

## Investigating Teachers' Views and Perceptions about the Impact of Using Literature Students' Language Skills in Enhancing EFL Sudanese Secondary Schools

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### Abstract:

This study aimed at investigating teachers' views about using literature in enhancing EFL Sudanese secondary school students' language skills. The study adopted the descriptive analytical method. The researcher has collected the data by using a questionnaire which was administered to (30) Sudanese secondary school teachers. To analyze the data, the researcher used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings of the study revealed that the use of literature in EFL classrooms enhances the students' language skills. In the light of the findings of the study, the researcher recommended that books should be selected in a way that motivates the learner and promotes conditions for learning, teachers should teach literature with the aim to improve their students' English language skills. Moreover, teachers need to raise the students' awareness about the importance of literature in the process of foreign language learning.

**Key words:** using literature, EFL, language skills.

### المستخلص:

هدفت هذه الدراسة لتقصي آراء المعلمين حول استخدام الادب الإنجليزي في تعزيز المهارات اللغوية لدي طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية بالمدارس الثانوية السودانية. استخدمت الباحثة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي و جمعت البيانات باستخدام الاستبانة التي وزعت على (30) معلماً للغة الإنجليزية بالمدارس الثانوية السودانية، استخدمت الدراسة برنامج الحزم الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية (SPSS) لتحليل البيانات. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن استخدام الادب الإنجليزي في فصول تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية يعزز المهارات اللغوية للطلاب. بناء على تلك النتائج فإن الدراسة أوصت بأن اختيار الكتب يجب ان يتم بطريقة تحفز المتعلم وترقي حال التعليم ويجب على المعلمين ان يدرسوا الادب الإنجليزي بهدف تطوير مهارات طلابهم اللغوية. علاوة على ذلك يجب على المعلمين زيادة وعي الطلاب بأهمية الادب الإنجليزي في عملية تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كـ لغة أجنبية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** استخدام الادب الإنجليزي، اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية ، مهارات اللغة.

### Introduction:

Teaching English literature to EFL students in secondary schools is helpful as it enriches their language, helps them interact and communicate, increases their interest in language learning and maintains positive classroom environment. Lazar(1993) declared that using literature in EFL classrooms is a faithful way of involving the learner as a whole person and provides excellent opportunities for the learners to expose

their personal opinions, reactions , skills and feelings.

Implementing literature depends on the students' needs, syllabus objectives, teachers' knowledge and experience. Nunan (1991) believed that "There never was and probably never will a strategy for all learners" this suggests that choosing literature depends mainly on the students' proficiency level and needs.

Teaching literature is useful as it develops EFL students' linguistic and literary skills. According to Hurst (1989) in teaching English as a foreign language literature has played a vital role in developing and enhancing English language skills hence it displays a rich context of grammatical and lexical items as well as representing a large resource of prompts for oral work.

In this paper the researcher tries to investigate the impact of teaching literature in enhancing EFL Sudanese secondary school students' language skills.

## 2. Statement of the problem:

The decline and serious deterioration of English language learning refers back, among other factors, to the absence of English literature from the curriculum, though not all English language learning problems resulting from absence of literature.

There are other factors which lead the way towards bringing this tragic situation such as poor writing materials and textbooks, difficulties caused by lack of time, problems of overcrowding in school classrooms, class size, age, abilities, teachers, familiarities, topics of lessons, problems of individual learner differences, etc.

Therefore, the researcher carried out this study to shed light on the idea of introducing English literature to the curriculum to count its substantial role in enhancing students' language skills.

## 3. Objectives of the Study:

The study is carried out to achieve the following objectives:

This study aims to:

1. Cast light on the importance of using literary works in the EFL classrooms and how these works assist the development of language competence not only through

isolated texts but through the whole body of knowledge.

2. Draw the attention of syllabus designers to consider the relation between literary conventions (interplay of event to event, relationship between characters, exploitation of ideas and values system) and the world wide literature which plays a great role in the process of language teaching, and consequently in developing the four skills through motivating and communicative materials.

3. Persuade syllabus designers and teachers to consider literature (not as an isolated activity but) as one to be viewed in relation to general cognitive development of the students. i.e. literature syllabus be responsive to the total educational and cultural context.

## 4. Questions of the Study:

1. How can the absence of literature from the curriculum lead to the deterioration of English language learning?

2. To what extent does the use of literature in EFL secondary school classrooms promote students' language skills?

## 5. Hypotheses of the Study:

1. The absence of literature from the curriculum is one of the factors that lead to the deterioration of EFL.

2. Using literature in EFL secondary school classrooms promotes students' language skills.

## 6. Significance of the Study:

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.

#### **7. Limits of the Study:**

This study is limited to EFL Sudanese secondary school teachers in Al Butana Province during the academic year (2020-2021) in order to investigate the impact of using literature in enhancing students' language skills.

#### **8. Methodology of the Study:**

As has been mentioned, the purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of using literature in enhancing students' language skills, to achieve this goal and in an attempt to answer the study questions, data has been collected through using a questionnaire which was administered to (30) professional Sudanese secondary school teachers in Al Butana Province who have long experience in teaching English and doing research in English. Then the data has been analyzed statistically by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences SPSS.

#### **9. Definition and Purposes of Literature:**

According to Hassan (1991) literature can generally be seen as "The study and writing of books". Burgess (1995) defines it as an art which exploits language since it serves primarily two main purposes: teaching important lessons and entertainment.

Accordingly, literature is meant to convey a moral or educational message to the reader. Besides, it gives him the pleasure by being transmitted to fictional

world, i.e. literature touches almost all aspects of life. It is the mirror that reflects life and inner emotional feelings upon every human phenomenon. Furthermore, literature is also used as a substantial medium through which culture is expressed or promulgated.

#### **10. Literature and Language Teaching:**

Teaching literature transcends the particular circumstance, places and contexts in which literature is taught. According to Brumfit, (1985: 117) "Teaching and learning literature is completely concerned with one of those factors which are represented in cultural studies, linguistics, advanced English proficiency work or history since any work of literature is a language act that exploits the resources of the time and place in which it is written".

Carter and Long (1991:2) asserted that there is much to be gained in terms of language development from exposure to literary language as teaching literature helps students find ways into a text in a methodological way.

According to Lazar (1993) literature is important in EFL classrooms as it is useful for the students' motivation, language development and cultural awareness:

##### 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 for meaning and pay less attention to form. As readers experience the joy and satisfaction from reading literature, they are motivated to read further. Strevens (1984) indicates that the students' motivation can be maintained by variety and amusement in the teaching material and not simply by applying abstract rules.

##### 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 and enhances students' language skills. Moreover, literature provides 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 literature, 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 what they are reading.

**11. Literature and Language Skills:**

Teaching literature to EFL Sudanese secondary school students allows them enhance the four skills of the language.

**A. Literature and Listening Skills:**

Listening skill is one of the most important and fundamental one of the four skills in EFL learning that involves voluntary and conscious repetition of various patterns of language sounds for drawing meaning out of them. It is therefore, a purposeful receptive skill that focuses on language sounds voluntarily, systematically and consciously Belaco, (1969: 66) argued that the language is presented in full and is totally integrated with all its features of phonology, semantics, syntax and more particularly sound variation.

Students learn to use their knowledge of the language to listen to news, special programs. Thus, the learner needs to be encouraged to develop listening skills. Therefore, listening activities aim at

providing the learners with adequate exposure in order to create awareness of the usefulness of recorded broadcast, e.g. weather reports, commercial advertisements, etc.

While doing listening activities the teacher may start with note-taking, then gradually move to more complex activities, concepts of listening for interpretation and critical evaluation.

After presentation, the students are asked to think about parallel stories and narrate them to the others. Thus, besides practicing listening comprehension this task gives them practice in continuous oral narration, while errors of grammar and language are noticed and corrected incidentally, simultaneously with practice in stress, intonation, using fillers, etc.

**B. Literature and Speaking Skills:**

Speaking skill is a productive one that involves the use of language sounds as speech is an essential human activity that EFL learners should master. Some language teaching theories claimed that students acquire language skills easily if they are presented in the spoken form before the written form. Rangxilan (1990) said "What makes English teaching in the foreign language school so effective in a country in which people have been little exposed to English is their focus on a wholly English oral presentation and oral practice in English classrooms".

Through teaching literature, students gain excellent training in oral communication as they are engaged in open discussions when they are asked to present seminars by being given a variety of topics.

Oral presentations of the language helps EFL students to master speaking skills in a controlled environment besides creating conditions which promote maximum development on the fluency side.



### C. Literature and Reading Skills:

The teaching of literature is mainly based on the use of literary texts in the classrooms. Literature provides students with the experience of reading as they discover not only isolated texts but a whole body of knowledge, discussed in relation to experience gained from literature.

Another value of reading in literature is that it motivates the learner for it gives him pleasure by being transmitted to the fictional world whether it is natural, social or individual interests.

Furthermore, literary texts include a great deal of other information sources of stimulation including historical and journalistic materials, samples of other artistic forms, accounts of scientific, technical and sociological aspects. For examples to read English newspaper or a novel requires mastery of several words that the limited vocabulary which learnt during the first few years of English study will not serve for wider reading. Therefore, through literature EFL students acquire vocabulary of necessary proportion rapidly and effectively.

### D. Literature and Writing skills:

Writing about literary works encourages students to be better writers because it requires a close examination of the elements of the story such as characterization, setting, point of view, style, tone, ...etc. hence reading literary materials can be used as a medium for practicing writing skills.

When students read for the first time they get an overall idea of the content they make outlines of their ideas or main points. During their second reading, students write comments about the content in order to reveal themselves as active readers through their trials to come up with some ideas on a given topic.

During sessions of discussion students listen to arguments and take down notes for further reference, the teacher may include enough questions to test the students' production as when he asks them to write two or more short paragraphs.

writing skill can also be enhanced through writing assignments which consist of various practical writing skills. Students can be given a set of questions to think about. They may use complex structures and vocabulary. This activity is very useful for the student and improves students' writing in content, organization and even grammar.

### 12. Previous Related Studies:

Mohammed (2007) made a study under the title " Investigating the Impact of Literature in Developing Students' Language skills", the study adopted analytical descriptive method, the data has been collected through two tools; a diagnostic test for (40) secondary school students and a questionnaire for (40) secondary school teachers. The results of the study revealed that literature plays a great role in developing students' English language skills as the test showed that Sudanese secondary school students face some difficulties when they are asked to perform exercises based on oral and writing skills as the syllabus does not include enough oral and writing exercises.

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



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.

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.

### 13. Data Analysis and Discussion:

The questionnaire was given to 30 respondents who represent the teachers' community at Sudanese Secondary schools.

**The following table shows the mean and standard deviation and chi-square values for the study Hypotheses (1&2):**

1. The absence of literature from the curriculum is one of the factors that lead to the deterioration of EFL.
2. Using literature in EFL secondary school classrooms promotes students' language skills.

No.	Statements	mean	SD	Chi square	p-value
1	The absence of literature from the curriculum affects language learning negatively.	3.6	80	29	0.023
2	Listening skills can be improved through interpreting and evaluating literary works.	2.4	50	28	0.010
3	Through studying literature students can gain excellent training in oral skills.	3.3	70	23	0.006
4	Literature is a widely appealing source of materials for reading	2.5	3.8	15	0.046
5	Literature can be used to minimize difficulties in writing skills	3.4	2.5	22	0.000
6	When interpreting literary works, integration of the skills can be achieved	2.8	1.7	12	0.000
7	Literary materials are enthusiastically received by the students because of their association with the students' experiences	2.9	4.8	34	0.000
8	Using literature provides a contextualized body through which language items are made more memorable than using isolated texts	2.7	50	22	0.000
9	An English play is an appealing material for the students as it presents the language in authentic situations	2.9	70	24	0.023

10	Poems are valuable techniques that enhance the teaching of the forms of pronunciation and grammar.	2.6	50	22	0.036
11	Teaching literature creates a variety of classroom activities which enrich the language of communication	3.6	80	22	0.023
12	Grammatical structure can be reinforced through teaching literature	3.4	.50	28	0.010

It is clear from the above table that the calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in the (12) statements is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents, so we can conclude that the hypotheses of the study are verified.

#### 14. Conclusion and Recommendations:

According to the findings of the teachers' questionnaire which investigated the teachers' views and perceptions about using literature in EFL Sudanese secondary schools in order to enhance students' language skills, the study came up with the following findings: -

- The absence of literature from the curriculum affects language learning negatively.
- Literature represents an appealing source of materials for reading.
- Through studying literature students gain excellent training in oral skills.
- Teaching literature creates a variety of classroom activities which enrich the language of communication.
- Grammatical structure can be reinforced through teaching literature.
- Literature helps students to speak clearly, precisely and concisely and

become more proficient creative, and analytical learners.

- Teaching literature increases the students' language skills awareness.
- Literature helps EFL learners to write more effectively.
- Teaching literature improves the linguistic knowledge of the learners as they extend the knowledge of vocabulary, reading, listening speaking and grammatical structures.
- Literature is a powerful and motivating source for teaching the four skills of English.

Depending on the study findings, the researcher suggests the following recommendations:

- Books should be selected in a way that motivates the learner and promotes conditions for learning.
- Cassettes should be used in EFL classrooms for they provide recorded short stories, plays, and poems which add pleasurable atmosphere and break the burden.
- In teaching and learning English literature and language, it is worthwhile integrating them with video so that students can enjoy talking and writing about the text. It would be good to alternate audio-tapes and video-tapes.
- Teachers of literature should concentrate on books that are directly needed by students at the stage of their development.

- Methods of teaching should encourage students to introduce (into discussion) any relevant book they perceive to be readable.
- Teachers should teach literature with the aim to improve their students' English language skills.
- Teachers need to raise the students' awareness about the importance of literature in the process of foreign language learning.
- Syllabus designers should consider the relationship between literary conventions and the worldwide literature which plays a great role in the process of language teaching, and consequently in developing the four skills through motivating and communicative materials.

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