

The Role of Abridged Shakespeare Plays in Improving EFL Students' Language Skills

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the role of abridged Shakespeare plays in improving EFL students' language skills. The researcher followed the analytical method, to collect data the researcher used achievement test. The study sample is represented in (40) secondary school students. The data collected was analyzed by using Statistical Packages of Social Sciences (SPSS). Based on the data analysis and discussion the following are revealed: Spoken discourse markers are effective in improving EFL learners' oral fluency, also Spoken discourse markers are motivating to improve EFL learners' oral fluency and teaching literature to Sudanese secondary students improve students oral communication fluency. Based on finding the researcher recommended that literature should be taught at secondary to improve EFL students' language skills.

Key words: Shakespeare plays, language skills and secondary school.

المستخلص

هدفت هذه الدراسة الي معرفة دور مسرحيات شكسبير المختصرة في تحسين المهارات اللغوية لطلاب دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية لغةً أجنبية. أتبعته الباحثة المنهج التحليلي لجمع البيانات بأستخدام اختبار التحصيل. تمثلت عينة الدراسة في (40) طالبة من المرحلة الثانوية. تم تحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها بإستخدام الحزم الإحصائية للعلوم الإنسانية (SPSS) بناءً علي تحليل البيانات والمناقشة، تم التوصل الي الاتي: علامات الخطاب المنطوق فعال في تحسين في تحسين الطلاقة الشفهية لدارسي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية، كما أن علامات الخطاب المنطوق يحفز علي تحسين الطلاقة الشفهية لدارسي اللغة الانجليزية و أيضا تدريس الادب الإنجليزي لطلاب المرحلة الثانوية في السودان يحسن طلاقة التواصل الشفوي. وبناء علي النتائج التي توصلت اليها الباحثة توصي بالاتي: ضرورة تدريس الادب الإنجليزي لطلاب المرحلة الثانوية لما له من دور في تحسين مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مسرحيات شكسبير، مهارات لغوية بالمرحلة الثانوية.

Introduction

Teaching classical literature in Sudanese high secondary schools witnessed its ups and down and in some stages in Sudan it showed a steady decline from the time of Arabicisation the medium of instruction in both schools and universities in the 1970s till present. With the absence of English language and literature (A. Mohammed, 2001) both classics and

modern from schools and cutting down the periods of English language in schools from nine periods per-week to currently four periods per-week teachings explicit grammar, short reading comprehension and writing composition resulted in the decline of the English language among students. Literature and English language should be taught

in Sudan because it is still seen as a window upon the world. (M. Abdul-Rasoul, 1971). Nevertheless, Language should not be taught with the negligence of its literature.

Statement of the Problem

The research observes that through his work as teacher, language learners need to produce language to improve and to show levels of proficiency. When they cannot speak fluently, they are considered unsuccessful in mastering language skills. Even though they have been studying English for many years. This result is partly because of a focus on teaching grammar and lack of opportunity to practice speaking in English through study literature. Therefore, oral fluency should be focus of studying literature work such as, William Shakespeare and other literary works, because it provides learners' with a new vocabulary. Thus, student will progress and develop in learning language skills.

Significance of the Study

The researcher advocates the use of plays in high schools in particular abridged Shakespeare play of Romeo and Juliet in order to raise the level of English language among high school students. "In choosing a script, the teacher should ensure that the language is accessible to the learners and relevant to their needs and that the topic arouses the students' interest. Themes relating to family situations are therefore useful." (D. Paul, 1990). Therefore, the researchers vigilantly selected this particular abridged Shakespeare play. Studying such brings into the class role-play, turn-taking, memorization and even improvisation. Such practices

facilitate improving oral competence a skill that is widely does not exist among Sudanese learners, and if it does, it unfolds weakness and embarrassment to speak in front of other peers. "A wide range of oral activities that have an element of creativity present". (Hubbard et al 1986: 317).

"Shakespeare, is the most important author students can study, therefore deserve up to one third of the class time each year..... Shakespeare should be taught to all students not just the academically able" (Early, M. 1967). Therefore, The researcher believes, the Sudanese Ministry of Education has to shoulder the responsibility to enclose teaching classic English literature once again since the exclusion of English literature from the syllabus of English language in 1990s which led to a great damage in the standard of English language (Mohamed, 2009:2).

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study is to improve English language skills and acquire vocabulary and expressions through reading abridged Shakespeare play of "Romeo and Juliet".

Questions of the Study

To what extent does studying abridged Shakespeare play contributes to develop high secondary students' language skills?

Hypothesis of the Study

Studying abridged Shakespeare play contributes to develop high secondary students' language skills.

Literature Review

English Literature in Sudan

When the language of English was superimposed upon Sudan by the occupiers in 1898.

It was of two types, the first was “government education” and the second type was to serve the purpose of the Christian missionaries. At that juncture Sudan entered a new phase in the teaching and learning of English that Dr. Yeddi (2003), predicts it as “the sinister hegemony of the English language.

The Teaching of classical literature in Sudanese higher secondary schools witnessed its uncertainties and instabilities at some point of time; it showed a steady decline from the time of Arabicisation process and it also affected the medium of instruction in both schools and universities in the 1970s till the present time. With the absence of English language and literature from its courses of study (A. Mohammed, 2004) both classical and modern from the school syllabus. The slashing of the timetable in English language in schools from nine periods per-week to only four periods per-week. Focusing just on teaching plain, basic grammar, brief reading comprehension and writing compositions resulted in the deterioration of the English language among tertiary level students. It is imperative to teach Literature and English language in Sudan because it is still seen as a window upon the world. (M. Abdul-Rasoul, 1971). Using literature as a resource offers teachers possibilities for basing language learning activities on materials that can stimulate greater interest and involvement than is the case with other texts (Carter and Long, 1991: 3)

Shakespeare's Literature Works

Shakespeare's works include (37) plays, (2) narrative poems, (154) sonnets, and a variety of other poems. No original manuscripts of Shakespeare's plays are known to exist today. It is actually thanks to a group of actors from Shakespeare's

company that we have about half of the plays at all. They collected them for publication after Shakespeare died, preserving the plays. These writings were brought together in what is known as the First Folio ('Folio' refers to the size of the paper used). It contained (36) of his plays, but none of his poetry. Shakespeare's legacy is as rich and diverse as his work; his plays have spawned countless adaptations across multiple genres and cultures. His plays have had an enduring presence on stage and film. His writings have been compiled in various iterations of The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, which include all of his plays, sonnets, and other poems. William Shakespeare continues to be one of the most important literary figures of the English language.

{<https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/>}

Value of Teaching Literature

According to Gad Allah, B. (2017), literature is considered as the back bone of any language because it reflects culture, traditions, customs and religion and believes of different groups in the society. Also literature is known as a window through which all human activities help learner to know more about the target group in the society. The Integration of literature in language teaching encourages students to read and to experience language in use. Moreover, the study of literature prepares students for literary studies at the university level. Therefore, this research proceeds with the undaunted campaign of teaching Shakespeare's play the abridged ones in order to reform and spearhead teaching and learning for the EFL students and learners of Sudan.

Why Shakespeare Literature?

Forrester, A. (1995) states that: Shakespeare was not particularly highly regarded in his writing lifetime. Although his poetry was applauded, there was only a short period at the cusp of the 16th and 17th centuries when his plays were popular with the groundlings and fairly popular at court, but his literary expertise was never highly valued unlike Marlowe or Jonson... It was only towards the end of this period and during the 19th century that scholars began to take the plays seriously and so prime the academic engine which has produced more words than any other field. It is also, incidentally, at this time that the real separation of Shakespeare as text versus Shakespeare as drama comes into play.

Challenging and Inspiring Students'

This researcher, can't think of no better way to challenge a student's reading than to have them study some Shakespeare's works whether abridged or not. Once the learner feels comfortable with their reading then a great way has been discovered to build their eagerness and stimulate their brains. Therefore, a teacher needs to encourage them to read some of Shakespeare's works. A great manner to do this is to read together the first time to help them slowly understand the language and be there to help them overcome any difficulties they may face at first. Reading Shakespeare can be a wonderful learning experience and a great ability for any student to possess. Shakespeare's writings are timeless and full of meaning. The Girls High school students can learn so much from studying the works of this famous Bard

including understanding the history behind his writings and learning from the messages he wished to convey.

Shakespeare's Use of Vocabulary and expression

According to R. Lampert, (2008), very few might know that many English words and expression used in the present-day English is invented by Shakespeare. "The estimated numbers and phrases coined by the Brad is approximately 1.600 including such standards as countless, majestic and excellent. In *Romeo and Juliet*, as in all of Shakespeare's writing, more problematic are the words that we still use but that now have different meanings. In the opening scenes of *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, the word heavy has the meaning of "sorrowful," the word envious is used where we would say "malicious," sadly where we would use "gravely" or "seriously," his where we would use "its," happy where we would say "fortunate," cousin where we would say "kinsman," and still where we would say "always." Such words, too, will become familiar as you continue to read Shakespeare's language." (Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* from The Folger Shakespeare.) Shakespeare changed nouns into verbs and verbs into adjectives, connecting words never before used together adding prefixes and suffixes and advising words wholly original.

Method of the study

The researcher used the analytical method to conduct the study. For data collection the researcher used achievement test.

Data Analysis

Table (1) show the distribution of the answers of Shakespeare plays.

N	Evaluation	Frequency	Percentages
0	fail	0	0 %
1	weak	6	15 %
2	pass	12	30 %
3	v. good	21	52.5 %
4	excellent	1	2.5 %
total		40	100 %

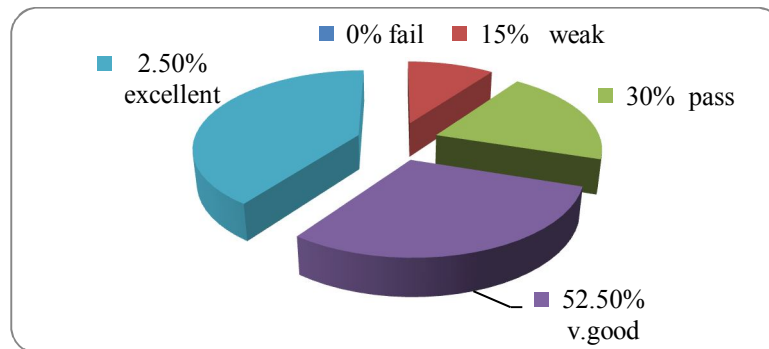


Figure (1) show the distribution of the answers of Shakespeare plays.

From table (1) and figure (1) which show that the majority of the study endive duals were rated (very good) as their number reached (21) by (52.5%), followed by those who obtained an estimate (pass) as their number reached (12) by (30%), followed by those who obtained a (weak) rating, where their number reached (6) by (15%), followed by those who obtained the (excellent) rating, as their number reached (1) with a rate of (2.5%). Their assessment (fail) was (0) and at a rate (0%).

Table (2) show the distribution of the answers of the students about characters in “Romeo and Juliet”.

N	Evaluation	Frequency	Percentages
0	fail	3	7.5 %
1	weak	6	15 %
2	pass	12	30 %
3	v. good	15	37.5 %
4	excellent	4	10 %
total		40	100 %

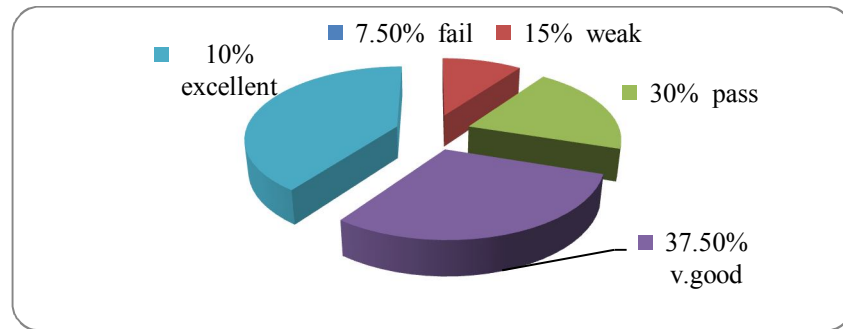


Figure (2) show the distribution of the answers of the students about characters in “Romeo and Juliet”.

From table (2) and figure (2) that the majority of the study individuals were rated (v. good) as their number reached (15) by (37.5%), followed by those who obtained an estimate (pass) as their number reached (12) by (30 %), followed by those who obtained a (weak) rating, where their number reached (6) by (15 %), followed by those who obtained (excellent) was (4) and at a rate (10 %). Their assessment (fail) rating, where their number reached (3) by (7.5%).

Table (3) show the distribution of the answers of the students in vocabulary test in “Romeo and Juliet” play.

N	Evaluation	Frequency	Percentages
0	Fail	5	12.5 %
1	Weak	6	15 %
2	Pass	10	25 %
3	v. good	15	37.5 %
4	Excellent	4	10 %
total		40	100 %

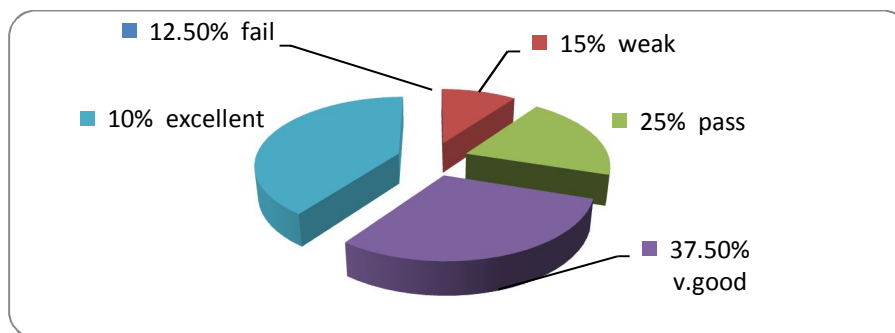


Figure (3) show the distribution of the answers of the students in vocabulary test in “Romeo and Juliet” play.

From table (3) and figure (3) that the majority of the study individuals were rated (v. good) as their number reached (15) by (37.5%), followed by those who obtained an estimate (pass) as their number reached (10) by (25%), followed by those who obtained a (weak) rating, where their number reached (6) by (15%), followed by those who obtained the (fail) rating, as their number reached (5) with a rate of (12.5%). Their assessment (excellent) was (4) and at a rate (10%).

Table (4) show the distribution of the answers of the students in quotes test from “Romeo and Juliet” play.

N	Evaluation	Frequency	Percentages
0	fail	5	12.5 %
1	weak	8	20 %
2	v. good	20	50 %
3	excellent	7	17.5 %
total		40	100 %

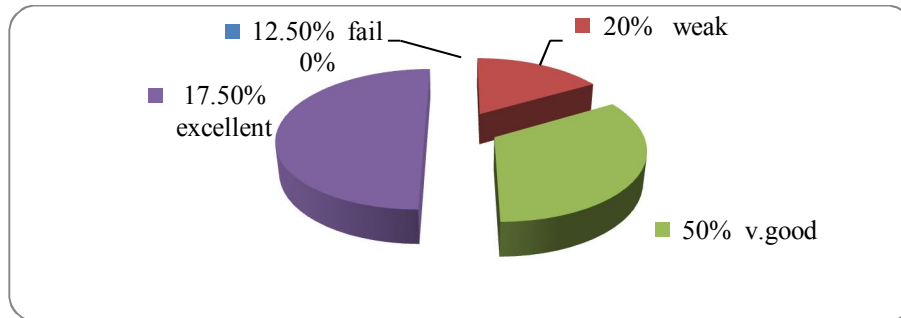


Figure (4) show the distribution of the answers of the students in quotes test from “Romeo and Juliet” play.

From table (4) and figure (4) that the majority of the study individuals were rated (v. good) as their number reached (20) by (50 %), followed by those who obtained an estimate (weak) as their number reached (8) by (20 %), followed by those who obtained a (excellent) rating, where their number reached (7) by (17.5 %), Their assessment (fail) was (5) and at a rate (12.5 %).

Discussions and Results

The finds of data analysis validate the hypothesis that states: Studying abridged Shakespeare play contributes among high school students. Students read in pairs and acted the play to practice both receptive and productive skills. From the results, it shows that (37%.5) variant of a very good, the highest score which shows an understanding of the characters of the play and also (37.5%) variant of a pass, the

highest scored in the students question on the Elizabethan vocabulary of Shakespeare develop reading skill and a highest variant of agree in ELT questionnaire of (52%) that Shakespeare play of Romeo and Juliet equips learners with everlasting quotes and expressions from his characters, and in student turn taking during reading the play the highest variant of strongly agree was (36%) that improves speaking skill all students language skills.

Conclusion

Based on the data analysis, it can be concluded that: Spoken discourse markers in the abridge play of “Romeo and Juliet” are effective in improving and motivating EFL learners’ overall language skills in particular oral fluency and indubitably teaching English literature to Sudanese secondary students improve and motivate student’s language skills.

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