewer numbers. In the same way, some pedagogical implications were identified in which the students, teachers, and the syllabus are the important elements in education. Finally, some aspects that the teacher must take into account when constructing or applying this type of test are detailed.

Keywords: Integrative Tests, pedagogical implications, advantages, disadvantages



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Acknowledgments

Firstly, I would like to say that I am grateful to God for having given me wisdom and guidance to complete my university career. I also want to thank my parents for supporting and motivating me despite the distance. How can I not be grateful to Karolyne Piedra for being my thesis partner and one of my best friends who has been an incredible person to me. Thanks to God, to my parents, friends, pets, and other people who have been my pillar during these years of study, because without all of them, I would not have been able to achieve my goal.

Lilian Lema

Acknowledgments

First of all, I want to express my deepest gratitude to God for granting me the strength, and inspiration throughout my thesis journey. I also extend my heartfelt appreciation to my dad, Amador, for his support, and belief in my abilities. His guidance, patience, and love have been instrumental in shaping me into the person I am today. I want to give a special mention to my thesis partner and dear friend, Lilian Lema. Her friendship and support have been invaluable to me. I am grateful to have had her by my side as we tackled this academic endeavor together. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge my beloved pet, Chiquita, who has been a faithful companion throughout this journey. Her presence, unconditional love, and playful spirit have brought joy and comfort during challenging times. I am so thankful for my Chiquita's furry support and for always being by my side.

Karolyne Piedra

Dedication

This project is dedicated to my family, especially my parents, Raul and Rosa, to my beloved half-sister, Karol, and to my grandparents, Jose and Rosa who always supported and encouraged me.

Lilian Lema

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my dad Amador, sister Erika, and pet Chiquita, whose love, guidance, belief, and loyal companionship in me continue to inspire my journey. Their love and support have shaped me into the person I am today.

Karolyne Piedra

Introduction

The application of Integrative Tests, which are evaluation tools that allow teachers or instructors to assess different students' skills at the same time (Plakans, 2010), has been a controversial topic in the field of education in recent years due to the lack of familiarity with its application (Šolaja, 2017). This research aims to study Integrative Tests because they are not widely used and there is not a clear socialization with these types of tests, as Fatemi and Khaghaninejad (2011) mentioned, Integrative Tests are rarely applied nowadays since they are not well-known in some educational systems and due to the fact that traditional tests are still used in many language contexts.

For this research synthesis, the following research questions were formulated.

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of applying Integrative Tests to measure English language learners' proficiency?
2. What are the pedagogical implications of applying Integrative Tests to assess English language learners' proficiency?

In this research, both qualitative and quantitative data about the implementation of Integrative Test were analyzed. The different articles showed advantages and disadvantages; however, it is evident that the information provided about the advantages of this assessment tool is more recurrent and repetitive than disadvantages, which are less common.

This study consists of five chapters. The first chapter presents the description of the research which is divided into the background, the problem statement, the justification, the research questions, and the objectives of this research synthesis. The second chapter includes the theoretical framework. It describes the most important terms that are related to the application of Integrative Tests. The third chapter, the literature review is presented, it encompasses a short description of the articles selected for the analysis. The fourth chapter is the methodology which shows how the study was conducted and the way in which the articles were selected. The fifth chapter is data analysis which contains a short examination of the studies. The analysis of the information was divided into five tables which describe the "Year of Publication of the Studies", "Advantages of Integrative Tests", "Disadvantages of Integrative Tests", "Pedagogical Implications of Integrative Tests", and "English teachers' considerations when constructing and before administering Integrative Tests."

Finally, the sixth chapter presents the conclusions of this paper, the recommendations for further analysis, and the references.

CHAPTER I

Description of the Research

1.1 Background

As it is well-known, the application of several instruments including different kinds of tests is necessary in order to assess language proficiency. In the field of language assessment, it is possible to distinguish between two types of language tests: integrative and discrete-point tests (Stubbs & Tucker, 1974). The main characteristic of discrete-point tests is that they are structured to evaluate language proficiency in separate and well-defined sections, and each one can be tested successfully at the same time (Šolaja, 2017). On the other hand, Integrative Tests are mainly characterized by compiling all the core skills of the English language (i.e., reading, writing, listening, and speaking). This research synthesis will focus on analyzing Integrative Tests since it is important to consider its advantages, disadvantages, and pedagogical implications on students' English language proficiency.

Most of the time, many English language teachers struggle to select the best structured and most objective type of evaluation. This happens due to the fact that implementing different types of assessments will yield different results on students' performance, or as Šolaja (2017) stated, "all language tests consist of specified tasks through which language abilities are elicited" (p. 8). Thus, it is precise for English language teachers to know about Integrative tests characteristics since they can become a valuable resource for second language instructors when assessing English language learners' proficiency.

In this regard, Khosravan (2020) defined Integrative testing as an evaluative tool that "combines different aspects of language in one integrated test. For example, composition writing where the form, content, use of vocabulary, grammar, etc., can be checked" (p. 10). Also, in the words of Hidri (2017), "in integrative testing, several skills are blended together, and they are meant to measure test takers' ability to comprehend and process information" (p. 5003).

In the preliminary research, different studies about Integrative Tests have been found. They address different areas such as the effectiveness of Integrative Tests in evaluating the English language skills and their components, and the implementation of digital aids such as computerized tests. Other areas include the role of Cultural Schemata (i.e., cultural differences) on students' performance, as well as Integrative Tests' authenticity, validity, reliability, and students' experiences when completing Integrative Tests.

1.2 Problem Statement

Selecting the most suitable instruments to successfully measure English language learners' proficiency has been a constant matter of discussion among English language instructors. It is usually difficult for English language educators to decide to test their students by using either

Integrative Tests or more conventional evaluations (Saeedi, Tavakoli, Kazerooni & Parvaresh, 2011). However, Šolaja (2017) defended the incorporation of Integrative Tests to assess English language learners and said that “for successful communication, a language user needs to be able to use several language units at once which is why an integrative task represents a perfect tool for testing proficiency” (p. 28). Thus, Integrative Tests seem to be valuable resources that could influence the English language assessment process by checking students’ knowledge fast and efficiently in this case. As opposed to this, however, Sadeghi (2008), after analyzing the use of cloze test to measure reading comprehension, stated that “favoring Integrative Tests over other techniques for measuring text comprehension is not tenable simply because cloze does not seem to measure just overall understanding” (p. 126). All-encompassing, it is compulsory to look at the whole picture and analyze the benefits of Integrative Tests in assessing students’ mastery of all the skills (speaking, writing, reading, and listening) and the subskills (skimming in reading, organizational and editing skills in writing, recognition of connected speech and understanding gist in listening, and pronunciation and intonation in speaking, etc.) the English language has rather than focusing just on one of them.

Most studies have approached the impact that Integrative Tests can have on students’ performance, but the majority of them are comparison studies that also involve the application of discrete-point tests and analyze them collectively. Therefore, analyzing how beneficial it can be to test English language students’ performance through the application of Integrative Tests as unique tools is necessary. Consequently, the present research synthesis emerges as an instrument that contributes to satisfying the necessity of filling that research gap.

1.3 Rationale

Corder (1975), with regards to language assessment, stated that “the ability to do a good job of measuring the learner’s knowledge of the language depends upon the adequacy of our theory about the language, our understanding of what is meant by knowledge of language” (p. 25). So, given this, assessing English language proficiency is a key component for teachers and students, but it is also closely related to teachers’ and students’ teaching and learning goals respectively. Notwithstanding, there has been a lack of balance regarding the amount of research done analyzing the sole application of Integrative Tests in English language learning contexts. Therefore, a research synthesis that contributes to filling that void by going over all the implications and possible educational outcomes of applying Integrative Tests as standalone tools for assessment in English language learning contexts is needed. Filling this gap is necessary since it would serve as a source of information for language teachers who are unsure about all the implications that involve administering Integrative Tests to students.

It will also be useful for English language students who are curious to find out the reasons and purposes their teacher or teachers may have for using this specific type of test.

Additionally, being aware of the possibility of applying Integrative Tests is relevant for teachers since sometimes, “there is not the time to test thing at a time,” or test’ purpose “may not require a detailed assessment of a student’s understanding or skills” (Septiarini & Hikmah, 2017, p. 681). However, saving time must not be the only justification language teachers need to have for incorporating Integrative Tests as a means of language assessment; there are far too many more implications that have to be considered objectively.

This research synthesis aims at analyzing the advantages, disadvantages, and pedagogical implications of the different types of instruments of evaluation that are considered as Integrative Tests in any type of English language learning context.

1.4 Research Questions

The following questions will be answered:

- a. What are the advantages and disadvantages of applying Integrative Tests to measure English language learners’ proficiency?
- b. What are the pedagogical implications of applying Integrative Tests to assess English language learners’ proficiency?

1.5 Objectives

General Objective:

To identify the advantages and disadvantages of applying Integrative Tests and its pedagogical implications.

Specific Objectives:

- To explain the advantages and disadvantages of applying Integrative Tests when assessing English language learners’ proficiency.
- To identify the pedagogical implications of applying Integrative Tests to assess English language learners’ proficiency.

CHAPTER II

Theoretical Framework

2.1 Assessment

Due to the fact that ordering and ranking students is still present, teachers need to assess their students' progress in any field they are studying by applying the most suitable test they consider. Assessment is used to measure students' knowledge; it can be a single class assessment or a task of a determined period of time, like a month's evaluation. It also shows the effectiveness of teaching and the aspects of the class that can be improved (Solaja, 2017). Consequently, assessment must be studied in order to understand how a particular practice, such as a task or test, might be a possible solution to problems when an indicator of level proficiency is required. Therefore, assessment is considered as a generic process which is concerned with the measurement and evaluation of the qualities of a subject of interest. Thus, its objective is to show which aspects and items of the tests were evaluated (Weaver & Rotmans, 2006)

2.2 Tests

Considering that "a test is selected for a particular situation and purpose" (Cronbach, 1984 as cited in Solaja, 2017, p.8), the aim may vary depending on what will be assessed. Thus, teachers must know what they want to test.

Furthermore, language teachers should consider some aspects when constructing and before administering any type of test such as validity, objectivity, and reliability (Brown, 2002). Also, the creators of classroom assignments should build and clarify the task demands in order to make students understand what the requirements for completing the test are.

A test is designed for students in order to be evaluated, not for teachers; however, it serves for both of them. Through its application students get a clue of the way to obtain better grades and improve their academic performance. On the other hand, it informs teachers how to adapt lessons and exams to improve the effectiveness on the student's learning (Bamgbose, 2022). Besides, Anagnostopoulos (2005) highlighted that a test may also enter into the interactions between teachers and students through classroom tasks which are used to display the conceptions of teaching endorsed by a test.

2.3 Importance of Tests

Tests are necessary because their results let the teacher give feedback to the students, and they aid the instructor to realize what to change when teaching. Moreover, the reaction of students to tasks influences their motivation and may vary their test performance (Heng-Tsung & Shao-Ting, 2016). Further, tests are crucial due to the fact that they allow students to put into practice and demonstrate their knowledge of what they have learned; through the

development of a task, students also receive some indirect language input (Marzban & Abdollahi, 2013).

In addition, the improvement of some skills, such as reading (Septiarini & Hikmah, 2017), speaking (Marzban & Abdollahi, 2013), and listening (Wei & Ying, 2017) can be seen through the use and application of tests.

2.4 Integrative Tests

Since measurement is important in education, there are many different types of assessments or tests; Integrative Tests are one of the variations of tests. It is a kind of language evaluation that measures the majority of the students' skills simultaneously. Thus, students illustrate their domain on the topic (knowledge about the theme) and their language ability (appropriate use of language skills) (Plakans, 2010).

According to Talebinezhad and Dastjerdi (2006) (as cited in Fatemi & Khaghaninejad, 2011), Integrative Tests can be created or adapted from provided instructional stuff or already existing authentic resources; in this way, teachers do not have to create new material. Hence, teachers can adapt the evaluations, tests or tasks depending on instructors' and students' necessities or requirements. In the same way, they can trust its validity since test designers are able to get a general idea of how students develop different skills when applying an Integrative Test, task, or approach (Septiarini & Hikmah, 2017). However, when any available test is not useful or even cannot be adapted, teachers must create a new one that covers all the required demands.

Additionally, in a written Integrative Test or task, students construct a meaning inferred from the text involving their knowledge, techniques, previous experiences, and capacity to understand information (Sukarni, 2021). Whereas in a listening assessment, test takers use strategies to reinforce their sub-skills and demonstrate engagement with the input and their comprehension of the provided audio or any material (Wei & Ying, 2017).

2.5 Types of Integrative Tests

In language assessments, the use of different types of Integrative Tests varies depending on the principal aim of the evaluation such as the skill that needs to be mostly evaluated. Marzban and Abdollahi (2013) mentioned that two types of tests have historically been claimed to be examples of Integrative Tests: cloze test and dictation; however, partial dictation is a variation of the traditional dictation way of assessment that is also used in the great majority.

2.5.1 Cloze test

A cloze test is a test that consists of filling in a space with a removed word and applying all the knowledge and strategies of the student to understand the text, creating a relationship with the missing word. This type of test can be presented in two ways: oral or written. When the

assessment is written, students have to infer the information from the text after the reading; and if the test is oral, test takers must listen carefully to the reading passage in order to perform properly (Atef-Vahid, Kashani & Haddadi, 2011).

2.5.2 Dictation

Dictation is an Integrative Test that serves as a language teaching and testing technique. It consists of the instructor reading a text while the students try to write what they hear to get the same reading passage (Marzban & Abdollahi, 2013).

2.5.3 Partial dictation

Partial dictation is a way of assessment very similar to dictation; however, in this type of test, a passage with some words removed is given to the students, who must listen to the reading and complete a test in which there are missing parts that must be completed (Marzban & Abdollahi, 2013).

2.6 Pedagogical implications

The factors that have an important role in an educational context are known as pedagogical implications. They involve teachers' assistance, the syllabus, and students' perceptions must be taken into account when using some type of educational activity. Moreover, according to Ajideh and Esfandiari (2009), these factors are important because they are directly related to the test makers, the syllabus structure, and the students who are the principal constituents of the instructional field. The implications are a key element in education since they are factors that cannot be seen, and many teachers or instructors do not take them into account.

CHAPTER III

Literature Review

3.1 Integrative Tests

The evolution of language testing encompasses significant changes over time. In the 1980s, a debate arose within the language testing community regarding the use of tests. Oller (1983) (as cited in Frost, Elder & Wigglesworth 2011) argued that language proficiency was a unitary concept rather than a definition that is studied separately. This new concept led to the exploration of Integrative Tests, which consider language evaluation as a whole in which all the skills are taken into account as a single unit instead of considering them as different parts of the language. Consequently, it is relevant to analyze the convenience of the application of Integrative Tests on different language learning levels and their possible drawbacks in order to ensure the reliability of the tests.

3.2 Advantages of Integrative Tests

Firstly, discussing the advantages of using Integrative Tests to measure English language students' proficiency is important because it allows teachers or instructors to choose the most appropriate way of assessing all competencies of learners. According to Wei and Ying (2017) and Saeedi et al. (2011), after applying Integrative Tests in their research, they found that there are several advantages when using Integrative Tests. For instance, these types of tests provide a strong match between readers' background knowledge of the topic and text content which enhances language comprehension through the development of the evaluations. Also, a mismatch makes readers unable to understand the core message of the text. Besides, several studies, including those by Heng-Tsung and Shao-Ting (2016) and Marzban and Abdollahi (2013), have demonstrated that the provided background knowledge can improve L2 reading and listening comprehension, especially when used together.

Furthermore, Heng-Tsung and Shao-Ting (2016); Marzban and Abdollahi (2013) established that Integrative Tests tend to have a higher degree of consistency, and cloze tests provide an overall picture of proficiency as they reflect how well language skills are used in a meaningful context. In addition, these studies indicated that written recall tasks, which are part of Integrative Tests, have been shown to be a commonly used measure of reading comprehension in L2 studies, as they reflect the cognitive processes involved in reading, such as encoding, restructuring, and analyzing information.

Another advantage of Integrative tests is established by Marzban and Abdollahi (2013). They suggested that when applying this test as a listening comprehension one, the use of dictation helps students to identify and recognize some phonetic aspects leading to a better use and understanding of the sounds. Marzban and Abdollahi (2013) also ended up considering

listening comprehension as an advantage after locating benefits when using Integrative Tests to analyze and measure the progress and proficiency of students in this skill.

Moreover, in a study conducted by Šolaja (2017), it is illustrated that students may get better grades when they are evaluated with an Integrative Test. This occurs because students combine many linguistic elements instead of focusing on just one method or strategy to complete the test. While in a classic test, the students only develop all the questions of the test with random and incorrect responses in order not to give it to the teacher with empty spaces.

In conclusion, different authors have pointed out some advantages of Integrative Tests that can serve as beneficial assessment tools for English language teachers in terms of consistency and practicality when used to measure English language learners' overall proficiency. However, it is important to be aware of the potential drawbacks and factors that can influence test performance to ensure accurate results.

3.3 Disadvantages of Integrative Tests

Despite the fact that integrative tests have benefits that help the instructor when choosing the best way to evaluate a student, the disadvantages that may arise must be taken into account. Sadeghi (2008) identified three main disadvantages of using Integrative Tests. First, he established that creating clear, meaningful, comprehensive rubrics and level descriptors for Integrative Tests can be challenging since any detail of the performance levels that are not properly described would make them potentially unreliable. Second, Sadeghi (2008) together with Frost, Elder, and Wigglesworth (2011) considered that these types of tests may not accurately assess reading comprehension since they often focus on a limited range of language skills or use artificial contexts that do not mirror the complexity of actual communication. This may create a mismatch between the required usage for a test's effective comprehension and its development. Finally, Sadeghi (2008) found that to fill an Integrative Test, a certain level of proficiency is required due to students having to look for and combine the most suitable strategies and techniques that allow them to complete the evaluation. It is a requisite because if students do not have the supposed level of proficiency, they might not understand the test and may spend more time than the ones that comply with the requirements.

Overall, while Integrative Tests have some advantages over other tests that just assess a single skill or subskill in evaluating English language proficiency, they also come with several disadvantages that need to be carefully considered before using them as a measure of language ability.

3.4 Pedagogical Implications of Applying Integrative Tests

Not only the advantages and disadvantages must be taken into account when choosing the most appropriate evaluation method, but also the pedagogical implications that exist when a certain type of test is going to be applied must be considered.

Due to Integrative Tests are not similar to classic tests such as multiple-choice evaluations, Plakans (2010) set up that when test takers are evaluated, they may not be familiar with the structure of the Integrative Tests. This fact leads students to need guidance from the teacher while they are developing a test. The instructor tends to help them with clear directions, strategies to comprehend the material, and techniques to integrate different skills such as reading and writing. The techniques or strategies may vary depending on the assessment that is being used; for example: in dictation test, a strategy is that students must focus on the introduction of the speech while in a cloze test students must identify the structure of the sentence.

Another pedagogical implication that may appear, according to Marzban and Abdollahi (2013), at the moment of developing an Integrative Test such as dictation, students require practice completing these types of tests. They need to be exposed previously to this way of evaluation where they have to fill the blank spaces of a text with a word or a phrase or write a complete passage while listening through the use of formative assignments. Marzban and Abdollahi (2013) saw that students with experience in these types of tests do better than those who have not been evaluated in this way. Thus, exposing students to any type of variation of dictation provides proper and enough instruction in order to improve their skills.

Furthermore, the syllabus design is a pedagogical implication when using Integrative Tests. As Ajideh and Esfandiari (2009) have illustrated, the syllabus for education is still focused on analytic approaches that were used in the past decades. The designers must focus on current synthetic approaches including a holistic view in which they emphasize the proper use of the language to enable students to master the language usage through the use of authentic materials and activities.

Finally, Heng-Tsung and Shao-Ting (2016) established that another pedagogical implication of applying Integrative Tests is the student's perception. It refers to the test takers' reactions and attitudes that are present while they are developing a test. The authors mentioned that the time students must answer or complete the questions, how they relate the ideas, and to what extent they master or know about the topic are some considerations test-takers must consider while developing an Integrative Test.

3.5 English teachers' considerations when constructing and before administering Integrative Tests to English language learners.

The use of integrated tasks as a measure of English language abilities raises questions concerning test validity, reliability, objectivity, and the limitations of their application.

First, Wei and Ying (2017) established that when constructing a test, the principal aspect that needs to be considered is validity; it means if it guarantees that the tool used for assessment evaluates what is supposed to be measured.

Additionally, Saeedi, Tavakoli, Kazerooni, and Parvaresh (2011) have emphasized that factors such as validity, test construction, reliability, and different test formats can all affect learners' performance. Thus, how reliable a test is must be considered, since if it does not comply with the principle of reliability, the test will not be a correct tool to evaluate students. However, some parts of the test can be changed or adapted depending on the level of the students and the degree of difficulty with which the test is expected to be applied. It is important to use various test adaptations to positively impact both the learning and teaching process. Effective English language teaching involves more than just teaching the mechanics of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Innovative schools and teachers understand that there are a multitude of factors that come into play in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom.

CHAPTER IV

Methodology

A study conducted by Cooper and Hedges (1988) claimed that “a research synthesis can be defined as a conjunction of a particular set of literature review characteristics” (p. 6), so this research synthesis analyzes, compares, and contrasts all the found elements.

The following research synthesis encompassed a thorough search strategy to collect data from several databases and several journals to obtain different and appropriate articles related to Integrative Tests. These databases included Pro Quest, Elsevier, EBSCO Host, OISE Library, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Dialnet, DOAJ, FLACSO, Academia, and ERIC. The key terms for searching for data used throughout this synthesis are (a) Integrative Tests, (b) English language classrooms, (c) Integrative Tests effects, (d) Integrative Tests application, (e) English language development, and (f) English language proficiency. Data gathered incorporated digital sources related to the topic, so studies related to the issue of this synthesis were easier to track in this format. The articles embrace empirical studies in order to get a better idea about English language teachers’ application of Integrative Tests in EFL classrooms to assess English language learners’ overall proficiency. To properly gather the reported information related to the topic from different investigation works, the methodology considered for this research work is bibliographic analysis.

Furthermore, in this research synthesis, several journals for collecting data were considered involving *International Journal of Multidisciplinary and Current Research*, *Journal of Teaching Language Skills*, *Linguistic and Literary Broad Research and Innovation*, *Second Language Studies*, *English Language Teaching* among others that will significantly influence the development of this research synthesis. Also, this study differentiated the articles selected for this research by means of a coding process. Consequently, the articles were labeled in concordance with the types of Integrative Tests they analyze, the specific effects those tests have on English language learners, and the frequency of application of the before mentioned tests. By doing so, data retrieved from the selected studies were thoroughly analyzed in a more convenient way.

For appropriate purposes, studies which use qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches were taken into account. Besides, the studies integrated into this research synthesis undergo a selection process based on specific criteria. One requirement is the convenience of applying any type of Integrative Tests for assessing students’ English language proficiency. That is, all kinds of Integrative Tests were considered for analysis. Another one is the application of Integrative Tests in any English language learning context worldwide. Additionally, only studies since the year 2000 were considered because the usage of Integrative Tests has been tackled considerably by researchers and English language

teachers in the last two decades (Šolaja, 2017). Furthermore, only studies written in English are considered as it is the main language used in articles related to education, and it is also the main language used for searching for data on the web. Books or theses about this research synthesis topic are not considered since many of those sources cover the topic specifications in a very broad way rather than exclusively.

CHAPTER V

Data analysis and results

In order to answer the research questions of this synthesis, 20 studies were collected and analyzed. To have a clear picture of the different aspects regarding Integrative Tests these studies were classified into the following categories: year of publication, advantages of Integrative Tests, disadvantages of Integrative Tests, pedagogical implications of applying Integrative Tests, and English teachers' considerations when constructing and before administering Integrative Tests to English language learners. Data were organized in tables with their corresponding analysis and discussion.

5.1 Year of Publication of the Studies

The first aspect being considered for the analysis is the year of publication of the studies since through the evolution of research, there may be changes in some tools that had a defined purpose but nowadays could have another use. For this reason, 20 articles from different years are analyzed in this section.

Table 1: *Year of Publication of the Studies*

Year of Publication of the Studies		
Year of publication	Nº of Studies	Author/s and Year
2002 - 2011	9	Brown, J. D. (2002); McKamey, T. (2006); Sadeghi, K. (2008); Ajideh, P. & Esfandiari, R. (2009); Plakans, L. (2010); Frost, K., Elder, C., & Wigglesworth, G. (2011); Atef-Vahid, S., Kashani, A. F. & Haddadi, M. (2011); Saeedi, M., Tavakoli, M., Kazerooni, R. S. & Parvaresh, V. (2011); Fatemi, A. & Khaghaninejad, M. (2011)
2012 - 2021	11	Wahdaniah, et al. (2012); Cai, H. (2012); Marzban, A. & Abdollahi M. (2013); Abbasian, G., & Ghasemi, K. (2015); Chae, E., & Shin, A. (2015); Heng-Tsung, D. H., Shao-Ting, A. H. (2016); Septiarini, T. & Hikmah, S. (2017); Wei, W. & Ying, Z. (2017); Šolaja, A. (2017); Hajebi, M. & Taheri, S. & Allami, H. (2018); Sukarni, S. (2021)

N= 20

Table 1 classifies all the studies into two periods of time. The first period corresponds to the studies published between 2002 and 2011, considering 2002 the initial year to analyze updated information. The second section embraces the studies published between 2012 and 2021. The range of years of the studies, from 2002 to 2021, is wide enough to analyze how the perception of Integrative Tests has evolved. It can be seen that in the two periods in which the analysis of the table is divided, there is a consistency in the number of published studies. After analyzing 20 articles a variation of the use of Cloze Tests was found. The following definitions show how the conception of the cloze test, a type of Integrative Test, changed through the years. Firstly, according to Sadeghi (2008), cloze tests are older than generally believed. In the beginning, cloze tests were directly involved in the health field, they consisted of a syllable deletion to test the degree of fatigue in mental functions. Then, Saeedi et al. (2011) pointed out that cloze tests involve not just a syllable but a word deletion with the purpose of assessing more than one skill of the test taker once they understand its general significance. Finally, Sukarni (2021) established that a cloze test consists of a single or multiple-word deletion, and it helps students recognize and develop an awareness of the interrelationships of the language. Although a cloze test was created for medical purposes, it still consists of completing a part of a text; it means that the principal structure of this type of test is still present.

5.2 Advantages of Integrative Tests

This category analyzes the most common advantages of Integrative Tests. For the construction of this table, 10 out of 20 studies were selected due to the fact that those studies embrace the topic of the advantages of Integrative Tests.

Of the 20 analyzed articles, ten stand out the advantages of Integrative Tests. Of these ten studies, six established that reading comprehension may be improved when using Integrative Tests. Three illustrated that these types of tests improve reading comprehension ability, and three articles demonstrated that students get higher scores on Integrative Tests than on other tests. Also, the following advantages are supported by just one author because a single article refers to improving the ability to speak, one on simple to fill out, and one on used as a diagnostic test.

The following table shows the advantages of using Integrative Tests.

Table 2: *Advantages of Integrative Tests*

Advantages of Integrative Tests		
Criterion	Number of Studies	Author and Year

Reading Comprehension Improvement	6	Abbasian, G., & Ghasemi, K. (2015); Septiarini, T. & Hikmah, S. (2017); Šolaja, A. (2017); Hajebi, M. & Taheri, S. & Allami, H. (2018); Sukarni, S. (2021)
Listening Comprehension Improvement	3	Marzban, A. & Abdollahi M. (2013); Heng-Tsung, D. H., Shao-Ting, A. H. (2016); Wei, W. & Ying, Z. (2017)
Speaking Skill Improvement	1	Marzban, A. & Abdollahi M. (2013)
Higher Scores	3	Chae, E., & Shin, A. (2015); Šolaja, A. (2017); Sukarni, S. (2021)
Simple to fill in	1	Heng-Tsung, D. H., Shao-Ting, A. H. (2016)
Used as a diagnostic test	1	Saeedi, M., Tavakoli, M., Kazerooni, R. S. & Parvaresh, V. (2011)

N=10

*Studies are counted in more than one category

Reading Comprehension Improvement

Table two illustrates that Integrative Tests have many advantages. A great number of authors Sukarni (2021); Septiarini and Hikmah (2017); Abbasian and Ghasemi (2015); Hajebi, Taheri, and Allami (2018); Šolaja (2017) agreed that one of the most relevant advantages is reading comprehension improvement.

According to Septiarini and Hikmah (2017); Šolaja (2017), test designers use Integrative Tests to measure reading comprehension due to the fact that test takers come away with a general idea of the text and some domain of the language used in a passage when they read or listen to while complete the test.

Additionally, the idea that one of the advantages of Integrative Tests is to improve reading comprehension ability is supported by Oller (1973) (as cited in Abbasian & Ghasemi, 2015), who stated that cloze tests are a useful tool to measure reading comprehension ability since they address discourse knowledge and syntax about the topic or passage at the same time.

Thus, this is possible because a single Integrative Test is enough for assessing the knowledge about the topic and the grammar structures used in the text or assessment.

Some authors, including Sukarni (2021); Abbasian and Ghasemi (2015); Hajebi, Taheri, and Allami (2018), reported how Integrative Tests make students improve their ability to read. First, Sukarni (2021) alluded that the application of an Integrative Test makes students raise interest in learning to find out the information from the reading text. Moreover, Abbasian and Ghasemi (2015) asserted that when test takers are filling out the test, they think carefully about what they are developing in order to get a complete idea which leads test takers to identify different vocabulary and grammar structures. Hajebi, Taheri, and Allami (2018) also reported that students could comprehend passages or readings easily due to the use of techniques such as learning chunks of words and word clusters that help them understand the test.

Listening Comprehension Improvement

Marzban and Abdollahi (2013); Heng-Tsung and Shao-Ting (2016); Wei and Ying (2017) found that listening comprehension improvement is another advantage of Integrative Tests. They stated that dictation, as part of integrative tests, can help increase listening comprehension. Thus, when using dictation, learners are able to notice and detect the mistakes they made while developing a task when students are aware of the correct pronunciation of English sounds by recognizing different aspects of pronunciation and sound English variation systems.

Moreover, Buck (2001) (as cited in Wei & Ying, 2017) held that dictation assesses listening comprehension skill in a local way focusing either in vocabulary or grammar abilities or domain, a literal, and a linguistic level. Thus, Integrative Tests lead students to be aware of the aspects of the language while creating new techniques that improve their mastering on the skills.

Along the same line, Integrative Test is the preferred test format of students because it holds implications for practice listening comprehension activities and offers language opportunities during the test and before it to attempt to perform the best of their L2 skills, including reading, listening, and speaking (Heng-Tsung & Shao-Ting 2016). Integrative Tests are highly liked by test takers since they can practice the language features after being assessed and they can apply all the knowledge and abilities development during the test. Undoubtedly, when looking for a type of test that improves listening comprehension ability, Integrative Tests must be considered due to the fact that they make students aware of the techniques, mistakes, and implications that this type of test carries out when test takers are developing it.

Speaking Skill Improvement

Regarding speaking improvement, Marzaban and Abdollahi (2013) found that Integrative Tests also benefit this skill. These authors explained that using conversations of native speakers as a model of the English system sound makes students improve their speaking

skills by practicing and identifying the sound system's features. Taking this into account, all the speaking techniques used by the students would evolve and be adapted during the test development. This occurs because test takers are able to recognize their own mistakes resulting in an improvement in the use of different methods or the establishment of new techniques for their speaking ability.

Higher Scores

Students' higher scores were seen as one more advantage of using Integrative Tests in the classroom by Sukarni (2021) and Šolaja (2017). Thus, when applying Integrative Tests and other types of tests to assess the same content, students get higher scores in the Integrative Tests because they are easier to fill in than in the other tests (Sukarni 2021). The same author found that at the moment of applying Integrative Tests to assess reading comprehension in non-English department students, the results were better grades on Integrative Tests than on classic tests.

Furthermore, Šolaja (2017) maintained that using Integrative Tests results in higher scores over other types of tests due to the fact that they are a perfect tool for testing students' language proficiency since communication encompasses many different parts of the language.

Simple to Fill in

Only one paper out of the 20 analyzed contains information establishing that simply filling out an Integrative Test is an advantage of using this type of tests. Heng-Tsung and Shao-Ting (2016) declared that since these types of tests are easier to fill out than other tests, students complete Integrative Tests more efficiently. They use cognitive, communication, and metacognitive strategies such as processing inductively, translating, linking to background knowledge, reviewing notes, and planning. These strategies facilitate the integration of reading and listening input into oral output. Apart from the fact that students consider that while they are assessed through an Integrative Test, they develop their vocabulary and get more ideas and inspiration by recognizing new words.

Used as a Diagnostic Test

Another advantage of using Integrative Tests is the way in which they can be used beyond using them just as a class assessment test. Saeedi et al. (2011) established that an Integrative Test simultaneously measures a student's skills. Therefore, it is used as a diagnostic test due to the fact that Cloze Tests are one of the most versatile and efficient language testing instruments so that they may be helpful in schools as achievement, diagnostic, and placement tests.

In the ten articles analyzed in this category, different advantages were located. Most of the authors coincided with the fact that Integrative Tests help students improve their reading comprehension ability. The authors of the analyzed articles conclude that Integrative Tests

evaluate the skills of a language as a whole. Despite some advantages that have been established by just an author, it is necessary to consider those findings.

5.3 Disadvantages of Integrative Tests

This category analyzes the disadvantages found through the research on applying Integrative Tests in a classroom. After exploring the chosen articles, 2 of the totals showed disadvantages about Integrative Tests. The disadvantages are classified in 3 categories: the level of proficiency, not specific scoring criteria, and reading comprehension.

Table 3: *Disadvantages of Integrative Tests*

Disadvantages of Integrative Tests		
Criterion	Nº of Studies	Author/ Year
The Level of Proficiency	1	Sadeghi, K. (2008)
Not Specific Scoring Criteria	2	Sadeghi, K. (2008); Frost, K., Elder, C., & Wigglesworth, G. (2011)
Reading Comprehension	1	Sadeghi, K. (2008)

N= 2

*Studies are counted in more than one category

When researching Integrative Tests, different advantages and disadvantages were highlighted by different authors. Although the disadvantages are few, they should be considered; the main disadvantages are that an Integrative Test requires a level of proficiency to develop it, the inability to measure reading comprehension, and no specific scoring criteria to measure content.

Level of Proficiency

One of the disadvantages that students can find when having an Integrative Test is the fact that this type of test require a high level of language proficiency. Even though this disadvantage was found in one study it is worth considering it. Sadeghi (2008) mentioned that because students must have a certain degree of ability to complete an Integrative Test, some test takers fail the test or do not understand it because they are not proficient enough in applying the required degree of the different skills and techniques. Consequently, they are not able to complete these types of assessments.

Integrative Tests do not Measure Reading Comprehension

As was shown before, table 2 illustrates that Sukarni (2021); Septiarini and Hikmah (2017); Abbasian and Ghasemi (2015); Hajebi, Taheri, and Allami (2018); Šolaja (2017); Oller (1973)

(as cited in Abbasian & Ghasemi, 2015) remarked that one of the advantages of using Integrative Tests was reading comprehension improvement. Notwithstanding, Sadeghi (2008) found that using Integrative Tests to assess reading comprehension was a disadvantage. This author referred to cloze tests as not being a proper way to assess reading comprehension. This occurs as a consequence of the required answers of these types of tests that may be more challenging since they have to complete it instead of just selecting one of a list of possible answers; thus, students feel the necessity on filling gaps, this leads them to the raising of multiple and random responses since test takers complete the questions in order to not leave it in blank spaces.

Not Specific Scoring Criteria

One more time Sadeghi (2008) stated that the lack of clarity on what is being measured, which means there are no particular scoring criteria, is another disadvantage of using Integrative Tests. Besides, Brown (2005) (as cited in Frost, Elder, & Wigglesworth, 2011) agreed with Sadeghi (2008) illustrating that students' answers may be problematic if scoring criteria is not specific in what is being measured because test takers would arise with the responses that were not asked. Therefore, this author found that some test takers do not consider a Cloze Test an Integrative Test because in his research, students do not contemplate an Integrative Test as a way of assessing since some of them see it as a test of vocabulary or grammar; even a part of them need help to identify the aim of that way of evaluating. Thus, an Integrative Test is a tool used for assessing, but it needs to be clear on what is being assessed.

5.4 English teachers' considerations when constructing and before administering Integrative Tests

This category embraces the English teachers' considerations that must be considered when constructing and before administering Integrative Tests. 10 of 20 studies were selected for this category. The articles contain the required information to complete the data table.

Table 4: *English teachers' considerations*

English teachers' considerations		
Criterion	Nº of Studies	Author/ Year
Validity	2	Wei, W. & Ying, Z. (2017); Saeedi, M., Tavakoli, M., Kazerooni, R. S. & Parvaresh, V. (2011); Brown, J. D. (2002); Frost, K., Elder,

		C., & Wigglesworth, G. (2011); Sadeghi, K. (2008)
Reliability	3	Chae, E., & Shin, A. (2015); Brown, J. D. (2002); Abbasian, G., & Ghasemi, K. (2015)
Objectivity	1	Heng-Tsung, D. H., & Shao-Ting, A. H. (2016)
Limitations	2	Ajideh, P. & Esfandiari, R. (2009); Plakans, L. (2010)

N=10

*Studies are counted in more than one category

As stated by some authors Wei and Ying (2017); Saeedi, Tavakoli, Kazerooni, and Parvaresh (2011); Brown (2002); Fros, Elder, and Wigglesworth (2011); Sadeghi (2008); Chae and Shin (2015); Abbasian and Ghasemi (2015); Heng-Tsung and Shao-Ting (2016); Ajideh and Esfandiari (2009); Plakans (2010), when constructing an Integrative Test, teachers must consider different aspects. The most important ones are the principles of language assessment: validity, reliability, objectivity, and some limitations that may appear during the process.

Validity

According to the analysis, Wei and Ying (2017); Saeedi, et al. (2011); Brown (2002); Frost, Elder and Wigglesworth (2011); Sadeghi (2008) alluded that a test must follow the principle of validity that states that an assessment must measure what it is supposed to evaluate in order to be appropriate and embrace favorable outcomes. This conception is supported by Sadeghi (2008), who found that a valid integrative test must be specific about the content's accuracy which refers to the level of correctness of the presented information. Additionally, Wei and Ying (2017); Saeedi, Tavakoli, Kazerooni, and Parvaresh (2011) agreed that different aspects, such as the level of authenticity and clarity of the evaluations, make the assessment a valid test; for example, the authors mentioned above stated that cloze tests comply with the principle of validity because they measure the content that was intended to be evaluated, so Integrative Tests are capable ways of assessment to measure general English proficiency.

Reliability

Another principle that must be considered when constructing an Integrative Test is reliability. In this analysis, there is no agreement on the reliability of Integrative Tests between Chae and

Shin (2015) and Abbasian and Ghasemi (2015). On the one hand, Chae and Shin (2015) declared that a tailored Integrative Test designed for a particular objective is reliable because it functions and gets the results as it was expected. On the other hand, Abbasian and Ghasemi (2015) pointed out that Integrative Tests are not a reliable method to assess language testing in particular unless the evaluation method is adapted and takes into account the levels of all students on the subject and the ability they have to develop this type of tests. Hence, some changes and adjustments such as the use of appropriate and accurate questions or topics must be made to make an Integrative reliable.

Objectivity

Just Heng-Tsung and Shao-Ting (2016) stated that an important aspect to consider is the test's objectivity. Any type of Integrative Test used to assess students should be objective and get what the teacher wants so the results will not be affected. The test results should reflect the knowledge of the topic and the performance proficiency of students instead of a misunderstanding of the instructions of the evaluation.

Limitations

Ajideh and Esfandiari (2009) and Plakans (2010) recognized that another aspect that must be considered is the limitations of applying a test; they illustrated two principal limitations. First, Plakans (2010) contemplated that the student's lack of familiarity with Integrative Tests is a limitation; for instance, if any particular approach or strategy is required, like a think-aloud verbal protocol, the moment that a student is completing a test may affect the results of the evaluation. Second, Ajideh and Esfandiari (2009) suggested that another limitation of applying Integrative Tests is that the number of test takers must be small in order to analyze and help them properly because some tests need extra help or instruction. But, if there is a large group of students the guidance would not work.

5.5 Pedagogical Implications

This category analyzes the pedagogical implications of using Integrative Tests as a way of assessment. For this category, 4 articles were chosen since they focus on the teacher's assistance, the syllabus design, and the students' perceptions of Integrative Tests.

Table 5: *Pedagogical Implications*

Pedagogical Implications		
Criterion	Nº of Studies	Author/ Year
Teacher's Assistance	2	Plakans, L. (2010); Marzban, A. & Abdollahi M. (2013)

The Syllabus	1	Ajideh, P. & Esfandiari, R. (2009)
The Students' Perception	1	Heng-Tsung, D. H., & Shao-Ting, A. H. (2016)

N= 4

In a classroom, when an activity is carried out, it could be a task or a test, the pedagogical implications that may arise need to be taken into account. Different authors found that the teacher's assistance, the syllabus design, and the students' perception are the most important implications that must be considered when applying a test.

Teachers' Assistance

Plakans (2010); Marzban and Abdollahi (2013) found that teachers' assistance is a pedagogical implication that is present in a language classroom. According to Plakans (2010), when completing an Integrative Test, students may need some instructions. Just as in the development of discourse, they need teachers to help, guide and provide them with strategies to analyze, understand and integrate different skills. Furthermore, Marzban and Abdollahi (2013) indicated that test takers should be helped by relating their attention to practice to infer and decode the information instead of guessing the answers. Thus, when using an integrative test as a form of evaluation in class, it should be considered that students will need help either to understand the test's structure or to use strategies that help them complete it.

The Syllabus Design

Since the syllables provided by any educational institution are the guidelines to follow in the classroom by applying the established methods or approaches, Ajideh and Esfandiari (2009) examined that the designs of the syllables are another pedagogical implication of applying Integrative Tests; this implies how the test is designed, adjusted, and applied. Ajideh and Esfandiari (2009) mentioned that syllabus designers should prioritize language use as a holistic approach; however, the program of studies still focuses on studying a language as separate parts. For that reason, the syllabus must be changed to a holistic view which includes the use of the Integrative Test as a way of evaluation, so the teachers would be enabled to use new approaches that facilitate the teaching of the language as a whole.

The Students' Perception

According to Heng-Tsung and Shao-Ting (2016), another implication that plays an essential role in an evaluation is test takers' perception of being assessed with an Integrative Test. The same authors stated that students consider that this type of test works well when they master two critical factors, which are an extended knowledge of the topic that is being evaluated and

a domain of strategies that same one's help test takers in their performance. If there is a gap on one of these factors they are not going to execute accurately.

In the analyzed articles, the pedagogical implications of using Integrative Tests as a way of assessment include educational centers, teachers, and students as part of the educational system. The teachers and syllabus designers' strategies must focus on using Integrative Tests to assess the language as a whole. Consequently, it can be said that the development and results of a task are not based only on the student's skills.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

This research analyzed 20 articles about the use of Integrative Tests and their function in order to highlight the findings of the main objective that focuses on the advantages and disadvantages of their application in an EFL classroom. Furthermore, the study focuses on the pedagogical implications that emerge from the applications of Integrative Tests in evaluating English language proficiency. When examining the pros and cons of Integrative Tests and their implications, the research aims to provide appropriateness and effectiveness information on the usage of Integrative Tests.

The articles analyzed helped us to identify the advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, the main advantages when applying Integrative Tests embrace an improvement in language skills such as listening, reading, and speaking. As can be seen, the advantages that were found in the analysis are significant in the understanding and development of student learning. On the other hand, the disadvantages include the lack of clarity or specification on what an Integrative Test assesses. Furthermore, it is evident that the same authors can find pros as well as cons of the use and application of this kind of assessment; however, we can see and express that the advantages are greater in number than the disadvantages.

Taking into account the research questions posed about the implications of applying Integrative Tests, the findings illustrate that in some cases, the syllabus depends on the educational system which still focuses on traditional approaches; additionally, since teachers must think about each factor that may arise when students are developing an Integrative Test so that they do not have doubts from students about the test.

Besides, when applying a test, the different types of existing tests and their main objectives must be taken into account. In the case of Integrative Tests, a test should be chosen depending on the skill you want to emphasize; for example, dictation or partial dictation is used for listening and speaking because students identify and use the ESS (English sound system), and cloze test is used for reading because they associate and infer ideas from the text. Thus, there must be selected the most proper and accurate type of Integrative Test; if a modification is necessary, it should be done in order to create a reliable, valid, and objective test.

6.2 Recommendations

More research and clarification should be done on the main differences and similarities between a discrete-point test and an Integrative Test since both are used as language tests, but when analyzing them because there is not enough information, many questions and doubts arise such as the secondary features or characteristics of discrete-point tests.

It is important to think that there exist more aspects and categories/information when applying the Integrative Test to expand and have a really fully complete knowledge of the topic, so it is relevant to consider all of them and not just the ones we focused on. In addition, considering articles and studies from past years would be advisable because, in the range of years that we take into account, there is not much difference that can be found about how Integrative Tests were and how they are now. Without leaving aside, the integrative tests should be more contemplated by professors at colleges and universities due to the amount of benefits that they have in the learning and knowledge of the students.

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