Contextualizing English Language Instruction through the Integrated Approach: A case Study of Rural Ugandan Primary Schools

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Abstract

The communicative approach to language teaching is recommended in Ugandan primary schools to help learners develop effective English communication skills. However, in rural pastoral communities such as Karamoja, differences in learners' English proficiency, cultural backgrounds, and learning interests pose challenges for teachers. To address these, teachers need a context-sensitive framework that localizes communicative strategies for effective instruction. This article introduces the Integrated Approach (IA)—an instructional framework adapted to enhance the teaching of English communicative skills in two rural schools in Karamoja. Grounded in action research design and guided by experiential learning theory, the study involved collaborative development of IA strategies with teachers. It details the process of adapting IA to teach selected communicative language components from the primary four syllabus and outlines the implementation procedure. Findings underscore the importance of sustained collaboration between teacher educators and grassroots teachers to improve classroom practice and promote equitable language learning.

Key words: English Teaching, Communicative skills, Integrated Approach, Karamoja

Introduction

The Integrated Skills Approach (IA) is a language instruction framework based on the principle that real-life communication is best developed through activities that integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing rather than teaching these skills in isolation (Widdowson, 1978). Rooted in the communicative language teaching movement, IA emphasizes using the target language for meaningful communication rather than focusing on vocabulary lists, grammar rules, or syntactic structures. Instead, it teaches vocabulary and grammar in context to build learners' ability to communicate effectively in oral and written forms. Countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Kenya have reported notable success in adopting IA despite challenges like low proficiency, rigid cultural norms, and limited resources (Stegall, 2021; Wayong'o, 2015).

In East Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Uganda have made progress toward communicative language teaching (CLT) approaches (Weddell, 2013; William, 2011). Uganda's Universal Primary Education policy aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4, aiming to ensure equitable access to quality education (United Nations, 2015). However, rural contexts—including Karamoja—continue to face challenges in implementing CLT provisions (Kyeyune, 2011; Shira, 2020; Brown et al., 2017; Datzberger, 2022). Primary Four marks a critical transition in Ugandan schools from mother-tongue instruction to English as both a subject and medium of instruction (UNCDC, 2010). Learners are expected to enter this stage with a foundational vocabulary of about 800 words (Ssentanda et al., 2019), enabling them to engage in simple communicative tasks. Instructional topics are drawn from familiar themes such as "Describing People," "Behavior," and "Shopping," with strategies designed to promote basic sentence construction in the present simple tense (NCDC, 2010).

Empirical studies, though not in Karamoja's transition classes, demonstrate IA's potential for improving vocabulary use, comprehension, and learner confidence (Saiful, 2020; Stegall, 2021). Drawing on students' lived experiences has proven particularly effective in supporting novice learners. In remote Karamoja schools, syllabi prescribe methods and materials that fail to reflect learners' sociocultural realities, leading to instruction disconnected from communicative goals. A situation analysis in the first phase of this study revealed that the absence of contextually relevant strategies significantly limits the implementation of communicative skills teaching in Primary Four classrooms (Namusiginyi & Ørevik, 2025). While CLT is widely recognized as effective, its success depends on sociocultural relevance (Hymes, 1972).

While learners are expected to transition to Primary Four with a vocabulary of at least 800 words (Ssentanda et al., 2019), earlier research shows that rural learners often lack this foundation (Kyeyune, 2011). Consequently, assumptions about their ability to construct simple sentences remain unrealistic. Moreover, pastoral-related learning preferences strongly influence instructional success, yet existing communicative topics rarely resonate with pastoral communities (Namusiginyi & Ørevik, 2025). This study addresses these gaps by introducing an instructional framework that integrates learners' cultural context with communicative language teaching principles. Through collaboration between teachers, headteachers, and a university researcher, the intervention applies Widdowson's Integrated Approach (1978) to develop contextually tailored strategies for teaching English communicative skills in Primary Four classrooms in rural Karamoja.

This study aims to explore the contextual factors that shape the design of an IA for English language instruction in rural Karamoja. It seeks to examine how teachers and headteachers can collaborate effectively to develop and implement strategies that are contextually relevant for teaching English communicative skills in Primary Four classrooms. The study also intends to assess the impact of IA on learners' engagement and their communicative competence in English. These objectives can be written as three research questions:

Research Questions

1. What contextual and sociocultural factors influence the design of an Integrated Skills Approach for English language instruction in rural Karamoja?
2. How can teachers and headteachers collaborate to develop and implement contextually relevant strategies for teaching English communicative skills in Primary Four classrooms?
3. What is the impact of the adapted Integrated Skills Approach on learners' engagement and communicative competence in English?

Review of Literature

Theoretical background

This study was premised in Experiential Learning Theory, which advances the view that new ideas are best acquired through experience (Kolb, 1984). In an English language teaching context, intervention studies have drawn upon the principles of the Experiential learning theory to provide a hands-on experience in new areas of instruction. The principles of reflective observation, concrete experience, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation have been found to have a positive influence in offering a 'learning-by-doing' approach to design and implement pedagogical interventions. The theory has informed interventions in various areas of language teaching, such as enhancing computer assisted instruction in teaching grammar in language education with participants, fostering students' workplace communicative competence (Wach et al, 2022), teaching fluency (Tavakoli, 2023), among others. Research shows that immersion in the four cycles facilitates hands-on experience and reflection, thus making new learning practical and sustainable in the long run (Kolb, 1984; McLead, 2017). In the subsequent sessions, participants in two groups transitioned to the concrete conceptualization and active experimentation cycles respectively. These sessions involved applying the IA principles to plan the lessons drawn from the communicative topics of the primary four syllabus. These lessons were later tried out on the theme of 'Shopping' by three participants in the peer lessons and 'describing people, objects and places' by two participants in their respective classes over a school term of the Ugandan primary school calendar.

The communicative view of skills instruction suggests that students' acquisition of effective language abilities involves the integration of both the structural form of the target language and the communicative function within contexts that reflect real-life situations (Halliday, 1978). Scholars who advocate for the communicative view of language argue that, since language serves primarily as a tool for expressing and exchanging ideas (Hymes, 1972), instructional practices should therefore aim to develop learners' abilities not only in linguistic accuracy but also in the functional use of language. In second language (L2) learning contexts, this means equipping students with the skills to use language meaningfully and appropriately across a range of communicative situations. Similarly distinguished language scholars such as Widdowson (1978) and Oxford (2001) advance the notions of teaching language form for the purpose of use in realistic contexts such as listening, speaking, reading and writing text that students find useful. This suggests that, in communicative skills instruction, it is important to focus on the vocabulary that learners are likely to use in their practice. Additionally, the target vocabulary, the instructional materials to be used as well as the activities to facilitate both oral and written practice should be aligned to the intended outcomes (Oxford, 2001).

Studies highlight the influence of activity-based methods in communicative skills-based instruction (Al-Maktary & Al-Kadi, 2017). Ruwe et al. (2011) observed that group discussion is a useful method that can be used for students to build and use vocabulary to express facts and form opinions, a view that Saiful (2020) shares. The integration of resources within the context for primary school students such as songs, dance and rhymes has been found enticing in acquiring new vocabulary, pronunciation and correct use (Kim, 2023). Studies have also suggested that to increase students' opportunities to use vocabulary and grammar

appropriately, using methods such as games and movies that learners related to in their environment could be encouraged (McDonough et al., 2013).

Several scholars have argued that for students to use vocabulary and grammar appropriately, instruction should integrate reading, writing, speaking and listening activities (Al-Maktary & Al-Kadi, 2017). The studies further advise that since communicative skills are effectively taught following a natural process of language learning, students should be exposed to receptive skills input involving listening and reading in that order (Widdowson, 1978). It is argued that students shall perfect the pronunciation of a word when it is used in a variety of ways through, for example, listening to the word, reading, speaking and writing it (Saiful, 2020; Tazjad, 2014). Additionally, roleplays have been found to be valuable not only in enhancing confidence to use target vocabulary but also in applying the vocabulary in similar situations (Stegall, 2021; Davis, 2019). These findings imply that through roleplays, students have better chances of searching for the vocabulary they need to use, practice pronunciation, and practice using it in a relevant context.

Integrated Approach (IA)

The core principles of the IA perspective include authenticity of language use, purposeful integration of multiple skills within a single communicative task, and learner-centered pedagogy that promotes active engagement (Saiful, 2020). Advocates argue that teaching language skills in an integrated manner enables students to develop fluency and confidence, as they are exposed to language as it naturally occurs, rather than through unrealistic separation of components (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). IA supports cognitive and metacognitive development by encouraging learners to transfer strategies across skills, thus improving overall communicative competence (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). In contexts where communicative skills are critical for educational and social advancement, such as in many multilingual African classrooms, the IA is a functional model for classroom practice that can be drawn upon to nurture students' communicative abilities. In rural classrooms where students already have the basic English language background, integrating language skills through meaningful, culturally relevant tasks not only enhances the opportunities to use the basic grammar in activities such as role-play but also supports the development of essential communicative skills such as fluency, confidence, and accuracy, thus preparing students to use English more effectively in both school and community interactions.

Studies on designing and implementing IA in the language classroom show that the IA in the primary school setting significantly improves teachers' pedagogical skills to teach cohesive devices in context, thus enhancing learners' skills in comprehension, fluency and coherence (Pardede, 2019). Hungyo and Kijai (2009) observe that effective teaching of communicative-based topics could be best implemented using the IA as this allows teachers to draw on relevant aspects of culture and shared experience to engage learners. According to Teba's (2020) study, the IA was not only vital in improving learners' communicative performance but was at the same time important in allowing teachers to integrate multiple skills in instruction. Additionally, classroom implementation of the IA has been found to be supportive of the students' ability to apply vocabulary and grammar in writing as well as use cohesive devices to link sentences (Fantahun & Sherif, 2022).

Method

This study is grounded in action research design and guided by experiential learning theory. In such action research design, the choice of participants is not simply a matter of numerical representation but of meaningful engagement within the local context. As Kemmis and McTaggart (2000), Merriam (2009), and Guest et al. (2006) argue, action-oriented research is guided by principles of collaboration, stakeholder participation, contextual understanding, and experience. These principles, aligned with the constructionist philosophical view that

knowledge is co-constructed with those directly involved in a phenomenon, guided this study (Crotty, 1998).

Participants

A purposive sampling technique was used to identify three teachers and two headteachers. The teachers were actively teaching English language in the primary four class in different schools located in the rural areas of Karamoja and the Headteachers were involved in supervising the implementation of the syllabus. The teacher participants are identified by pseudonyms in this study as Kuda, Lucy, Beki, while Ms. Modena and Ms. Tereza are the pseudonyms of the school administrators.

Data collection tools

Workshops and classroom observations were used to capture data relating to the design and implementation of the IA for enhancing instruction of communicative skills. A workshop is a useful method that facilitates interaction and collaboration of participants in a shared environment (Stringer, 1999; Krueger, 1994). In this study, these cycles were adopted as follows. The researcher facilitated the sessions by involving the participants to reflect upon their instructional strategies in communicative skills instruction and introduced the IA as an instructional approach. These sessions were conducted through group discussions and presentations. To capture data from the workshop activities, audio and video recording as well as field notes were effective for capturing the interactions, the thoughts and actions of the participants. The field notes, audio recordings, and participants' evaluation notes were used to collect data from the proceedings.

Classroom observations were conducted to examine how participants drew on Widdowson's (1978) principles of use, authenticity, integration, context and value. During each lesson, attention was given to how teachers prioritized the functional use of the target language, whether learning tasks reflected authentic communicative purposes, the extent to which multiple skills were integrated, how instruction connected to the local context, and whether activities supported meaningful engagement. An observation of rubric containing these aspects of was designed to obtain this data.

Data Analysis procedure

Data analysis followed a recursive thematic approach, consistent with Creswell and Poth's (2024) view of qualitative analysis as iterative and Braun and Clarke's (2012) emphasis on non-linear, back-and-forth engagement with the data. All the audio recordings from the workshop sessions were typed out word-for-word, while the handwritten field notes taken during the workshop and classroom observations were rewritten in fuller detail shortly after each session to ensure accuracy and completeness. Using the principles of IA use, authenticity, integration, context, and value as initial deductive categories, the data were first coded to identify how teachers designed and implemented IA-informed instruction. The transcripts and notes were checked several times to highlight key statements, repeated ideas, and patterns related to IA practices. Initial codes from each data source were then compared and grouped into broader categories, which were refined by revisiting earlier codes and checking for consistency across workshop data, field notes, and observations. Through this iterative comparison and refinement, coherent themes were developed that captured how participants conceptualized, experienced, and experimented with the IA principles within their context.

In conducting research through an action research approach, observing ethics is an important aspect. Zohrabi (2013) points out that trustworthiness, authenticity, and cultural sensitivity contribute to conducting a qualitative inquiry within the ethical cycles of research. Silverman et al. (2013) emphasize that reflexivity, member checking, and data triangulation ensure that the study is conducted within the ethical confines of qualitative research. Kemmis

and McTaggart (2000) argue that it is adhering to the elements of collaboration and participation. Guided by these principles, considerations of informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, respect, transparency and cultural sensitivity were observed in this study. Participants who accepted the study procedure and were interested in improving classroom practice consented to being part of the study. In addition, pseudonyms were used to describe data from the participants and the contexts to ensure confidentiality.

Results

This section provides a detailed description of design and implementation of each instruction aspect in the selected topics. This presentation follows the themes identified through the thematic analysis data (cf. the Methods section). Following the participants' engagement with the IA principles in CLT, a localized IA was designed to teach the topics 'Shopping' and 'Describing People, Objects and Places' as follows.
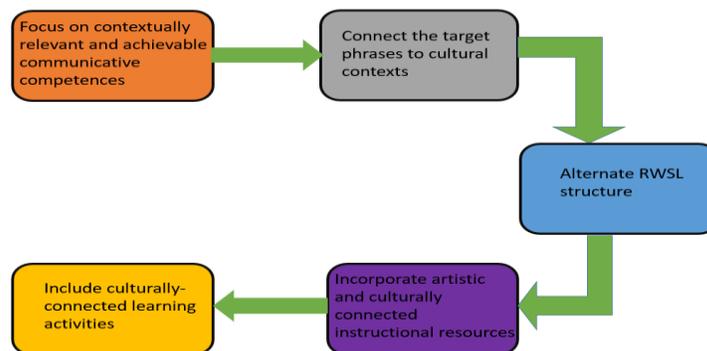

Figure 1. Widdowson's Framework of teaching language as communication (1978) (adapted)

As shown in Figure1, the participants focused on adapting the IA to improve five aspects that guided classroom instruction of English language communicative skills in the primary four level. Each improved aspect was then implemented in instruction as shown in the Tables 1, 2, and 3 below.

Table 1. Peer implementation of the Integrated Approach

No.	IA aspects	Kuda	Lucy	Beki
1.	Communicative goal	Learner practices asking for items and their prices.	The learner practices bargaining for items	The learner practices selling items in a shop
2.	Target vocabulary	I have come to buy sugar... and ... how much is...., what about....?	My father only gave me...., can you reduce the price? That is very expensive please... I only have....	Hello, can you buy from me please...? Hello customer, how can I help you...? You are welcome to my shop, what would you like to buy ...?
3.	Structure of Integration	discuss the items and prices, read the dialogue on the BB, draw pictures and write items recently bought	Listening to a short recording, answering oral comprehension questions, reading a short passage, written comprehension	Observe & listen to role play, write down answers from the guiding questions, share with a peer, complete the story frame.
4.	Instructional resources	Pictures, flash cards	Audio and modified reading passage	Role-play situation, shopping items, price tags, sentence frames.
5.	Interactive activities	Interpreting and drawing pictures, personal writing.	Role-playing, sharing ideas, creative writing	Role-playing, asking and answering questions, completing sentence frames

Table 2. IA implementation in the primary four classes taught by Lucy

Lesson	Learning Objective	Target Phrases	Integration (RWSL)	Instructional Materials	Learning Activities
Lesson 1	Use adjectives of height and shape in present simple to describe self	My name is... I come from... I am (size) and (height)	LRSW	Audio, Modified reading text on manilla, Stories	Role-playing self-introduction & description, Storytelling
Lesson 2	Describe family members	My... name is... She/he is (size) and (height)	RSLW	Picture of family member	Interpreting pictures, Q&A, Individual written description
Lesson 3	Describe friends	My best friend is... He/she comes from... is (size) and (height)	WSLW	Learners' pictures, Matching game	Drawing, Matching adjectives
Lesson 4	Compare appearance of friends using comparatives	My friends are... and... My friend... is (size/height) than...	SLRW	Puppets	Role-playing with puppets, Q&A, Written description
Lesson 5	Compare appearance of family members	My Headteacher/teacher/my best friend is (size) than...	SL&W	Sentence frames, Comprehension text	Group discussion, Individual description

Table 3. IA implementation in the primary four classes by Beki

Lesson	Learning Outcome	Target Phrases	Integration (RWSL)	Instructional Materials	Learning Activities
Lesson 1	Describe objects in environment using adjectives	The(size/color) pen/pencil is...	SLW	Colored pens, pencils, balls, slippers	Asking & answering questions, Pair sharing, Presentations
Lesson 2	Talk about things at home	Our cow/ goat/sheep is (size/color) ...	SLRW	Learners' drawn pictures	Reading in groups, Role-playing, Written comprehension
Lesson 3	Describe location of school	My school is... located in (District)...	R, S & W	Dialogue between Headteacher & pupil	Shared writing, Group discussion, Individual description
Lesson 4	Identify road marks showing school location	There is (road mark) ... It is (color/size/shape)	W R S L	Road mark pictures, Road signs, Modified text	Playing direction game, Writing directions
Lesson 5	Direct people to school	My school is located... Headteacher's office is near...	SLRW	Location game, Pointer, Score card	Playing & scoring locations, Writing directions

Aligning the Communicative Goals with the Learning Outcomes

By adapting the IA's principles of use, authenticity, integration, context, and value participants aligned the communicative goals with the learning objectives of the theme. Considerations of factors such as pastoral experience, the actual language ability and interest of the learners were considered in articulating the lesson outcomes. For example, In the topic of 'buying', Kuda, Beki and Lucy identified the learning outcomes as: 'The learner practices asking for items and their prices', 'The learner practices bargaining for items', and 'The learner practices selling items in a shop', respectively. To bring authenticity of the goal of teaching

shopping vocabulary and phrases to meaningful use, the learning outcomes identified by each participant related to daily practice. For example, buying, bargaining, and selling items are familiar practices in Karamoja's informal markets, where children often accompany parents or engage in small trade. It was, therefore, more likely that the learners would practice the target phrases in the lessons this time round than before the former practice of using textbook based scenarios of shopping in supermarkets, prices and items that were detached from the reality in the local context.

In one group discussion, a presenter noted,

> In our group, the learning outcome that we have stated for lesson on the topic of *'Buying'* are now very clear. We have stated the vocabulary and phrases to be practiced in the lesson, a familiar situation and the activity to support application.
> (Group 2 presenter)

The views from this group demonstrated that IA principles supported participants in stating realistic and achievable learning outcomes. In addition, an opportunity to articulate the target vocabulary and setting a familiar situation was created to facilitate the communicative use of English language. Similarly in table 2 and 3, Lucy and Beki applied the IA design in the topics of 'Describing People, Objects and Places' in their respective classes. The expected adjectives to be practiced by the learners were specific to height, size and color of family members in Lucy's lesson while the adjectives were used for describing objects and things such as cows, and places like the Headteacher's office. Therefore, applying the framework designed by the participants was applied in the process of instruction as illustrated in each topic.

Selecting appropriate English language phrases

Recognizing the low English language proficiency level, limited interest and exposure of the English language of the learners in rural Karamoja, participants applied the IA principles to select phrases that were appropriate for the learner. For example, In Kuda, Lucy and Beki's peer lessons, the target phrases related to the shopping situations included:

> *I have come to buy sugar... and ... how much is...., what about.....?, My father only gave me..., can you reduce the price?, Hello customer, how can I help you?.*

The participants made deliberate efforts to reflect on the cultural shopping experiences in the rural contexts. In the workshop session, a presenter noted,

> Before, we were teaching the vocabulary directly from the textbooks. But now with IA, we can simplify these words and relate to the shopping experiences of the learners in the shops and weekly market. (Group 2 presenter)

In this submission, participants recognized that teaching vocabulary without the learners' context and experience was a limitation in instruction. Lucy and Beki selected adjectives appropriate to describe family members, objects and places using real-life language in the classroom implementation. Therefore, with the phrases simplified and localized to the learner's proficiency level and local interest, the communicative intent of teaching would be realized for the primary four learners in rural Karamoja.

Integrating Speaking and Listening with Reading and Writing in Instruction

Participants acknowledged the IA's principle of integration in communicative language teaching, participants provided opportunities for reading, writing, speaking and listening practice in the forty (40) minutes lessons. Because of the duration of lessons, the four skills were alternated. During the workshop session, participants noted that,

We have been only focusing majorly on reading and writing. Now with this integrated approach, we need to focus on all the skills so that in primary four, the learners develop the sub-skills in all. At least in a single lesson, it is possible to provide practice at least two or three skills. (Group 1 presenter)

In the lessons that were presented by Kuda, Lucy and Beki for example, Kuda's lesson started with a discussion of the items and prices, followed by reading the dialogue on the chalk board, drawing pictures and writing items recently bought in that order. Lucy began the lesson by playing a short recording on bargaining for items, transitioning to answering oral comprehension questions, reading a short passage and finally, written comprehension activity. Similarly, participants made deliberate efforts to alternate RWSL practice in their lessons. In table 2 and 3, Lucy and Beki illustrate the integration structure. Applying the IA framework as shown in the illustration provided opportunities for the participants to explore approaches of engaging learners in RWSL practice in each lesson.

Supplementing Textbooks with Local Instructional Materials

With the IA principles in view, participants localized the textbook content and also incorporated teaching aids recognized in a pastoral context. Teaching resources such as pictures, manilla paper, flash cards, recorders, audios and videos, stories, songs, and dance were explored to facilitate instruction.   In the group discussions, participants suggested,

Instead of relying on the textbook diagrams that are not available here and sometimes are not even clear, we can use the manilla that is provided by the school to draw the things that the learners see every day. We can use these to make flashcards for playing games as well. Some of us have personal phones, radios, and loudspeakers. We could use these as instructional materials. (Group 1 presenter)

Participants pointed out that local songs and dances, such as those used during Thanksgiving ceremonies, could be integrated into lessons to create variety and relevance.

We can use songs and these children's stories. Here, there is a lot of shopping, and every family member has to contribute to the one-month eating, singing, and dancing during the traditional Thanksgiving ceremony. So, they can engage in several language tasks. I only see a problem if you have a large class, it can create a lot of excitement, and yet the lessons have a time limit. (Group 2 presenter)

In this presentation, using traditional song and dance could facilitate instruction of the target English language. The participants understood the value of contextualization, modification, and improvisation of instructional resources. In the peer teaching sessions for instance, Kuda used pictures and flash cards, Lucy utilized an audio recording and modified reading passage while Beki explored the use of a role-play situation. She provided shopping items, price tags and sentence frames. While in the classroom implementation, Lucy and Beki provided a range of local resources such as pictures, flashcards, realia and audio resources localized to the pastoral context of the learners.   These choices reflected an important instructional shift from relying on textbook-based materials to the integration of locally adapted, learner-relevant, and culturally familiar materials.

Incorporating more interactive activities

To teach communicative skills through interaction and collaboration, participants IA's principles of *use*, *value* and *context* to support learning the target phrases through group, pair and individual learning activities. This was a shift from teacher-led activities of choral drills and individual grammar tasks in previous practice to learner-centered communicative learning activities. For example, Kuda involved participants in drawing and interpreting shopping-related

items, followed by narrating personal shopping experiences. This allowed the engagement in buying different items and asking for different prices. Lucy structured the lesson by first using individual listening tasks, followed by paired storytelling, and then Q&A sessions. In addition, asking and bargaining was conducted in pairs which involved practicing asking for prices, making choices, and negotiating purchases reflecting cultural shopping mannerisms in the rural context.

Participants also noted,

> Instead of giving exercises like we have been doing, we can now also include assignments that learners can do in groups, pairs, and individually. From the examples in the Integrated Approach, learners can now consult one another. This makes learners active, confident, and supportive of one another. (Group 2 presenter)

These insights defined the place of working on tasks in groups and pairs in communicative skills instruction. In all the lessons observed in this study, participants incorporated activities such as group discussions and presentations, pair work, question and answer, storytelling and roleplaying. The activities provided practical opportunities for the learners to practice the language structures related to the communicative topics that were taught. In summary of the design and implementation, challenges such as clarity of the locally made instructional materials, especially the hand-drawn visuals, limited time to allow total practice, and lack of room to facilitate free practice of the skills emerged as limitations in implementing the IA. Nevertheless, participants acknowledged that with continuous reflection and refinement of instructional strategies following the action research approach, these challenges could be addressed.

Discussion

Before the Integrated Approach (IA) intervention, English lessons largely focused on spelling, vocabulary lists, and grammar rules that were taught through choral repetition and drills based on the two available textbooks, thus limiting the functional practice of intentioned skills. This approach produced what Widdowson (1978) calls "usage without use", where the theory of structure rather than its functional use forms the focus of instruction. Therefore, with the IA principles in view, participants planned the lessons with the objective of promoting communicative competence (Hymes, 1972; Kramsch, 2014; Mauranen, 2017), ensuring cultural relevance (Littlewood, 1981), and encouraging the adaptation of indigenous resources to support instruction (Corrado, 2022; Matasci, 2022; Dumbuya, 2024). The shift was equally consistent with the CLT view of teaching language for communicative aims (Hymes, 1972; Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Widdowson, 1978).

The IA principles guided the participants in selecting appropriate vocabulary and phrases related to the topics of '*Shopping*' and '*Describing people, things and places*' *within* the local experiences of the learner. Related to literature, studies show that facilitating learners to practice language structure can be achieved when phrases are reflected in the learner's lived experiences (Saiful, 2020; Stegall, 2021). Oxford (2001) emphasizes that vocabulary taught through familiar contexts supports better retention and communicative performance.

In reference to providing language practice through reading, writing, speaking and listening, the IA principles supported the participants to select tasks that engaged the learners to practice the four skills in the lessons. The integration of the four language skills in instruction is considered a foundation upon which the learner develops the basic skills of natural communication (Oxford, 2001). Studies have demonstrated that when opportunities for reading, writing, speaking and listening are provided, the learner has high chances of developing the desired language communicative skills (Teba, 2020). In addition, the learner could find meaningful ways of applying vocabulary and phrases since learning involves oral and written practice (Fantahun & Sherif, 2022). In this study, the IA design provided opportunities for the four language skills which were presented in alteration.

As far as designing the instructional materials for instruction was concerned, participants explored providing a range of local instructional resources in addition to the two textbooks that were dominantly used for instruction. According to studies, localizing instructional materials could enrich instruction, considering that resources such as song, rhyme and local stories aid memorization of vocabulary and pronunciation (Lee et al., 2023, Kim, 2023). Drawing on Widdowson's (1978) suggestion in the IA framework that language instruction is relevant when instructional resources resonate with the context, participants made use of cultural song and dance, creative pictures, realia as well as localizing the textbook passages in more contextually suited ways to support instruction.

Guided by the IA principles of relevance, authenticity and context (Widdowson, 1978), participants prioritized engaging the learners in learning tasks that promoted interactive practice of the communicative skills. According to research in ELT, providing young learners with opportunities to practice vocabulary in tasks that involve roleplaying in pairs as well as discussing in groups could enhance collaboration and peer learning (Eddie & Aziz, 2020; Farrell & Jacobs, 2020; Ruwe et al., 2011). Engagement in the practical tasks of language has been found to support learners in practicing the language, for instance, through mock dialogues (Stegall, 2020) and group work discussions (Ruwe et al., 2011), thus enhancing communication in the target language (Young, 2023). Therefore, participants ensured that the target English language vocabulary and phrases were practiced in pairs, groups as well as individually through roleplays, discussions and presentations.

However, while the IA provided alternative solutions to the challenges identified prior to the intervention, the participants frequently raised concerns over the limited time left for free practice. Relating to previous studies, ample time is a requirement for the learner to practice language structure, or else the functional bit may not be realized should practice time be compromised (Akram &Malik ,2010; Wayong'o, 2015). In addition, managing interactive tasks such as group work and roleplay was reported to be challenge in instruction. This was consistent with research showing that adapting the IA could be challenging in overcrowded or under-resourced context (Saiful,2020) yet such activities support practical use of the target language phrases (Widdowson, 1978). Although the IA advocates for locally developed teaching resources, in true practice these could instead create distortions as teachers may lack the skills to create clear and usable resources. In line with literature, the view that teacher's experience and skills in material design and development cannot be underestimated (Stegall, 2021; Farrell & Jacobs, 2020). Thus, while adapting the IA in rural contexts was promising, navigating through the challenges that come along   required an action research approach which allows a time-to-time reflection and refinement of instructional strategies.

Conclusion

This study empowers teachers to have a say in the national curriculum through contextualizing instructions of the English language. Withstanding the limitations highlighted in the design and implementation process, drawing on the IA principles provided localized instructional choices appropriate enough to teach the topics within the learners lived experiences. In addition, through the cycles of Kolb's (1984) theory of learning, the participants did not just learn by being instructed about the IA, but by trying out the instructional strategies, evaluating them in terms of strengths and areas of improvement, and refining the strategies for improved practice. In this way, participants articulated what they were able to do differently, where there was need for support and suggested improved strategies in future lessons. This iterative process aligned with studies that view teacher-researcher collaboration and hands-on approaches as empowering teachers to influence the standard syllabus as well as facilitate a deeper understanding of the importance of contextualizing instructional strategies to improve classroom practices (Tavakoli, 2023; Wach et al, 2022). In the context of rural Karamoja, this study provides a context specific approach to building primary school teachers' capacity in

English language communicative skills instruction as a way of realizing the expectations of the National syllabus (NCDC, 2010) and the National Teacher Policy (2019). This could be a step forward to ensure localized, context-driven pedagogy which is an essential stride for equitable and quality English language instruction in remote primary school classrooms.

Disclosure Statement:

Conflict of interest:

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