

Investigating Literary Competence at The University Level: A Case Study of Literature Teaching Modules

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Abstract:

This study aims at investigating the literary competence at the University level. The theoretical part of the study presents the concept of linguistic competence, then communicative competence down to literary competence and its role in understanding and comprehending the literary work. The practical part deals with the research methodology. The study in its last chapter ends up with some conclusions which indicate that there are statistically significant differences in the favor of the sample represented by university of Basra, college of Arts and college of Education in the level of literary competence.

Key Words: Linguistic competence, Communicative competence, Literary competence.

استقصاء الكفاءة الادبية للطلبة على المستوى الجامعي: حالة دراسية لوحدات تدريس الادب

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المخلص:

تهدف الدراسة الى استقصاء الكفاءة الأدبية لدى طلبة جامعة البصرة. يقدم القسم النظري من الدراسة مصطلح الكفاءة اللغوية ومن ثم الكفاءة التواصلية وصولاً الى الكفاءة الأدبية ودورها في فهم العمل الأدبي وتفسيره. اما القسم العملي من الدراسة يتناول منهجية البحث، الدراسة بفصلها الاخير تنتهي ببعض النتائج التي تشير الى وجود فروق ذات دلالة احصائية لصالح العينة في مستوى الكفاءة الأدبية. **الكلمات المفتاحية:** الكفاءة اللغوية، الكفاءة التواصلية، الكفاءة الادبية .

1-Introduction

Studying literature as a part of English Foreign Language curriculum has been a matter of concern for long time. Through literature, learners can develop their understanding and awareness of the other cultures and provide a rich resource for the linguistic input that helps the learners develop the four language skills. Literary works enrich learners' perspective and provide them with opportunities to deal with new vocabularies, grammatical structures and different learning styles. Keeping away literature in language learning means reducing the opportunity to "educate the whole person " (Lazar ,1993:19). Reading literary work is different from reading other types of discourse like textbooks or academic journals, in which the information is written without symbolism or rhythmical choice of word. In order to negotiate the meaning of literary texts that learners read, learners are supposed to have developed a minimum level of what we might call " literary competence". According to (Culler, 1975: 132) reading literary texts requires someone to have (implicit understanding of operations of literary discourse which tells someone what to look for). In this sense Culler refers to this ability as (literary competence) which enables readers to convert the meaning beyond what is written in the literary text.

2- Linguistics competence

The concept linguistic competence was absent from Noam Chomsky's work during the 1950. It was first introduced in 1965 in his elaboration of generative grammar which refers to the system of linguistic knowledge possessed by a native speaker of a language. For Chomsky competence is the ideal language system that enables the speakers to produce and understand an infinite number of sentences. (Crystal ,2008:92) shows that the linguistic competence is a term that" is used in linguistic theory which refers to the speaker's knowledge of language and the system of rules which they have mastered so that they can be able to produce and understand an infinite number of sentences and to recognize grammatical mistakes and ambiguities" . This means that linguistic competence is related to mastering the linguistic code of a language because it covers the following: phonology, morphology, vocabulary and syntax (Brown, 2007 :219). Competence is sometimes identified as an internalized language. Internalized language as defined by Chomsky is "some element of mind of the person who knows the language, acquired by the learner, and used by the speaker -hearer "(Chomsky,1986:22), and "As the system of knowledge attained "(Ibid:26).

In his discussion about the linguistic theory (Chomsky 1965:3) postulated that: Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker –hearer , in a completely homogenous speech-community , who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations , distractions , shift of attention and interest , and errors(random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance .

2-1 Communicative Competence

Chomsky's distinction between competence and performance and his notion of grammatical competence faced many criticisms. The major challenge came from Hymes who was considered the first to introduce his own notion of "communicative competence" in (1966) in his lecture delivered on "Developing the Language of the Disadvantaged Children", it was published, then as a paper entitled "On Communicative Competence" in (1972). (Hymes, 1972:280) believed that this distinction is not enough, for him Chomsky "omits almost everything of sociocultural significance". He objects Chomsky's theory of ideal-speaker for keeping out the social aspects of communication. Hymes (1972:272) rejects the "absence of a place for sociocultural factors". He points out that the communicative competence represents the sociolinguistic competence not only grammatical competence. He (Ibid:278) states that "There are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless".

Communicative competence differs from linguistic competence, Communicative competence concentrates on the native speaker's ability to comprehend and produce sentences which are appropriate to the context in which they occur. (Taha & Reishaan, 2008:37) state that Communicative Competence focuses on what speakers really need to know to communicate effectively in socially distinctive setting. It refers to the native speaker's ability to select from the totality of grammatically correct expression available for him. It also focuses on what the speaker needs to be able to.

2-2 Literary competence

The definition of literary competence has been widely discussed by some scholars. Culler (2000: 62) defines literary competence as "the implicit knowledge that readers and writers bring to their encounters with texts". Culler (1975) refers to the knowledge of the grammar of literature, for him mastering grammar of literature is equated with the knowledge of some conventions that helps readers grasp both explicit and implicit meaning of the literary work. (Culler, 1975:132) states that if a reader reads literary work without knowledge of "convention by which fictions are read" the reader would not be able to comprehend the literary text and understand the connection of the ideas presented in the text. The reader's knowledge of language enables him to understand the meaning of the words, sentence in the text, He/she relies on the literal meaning of the words and phrases. The reader would not be able to read it as literature due to the lack of literary competence. Brumfit and Carter (1986:18) define literary competence as "an interesting combination of linguistic, socio-cultural, historical and semiotic". Also, Hapsari (2011:31) elaborates that:

"Literary competence can be achieved if the study of literary work falls in between poetics and hermeneutics because second language learners may have difficulty to understand the symbolism which they are not familiar with. Symbolism

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in a literary work is closely related to the culture in which the author is exposed. Each culture might have certain idioms, symbolism, cultural values, social structures, roles, relationships, tradition belief, genre that cannot be found in other cultures".

In this respect if somebody reads literature, he often confronts with figures of speech, symbols and deviation from the ordinary use of language. (Lazar, 1993: 12)states that “ Effective readers of a literary text possess “literary competence” in that they have an implicit understanding of, and familiarity with , certain conventions which allow them to take the words on the page of a play or other literary work and convert them into literary meaning". Each literary genre requires a particular knowledge on the part of the reader, for instance poems require knowledge on rhyme, alliteration and images, whereas in novels for example readers should concentrate on characters, plot and point of view, so each genre implies specific features which require the readers to deal with in a particular way. Readers have to be familiar with literary terms which allow them to perceive the literary work appropriately. Readers who depend on the literal meaning of the words or who have no idea about foregrounding, foreshadowing, they will not be able to comprehend the meaning intended by the writer, they will not capture the ideas included in the text. Literary Competence relies on the reader’s knowledge and awareness of the author ‘s devices, terms, techniques, symbolism meaning and metaphorical uses this involves deviation from the normal use of grammar.

(Prahadaiah,2018:9)points out that Literary competence includes "the knowledge of traditions , attitude to the world of literature , skills in criticism of literature and the ability to respond to creative both literary and non-literary works" .During the process of acquiring Linguistic Competence reader interact with the literary text and "acquire a great deal of new language"(Ibid:10)

3- Research Methodology

This section outlines the research methodology which includes the procedures adopted in this research and the practical part that is concerned with analyzing the data collected from the two questionnaires. The two questionnaires have been used in this study, the first one was conducted on the teachers while the other one was conducted on the students to examine the points of view regarding students assumed literary competence standard and literature teaching given at University of Basra, college of Arts and college of Education.

3-1 The Questionnaire

In the present study, the researcher has adopted two main instruments. The first one is the teachers' questionnaire, designed to investigate the attitude of the teachers at the University of Basra concerning students' literary competence. The other instrument is students' questionnaire used for investigating students' literary competence at the University of Basra, college of Arts and college of Education. The total number of participants was (140), (12) teachers and (128) students from both colleges.

3-2 Data Analysis

In order to investigate the students' literary competence the researcher has adopted questionnaire instrument one for students and the other for teacher to get information about students' literary competence and about literature teaching at the University of Basra , College of Arts and College of Education .This section concerning about analyzing the responses gathered from the two questionnaire and explaining the statistical means used.

3-2-1 Teachers' Questionnaire

There are some goals behind constructing teachers' questionnaire .The main goal is to investigate students' literary competence, in addition to collect information about literature teaching, the texts which are taught in the classroom, their opinion about literature courses , whether these courses are sufficient to enhance the students competence or not and their aims of teaching students literary texts. This questionnaire consists of sixteen items. This questionnaire was analyzed according to percentage, frequency, valid percentage and cumulative percentage for each item as the table shows.

Table (1) Teachers' Responses to the questionnaire: (Item 1)

	Option	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Value	Always	-	-	-	-
	Often	5	41.7	41.7	41.7
	Sometime	6	50	50	91.7
	Rarely	1	8.3	8.3	100
	Never	-			
	Total	12	100.0	100.0	

Table (1) explains teacher' response to the question of whether" literary texts on the syllabus match the students' level.

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Table (2) Teachers' Responses to the questionnaire: (Item 2)

Value	Option	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percentage
	Yes	5	41.8	41.8	41.8
	No	-	-	-	-
	Occasionally	٢	16.6	16.6	58.4
	They Should Be More	٣	25	25	83.4
	They Should Be less	٢	16.6	16.6	100.0
	Total	12	100.0	100.0	

Table (2) shows the teachers' idea about the amount of literature courses received by students at the University of Basra. Are they enough to develop the students' literary competence?

Table (3): Teachers' Responses to the questionnaire: (Item 3)

Option	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percentage
Poetry	2	16.7	16.7	16.7
Short Story	2	16.7	16.7	33.4
Novel	8	66.6	66.6	100.0
Drama	-	-	-	-
Total	12	100.0	100.0	

This question aims to know which literary genre from the teachers' point of view is more beneficial for students to improve their competence and develop their ability in the target language.

Table (4): Teachers' Responses to the questionnaire: (Item 4)

Option	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	7	58.4	58.4	58.4
Often	4	33.3	33.3	91.7
Sometime	1	8.3	8.3	100.0
Rarely	-	-	-	-
Never	-	-	-	-
Total	12	100.0	100.0	

The researcher here is intended to detect the teachers' acceptability of inserting literary courses with language teaching.

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Table (5): Teachers' Responses to the questionnaire: (Item 5)

Option	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Teaching Language Skills	1	8.3	8.3	8.3
Motivating Student`s to read Literature	-	-	-	-
Vocabulary Knowledge	-	-	-	-
Enhancing Their Talent and Culture	2	16.7	16.7	25
All of Them	9	75	75	100.0
Total	12	100.0	100.0	

The reasons behind this question is to know the teachers' goal in teaching literary texts.

Table (6): Teachers' Responses to the questionnaire: (Item 6)

Option	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Difficult	6	50	50	50
Having A lot of Difficulty	2	16.7	16.7	66.7
Having little Difficulty	4	33.3	33.3	100
Having no Difficulty	-	-	-	-
Very Easy	-	-	-	100.0
Total	12	100.0	100.0	

Students in learning English literature are reading texts written in a foreign language not in their native language. Authors use everyday language to reflect their life in the literary work, they usually deviate from the normal usage of language, in this case teachers may face difficulty in teaching literature.

Table (7): Teachers' Responses to the questionnaire: (Item 7)

Value	Option	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percentage
	Time Limitation	1	8.3	8.3	8.3
	Students	2	16.7	16.7	25
	Texts	-	-	-	-
	Emotional and Social Distance	-	-	-	-
	All of Them	9	75	75	100.0
	Total	12	100.0	100.0	

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Teaching a foreign literature is not without obstacles that prevent students from learning literature as the teacher wants. The table above shows the most prominent problems that teachers encounter in their job.

Table (8): Teachers' Responses to the questionnaire: (Item 8)

	Option	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Value	Always	11	91.7	91.7	91.7
	Often	1	8.3	8.3	100.0
	Sometime	-	-	-	-
	Rarely	-	-	-	-
	Never	-	-	-	-
	Total	12	100.0	100.0	

Giving background information about the text help students to have a general idea and foster their understanding. this question aims to know whether teachers give a background information before going through the details of the texts.

Table (9): Teachers' Responses to the questionnaire: (Item 9)

	Option	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Value	Always	2	16.6	16.6	16.6
	Often	5	41.7	41.7	58.3
	Sometime	5	41.7	41.7	100.0
	Rarely	-	-	-	-
	Never	-	-	-	-
	Total	12	100.0	100.0	

Group work expand students' knowledge, it creates more opportunities for communication, it can promote learning and interacting. The table above shows whether the teachers engage their students in group works or not.

Table (10): Teachers' Responses to the questionnaire: (Item 10)

Option	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	6	50	50	50
Often	3	25	25	75
Sometime	3	25	25	100.0
Rarely	-	-	-	-
Never	-	-	-	-
Total	12	100.0	100.0	

The table above shows the proportions of the responses to the idea that the more texts students study, better they understand them. When students are exposed to many and varied texts, they will gain more knowledge about literary works, structures, vocabulary and meaning.

Table (11) :Teachers' Responses to the questionnaire: (Item 11)

Option	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	-	-	-	-
Often	7	58.3	58.3	58.3
Sometime	5	41.7	41.7	100.0
Rarely	-	-	-	-
Never	-	-	-	-
Total	12	100.0	100.0	

Students in an advanced stage have previously dealt literary genres, poetry, stories, novel and drama which mean that during the stages they built a kind of knowledge about literature. The researcher in this regard tries to know the teachers' point of view whether students in the advanced stage can make sense when they read the literary texts or not.

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Table (12): Teachers' Responses to the questionnaire: (Item 12)

Option	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	1	8.3	8.3	8.3
Often	4	33.4	33.4	41.7
Sometime	6	50	50	91.7
Rarely	1	8.3	8.3	100.0
Never	-	-	-	-
Total	12	100.0	100.0	

Selecting the suitable literary text is the cornerstone for motivating students to read literature. Texts which are appropriate to their level and interest encourage them to read the texts. Literary texts which are higher than their level of awareness make them confuse and alienated. The question here is that to know whether the texts which are taught in the classroom motivate students to read literature or not.

Table (13): Teachers' Responses to the questionnaire: (Item 13)

Option	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Listening	-	-	-	-
Speaking	2	16.7	16.7	16.7
Reading	6	50	50	66.7
Writing	4	33.3	33.3	100.0
Total	12	100.0	100.0	

Teaching literary works is considered as an ideal way to develop the four basic language skills, so including literary texts in the English foreign language curriculum is a useful means to help students develop language skill. Every teacher attempts to focus on a specific skill in addition to the other skills. The question here is to discover which skill teachers focus on.

Table (14): Teachers' Responses to the questionnaire: (Item14)

Option	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	9	75	75	75
Often	2	16.7	16.7	91.7
Sometime	1	8.3	8.3	100.0
Rarely	-	-	-	-
Never	-	-	-	-
Total	12	100.0	100.0	

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As the researcher has concluded before in table (4) that most teachers support the inclusion of literature into language teaching. Now the researcher tries to get information about whether the same teachers think that the literary texts help to improve students' language skills or not.

Table (15) :Teachers' Responses to the questionnaire: (Item 15)

Option	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	8	66.7	66.7	66.7
Often	2	16.7	16.7	83.4
Sometime	1	8.3	8.3	91.7
Rarely	1	8.3	8.3	100.0
Never	-	-	-	-
Total	12	100.0	100.0	

Literary work is usually a reflection of the society and culture that the writer lives in. The question here is directed to know from teachers' point of view whether studying texts from other cultures promotes awareness or not.

Table (16): Teachers' Responses to the questionnaire: (Item 16)

Option	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	5	41.7	41.7	41.7
Often	4	33.3	33.3	75
Sometimes	2	16.7	16.7	91.7
Rarely	1	8.3	8.3	100.0
Never	-	-	-	-
Total	12	100.0	100.0	

One of the merits of a good text is that which can stimulate students to think, meditate and form a judgment. It is important to find out the teachers' opinions about whether the texts that students deal with in the class encourage them to think, to give a reaction and make conclusions.

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3-2-2 Students' Questionnaire

This questionnaire is constructed to Investigate students' literary competence at the University of Basra, College of Arts, College of Education. The items is going to be analyzed by using the Socialistic Program Statistics Suitcase (SPSS).

The first hypothesis which is " The learners at English department have very poor standard of an assumed literary competence"

Table (17) Literary competence' standard according to the whole study population.

Variance	Arithmetic mean of the sample	Std. Deviation	The hypothetical medium	Number of individuals in the sample	Freedom Degree	Calculated T-value	Tabular T- value	Significant Degree
Literary competence	50.726	8.637	48	128	127	3.570	1.960	Statistic Significant

The table indicated that the value of the Arithmetic mean is (50.726) of (128) participants with Standard deviation of (8.637). The Hypothetical medium is (48) with Freedom degree of ((127).

The calculated T- value is compared with the tabular T-value at significance degree of(0.05) and Freedom degree of(127) which is (3.572).We see that the calculated T-value is greater than the tabular value and this means that there are statically significant differences in the favor of the sample all in the level of literary competence as shown in the table above.

Hence, hypothesis (1) is nullified and unaccepted.

To identify the literary competence of the individuals of the sample according to its sub-samples represented by (College of Arts males and females , College of Education males and females) and by finding the arithmetic mean and standard deviations for each sample separately , the T- test shows that there are no statistically significance differences except for (College of Arts :females) where it was the calculated value was greater than the tabular values .The table below explains:

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Table (18) Literary competence' standard according to the sub-samples

	Category	Arithmetic mean	standard deviation	The hypothetical medium	Number of individuals in the sample	Freedom Degree	Calculated T-value	Tabular T-value	Significant degree
1	Education males	50.407	8.307	48	27	26	1.505	2.056	No Significance
2	Education females	49.720	70.352	48	43	26	1.534	2.021	No significance
3	Arts Males	48.869	12.170	48	23	22	0.342	2.074	No Significance
4	Arts females	53.285	7.213	48	35	34	4.334	2.021	No Significance

The second hypothesis is" No significance differences in the literary competence" can be found between the colleges of Basra University"

Table (19) Literary competence' standard according to university "

Category	Arithmetic mean	standard deviation	Number of individuals in the sample	Freedom degree	Calculated T-value	Tabular T-value	Significant Degree
College of Education	49.985	7.683	70	126	1.075	1.960	No significance
College of Arts	51.620	9.658	58				

To analyze the results, T-test was used as a statistic means. The statistic findings indicated that T- value was (1.075) with significant degree of (0.05) and with Freedom degree of (126). The calculated value compared with the tabular T-value at the significant degree of (0.05) was (1.965). We see that the calculated T- value is less than the tabular T- value and this means that there are no statistically significant differences in the " literary competence" between the colleges of Basra University.

Hence, hypothesis (2) is accepted.

The third hypothesis which is" No significant differences can be found according to gender in the literary competence".

Table (20) literary competence' standard according to gender

Variance	Arithmetic mean	standard deviation	Number of individuals in the sample	Freedom degree	Calculated T-value	Tabular T - value	Significant degree
Male	49.7	10.184	50	126	1.090	1.960	No Significance
Female	51.384	7.478	78				

In order to examine the results T- test was used for two independent samples .The statistic findings in the table above detected that T- value was(1.090) with significant degree of(0.05), Freedom degree of(126).The calculated T- value was compared with the tabular T- value at the significant degree of(0.05). The Calculated T-value is less than the tabular value. this indicates that there are no statistically significant differences according to gender variable (Colleges of Arts and Education: male) compared to (Colleges of Arts and Education: females) in literary competence.

Hence, hypothesis (3) is accepted and proved.

4- Conclusions

After having analyzed the questionnaires, the researcher in this section arrives at some concluding remarks concerning students' literary competence and about literature teaching:

1. It was concluded from the results of the statistical analysis of the study sample data for students of the College of Arts and Education, University of Basra that students have an acceptable and encouraging level of literary competence , this due to the presence of statistically significant differences in favor of the members of the sample, so the hypothesis which states that students have a very poor standard of literary competence is unacceptable in the light the calculated statistical values which were greater than the tabular values.
2. Literary competence of the individuals of the sample according to its sub-samples represented by (College of Arts males and females , College of Education males and females) shows that there are no statistically significance differences except for (College of Arts :females).It can be attributed to the passion of females to stories and imagination, usually males tend to adventure and sports, while females respond to romantic stories. It can also be explained that students at the College of Arts study literature and literary criticism more deeply than their peers at the College of Education, and this reflects the importance of literature and its various arts to improve literary competence.

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3. There are no significant differences in literary competence standard according to gender related to both colleges Arts and Education at the University of Basra which indicates that the second and third hypotheses are acceptable and proved.
4. From teachers' point of view, the novel seems to be the most beneficial literary genre to enhance students' literary competence, while students prefer short story this can be due to its simplicity and shortness.

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