

## The Impact of Teaching Literature to Enhance EFL Linguistic Competence (A Case Study of Sudanese EFL Secondary School Students)

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### Abstract:

This paper aimed to investigate the impact of teaching literature to enhance EFL Sudanese secondary students' linguistic competence. The study has adopted the experimental methods. The data of the study were obtained by a test for the students. The test was given to two groups of Sudanese secondary school students, each group consisted of (30) students. To analyze the data the researcher has used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), the findings of the study revealed that teaching literature plays a major role in enhancing EFL Sudanese secondary students' linguistic competence, promotes their understanding of the culture of the target language and develops their linguistic competence. In light of the findings of the study, the researcher recommends that teachers should use literature that suit the levels, needs and interests of the students in order to help them acquire a native-like competence and increase their language awareness and develop their language skills.

**Key words:** Linguistic competence, teaching literature, language skills.

### المستخلص:

هدفت هذه الدراسة لتقصي أثر تدريس الادب الإنجليزي في تعزيز القدرة اللغوية لدى طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية بالمدارس الثانوية السودانية. استخدمت الباحثة المنهج التجريبي و جمعت البيانات بواسطة الإختبار. الذي اجري لمجموعتين تكونت كل مجموعة من (30) طالبا و طالبة. استخدمت الباحثة برنامج الحزم الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية لتحليل البيانات. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن تدريس الادب الإنجليزي يلعب دور رئيسي في تعزيز القدرة اللغوية لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية بالمدارس الثانوية السودانية ويعزز فهم ثقافة اللغة الهدف ويطور الكفاءة التواصلية.

بناء على تلك النتائج فإن الباحثة توصي بأنه يجب على المعلمين تدريس الروايات التي تتناسب مستويات واحتياجات وإهتمامات الطلاب لمساعدتهم على إكتساب الكفاءة اللغوية الام و زيادة الوعي اللغوي و تطوير مهارات اللغة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** القدرة اللغوية, تدريس الادب الإنجليزي, مهارات اللغة.

### Introduction:

Recent trends of EFL teaching have shown that it is important to include literature as a part of EFL teaching as it provides students with valuable authentic materials which extend their linguistic knowledge, exposes them with a wide range of grammatical and

vocabulary items, raises their language awareness, promotes understanding of the culture of the target language and develops their language interpretive skills. Teaching literature is considered the most appropriate choice to enhance EFL Sudanese secondary school students' linguistic competence.

Literature is useful as they serve to develop students' linguistic and literary skills. According to Hurst(1989) in teaching English as a foreign language the literature has played a vital role in developing and enhancing language skills as literature displays a rich context of grammatical and lexical items as well as a large resource of prompts for oral work.

Oda (2012) asserted that literature plays a crucial role in developing and enhancing learners' linguistic competence because it is full of variety of the language that is displayed with concrete examples of writing skills in action. He added that using literature to teach EFL students has many advantages .First, they can create interest when studying them carefully and attentively. Second, literature is the main source for providing learners with various vocabulary items and practical grammatical structures. Moreover, literature enhances the pronunciation of English particularly when it is read aloud in the classroom. Furthermore, reading and writing are better enhanced through studying literature. This means that literature helps students to organize their ideas and participate in discussing different topics as they develop the four English language skills reading, writing, listening and speaking.

In this paper the researcher tries to investigate the impact of teaching literature to enhance EFL Sudanese secondary school students' linguistic competence.

During her experience in teaching English as a foreign language for several years the researcher has noticed that the standard of EFL Sudanese secondary

school students in English language is declining hence they need to improve their linguistic knowledge and develop their language skills reading , writing , listening and speaking , so the purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of teaching literature in enhancing EFL Sudanese university students' linguistic competence and to suggest ways of developing the process of teaching literature to promote the standard of EFL Sudanese school students.

The study is carried out to achieve the following objectives:

1. To investigate the impact of teaching literature in enhancing EFL Sudanese secondary school students' linguistic competence.
2. To find out how can teaching literature enhance EFL Sudanese secondary school students' linguistic competence.

The following questions form the basis of this study:

1. What is the impact of teaching literature at Sudanese secondary schools in enhancing EFL students' linguistic competence?
2. How can teaching literature enhance EFL Sudanese secondary school students' linguistic competence?

1. Teaching literature at Sudanese secondary schools has great impact on students' linguistic competence.

2. Teaching literature enhances EFL Sudanese secondary school students' linguistic competence as literature provides them with an authentic model that supports their language enrichment.

This study is significant for a number of reasons:

It contributes to the existing literature in the field of teaching literature.

Teachers will have a better understanding of their students learning difficulties and examine their own teaching techniques and materials, accordingly.

Learners can identify their problems and be aware of the factors that contribute to their difficulties and can apply the right strategies and techniques of learning literature.

The study shall also form a point of departure for syllabus designers and educators in the field of their specializations.

This study is limited to EFL Sudanese secondary school students during the academic year (2020-2021) in order to investigate the impact of using literature in enhancing their linguistic competence.

As has been mentioned, the purpose of this research is to investigate the impact of using literature in enhancing students linguistic competence, to achieve this goal and in an attempt to answer the research questions, data has been collected through using a test . The test was given to two groups of Sudanese secondary school students , each group consisted of (30) students ; those who studied literature and those who did not study literature during their study of English language. Then the data has been analyzed statistically by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

## **2.Choosing Literature:**

The use of literature in EFL classrooms should aim to encourage students to use the language that they have previously learnt so the teacher plays an important role in choosing the appropriate type of literature to teach in the classroom and should help the students to understand it.

Hill (1994) pointed out that there are three basic criteria for choosing the literary text:

- 1.The needs and abilities of the students.
- 2.The linguistic and stylistic level of the text.
- 3.The amount of background information required for a true appreciation of the material.

Pardede(2011) argued that the importance of considering these criteria could be perceived by choosing the vocabulary and sentence structure of the novel to be studied so as to suit the level of the students; novels with archaic , slang, foreign words and having sentences imitating the speech of a particular locality or ignorant people should be avoided.

Moreover, the teacher should choose novels that suit the levels of the students Ur(1996:150) stated that " The use of authentic text with less proficient learners is often frustrating and counter-productive" therefore, the teacher should use simplified texts with less proficient students.

Spack(1985) claimed that it is important for the teacher to choose stories that would interest students , the teacher most likes to teach, and which have been made into films in order to provide visual interpretation.

Mckay (2001:322) asserted that students enjoy reading texts that are relevant to their life experience and interest. This suggests that the teacher should choose the novels that suit the levels , needs, and interest of the students.

Teachers should choose the novels they want to teach their students carefully otherwise, students may encounter some problems relating to the language itself, cultural issues or text selection ( McKay, 2001) .

The most common problem when choosing novels is the language itself, more specifically, syntax and vocabulary; literary vocabulary and grammatical structures are often considered to be too complicated for EFL students as a result they consider reading novels so demanding.

Lima(2005:186) stated that the mastering of grammatical forms and graded structures that usually guide the EFL teaching "clashes violently with the intentional bending and breaking of grammatical rules that seems to be one of the main features of literature", in addition, lexis reveals the same problem because novels are characterized by the use of creative and unrestricted vocabulary items.

Cultural issues can also hamper the understanding of EFL learners. McKay(2001) argued that literature is saturated with cultural aspects that might frustrate the inexperienced reader.

Text selection is an important issue that should be taken into consideration when choosing novels; it should be based on a number of factors such as learners' level of proficiency, age, gender, and background knowledge.

Above all, teachers should also choose novels of reasonable length as most of the students feel frightened to work with long texts.

### **3. The Effects of Teaching Literature in Enhancing EFL Language Skills:**

Teaching literature to EFL university students allow students to enhance the four skills of language.

#### **Reading:**

Teaching literature is useful in improving students' reading abilities and vocabulary

as literary texts serve to develop the linguistic and literary skills; through teaching novels students develop their reading competence which helps them to build and extend vocabulary and improve understanding during listening and writing. Starja (2015) stated that when students develop their reading competence they will be able to master some sub skills which include :

- a. Comprehending the lexis.
- b. Recognizing the key words.
- c. Predicting the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context.
- d. Determining the grammatical categories of word classes such as nouns, verbs, adjectives..etc.
- e. Grasping denotation and connotations meanings of the text.
- f. Understanding the main idea.
- g. Using textual knowledge, lexical and grammatical cohesive means to link the topic.

#### **Writing:**

Novels are a powerful source for writing in EFL. They can develop students' writing as students try to imitate the original style of novelists. Oster(1989) asserted that literature helps and motivates students to write more creatively.

Teachers need to design different writing activities in order to enhance their students' writing skills depending on the level of the students; they may ask students to write a dialogue between two characters from the novel, to paraphrase certain sentences or a particular paragraph, write a report, summarize some events of a particular chapter of the novel or write about characterization, setting, plot, climax..etc.



By the time the students finish reading the novel , the teacher may ask them to write an essay or a review about the novel.

#### **Speaking and Listening:**

Teaching literature can also help EFL students to speak the language in a creative and imaginative way as they explain their own point of view or the point of view of the characters in the novel or their peers.

Oster(1989:85) asserted that "Focusing on point of view in literature enlarges students' vision and fosters critical thinking by dramatizing the various ways a situation can be seen" this suggests that if students read the novel and interact with what they have read, they would be able to speak about it effectively.

#### **4.Reasons for Using Literature in EFL Classrooms:**

According to Lazar (1990) literature , with its unique characteristics benefit the students in the following aspects:

a. Motivation:

Literature, by addressing to complex situations , life dilemmas , and other universal themes that the readers can be attracted to, intrigue the readers to read on for meaning and pay less attention to form. As readers experience the joy and satisfaction from reading the novels, they are motivated to read further.

b. Language Improvement:

As extensive reading contributes to vocabulary acquisition , teaching literature provides authentic, large exposure to the target language and therefore can be a very effective way to build vocabulary. Moreover, novels provide students with various linguistic forms and communicative functions of the language.

c. Cultural Awareness:

Literature serves as a window to the target culture; showing EFL learners how native speakers' think , communicate and live. By reading the novel, the students obtain virtual access to the culture and discover the way the characters view the world which would lead them to understand the social, historical, political, and economical facts that shape the cultural background of the novel.

In addition to the above mentioned aspects, teaching literature contributes to students' personal growth, critical thinking and give them different reading experience from textbooks (Gareis et al.,2009).

#### **5.Previous Empirical Studies:**

Tsai(2012) made a study entitled "Students' Perceptions of Using a Novel as Main Material in the EFL Reading Course", the study focused on evaluating the effectiveness of novel-teaching based on students' subjective perceptions, for this purpose , the researcher used pretest and post test and a pair of questionnaires to measure students' perceptions and attitudes prior to and after the novel class , the findings of the study indicated that students demonstrated improvement in attitudes, confidence , interest and reading abilities.

Oda(2009) made a study under the title "The Role of Teaching the English Novel in Developing Language Skills" with the purpose to find out the role the novel can play in developing students' language skills and to examine to what extent the novel may provide students with different vocabulary items and grammatical structures , to gather the data of the study the researcher used pre test and post test.

The findings of the study revealed that if the novel is used properly and seriously in tackling it linguistically, the effective role of the novel in developing the language of the learners would be so clear.

Gareis et al.(2009) confirmed that novels can fit in diverse language programs in secondary and postsecondary education, Butler(2006) also provided an example of an attempt to incorporate literature into language classes in a South African context. The English course he described, implemented in the context of the university of North West, included four components: Introduction to English Studies, Introduction to Textual Analysis, Introduction to Literary Genres and Grammar Awareness. Based on the integrated approach between language and literature elements, the course resulted to be evaluated in a highly positive way (with 86% of students in favor of the integrated approach).

#### 7. Data Analysis and Discussion:

##### Test results of the first group of students (who studied novels):

Table (1) shows the frequency and percentage of distribution of the answers of the first group of the study(those who studied literature):

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Pass	24	83%
Fail	6	17%
Total	30	100%

#### 6. Material and method

In this study a test was given to two groups of Sudanese secondary school students , each group consisted of (30) students ; those who studied literature and those who did not study literature during their study of English language. Then the data has been analyzed statistically by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS)

The main purpose of this test was to investigate the impact of teaching literature in enhancing EFL Sudanese secondary school students' linguistic competence.

Hypotheses of the study:

- 1.Teaching literature at Sudanese secondary schools has great impact on students' linguistic competence.
- 2.Teaching literature enhances EFL Sudanese secondary school students' linguistic competence as literature provides them with an authentic model that supports their language enrichment.

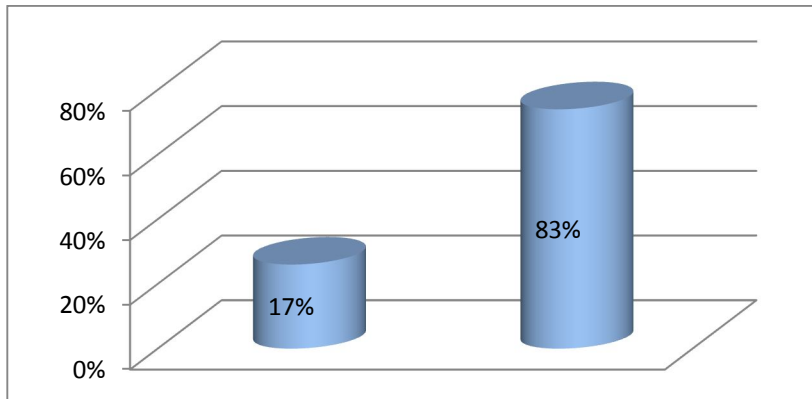


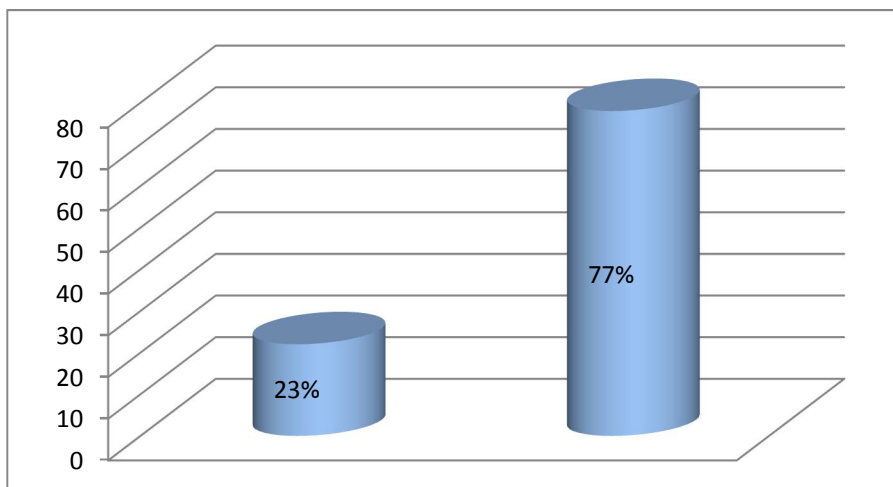
Figure (1)

The above table(1) and figure(1) illustrate the percentage and frequency of the answers of the first group of the study(students who studied literature) to the test and show that most of the sample of the study passed the test as it is represented by (83%).

**Test results of the second group of students ( those who did not study literature):**

**Table (2) shows the frequency and percentage of distribution of the answers of the second group of the study:**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Pass	7	23%
Fail	23	77%
Total	30	100%



Figure(2)

The above table(2) and figure (2)illustrate the percentage and frequency of the answers of the second group of the study(who did not study literature) to the test and show that most of the sample of the study failed the test as it is represented by (77%).

**Table No (3) shows a comparison of the Frequency of Distribution and Decisions of the students' answers of the two groups of the study:**

Groups	Pass		Fail		Decision
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Group 1	24	%83	6	%17	acceptable
Group 2	7	%23	23	77%	acceptable

According to the results above, it can be said that the majority of the students in the second group( who did not study literature) were unable to pass the test, so we can say that the hypotheses of the study are confirmed.

#### 14. Conclusion and Recommendations:

According to the findings of the students' test which investigated the impact of teaching literature to enhance EFL Sudanese secondary school students' linguistic competence , the study found out that teaching literature plays a major role in enhancing EFL Sudanese secondary students' linguistic competence as it increases the students' language awareness.

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends the following points:

- Teachers should provide students with authentic literary materials such as films, lectures, songs, conversations, and news to help students to be aware of different accents of English, stress, intonation, pitch and the culture of English.

- Teachers should provide students with the necessary vocabulary and new grammatical items that are likely to encounter them while reading

- Students should try to interact with literary works in the classroom to be active learners

- Teacher should choose literatures that suit the levels, needs, and interests of the students to teach in EFL classrooms.

- Teachers should teach literature with the aim to improve their students' linguistic competence.

- When teaching novels, the teachers should encourage students to use the language that they have previously learnt.

- Teachers should encourage their students to read literature in and outside the classroom setting in order to improve their language skills.

To sum up , the use of literature in language teaching provides EFL students with a good opportunity for language enrichment as literature represents a rich source of language input and useful to enhance language proficiency

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