Investigating Teachers' Views and Perceptions about Using Literature in EFL Classrooms at Sudanese Secondary Schools

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Abstract:

This study aimed at investigating teachers' views about using literature to enhance EFL Sudanese secondary school students' linguistic competence. The study adopted the descriptive analytical method. The researcher has collected the data by using a questionnaire for (30) Sudanese secondary school teachers. To analyze the data the researcher used the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).The findings of the study revealed that the use of literature in EFL classrooms enhances the students' linguistic competence. In the light of the findings of the study, the researcher recommended that teachers should use authentic literary materials that suit the level and the needs of the students. Moreover, teachers need to raise the students' awareness about the importance of literature in improving their linguistic competence.

Key words: Using literature, linguistic competence.

المستخلص

هدفت هذة الدراسة لتقصي أثر إستخدام الادب الإنجليزي في تعزيزالقدرة اللغوية لدي طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية بالمدارس الثانوية السودانية من وجهة نظر المعلمين. إستخدمت الباحثة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي و جمعت البيانات بواسطة الإستبانة التي وزعت على (30) معلماً للغة الإنجليزية بالمدارس السودانية الثانوية,إستخدمت الباحثةُ برنامج الحزم الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية لتحليل البيانات. أظهرت نتائجُ الدراسةأن استخدام الادب الإنجليزي في فصول تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية لغة اجنبية يعززالقدرة اللغوية للطلاب. بناء على تلك النتائج فإن الباحثةأوصت بأنه يجب على المعلمين أن يستخدموا مواد أدبية حقيقية مناسبة لمستويات و احتياجات الطلاب علاوة علي ذلك يجب على المعلمين زيادة وعي الطلاب بأهمية الادب الإنجليزي في تعزيزقدرتهم اللغوية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: إستخدام الادب الإنجليزي , القدرة اللغوية.

Introduction:

Much of the professional writing on the teaching of literature on elementary and secondary schools has in recent years, focused on reader response theory and on multiculturalism in literature for children and young adults. Reader-response theory has provided the foundation for instructional approaches that emphasize the role of readers in constructing meanings and interpretations of texts, while multiculturalism has called for an expanded repertoire of authentic literary works to reflect the cultural diversity that characterizes of global society. Apart from this and particular in environments where English is used as a second or foreign language the aim is to improve learners communicative competence trough exposure to authentic literary works that would stimulate love for reading.

Reading across cultures or presenting students with literary works portraying diverse cultural viewpoints helps to fill a gap by presenting stories of actual classrooms and the ways that teachers and students in those classrooms, from third grade to college, make and take meanings from a variety of texts. In so doing it takes us well beyond being satisfied with merely exposing readers to a variety of texts.

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So, students should be encouraged to read different literary works from different parts of the world so long as the rationale is to develop interest in reading and hence enhance communicative competence.

In this paper the researcher tries to investigate the impact of using of literature to enhance EFL Sudanese Secondary school students' communicative competence.

The researcher has noticed that many EFL learners (secondary school students) face numerous serious deficiencies in English language skills; they find it difficult to grasp the intended message. Furthermore, when it comes to doing exercises, they are observed to be very poor performers, resulting in comparatively poor achievement, too.

So, the researcher finds it important to explore these hurdles with the intention of suggesting the appropriate rectifications.

The study is carried out to achieve the following objectives:

1. To investigate the teachers' views about the use of English literature to improve their students linguistic competence .

2. To propose some suitable ways of using literature in order to enhance EFL Sudanese secondary school students' linguistic competence.

The following research questions formed the basis of the study:

1. What are the teachers' views about the use of English literature to improve their students' linguistic competence?

2. How can teachers use literature in order to enhance EFL Sudanese secondary school students' linguistic competence?

The following hypotheses are postulated:

1. The use of English literature improves students' linguistic competence.

2. Teachers can use literature effectively to enhance EFL Sudanese university students' linguistic competence.

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 teachers during the academic year (2020-2021) in order to investigate the impact of using literature in enhancing students' linguistic competence.

As has been mentioned, the purpose of this study 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 questionnaire which was administered to (30) professional Sudanese secondary school teachers 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 Science SPSS.

2.Advantages of Using Literature in EFL classrooms:

Chenfled(1978:211) stated the importance of using literature in EFL classrooms by saying "Through literature we can learn about ourselves , other people , other places and other times. We dip into the wisdom of accumulated human knowledge; we gain insights into human situations, social and historical events, through literature we discover what is possible in human experience and imagination, and our own lives grow in richness and depth".

Salih(1989:25) argued that literature helps students to develop their language knowledge and improves what they know about English syntax, morphology , semantics and implicitly phonetics . This indicates that through literature students can distinguish acceptable sentences from unacceptable ones , they can learn to produce infinite set of sentences they have never heard before and they can improve their knowledge about word formation and idioms.

Obediat(1997:32) asserted that literature helps students to acquire a native-like competence in English, express their ideas in good English , learn the features of modern English , learn how English linguistic system is used for communication , see how idiomatic expressions are used, speak clearly , precisely and concisely and become more proficient , creative, and analytical learners.

Bobkina(2014) stated that the latest developments in the field of sociolinguistics, pragmatics, semiotics, discourse analysis and psycholinguistics reveal some additional benefits that can be attributed to literary texts.

Langer(1997) declared that literature helps students to reflect on their lives and their surrounding world, opening "horizons of possibility , allowing them to question, interpret, connect, and explore".

According to Mart(2016) literature has been considered as a valuable resource in language instruction and provides learners with various advantages:

1. Literature improves learners' linguistic knowledge as it extends their vocabulary and grammatical structures. This suggests that using literature in EFL classrooms enriches students' language.

2. Literature provides meaningful input which enables EFL learners to develop their linguistic competence. Pugh(1989) argued that literature is " a potentially rich source of meaningful input outside the classroom".

3. Literature increases students' language awareness as literary texts widens students' knowledge about how words are used in different contexts.

4. Literature provides authentic materials which expose learners with real life-like situations.

5. Literature enhances students' communicative competence. Collie and Slater(1987) claimed that language and literature are integrated "to let the students derive the benefits of communication and other activities for language improvement within the context of suitable work of literature".

6. Literature expose EFL learners to the culture of the target language.

7. Literature develops EFL learners interpretive skills as it helps learners to draw inferences from the context.

8. Literature helps social development as it includes universal themes that are related to the world's issues.

Oda(2009) stated that the study of literature is an important factor in creating an intimate relationship between the learner and the literary work, and between the learner and the language on the other side. Widdowson(1975:73) declared that literature occupies a significant part of language teaching programs because it provides learners with the ability to master the basic activities . In addition, it can draw an imaginative world and create an interesting life that makes the learner interact with the writer.

Davies(1985:189) argued that literature leads to enriching the linguistic level. A great consciousness of the full range of possibilities for variation offered by the language, in addition, literature makes the students more sensitive to the way a particular writer selects from and exploits these possibilities and quicker to recognize what is special about the style of a literary text.

Maley(1989) stated the importance of the following criteria in support of the use of literature in language classrooms:

1. Universality: This includes global topics such as love, death, pride , jealousy..etc.

2. Non-triviality: Literature does not trivialize , but provides readers with genuine and authentic input.

3. Personal relevance: Literary texts commonly deal with events, ideas, feelings and emotions that may conform to a real or imaginative part of the reader's experience.

4. Interest: EFL learners find literary texts interesting as they are part of the human global experience.

5. Imaginative power: Literature is an ideal tool for generating topics for class debates.

6. Ambiguity: Literature is opened to subjectivity and association of ideas and guarantees class debates.

All in all , literature plays a crucial role in enhancing EFL students' linguistic competence as it provides them with all the aspects of the language.

3. Literature, Language and Culture:
Culture is not only understood as the advanced intellectual development of mankind as reflected in the arts, but it refers to all socially conditioned aspects of human life (cf. Snell-Hornby, 1988: Hymes, 1964). A society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves. Culture, being what people have to learn as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end product of learning: knowledge, in a most general, if relative, sense of the term. By definition, we should note that culture is not material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behavior, or emotions.

It is rather an organization of these things. It is the forms of things that people have in mind, their models of perceiving and dealing with their circumstances. To one who knows their culture, these things and events are also signs signifying the cultural forms or models of which they are material representation.

It can be summarized that this definition suggests three things: firstly, culture seen as a totality of knowledge and model for perceiving things, secondly, immediate connection between culture and behavior and events, thirdly culture's dependence on norms. It should be noted also that some other definitions claim that both *knowledge* and *material things* are parts of culture. (Koentjaraningrat, 1996: 80-81) and Hoijer (1967: 106).

According to Snell-Hornby (1988: 40), Wilhelm Von Humboldt first formally formulated the connection between language and culture. For this German philosopher, language was something dynamic: it was an activity rather than a static inventory of items as the product of activity. At the same time language is an expression of culture and individuality of the speakers, who perceive the world through language. Related to Goodrulgh's idea on culture as the totality of knowledge, this present idea may see language as the knowledge representation in the mind.

Halliday and Hassan (1985: 5) state that there was the theory of context before the theory of text. In other words, context precedes text. Context here means context of situation and culture (Halliday and Hasan, 1985: 7). This context is necessary for adequate understanding of the text, which becomes the first requirement for translating. Thus, translating without understanding text is non-sense, and understanding text without understanding its culture is impossible.

All in all, we are faced with two extremes. Which one is right? The answer, according to Snell-Hornby (1988: 41) lies not in choosing any of the two. If the extremes are put at the ends of a cline, the answer lies between the two. In brief, theoretically the degree of probability for perfect translation depends on how far the source language text (SLT) is embedded in its culture and the greater the distance between the culture in (SLT) and target language text (TLT), the higher is the degree of impossibility.

4. What factors should teachers consider when teaching English Literature in EFL classrooms?

Carter and Lang(1991) stated that in literary texts teachers need to be aware of the following :

1. Text selection:
   When choosing texts teachers should use texts that have relevance and interest to students, texts also need to be appropriate to the level of students' comprehension.

2. Length:
   Shorter texts are easier to use within the class time available.

3. Cultural difficulty:
   When choosing texts, teachers should avoid texts that are so culturally dense that students can find difficult to understand.

4. Cultural appropriacy:
   When teaching literary texts learners should not be offended by the target language culture.

Duff and Maley(2007) stated that teachers can cope with many of the challenges that literary texts present , if they ask a series of questions to assess the suitability of texts for any particular group of learners:

1. Is the subject matter likely to be interested to the students?
2. Is the language level appropriate?
3. Is the length for the time available?
4. Does it require much cultural or literary background knowledge?
5. Is it culturally offensive in any way?
6. Can it be easily exploited for language learning purposes?

The authors also emphasized the importance of varying tasks difficulty as well as text difficulty.

Level 1 simple text + lower-level task.

Level 2 simple text+ more demanding task.

Level 3 difficult task+ lower- level task.

Level 4 difficult text+ more demanding task

5. **Previous Related Studies :**

Al Sabiri(2018) conducted a study entitled" A Study on the Views of English Literature Teachers about How to Teach English Literature: Libyan Higher Education Context" to examine the views of English literature teachers about how to teach English literature. To collect the data of the study the researcher used semi - structured interviews. The findings of the study indicated that teaching of English literature still needs improvements. It was also found out that the Paraphrastic Approach , Information -Based Approach and Language-Based Approach were the preferred approaches of teaching literature. Moreover, the findings revealed that English Literature teachers face some difficulties related to their teaching contexts and themselves such as lack of facilities, visual aids and technology , lack of appropriate classroom environment , lack of self-confidence in teachers and lack of establishing rapport in teachers with their students in the classroom.

Hwang and Embi(2007) researched "Approaches Employed by Secondary School Teachers to the Literature Component in English". The study was conducted in 15 secondary schools in Sandakan, Sabah with a population of 112 English teachers.

6- Material and method

To collect the data of the study the researchers used the questionnaire as the primary tool, classroom observations and focused interview as secondary tools. And she used the descriptive analytic method in collecting data of the questionnaire – in addition a test the for the students the 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 science (spss)

The finding of the study revealed that teaching literature plays a major role in enhancing that EFL – Sudanese secondary school students linguistic competence .

7. Data Analysis and Discussion:

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

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Table (1) the mean and standard deviation and chi-square values   for the study Hypotheses (1&2):

1. The use of English literature improves students' linguistic competence.

2. Teachers can use literature effectively to enhance EFL Sudanese university students' linguistic competence .

No.	Statements	mean	SD	Chi square	p-value
1	Literature helps EFL students to acquire a native-like competence .	3.6	08	29	0.023
2	Literature is a powerful and motivating source for teaching speaking and listening skills.	2.4	05	28	0.010
3	Literature helps students to develop their language knowledge and improve what they know about English syntax , morphology , semantics and implicitly phonetics.	3.3	07	23	0.006
4	Literature helps EFL learners to write more effectively.	2.5	3.8	15	0.046
5	Literature is very important to use in the classroom as it provides the students with enjoyment and understanding of the real world of life.	3.4	2.5	22	0.000
6	Teaching literature increases the students' language awareness.	2.8	1.7	12	0.000
7	Teaching literature improves the linguistic knowledge of the learners as they extend the knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical structures.	2.9	4.8	34	0.000
8	Teaching literature promotes students' understanding of the culture of the target language.	2.7	05	22	0.000
9	Literature helps students to enhance their communicative competence as they stimulate learners for language learning.	2.9	07	24	0.023
10	Literature helps students to speak clearly , precisely and concisely and become more proficient creative, and analytical learners.	2.6	05	22	0.036

11	Literature helps students to reflect on their lives and their surrounding world, opening "horizons of possibility, allowing them to question, interpret, connect, and explore".	3.6	08	22	0.023
12	Literature helps social development as they include universal themes that are related to the world's issues	3.4	.50	28	0.010

From the above table, it is obvious 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.

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

- Teaching literature increases the students' language awareness.
- Teaching literature helps EFL students to acquire a native-like linguistic and communicative competence.
- Literature helps students to develop their language knowledge and improve what they know about English syntax , morphology , semantics and implicitly phonetics.
- Teaching literature promotes students' understanding of the culture of the target language.
- Literature helps students to enhance social development as they include universal themes that are related to the world's issues.

- Literature is very important to use in the classroom as it provides the students with enjoyment and understanding of the real world of life.

8. Conclusion :
To conclude the study the researcher came up with finding that literature increases the students' language awareness and helps EFL students to acquire a native – like linguistic and communicative competence , improve what they know about English syntax , morphology , semantics and implicitly phonetics

9.Recommendations:
- The following are some recommendations for EFL teachers:
- Teacher should choose the literature that suit the levels, needs, and interests of the students to teach in EFL classrooms.
- Teachers should also choose novels of reasonable length as most of the students feel frightened to work with long texts.
- Teachers should motivate the students to study novels carefully and attentively.
- Teachers should teach literature with the aim to improve their students' linguistic competence.
- Teachers should encourage their students to read literature in and outside the classroom setting in order to improve their language skills.

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