



## Research article

# A Reflective Practice of Intensive Teaching of EFL to Non-English Majors in a Hybrid Mode: Insights from an EFL Class from Eastern Siberia

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## Abstract

The article discusses the intensive English language training for non-English major students at the North-Eastern Federal University, Russia's Far East region. This study checks out the efficacy of an intensive hybrid teaching model in undergraduate students. The intensive method of teaching is aimed at creating an activating environment for the concurrent development of English skills in non-English major students. The theory of the intensive methodology in the EFL field has been studied in Russian and international research. The intensive hybrid training model combining digital and face-to-face instruction is presented in this article. During the intensive training, 100 undergraduate non-English major students took part in experimental learning. Placement test for students was conducted at the start of the academic year and the final test upon completion of the academic year. The results of the test in the control and experimental groups are also presented. Moreover, the problems in using the intensive hybrid training model are identified.

**Keywords:** intensive training, communicative competence, interactivity, EFL, short-term learning, hybrid teaching model, English skills, digital learning



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## Introduction

Nowadays teaching EFL to non-English major students requires an effective combination of face-to-face and digital learning. It implies a new way of organizing the educational process that effectively develops students' EFL skills in interpersonal and social interaction. Since non-English major students are normally given a limited number of teaching hours, improving teaching practice is done by implementing intensive methodology and digital learning opportunities. It

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needs thoughtfully designed development of the hybrid training model as undergraduate students who have mastered any foreign language become highly competitive specialists in any field.

The importance of intensive teaching to develop EFL communicative competence is emphasized by many researchers. Intensive courses in English are being implemented in universities across the globe (Daniel, 2000; Davies, 2006; Kartavtseva, 1999; Krukova & Lagun 2022; Kucsera and Zimmaro, 2010; Scott, 2003; Solodikhina, 2009; Wlodkowski, 2003). In particular, intensive training aims at developing students' English skills through accelerated assimilation of the instructional material to engage their cognitive and intellectual abilities. Intensive training is considered organized task-based communication in the target language. The designated purpose of intensive classes is to master English skills in a short time. Additionally, new learning materials are prepared or updated to suit the purpose of the intensive training methodology.

### **Literature review**

Scholarly literature indicates that researchers (Shukin, 2010; Shekhter, 1981; Kitaygorodskaya, 1986; Blinov & Kraevsky, 1965; Solodikhina, 2009; Krukova & Lagun, 2022) have identified intensive training features and exchanged views on its implementation in the teaching process. Krukova & Lagun (2022) consider intensification as the optimal organization of education allowing one to achieve the maximum learning outcomes in a short time. In a similar direction, Kartavtseva (1999) states that intensive training is a fast intense educational process in which students are engaged in learning English in a short time demonstrating their academic and creative abilities. Thus, the main feature of intensive training is personality-oriented communication in the target language to develop students' EFL communicative skills along with their creative skills.

Blinov & Kraevsky (1965) define intensive training as a system of training that is aimed at the assimilation of more teaching material in the shortest possible time. It is achieved by increasing the number of learning tasks and exercises loads on students and, consequently, by increasing students' productivity during the study. Shchukin (2010) regards intensive methodology as a training system, the main features of it being speeding up the EFL teaching process or any other foreign language teaching and minimal energy costs on the part of students. The intensification of the learning process is to have clear learning goals and be personality-oriented, intense, and efficient in a certain classroom setting.

Shekhter et al. (1981) assume that intensive training directly refers to learners' emotions, feelings, and motivation. Learning should be a motivating and interesting activity for students. The main task of a teacher is to create a favorable psychological climate for all learners to communicate in the target language. In other words, the purpose of intensive training is to get the psychological barrier down when communication in the target language becomes just a simple improvisation. The main features of intensive training are identified absence of an exam, absence of homework, and teachers not correcting students' mistakes.

Solodikhina (2009) differentiates the attributes of intensive training such as the use of a variety of teaching methods, including active learning, collective interaction through teamwork, student-

oriented teaching, and computerization of the learning process. Intensive training is known as a training system that carefully selects and organizes instructional material.

Kitajgorodskaja (1986) elaborates that intensive training is training designed mainly to master communicative skills in the target language based on learners' psychological reserves and their learning activities. In other words, intensive training is a method of "activating the cognitive and intellectual capabilities of a learner and the team of learners".

Particularly, Kitajgorodskaja (1986) identifies five basic principles of intensive teaching.

1. Person-centred communication. Intensive training is face-to-face communication to develop speaking skills and participation in real-life communication in the target language. The development of learners' English communicative skills is the primary goal of training. As a result, students must be able to converse in real-life communication.
2. Role-playing in the classroom. Organization of the learning process and instructional materials in intensive education targets activating students' cognitive and intellectual processes. During the study, students should give their own opinions on the discussed issues or problems. The teacher assigns a role to each student.
3. Collective communication through teamwork. Team interaction is a key element in intensive training. Team interaction ensures achieving high learning efficiency by revealing the cognitive, intellectual, and academic potential of each student in communication. In active interaction, students do not only exchange knowledge about the language system but also learn to communicate in English.
4. Concentrated teaching materials and procedures. A leading explanation for it is the correct distribution of time and optimal chosen quantitative and high-quality teaching tasks for EFL skills development.
5. Multifunctionality of the exercises used. The stated purpose of it is the correct application of language structures and communicative activities. The students should improve their EFL skills by performing a variety of tasks in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, speaking, and writing. The interconnected and concurrent development of all four English skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) is highlighted.

Several researchers (Daniel, 2000; Davies and Scott, 2006; Ho and Polonsky, 2007; Kitajgorodskaja, 1986; Kucsera and Zimmaro, 2010; McCluskey, Weldon, & Smallridge, 2019; Mukundan et al., 2012; Scott and Conrad, 2003; Wlodkowski, 2003) write that intensive courses have become more applied in different higher schools. Daniel (2000) writes that "intensive training is an adequate format to concentrate exclusively and intensively on specific planning topics. ...Second, they are a convenient and flexible option for people searching for part-time, supplementary, or adult education". As Scott & Conrad (1992) and Daniel (2000) claim intensive training increases "students' motivation, commitment and engagement. It is perceived by students as much more intense, more stimulating, more exciting, more efficient, more integrated, more challenging, and certainly a more enjoyable experience".

McCluskey, Weldon, & Smallridge (2019) evidence that teachers applying intensive training methods consider that the students are fully immersed in studies and more focused on one

discipline at a time, and then do more research work while studying. In addition, it develops a passion and motivation for the subject.

Ho and Polonsky (2007) highlight several benefits of intensive teaching reported by students. For example, marketing students assessed intensive teaching of subjects as being more interesting and comprehensible than the subjects in the traditional mode. Even though the students' assessments in intensive mode differed from the assessments in the traditional mode, the exam results and final grades did not differ statistically. This study proves that intensive regimes can be a viable alternative to traditionally taught subjects during a semester or academic year.

Davis and Scott (2003) refer to the main advantages of intensive courses such as reducing procrastination and increasing motivation, concentration, retention, endurance, and the level of interaction between participants. In contrast, the main risks are fatigue, overload, and lack of flexibility due to the high speed of the learning process. Similarly, Scott & Conrad (1992) and Wodkowski (2003) describe the features of intensive courses as "accelerated, time shortened, block format, compressed course, flexible courses in which the number of sessions or the length of the course or class time is shorter than the usual format of the schedule". Jenkins, Queen & Algozzie (2002) regard block scheduling as an indispensable part of intensive courses. In their opinion, this optimizes the learning time during the academic year.

Daniel (2000) believes that intensive teachers should employ innovative methods of teaching and devote more time to discussions and practical learning, while students should alter their learning styles.

Mukundan, Mahvelati & Nimehchisalem (2012) investigated the impact of intensive TEFL training on Malaysian secondary school students. In this study, Intensive English programs were held in several classes in a shorter period. This study represented a single-group quasi-experimental design. The training lasted four weeks. The students' scores were analyzed by using paired sample t-tests before and after the training. The results showed that the students of the experimental group got higher scores ( $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ) after testing than the students of the control group. Also, the students informed the researchers that they enjoyed the intensive English classes.

In their article McCluskey, Weldon & Smallridge (2019) write that the curriculum for freshmen was redesigned into intensive training in 2018 at Victoria University (VU) in Melbourne, Australia. This intensive training approach was adopted to support students who were from low socio-economic backgrounds to create interest in studying making it effective. All freshmen had been assigned to follow eleven three-hour classes for four weeks to make higher education more accessible and ensure students achieve success academically. The intensive training courses have produced exceptional results with high academic results. Namely, the results demonstrated that the overall students' pass rates increased by 7.9 percentage points to 83.9%. Moreover, the number of students who have received Distinction grades grew by 6.8 points to 26.7%, whereas the number of students receiving High Distinctions rose by 6.6 points to 22.2%.

Thus, intensive training demands reorganization of the teaching process, including organizing a timetable, educational equipment, learning materials, skills to be developed, classroom, and assignment of training tasks to a full-time lesson and a digital platform. The leading characteristics are the students' activity, stimulating students' cognitive and intellectual activity through learning assignments, role-playing, and task-based approach. The selection of instructional material, which reflects the real environment, is of particular importance. Communicative situations are considered units of instruction, including task-based activities on different unit topics. What is more important, in traditional teaching, the assimilation of the study material is the primary object, while in intensive training organizing students' interaction is the primary object for a teacher.

In our case, intensive training lasts nine months at the M.K. Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University. Students learn a General English course for 2 hours daily in modules throughout the year from September to May. The main language course is the Language Hub, a 6-level general English course with a variety of audio and video materials. It is a six-level general course for meaningful communication-oriented practice. Digital teaching of English is presented on a digital platform Skyes and the university learning management system Moodle while tracking the performance of tasks and identifying problems in doing a particular class material.

The teacher adheres to the main theme of the module, resorting to a variety of tasks with intensive TEFL training at each stage of the lesson. He or she puts into practice task-based assignments because the aim of developing English speaking skills requires a wide variety of situations to perform many communicative tasks.

One of the most important features of intensive learning is the interaction between the learners. It can have many forms such as the teacher and the student, the teacher and the group, and the students and students. What is more important, the student is put in the centre of learning. The organization of interpersonal interactions is centered on a student performing communicative tasks between students, on the one hand, and a teacher, on the other hand. This process is guided by the teacher.

Nowadays intensive methodology uses up all the possibilities of digital learning. Students are taught both face-to-face and digitally. In full-time classes, the teacher introduces students to new study material, new language units, grammatical structures, pronunciation of new words, and vocabulary. After familiarization, the practice of the English language takes place in the classroom in different communicative situations.

The hybrid training model consisting of three blocks is depicted in Table 1. Methodology block includes teaching approaches, and appropriate principles and techniques. The learning process block shows the teaching/learning aims of the hybrid training model and the kinds of learning tasks. The assessment block contains the methods for evaluating students' performance in all four English skills. The hybrid training model requires an online digital course.

| <b>I. Methodology</b>                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Purpose:</b> to develop students' EFL competence              |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Communicative approach                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Competence-based approach                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>II. Learning process</b>                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Aims</b>                                                      | Classroom learning<br>1. To introduce new study material (pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar) on units<br>2. To practice study material in real-life situations<br>3. To construct meaningful communication. | Digital learning<br>1. To develop EFL skills in real-life situations<br>2. To provide students with unsupervised English learning (students' autonomy)<br>3. To assess EFL skills |
| <b>Activities</b>                                                | pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary exercises, role-plays, monologue, brainstorming, discussions, debates, presentations                                                                                      | projects, tests, quizzes, case studies                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>III. Assessment</b>                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Speaking skills                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Listening skills                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Writing skills                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Reading skills                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Criteria: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, mechanics  |                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Tests                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>The outcome:</b> students' increased level of EFL proficiency |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                   |

**Table 1.** The hybrid training model

The differentiation of teaching tasks into full-time and digital formats is made according to the learning objectives. Face-to-face classes are introductory, practicing, and corrective. In contrast, digital classes focus on consolidating the training material and practicing studied material in various communicative situations. Finally, the digital platform assesses students' English skills in different units taught. In other words, digital classes have consolidating, practicing, and assessing functions.

In the academic year, 8 units are studied in English skills such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, listening, reading, speaking and writing. The 60% of the time is allocated to face-to-face classes, and the other 40% on digital learning.

This study checked out the following research questions:

- a. Does the introduction of an intensive hybrid teaching model have a significant impact on the English language skills of students?
- b. Are there any significant differences in test scores between experimental and control groups in terms of language proficiency?
- c. What problems has the implementation of an intensive hybrid teaching model caused?

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Study objectives**

The overall goal of the intensive EFL teaching of non-English major students is declared the development of students' communicative competence. The goal of this pilot intensive training is to test the effectiveness of an intensive hybrid teaching model in undergraduate students at the tertiary level.

#### **3.2. Participants**

The subjects were the students of the Engineering and Technical Institute and the Institute of Mathematics and Information Science of the North-Eastern Federal University, Russia. In sum, 100 full-time bachelor's students took part in the pilot training. Pilot training was carried out by the Department of Modern Languages in the Sciences.

#### **3.3. Setting**

Pilot training according to the proposed hybrid training model was conducted in the period from September 2021 to May 2022. Students were engaged in five pairs of lessons (10 academic hours) per week. In the classroom, the participants of the experimental groups used English language manuals such as Language Hub or Optimize and the online digital platform Skyes for unsupervised work. The students of the control group studied twice a week and completed tasks in LMS Moodle for unsupervised work.

The study used a pretest and a posttest of the same samples of students. In particular, 100 students of the Institute of Mathematics and Information Science and 100 students of the Engineering and Technical Institute of the North-Eastern Federal University took part in the pilot training in the 2021/2022 academic year. The students were taught a General English course. Therefore, the Russian Unified State Exam (RUSE) test served as a research tool. This test was developed by the methodologists of the Federal Institute of Pedagogical Measurements and aims to measure English language proficiency by the CEFR. Thus, it is considered the test has passed the validity and reliability criteria. There were 40 tasks in total, including all four English skills. The test included listening, reading, use of English (vocabulary and grammar), speaking and writing tasks. To measure the initial level of English language proficiency, a Russian Unified State Exam test was conducted for first-year students, a diagnostic test at the start of the first semester, and a control test at the end of the second semester.

During the pilot training, the students of the experimental group did listening assignments, and grammar tasks, learned vocabulary, and did writing tasks such as writing emails, articles, reviews,

and essays. On the digital platform Skyes they performed listening, reading, and use of English tasks, and also speaking tasks.

### 3.4. Research instrument

The Russian Unified State Exam in foreign languages was administered to confirm the homogeneity of participants regarding language proficiency. The RUSE test in this study was intended to assess students' proficiency in both written and spoken English. The writing section of the EFL test included four main parts: (1) Listening Comprehension, (2) Reading Comprehension, (3) Use of English, and (4) Writing. The speaking part included 4 tasks: (1) Reading text, (2) Dialogue Inquiry, (3) Interview, and (4) Thematic Monologue. Table 1 contains a description of the Russian Unified State Exam and the total number of tasks included in the writing and speaking parts.

The elementary, intermediate, and upper-intermediate RUSE tasks correlate with the levels of foreign language proficiency in the documents of the Council of Europe as follows: Elementary level correlates with A2+, Intermediate level correlates with B1 and Upper-Intermediate correlates with B2...

As for the structure of the test, it is as follows. Listening consisting of 9 tasks has a maximum score of 20. Reading having 9 tasks gives a maximum score of 20. Use of English, 20 tasks, has a maximum score of 20. Two writing assignments weigh 20 at a maximum. The speaking part offering 4 tasks has a maximum score of 20.

The total time to finish the four sections of the writing part of the exam is 3 hours (180 minutes). The speaking part of the exam is held on a separate day. The time for completing 4 speaking tasks, including preparation time, makes up 17 minutes. The total test time both in writing and speaking parts is 3 hours and 17 minutes (197 minutes). Recommended time for different exam sections is as follows: "Listening" – 30 minutes, "Reading" – 30 minutes, "Using English" – 40 minutes, "Writing" – 80 minutes, "Speaking" – 17 minutes.

The Russian Unified State Exam scoring scheme was used as the rating scale to assess the participants' pretest and posttest. The criteria for writing and speaking parts included three analytical criteria: content, organization, grammar, and vocabulary/mechanics (appendices 1 and 2).

Table 2

**Structure of the Russian Unified State Exam**

| English skills         | Number of tasks | Number of scores |
|------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Listening              | 9               | 20               |
| Reading                | 9               | 20               |
| Grammar and vocabulary | 20              | 20               |
| Writing                | 2               | 20               |
| Speaking               | 4               | 20               |
| <b>Total:</b>          | <b>44</b>       | <b>100</b>       |

The scoring system is as follows: points 0-25 correspond to the A1 level, points 26-54 correspond to the A2 level, points 55-85 correspond to the B1 level, and points 91-100 correspond to the B2 level.

#### 4. Data collection and analysis

##### 4.1. Pretest results

At the first stage, a pretest was administered to measure the level of English proficiency in students at the beginning of the first semester. For this, the materials of the Russian Unified State Exam were used. Testing was held in LMS Moodle (which allowed us to calculate points automatically), whereas the speaking part was held on a separate day in the classroom according to the criteria. The independent  $t$  criterion and one-way ANOVA were utilized as a method of statistical data processing in the study.

The students were divided into 3 groups based on their English language proficiency test results. The first group of students, who demonstrated the A1 level is elementary. The second group of students having A2 level make up the pre-intermediate group. Furthermore, the third group of students who showed B1 level was designated to be the intermediate group.

The data of A1 level students are represented in Table 2. It shows that the critical value of 1.984 is less than the  $t$  value ( $0.2493 < 1.984$ ), meaning that the average values do not differ significantly between experimental and control groups.

Table 3

|                | Experimental group | Control group |
|----------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Mean           | 12.56              | 12.26         |
| Variance       | 31.5664            | 40.8324       |
| SD             | 5.6184             | 6.39          |
| n              | 50                 | 50            |
| t              | 0.2493             |               |
| d.o.f          | 98                 |               |
| Critical value | 1.984              |               |

Furthermore, table 3 shows the data of A2 level students. As we can see from the table, the critical value of 1.984 is higher than the calculated  $t$  value ( $0.9708 < 1.984$ ), thus assuming the means between experimental and control groups are not significantly different.

Table 4

|             | Experimental group | Control group |
|-------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Mean        | 35.8               | 34.42         |
| Variance    | 49.76              | 51.2836       |
| Stand. Dev. | 7.0541             | 7.1613        |
| n           | 50                 | 50            |

|                |        |
|----------------|--------|
| t              | 0.9708 |
| d.o.f          | 98     |
| critical value | 1.984  |

Finally, the advanced group of students displaying a B1 level has a critical value of 1.984. The absolute value of the calculated  $t$  is smaller than the critical value ( $0.6266 < 1.984$ ), which confirms that the average values between the experimental and control groups are insignificant.

Table 5

|                | <b>Experimental group</b> | <b>Control group</b> |
|----------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Mean           | 62.8                      | 63.56                |
| Variance       | 50.92                     | 22.6464              |
| Stand. Dev.    | 7.1358                    | 4.7588               |
| n              | 50                        | 50                   |
| t              | -0.6266                   |                      |
| d.o.f          | 98                        |                      |
| critical value | 1.984                     |                      |

Summing up the diagnostic stage of testing, we can state that there is evidence that the results of the first diagnosis show the same level of development of EFL communicative competence in both experimental and control groups. In general, first-year students have proven that they are homogeneous in language proficiency in EFL classes. This fact allows us to conduct intensive training in English as a foreign language setting to test the effectiveness of the intensive hybrid teaching model.

#### 4.2. Posttest results

At the end of the pilot training, exit English testing was carried out in the control and experimental groups. Its purpose was to determine the statistical significance between the results in both groups: before and after training in the experimental and control groups as well as after training between them. The RUSE test took place in all three groups of students according to their levels of English proficiency. The participants of the experimental groups were trained as part of the pilot training which lasted two semesters. The teaching hours per semester were different, comprising 90 and 120 hours per semester respectively. In contrast, students of the control group studied 72 and 72 hours per 2 semesters respectively.

First, students of A1 level were checked. The Student's  $t$  criterion was utilized to process the results. Their results are presented in Tables 6 and 7. As it is seen, the calculated  $t$ -value surmounted the critical value ( $4.6157 > 1.984$ ), so the means noticeably differ. The coefficient is at  $p < 0.05$ .

Table 6 presents data comparing the results in the control and experimental groups before and after training. To determine the validity of the post-test one-way ANOVA was utilized. The one-way ANOVA test for independent measures compares the means of experimental and controlled groups between and within treatments. The results are positive. The F-ratio value being equal to 20.87864, the result is significant at  $p < .01$ .

Table 6

|                | Experimental group | Control group |
|----------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Mean           | 35.84              | 26.18         |
| Variance       | 110.9344           | 108.0676      |
| Stand. Dev.    | 10.5325            | 10.3956       |
| n              | 50                 | 50            |
| t              | 4.6157             |               |
| d.o.f          | 98                 |               |
| critical value | 1.984              |               |

Table 7

| <b>Groups</b>      | <b>SS</b> | <b>df</b> | <b>MS</b> |              |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------|
| Between-treatments | 2332.89   | 1         | 2332.89   | F = 20.87864 |
| Within-treatments  | 10950.1   | 98        | 111.7357  |              |
| Total              | 13282.99  | 99        |           |              |

The second group of students that we checked for English skills outcomes was the students of A2 level. The results of A2 level students are presented in Tables 8 and 9.

Table 8

|                | Experimental group | Control group |
|----------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Mean           | <b>70.8</b>        | <b>55.2</b>   |
| Variance       | 52.56              | 49.76         |
| Stand. Dev.    | 7.2498             | 7.0541        |
| n              | 50                 | 50            |
| t              | 10.9051            |               |
| d.o.f          | 98                 |               |
| critical value | 1.984              |               |

In this table, the critical value is 1.984. The calculated t goes beyond the critical value ( $10.9051 > 1.984$ ), so the means have become considerably unequal at the A2 level. In addition, the ANOVA results also showed positive results, the F-ratio value equals 116.54261, the result is significant at  $p < .01$ .

Table 9

| <b>Groups</b>      | <b>SS</b> | <b>df</b> | <b>MS</b> |               |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------------|
| Between-treatments | 6084      | 1         | 6084      | F = 116.54261 |

|                   |       |    |         |  |
|-------------------|-------|----|---------|--|
| Within-treatments | 5116  | 98 | 52.2041 |  |
| Total             | 11200 | 99 |         |  |

Continuing the analysis of the results of the pilot training, we present the data of B1 level students in tables 10 and 11. In our study, this was the advanced group of students, and the experimental groups' results show an important increase in the exit test compared to the control groups.

Table 10

|                | <b>Experimental group</b> | <b>Control group</b> |
|----------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Mean           | 91.9                      | 77.34                |
| Variance       | 17.25                     | 24.8244              |
| Stand. Dev.    | 4.1533                    | 4.9824               |
| n              | 50                        | 50                   |
| t              | 15.8723                   |                      |
| d.o.f          | 98                        |                      |
| critical value | 1.984                     |                      |

In the table below, the critical value is 1.984. The calculated t is better than the critical value ( $15.8723 > 1.984$ ), making the discussed means different. The following ANOVA outcomes demonstrated a significant discrepancy between the two groups before and after the pilot training. The F-ratio value is 246.88852, which is significant at  $p < .01$ .

Table 11

| <b>Groups</b>      | <b>SS</b> | <b>df</b> | <b>MS</b> |               |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------------|
| Between-treatments | 5299.84   | 1         | 5299.84   | F = 246.88852 |
| Within-treatments  | 2103.72   | 98        | 21.4665   |               |
| Total              | 7403.56   | 99        |           |               |

As demonstrated by the results of the pilot training, it is imperative to state an increase in the level of English skills of students in both experimental and control groups. However, the learning outcomes between the students who completed intensive TEFL training and the students who did not take intensive courses are significant as proven by statistical data. Consequently, this proves that intensive training has had a positive effect on students' four English skills

## 5. Discussion

The Intensive English Language teaching practice was applied for non-English major students in the 2021-2022 academic year by the Department of Modern Languages in the Sciences. Considering the results of the posttest in all four English skills, it can be assumed that the intensive methods undertaken by the institution have proven to be efficient in teaching university students. It is suggested that intensive teaching provides more opportunities for university learners than other age groups for several reasons. For instance, personal maturity, developed language skills,

native language learning experience, higher intellectual capabilities, a lot of background knowledge in many disciplines, a large worldview, and developed cognitive abilities make intensive English language training the most suitable at the university level. This opinion coincides with the opinion of other researchers (Ibraimov, 2018; Küçüktepe & Kerimoğlu, 2021). In other words, intensive English language teaching is considered the most appropriate for university students.

In the digital era, intensive teaching methods imply enhancing the learning process through technology such as the Internet, online courses, interactive digital platforms, and multimedia (Gan, Menkhoff & Smith, 2015). The main aim of introducing technology into teaching is to strengthen the student learning experience (Wu & Lambenicio, 2022; Akyuz & Yavuz, 2015). Recommendations for finding free English language materials on the Internet and how to use them in teaching practice are found in the article by Francisca M. Ivonea & Willy A. Renandyab (2019). Therefore, intensive hybrid teaching models necessitate not only the design and development but also introduction and successful practice. Ultimately, the use of the internet and digital platforms serves to intensify English teaching and learning practice both for teachers and students. The positive outcome obtained in this pilot study demonstrates that intensive methods require the upgraded system of hybrid teaching model, techniques and curriculum design, schedule organization, and development of modern instructional materials.

As the practice has illustrated, intensive teaching and learning requires careful methodical preparation on the part of the teacher such as the availability of teaching materials, development of up-to-date instructional materials, development of digital platform materials, schedule organization, consultations, and effective combination of face-to-face classes and digital unsupervised classes. To put it in another way, there is a need to build a training model that would represent a single methodical system of training and learning assessment. This model comprises goals, subgoals, digital and classroom instructional materials, skills to be developed, and a unified learning outcome assessment scheme. Similarly, in the article Nurcahyani & Bahrani (2021) consider the number of arrangements that make intensive teaching more efficient and productive. These factors include doing lesson plans, using articles from the internet, using visual media, developing good interaction with the students and advising the low-achieving students, giving written tests and oral tests, providing individual consultations in English lessons, and reviewing the material that has been learned at home. They make intensive teaching and learning productive.

This pilot study found that there has been an increase in the level of English proficiency at the end of the academic year. Specifically, the results of this study exhibited that students have elevated their English skills such as speaking, writing, listening, and reading. These results echoed the research conducted by other teaching practitioners. For instance, Collins and White (2011) have conducted intensive English as a second language courses for French-speaking learners. They conducted 400 hours of intensive instructions in a concentrated and distributed mode. The findings of the study show substantial progress in treatment groups in terms of language development. The results of that research are consistent with this pilot training outcome. Likewise, another research undertaken by Nadia & Aditama (2018) explored how effective intensive

teaching approaches for university students are based on the communicative approach. The study took place for two semesters. The results demonstrated that students on average enhanced their English language skills. The intensive English language instruction of students was successful.

The students are immersed in abundant English practice in classrooms and on the digital platform Skyes. Integrated English skills are taught, which is believed to be the most appropriate mode of teaching at the tertiary level (Bentahar & Cranker, 2021). Particularly, intensive teaching methodology was successfully applied to develop certain English skills such as listening, reading, and speaking. Intensive listening exposure on digital platforms enhances students' listening skills. Similar results were found in the research done by Ahmadpour, Asadollahfam & Journal (2018). In the field of listening, students are exposed to a large variety of listening tasks in one unit in classrooms and for unsupervised study on the digital platform Skyes. Listening is integrated with speaking and reading assignments in classrooms. During listening or reading tasks, the students are exposed to new vocabulary and grammar structures. Integrated English skills are the best solution for intensive training.

As for the field of speaking, students are taught to use grammar and vocabulary learned before on the digital platform Skyes to make up dialogues in pairs and tell their monologues in classrooms. The speaking tasks consolidate the listening and reading skills. As it comes from an English teaching programme, speaking skills are the main target skills in intensive learning. In reading, students' improved vocabulary skills and knowledge of grammar structures lead to a better comprehension of articles or any other reading materials, including specialist reading. Predominantly, the students do reading assignments and exercises as an unsupervised study of English on the digital platform Skyes.

As for the writing field, writing tasks are given based on listening and reading assignments. Extensive vocabulary exposure and learning grammar structures improve students' writing abilities. Reading articles and texts and listening to podcasts develops not only listening skills but also gives the students ideas for writing articles, reviews, or essays.

Overall, intensive integrated teaching and learning students' increased exposure to many exercises and activities enables them to practice English more than in regular classrooms. A hybrid mode of intensive English teaching gives more time and possibilities for practicing English. Thus, students develop their English skills better.

Despite having positive results, this intensive English language training encountered some difficulties. Namely, these issues include a lack of motivation in non-English major students to study English and students skipping many lessons. Consequently, some truant students do not complete assignments. They fall behind other students and have to complete tasks during the examination session. However, because students are familiar with General English at school, they easily complete tasks on a digital platform and do the tasks in the coursebook. These difficulties may make intensive teaching practice very inefficient and unproductive to some extent.

To overcome difficulties, a well-balanced hybrid model of intensive English teaching is to be refined and practiced. This model includes multimedia activities, interactive assignments, and

tasks in all four English skills, creative projects, and a set of tests. In other words, teaching English is to be interesting for students to cater to their motivation and not to miss lessons.

There are several limitations to this pilot training. Firstly, there was a small number of students involved in this pilot training. Secondly, students from one educational institution took part in the research. In addition, there were students from one region of the country. However, these limitations should not prevent the development and improvement of the intensive hybrid teaching model for non-English major students.

## **6. Conclusion**

To test an intensive hybrid teaching model, 600 students took part in tracking progress in the EFL setting. Experimental intensive English language training took place for the first-year non-English major students at the North-Eastern Federal University. According to the previous curriculum, students studied English as a compulsory discipline for 2 years. After implementing intensive English learning practice, the duration of study was reduced to one year, making the learning process more intensive for both teachers and students.

The change in the curriculum is related to the educational reform undertaken by North-Eastern Federal University. According to the new curriculum, in their second year of study, willing students have an opportunity to study English in such disciplines as Business English, Communicative English, and English for Specific Purposes courses. The teachers have faced the problem of teaching students in a short time with an increased teaching load. The reduction of the training period and the intensification of the learning process has set the task for teachers to create and apply a new intensive training model, which in the future form a productive unified methodological system.

The experimental training using intensive methods involved experimental and control groups of students: 2 groups of A1 level (Elementary) and 2 groups of A2 level (Pre-Intermediate), 2 groups of B1 level (Intermediate) according to CEFR. Despite some issues discussed above, the results obtained during this pilot study allow us to conclude that intensive methods, techniques, learning materials, cooperation with students, and the use of the digital platform Skyes prove to be effective.

To sum up, in light of the results, it can be recommended that creating an intensive hybrid training model having traditional classes and technology-based classes must be regarded as the most appropriate model. Therefore, such a refined model should be implemented in teaching practice to make it more productive and up-to-date.

## **Declaration of Conflicts of Interests**

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest.

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### Appendix 1

#### Criteria for evaluating email (maximum 6 points)

| Scores | Content                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Organization                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Grammar, Vocabulary & Mechanics                                           |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2      | The target language communicative task is completed in full: all aspects specified in the task are given (complete and accurate answers to 3 questions are given, 3 questions on the specified topic are asked correctly); 1 incomplete or inaccurate aspect | The statement is coherent and logically organized. The text is correctly divided into paragraphs. Organizing into paragraphs is appropriate, logical, and clear; key information is highlighted and an email is well organised; 1 error in the organization | 1-2 lexical and grammar errors and/or 1-2 spelling and punctuation errors |

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                      |                                                                                         |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | The target language communicative task is not fully completed: all aspects specified in the task are not given (all cases not specified in the assessment for 2 points and 0 points)                                                                                                                                                                      | 2-3 errors in the organization       | 3-4 lexical and grammar errors and/or 3-4 spelling and punctuation errors               |
| 0 | The target language communicative task not completed: 3 or more aspects of the content are missing, or 6 aspects are not given incompletely/ inaccurately, or 1 aspect is not given and 4-5 are given incompletely/inaccurately, or 2 aspects are not given and 2-4 are given incompletely/inaccurately, or the email does not match the required length. | 4 or more errors in the organization | 5 or more lexical and grammar errors, and /or 5 or more spelling and punctuation errors |

### Criteria for evaluating detailed writing assignment

(maximum 14 points)

| Scores | Content                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Organization                                                                                                                                           | Vocabulary                                                                             | Grammar                                                               | Spelling /Punctuation                                                             |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3      | The target language communicative task is completed in full: all aspects specified in the task are given; the style is chosen correctly; 1 incomplete/ inaccurate aspect; 1 stylistic error                      | The writing is coherent and logical, it is based on the proposed plan, the text is correctly divided into paragraphs; linking words are used correctly | The vocabulary used corresponds to B2 level; 1 lexical error                           | The grammatical structures correspond to B2 level; 1-2 grammar errors | No errors                                                                         |
| 2      | The target language communicative task is completed in main points: 1 aspect is not given, or 1 aspect is not given, and 1 is given incompletely/inaccurately; 2-3 aspects are given incompletely /inaccurately; | The writing is coherent and logical, it is based on the proposed plan, the text is correctly divided into paragraphs, and the linking                  | The vocabulary corresponds to B2; 2-3 lexical errors; or the vocabulary is limited but | The grammatical structures correspond to B2; 3-4 grammar errors       | No errors. The text is composed of sentences with correct punctuation; 1 spelling |

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                       |                                                                                |                                              |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
|   | the style is mostly correct (2-3 errors)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | words are used; 1-3 errors                                                                                                                                                                        | used correctly                                                        |                                                                                | and/or punctuation error 1                   |
| 1 | The target language communicative task is not fully completed: 1 aspect is not given, and 2-3 are given incompletely/inaccurately, or 2 aspects are not given (the other aspects are given), or 2 aspects are not given and 1 is given incompletely/inaccurately, or 4-5 aspects are given incompletely / inaccurately; 4 stylistic errors | 4-5 errors in the organization of the text and/or there is no introduction or conclusion                                                                                                          | The vocabulary used does not fully correspond to B2; 4 lexical errors | The grammatical structures used do not fully correspond B2; 5-7 grammar errors | 2-4 spelling and/or punctuation errors       |
| 0 | The target language communicative task is not completed: all cases not specified in the assessment for 1, 2, and 3 scores; or the answer does not match the required length, or more than 30% of the response is plagiarism                                                                                                                | 6 or more errors in the organization of the text; and/or there is no introduction and conclusion, and/or the proposed the plan is not fully followed; and/or there is no division into paragraphs | 5 or more lexical errors in the text                                  | 8 or more grammar errors                                                       | 5 or more spelling and/or punctuation errors |

## Appendix 2

### Criteria for evaluating speaking tasks (maximum 20 points)

#### Task 1 (reading the text aloud) – maximum 1 point

|                  | 1                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 0                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Phonetics</b> | The text is read with reasonable pauses; phrasal stress and intonation contours are correct; pronunciation of words is correct; no more than 5 phonetic errors, including 1-2 errors that distort the meaning | Speech is errorful with a large number of unnatural pauses, stutters, incorrect placement of accents, and errors in the pronunciation of words, or more than 5 minor phonetic errors |

|  |  |                                    |
|--|--|------------------------------------|
|  |  | or 3 or more major phonetic errors |
|--|--|------------------------------------|

**Task 2 (Dialogue Inquiry)**  
(maximum 4 points)

|                      | <b>1</b>                                                                                                           | <b>0</b>                                                                                                                                        |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Questions 1-4</b> | The grammatically right question given, no lexical errors; phonetic and lexical errors do not hinder communication | The question is not asked, or the wrong question is asked; and /or grammar errors, and/or phonetic and lexical errors that hinder communication |

**Task 3 (Interview)**  
(maximum 5 points)

| <b>Scores</b>        | <b>1</b>                                                                                                                     | <b>0</b>                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Questions 1-5</b> | A complete and accurate answer to the request for information is given: no elementary lexical grammar and/or phonetic errors | The answer is not given, or the wrong answer is given, or the answer contains less than 2 phrases; or there are elementary lexical, grammar and/or phonetic errors in the answer |

**Task 4 – Thematic Monologue**  
(maximum 10 points)

| <b>Scores</b> | <b>Content</b>                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>Organization</b>                                                                                                                                  | <b>Mechanics</b>                                                   |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4             | The target language communicative task is fully completed; all aspects are given; 12-15 sentences                                                                                      | No errors                                                                                                                                            | No errors                                                          |
| 3             | The target language communicative task is mainly completed: 1 aspect is not given (other aspects are fully given), or 1-2 aspects are given incompletely/inaccurately; 12-15 sentences | The speech is coherent and logical; has an ending (introduction with an appeal to a friend and a final phrase); the linking words are used correctly | 3 lexical and grammar errors and/or no more than 3 phonetic errors |
| 2             | The target language communicative task is not fully completed: 1 aspect is not given and 1 is given incompletely/inaccurately, or 3 aspects                                            | The speech is coherent and logical and has an ending, but there is no introductory phrase with an appeal to a friend or the final phrase,            | 4-5 lexical and grammar errors and/or 4-5 phonetic errors          |

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                     |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|   | incompletely/inaccurately; 10-11 sentences                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | and/or the linking words are not used enough                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                     |
| 1 | The target language communicative task is partially completed: 1 aspect is not given and 2 are given incompletely/inaccurately, or 2 aspects are not given (other aspects are fully given), or all aspects are given incompletely/inaccurately; 8-9 sentences                                                       | The speech is not quite coherent and logical and does not have an ending, or there are no introductory and final phrases; and/or the linking words are not used enough | 6-7 Lexical and grammar and /or 6-7 phonetic errors                                                                 |
| 0 | The target language communicative task is not completed: 3 or more aspects are not given, or 2 aspects are not given and 1 or more are given incompletely/inaccurately, or 1 aspect is not given and the other aspects are given incompletely/inaccurately, or the length of the utterance is 7 or fewer sentences. | The speech is not coherent and illogical and/or does not have an ending, there are no introductory and final phrases, and the linking words are practically not used   | 8 or more lexical and grammar errors or 4 or more major lexical and grammar errors and/or 8 or more phonetic errors |