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ENHANCING ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS IN SENIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF INNOVATIVE CURRICULA AND TEACHING METHODS

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Abstract
This study investigated the comparative impact of innovative and traditional approaches to English Language Teaching (ELT) on senior secondary students' comprehension, vocabulary, and writing skills. Employing a quantitative, quasi-experimental design, the research involved 800 students (Grades 11–12) drawn from public and private schools. The experimental group received instruction through an innovative curriculum emphasizing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), peer collaboration, project-based tasks, and technology integration, while the control group followed traditional lecture- and grammar-based instruction. Data were collected using CEFR-aligned pre- and post-tests, essay assessments, and a student engagement survey adapted from Fredricks et al. (2004). Statistical analyses—including paired-samples t-tests, independent-samples t-tests, ANOVA, and effect size measures—revealed that students exposed to innovative curricula and interactive pedagogies demonstrated significantly higher gains than those taught through traditional methods, though effect sizes were modest. These findings underscore the need for curriculum reform, interactive pedagogy, and policy-level support to align English education with the demands of globalization.

Keywords: English Language Teaching (ELT), Innovative Curricula, Interactive Pedagogy, Secondary Education

1. Introduction

1.1 Background: English Proficiency as a Key Academic and Social Competency

In today's interconnected world, English proficiency is widely recognized as a vital academic and social competency. As the global lingua franca of business, science, technology, and diplomacy, English enables communication across cultures and disciplines, making it indispensable for students preparing for higher education and international careers (Crystal, 2003). Proficiency provides access to scholarly journals, online platforms, and collaborative networks, fostering critical thinking and lifelong learning (Graddol, 2006).

However, many school systems continue to emphasize rote learning and grammar drills rather than communicative competence, limiting students' ability to apply English effectively in authentic contexts (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This highlights the urgent need for curricula and pedagogies that prioritize real-world application and student-centered learning—both essential for success in a globalized education system.

1.2 Problem Statement, Objectives, and Hypotheses

Despite its importance, English instruction at the senior secondary level in many regions remains dominated by outdated practices, such as grammar drills, memorization, and lecture-based teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). While these approaches may support functional literacy, they often fail to cultivate higher-order competencies such as critical reading, academic writing, and oral communication (Nunan, 2004). They also neglect learner autonomy and engagement—factors closely associated with long-term language achievement (Littlejohn, 1992; Harmer, 2007).

Emerging research highlights the potential of project-based, interdisciplinary, and technology-enhanced curricula, coupled with interactive, learner-centered methods, to strengthen communicative competence (Tuan, 2011; Wang & Han, 2011). This study therefore evaluated the comparative effectiveness of innovative and traditional ELT approaches in enhancing comprehension, vocabulary, writing, and student engagement at the senior secondary level.

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To compare the effectiveness of innovative and traditional ELT curricula in enhancing comprehension, vocabulary, and writing skills.
2. To analyze the impact of interactive, student-centered teaching methods relative to lecture-based instruction on engagement and real-world language application.

1.4 Hypotheses

H1: Innovative curricula enhance comprehension and application more effectively than traditional models.
H2: Interactive, learner-centered methods outperform lecture-based instruction in developing English skills.

1.5 Significance of the Research

This research is significant for curriculum designers, teachers, and policymakers, as it responds to the urgent need to modernize English instruction at the senior secondary level. In today's globalized world, English proficiency is directly linked to academic opportunity, employability, and international engagement (Graddol, 2006).
For **curriculum designers**, the study provides data-driven insights into how innovative frameworks—such as thematic instruction, CLIL, and technology-based syllabi—enhance comprehension and application, enabling the development of contextualized and engaging content (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010; Tucker, 2012).
For **teachers**, it highlights the effectiveness of interactive, student-centered strategies such as role-play, flipped learning, and task-based activities over traditional lecture-based instruction, thereby supporting engagement and real-world communication skills (Harmer, 2007; Wang & Han, 2011).
For **policymakers**, the research offers a rationale for reforms in teacher training, curriculum mandates, and infrastructure investment to support modern, technology-integrated classrooms (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 English Language Pedagogy Trends in Secondary Education

Recent years have witnessed a marked shift in English language pedagogy at the secondary level, moving away from grammar-focused, rote-based instruction toward communicative and learner-centered approaches. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has gained particular recognition, especially in Japan, for linking subject content with language instruction and simultaneously enhancing proficiency and cognitive skills (Dilenschneider et al., 2023).
Digital tools are increasingly shaping pedagogy. Platforms such as Google Docs and AI-supported applications have transformed writing instruction by enabling collaboration, peer review, and learner autonomy while fostering reflective practices (Eragamreddy & Joseph, 2024). Structured oral presentations have similarly improved student fluency, confidence, and willingness to communicate in English (Taguchi & Matsumura, 2023).
In resource-constrained contexts, context-responsive practices emphasize cultural identity, motivation, and self-efficacy, as demonstrated in Palestinian classrooms (Qaddumi et al., 2023). Meanwhile, hypertext resources and AI-based platforms in China and beyond are transforming grammar and reading instruction by offering interactive, adaptive, and personalized learning pathways (Wei, 2024; Samal et al., 2024).
Collectively, these trends mark a philosophical shift in pedagogy: English is no longer taught as a static set of rules but as a dynamic, technology-enriched medium for real-world communication and lifelong learning.

2.2 Innovative Curriculum Approaches

Secondary English curricula have increasingly shifted from grammar-translation methods toward innovative frameworks that emphasize communication, critical thinking, intercultural awareness, and digital literacy.

A key feature of innovation is the inclusion of multicultural and inclusive content. In Korea, curriculum revisions between 2015 and 2022 promoted intercultural understanding and authentic language use, while technology-based frameworks supported diverse learners, including the visually impaired (Kang & Oh, 2025; Rangkuti et al., 2025).

Creative drama techniques have proven particularly effective, enhancing confidence and encouraging spontaneous language use in dynamic, participatory classrooms (Setyarini & Waludin, 2025). Likewise, deep learning and metacognitive strategies foster higher-order thinking and independent learning, with studies in China reporting significant gains in reading comprehension (Benu et al., 2025; Zhou, 2025).

Digital integration has become central to curriculum reform. AI-supported platforms such as AulaNova enable adaptive, personalized lesson planning, while cross-curricular, technology-enhanced models promote multiliteracy and digital fluency (Sheykina et al., 2025; Lazou, 2025).

Overall, these innovations redefine English curricula as flexible, inclusive, and technology-enriched, preparing learners for global citizenship and lifelong learning.

2.3 Interactive and Student-Centered Teaching Methods

English teaching at the secondary level is increasingly shaped by interactive and student-centered methods that emphasize autonomy, engagement, and collaboration rather than passive reception.

Approaches such as group work, role-plays, gamification, and project-based learning have demonstrated effectiveness in enhancing comprehension, fluency, and critical thinking. Gamified environments improve motivation and vocabulary retention, with learners reporting higher enjoyment when digital quizzes and point-based systems are incorporated (Rahmah & Andovita, 2025).

Teachers adopting student-centered pedagogies supported by digital tools report higher levels of engagement and dialogic interaction, giving learners a stronger voice in the classroom (Diana et al., 2025). Group learning strategies promote fluency and peer collaboration (Sofiana & Fahira, 2025), while multimodal activities such as infographic-based gallery walks strengthen both visual and oral communication (Samsi & Jasmine, 2025).

In resource-limited contexts, interactive problem-solving and real-world prompts help mitigate overcrowding and restricted instructional time (Nisak & Masruroh, 2025). Flipped and inquiry-based learning approaches further promote differentiation and inclusivity, enabling diverse learners to participate meaningfully (Boardman & Coleman, 2025).

Overall, interactive methods shift ELT toward authentic, participatory, and learner-driven communication.

2.4 Challenges in Traditional Approaches to English Language Teaching

Despite growing advocacy for innovation, traditional methods remain dominant in many secondary classrooms. Grammar-translation, rote memorization, and teacher-centered instruction persist, particularly where examinations drive curriculum design.

These approaches face significant limitations. Textbook-driven lessons often fail to engage diverse learning styles, leading to weak vocabulary mastery and limited comprehension (Baehaqi & Fauzan, 2026; Ding, 2025). Overemphasis on grammar and translation produces mechanical accuracy but restricts fluency and spontaneous expression (Ulviani, 2025). Rigid structures disconnected from students' lived experiences discourage experimentation and authentic language use, particularly in multilingual contexts (Abrar & Zafar, 2025).

For teachers, traditional methods limit creativity and adaptability, constraining instruction within rigid syllabi (Husniyah, 2025). Furthermore, poor integration of ICT persists, as many classrooms lack infrastructure and teacher training to embed digital tools into learning (Susanto, 2025).
Although traditional methods provide a foundation for basic literacy, they fall short in cultivating communicative competence, learner engagement, and twenty-first-century skills—underscoring the urgency for reform.
Traditional ELT methods—grammar translation, rote memorization, and teacher-centered delivery—continue to dominate but are increasingly recognized as insufficient for contemporary learners. They prioritize accuracy over fluency, fail to engage diverse learners, and lack real-world relevance or technological integration.
By contrast, innovative curricula and interactive, student-centered approaches—enhanced by digital tools—promote motivation, collaboration, critical thinking, and authentic communication. Recognizing these gaps is essential for policymakers, curriculum designers, and teachers seeking to reform English education into a more effective, engaging, and globally relevant practice.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a quasi-experimental, comparative design with pre- and post-tests to measure learning gains between experimental and control groups. This design was selected because it enabled causal inference in authentic classroom contexts where random assignment was not feasible.

3.2 Participants

The sample comprised 800 Grade 11–12 students from both public and private schools, ensuring demographic and geographic diversity.

- **Experimental group (N = 417):** Received an innovative curriculum integrating Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles, project-based tasks, peer collaboration, and technology.
- **Control group (N = 383):** Followed a traditional curriculum emphasizing grammar-translation, lecture-based delivery, and minimal interaction.

Teachers across both groups held comparable qualifications to minimize instructor bias and ensure fairness in implementation.

3.3 Instruments

1. **Pre- and Post-Tests:** Designed to assess comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and writing skills.
2. **Student Engagement Survey:** Adapted from Fredricks et al. (2004) to measure behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement.

3.4 Procedure

The study was conducted over 12–16 weeks. During the first week, baseline testing was carried out, followed by the instructional intervention. Weekly monitoring through logs, structured observations, and informal teacher interviews ensured fidelity of implementation. Post-tests were administered in the final week.
Controlled variables included:

- Class size fixed at approximately 40 students.
- Equal instruction time across groups.
- Standardized testing conditions to ensure comparability.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS. Statistical methods included:

- **Paired-samples t-tests:** To assess within-group gains.

- **Independent-samples t-tests:** To compare between-group performance.
- **One-way ANOVA:** To examine subgroup differences.
- **Cohen's d:** To calculate effect sizes.

This framework combined rigor with real-world applicability, providing robust evidence regarding whether innovative pedagogies yielded superior outcomes compared to traditional ELT methods.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Hypothesis 1: Effect of Innovative vs. Traditional Curricula

1. Group Statistics

				Bootstrap[a]			
						95% Confidence Interval	
	Group		Statistic	Bias	Std. Error	Lower	Upper
Gain Score	Experimental	N	417				
		Mean	5.94	.02	.24	5.49	6.43
		Std. Deviation	4.760	.009	.145	4.470	5.053
		Std. Error Mean	.233				
	Control	N	383				
		Mean	5.21	.00	.20	4.83	5.63
		Std. Deviation	3.914	-.008	.133	3.641	4.169
		Std. Error Mean	.200				

a. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 stratified bootstrap samples

This hypothesis evaluated the impact of innovative versus traditional curricula on students' English comprehension and application. Findings revealed statistically significant support for H1, though effect sizes were modest.

Descriptive Statistics: The experimental group (N = 417) achieved a higher mean gain score (M = 5.94, SD = 4.76, 95% CI [5.49, 6.43]) than the control group (N = 383) (M = 5.21, SD = 3.91, 95% CI [4.83, 5.63]). While both groups improved, the experimental group's larger gains indicated the added value of innovative pedagogy.

Inferential Tests

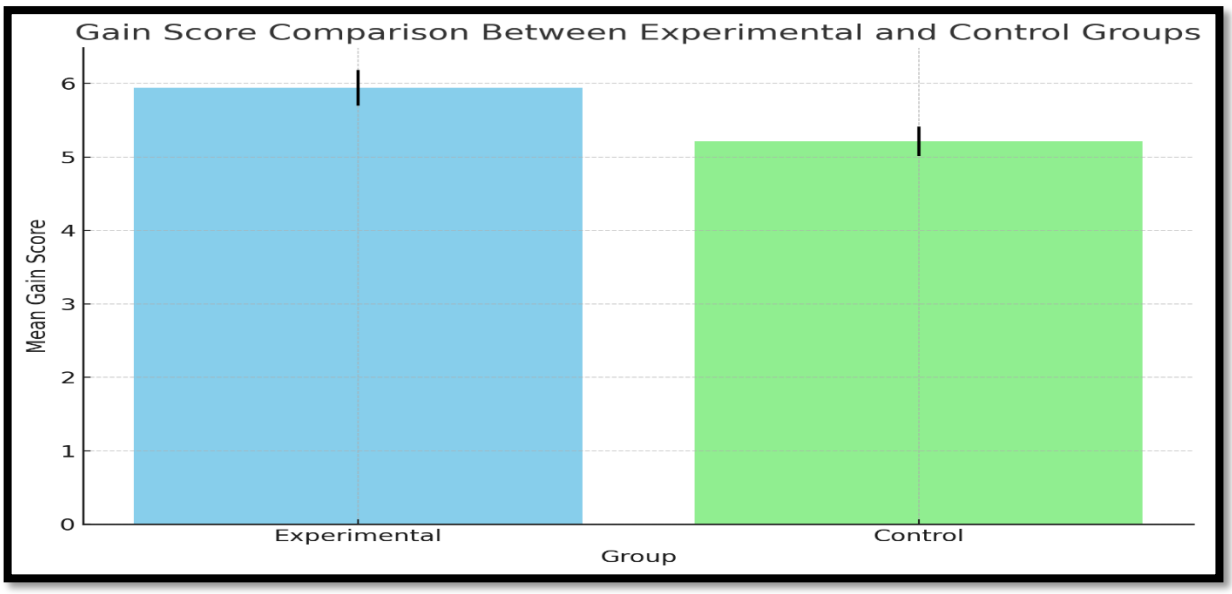
Independent-samples t-test: Confirmed a significant group difference, $t(798) = 2.35$, $p = .019$, with the experimental group outperforming by 0.73 points (95% CI [0.121, 1.336]).

Bootstrap resampling (5,000 samples): Validated this result, mean difference = 0.729, 95% CI [0.108, 1.351], $p = .023$, confirming robustness.

Effect Size

- Cohen's $d = 0.166$
- Hedges' $g = 0.166$
- Glass's $\Delta = 0.186$

These results indicate a small but meaningful effect (<0.2 SD), suggesting that curriculum innovation improved outcomes, though gains may have been moderated by factors such as learner motivation, prior exposure, or classroom dynamics.



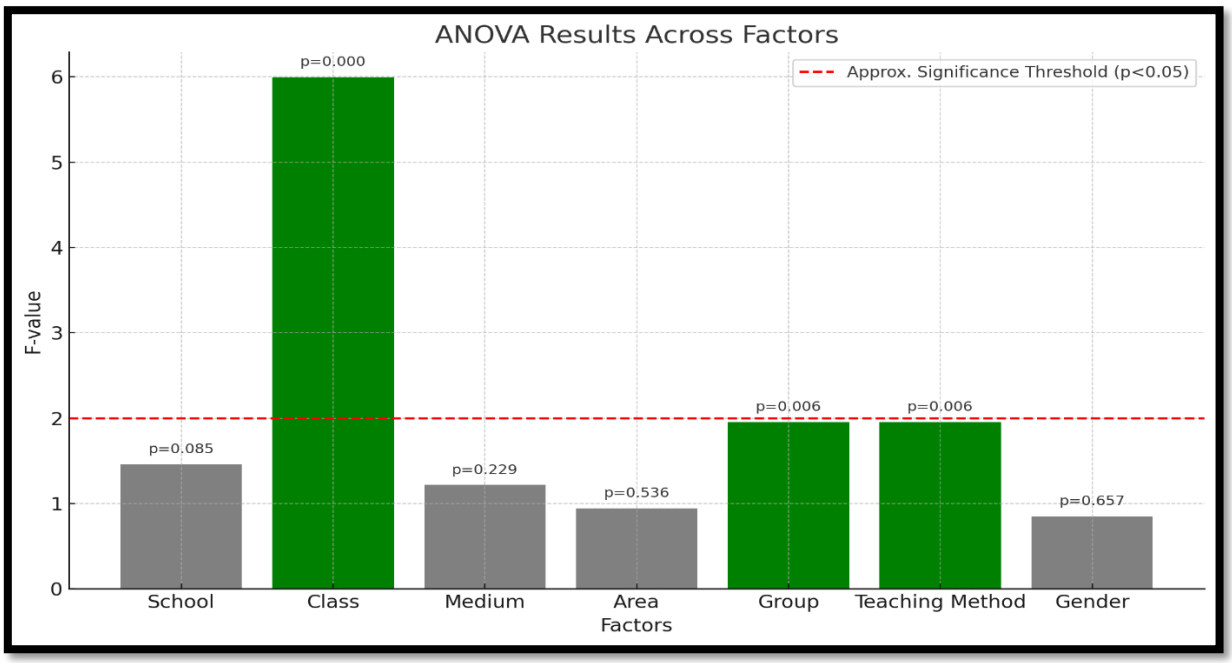
ANOVA Subgroup Analysis

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
School	Between Groups	14.991	21	.714	1.457	.085
	Within Groups	381.227	778	.490		
	Total	396.219	799			
class	Between Groups	27.845	21	1.326	5.993	.000
	Within Groups	172.144	778	.221		
	Total	199.989	799			
Medium	Between Groups	6.348	21	.302	1.216	.229
	Within Groups	193.407	778	.249		
	Total	199.755	799			
Area	Between Groups	13.282	21	.632	.942	.536
	Within Groups	522.398	778	.671		
	Total	535.680	799			
Group	Between Groups	10.014	21	.477	1.956	.006
	Within Groups	189.625	778	.244		
	Total	199.639	799			
Teaching Method	Between Groups	10.014	21	.477	1.956	.006
	Within Groups	189.625	778	.244		
	Total	199.639	799			
Gender	Between Groups	4.487	21	.214	.851	.657
	Within Groups	195.388	778	.251		
	Total	199.875	799			

A one-way ANOVA confirmed a significant effect of curriculum type ($F(1, 798) = 5.534$, $p = .019$). No significant differences emerged across school type, medium of instruction, gender, or urban–rural background, indicating broad applicability. However, class-level differences were significant ($F(21, 778) = 5.993$, $p = .000$), suggesting that classroom dynamics and teaching style shaped learning outcomes.

Conclusion: Results support H1, confirming that innovative curricula yield superior gains in comprehension and application compared to traditional instruction. Although the improvements were modest in size, their consistency across tests strengthens confidence in this conclusion.



4.2 Hypothesis 2: Effect of Interactive vs. Lecture-Based Teaching

1. Group Statistics

	Teaching Method		Statistic	Bootstrap[a] Bias	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval Lower	Upper
Gain Score	Traditional Methods	N	383				
		Mean	5.21	.02	.20	4.87	5.65
		Std. Deviation	3.914	-.002	.134	3.637	4.178
		Std. Error Mean	.200				
	Interactive Methods	N	417				
		Mean	5.94	.00	.23	5.49	6.41
		Std. Deviation	4.760	-.004	.142	4.468	5.028
		Std. Error Mean	.233				

a. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 stratified bootstrap samples

This hypothesis tested whether interactive and student-centered teaching methods improve English skills more effectively than lecture-based instruction. Findings consistently supported H2.

Descriptive Statistics

The interactive teaching group (N = 417) achieved a mean gain score of (M = 5.94, SD = 4.76, 95% CI [5.49, 6.41]) compared to the lecture-based group (N = 383) (M = 5.21, SD = 3.91, 95% CI [4.87, 5.65]). The mean difference of 0.73 points highlights a clear advantage for interactive methods.

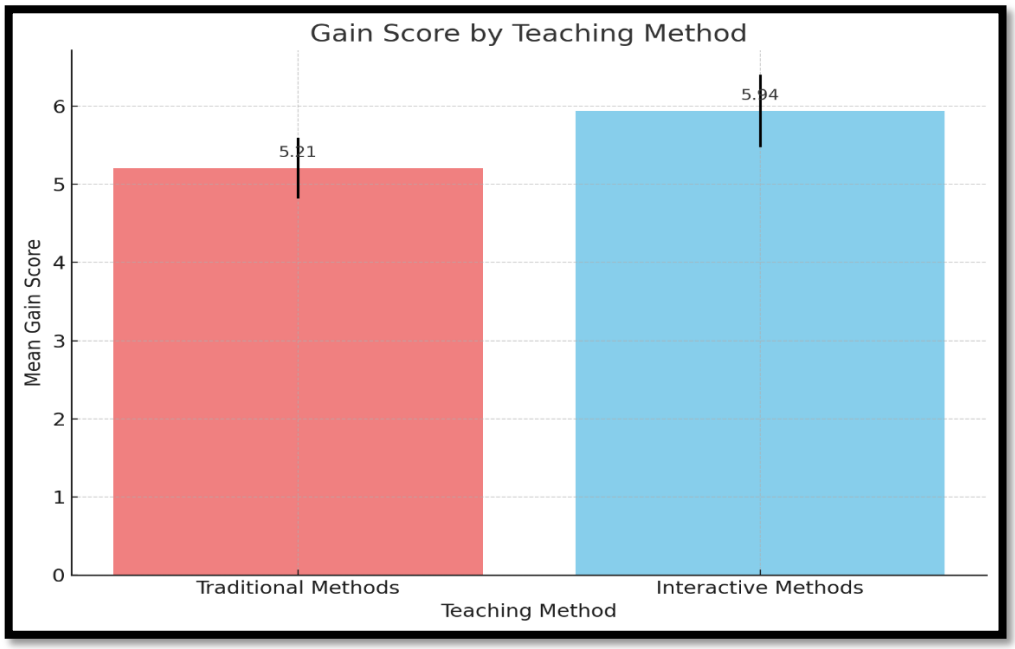
Inferential Tests

- **Independent-samples t-test:** Confirmed a significant group difference, t(798) = -2.353, p = .019, mean difference = -0.729 (95% CI [-1.336, -0.121]).
- **Bootstrap resampling (5,000 iterations):** Produced consistent results, mean difference = -0.729, 95% CI [-1.298, -0.072], p = .023.

Effect Size

- Cohen's d = -0.166 (95% CI [-0.305, -0.027])
- Hedges' g = -0.166
- Glass's Δ = -0.153

This indicates that students in interactive classrooms performed better than approximately 56% of their peers in traditional lecture-based settings.



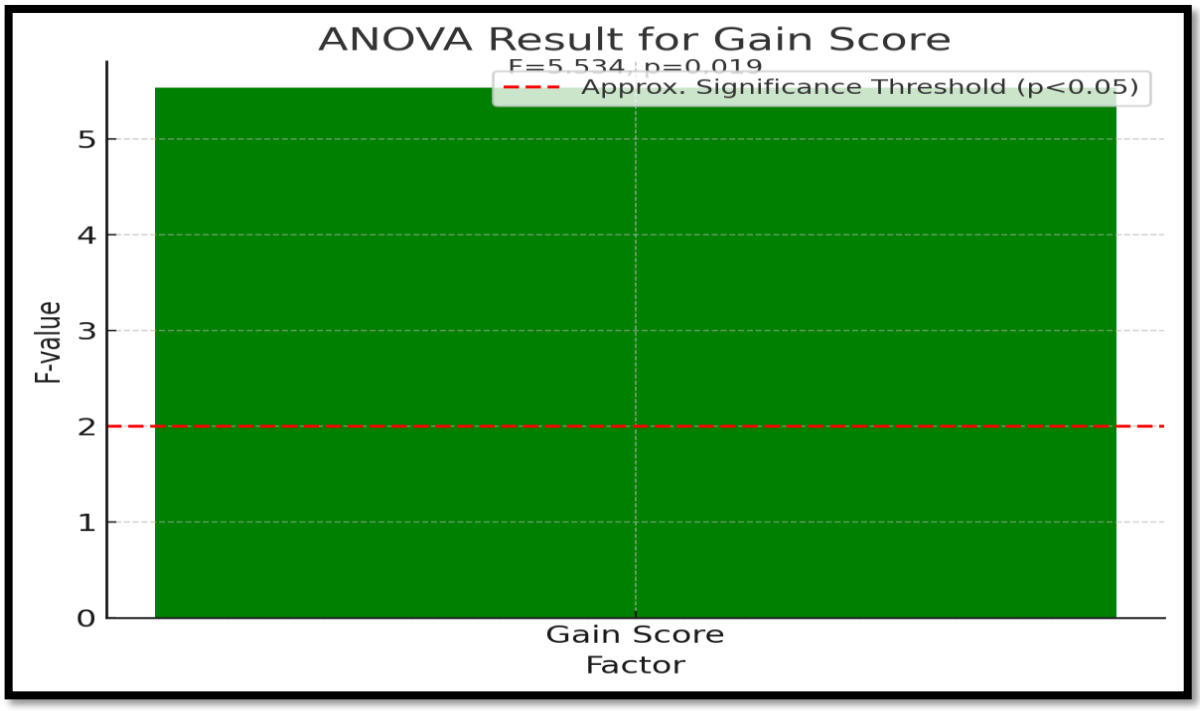
ANOVA

Gain Score

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	105.968	1	105.968	5.534	.019
Within Groups	15279.371	798	19.147		
Total	15385.339	799			

ANOVA further confirmed teaching method as a significant predictor of outcomes (F(1, 798) = 5.534, p = .019), reinforcing that instructional strategy, rather than institutional or demographic factors, was the primary driver of differences in performance.

Conclusion: Results support H2, showing that interactive, learner-centered methods significantly enhance English proficiency compared to lecture-based instruction. Although the effect size was modest, consistency across statistical tests highlights the practical value of interactive pedagogy in fostering comprehension, application, and engagement.



5. Discussion

The findings of this study strongly support the hypotheses that **innovative curricula and interactive teaching methods yield greater gains in English language proficiency than traditional approaches**. Although the effect sizes were modest, the results were consistent across t-tests, ANOVA, and bootstrap analyses, underscoring both their reliability and practical significance.

These outcomes align with prior research emphasizing the value of **task-based, content-integrated, and communicative curricula** (Coyle et al.; Graddol; Richards & Rodgers). Students in the experimental group demonstrated higher gains in comprehension, vocabulary, and writing, confirming the effectiveness of contextualized learning. Similarly, student-centered strategies—such as group discussions, gamification, and project-based tasks—supported deeper engagement and spontaneous use of English. This finding is consistent with Harmer's (90) view that interactive classrooms foster motivation and encourage active participation.

Crucially, the improvements extended beyond academic achievement to **real-world communicative competence**, equipping students with the linguistic skills required for higher education and professional contexts. The presence of class-level variations further suggests that **pedagogy and interaction quality significantly shape learning outcomes**, echoing Nunan's emphasis on classroom dynamics.

Overall, the study underscores the pressing need for **curriculum reform, teacher training, and supportive policy interventions** to ensure that English instruction evolves in step with global demands.

6. Implications

The results of this research carry important implications for **curriculum designers, teachers, and policymakers**, highlighting the need for systemic reform in English language teaching at the senior secondary level. The modest yet statistically significant gains observed among students exposed to innovative curricula and interactive pedagogy provide evidence-based justification for such change.

First, the findings confirm the urgency of **curriculum reform**. Traditional grammar-translation and rote-based syllabi remain poorly aligned with the communicative demands of real-world contexts. In

contrast, contextualized, task-based, and interdisciplinary frameworks improved comprehension, vocabulary, and writing, demonstrating scalability across school types, mediums, and regions (Coyle et al. 12; Graddol 105; Ulviani).

Second, the results establish **teaching methodology as the primary driver of success**. Interactive strategies—including group work, gamification, and collaborative writing—fostered higher levels of motivation, autonomy, and authentic language use (Harmer 89; Rahmah & Andovita; Sofiana & Fahira). Their consistent effectiveness across demographics emphasizes the inclusivity and adaptability of student-centered pedagogy.

Finally, at the **policy level**, sustainable reform requires a multifaceted approach:

- Strengthening teacher professional development in interactive and inclusive pedagogy.
- Expanding investment in digital infrastructure to reduce inequities across schools.
- Embedding communicative and competency-based frameworks into national curricula.

Together, these measures can transform English education into a **future-ready, equitable, and globally relevant system**.

7. Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into the benefits of innovative curricula and interactive teaching methods, two primary limitations should be acknowledged.

First, the **short duration of 12–16 weeks** limited the ability to capture the long-term impact of curricular and pedagogical innovations. Although pre- and post-test comparisons revealed measurable gains, sustained language development—particularly in writing proficiency, fluency, and spontaneous communication—typically requires extended exposure across multiple semesters or years (Harmer 123). The relatively brief timeframe also constrained the study's capacity to examine slower-developing outcomes such as learner motivation, engagement, and metacognitive growth (Boardman & Coleman).

Second, the study was **geographically confined to a single region**, involving 800 students from selected schools in Kanpur. Although results were consistent across urban and rural settings, school types, and mediums of instruction, the limited scope restricts generalizability. Variations in curriculum frameworks, teacher training, infrastructure, and linguistic diversity across different regions may influence outcomes (Coyle et al. 10; Susanto).

Despite these limitations, the consistency of findings across demographics and statistical tests strengthens confidence in the study's validity. Future research should adopt **longer timelines, more diverse contexts, and longitudinal follow-up designs** to confirm both the sustainability and scalability of these pedagogical innovations.

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