



BEYOND GRAMMAR: EXPLORING THE OUTCOME OF ENGLISH LITERATURE ON COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCY IN PAKISTANI ESL LEARNERS

Shazia Saleem
shazia.saleem@uog.edu.pk

Associate Lecturer, Department of English, University of
Gujrat, Gujrat, Pakistan.

Saira Qasim
saira.qasim@uog.edu.pk

Teaching Assistant, Department of English, University of
Gujrat, Gujrat, Pakistan.

Yasir Rizwan
yasir.rizwan@uog.edu.pk

Associate Lecturer, Department of English, University of
Gujrat, Gujrat, Pakistan

Abstract

This article investigates the impact of English literature on the improvement of communicative competency among Pakistani learners of English as a Second Language (ESL). Conventionally, ESL teaching in Pakistan has been centred to a great extent on grammar and compositional aspects of the language, often ignoring the functional and interactional perspectives which seem necessary for the real-world communication.

A mixed methods approach has been utilized to analyse this betterment in learning of English as a Second Language. Statistical results have also been collected from standardized language tests to gauge the transformation in learners' linguistic capabilities and the findings came out from students' interviews gives a profound comprehension of their experiences and perceptual experience.

The results present that learners' exposure to English literature increases their language competency and intercultural awareness indicating that integration of literature not only spark a spirit for an enlightenment to a reliable language use but also a richer expressive style, pragmatic use of language, and an improved cultural aspect.

So, overall view of the picture shows that integrating literature into ESL teaching strategies can be highly effective in inspiring subtle language learning.

Keywords: *Communicative Competence, English Literature, ESL Learners, Optimistic Outcome, Pedagogy.*

Corresponding Author: Shazia Saleem (Associate Lecturer, University of Gujrat, Gujrat, Pakistan).
Email: shazia.saleem@uog.edu.pk

1. Introduction

English language being lingua franca is essential in many socioeconomic and educational ways across the world. English is widely used as a medium of instruction and as an official language in Pakistan too, especially in higher education (Rahman, 2020). Therefore, one of the main educational objectives for Pakistani students is to become communicatively competent in English. However, the road to achieving the competency through literature is frequently convoluted and multifaceted because grammar and rote learning are prioritized over real-world language application (Khan & Mahmood, 2019). In this regard to improve ESL students' communication abilities incorporation of English literature into the curriculum offers a viable way because the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in a variety of social contexts includes the concept of communicative competence, which extends beyond simple grammatical accuracy (Canale & Swain, 1980). Although grammar teaching is emphatically the fundamental of language acquisition yet an excessive focus on structural elements, it often results in a lack of practical competency (Bashir & Ali, 2021). Researchers claim that students' exposure to real-world language usage, diverse discourse patterns, and cultural contexts are all essential for fluent communication, the literature integration in ESL classes can close this gap (Iqbal & Naqvi, 2018).

English literature with its large collection of poetry, drama, and prose, provides a wide range of possibility for critical thinking and language immersion. Students who engage themselves with literary texts also profited by the interpretive and analytical abilities necessary for booming communication in addition to being open to complex lexicon and conversational expressions (Ahmed et al., 2022). Thanks to the powerful interplay between literary hold and language acquisition that students are able now to view language as a living, contextualized entity rather than an abstract set of rules (Aslam, 2023).

Nonetheless, English literature's integration into Pakistani ESL curricula is still irregular and often meager, despite its effectiveness and the reason is traditional

educational approach that is exam-centered, (Shah & Rehman, 2021). The teachers who lack the pedagogical training may require to use literature as a communicative tool to maintain a cycle of rote learning (Farooq & Sabir, 2020). Therefore, this is leading to a situation that emphasizes the necessity of investigating the organized integration of literary engagement into language education in order to boost communicative competence.

The goal of this study is to analyses the effects of integration of English literature as a teaching tool to improve Pakistani ESL students' communicative proficiency. This study mainly focuses to highlight the best drill that strikes a proportionality between literary analysis and the development of communication skills by looking at both theoretical stance and real-world applications. It will also handle the difficulties in teaching literature-based languages and offer resolution to maximize their effectiveness in Pakistani classrooms. This study also probes into the current academic conversation on language pedagogy by examining the relationship between literature and communicative competence and supporting a more wide and useful method of teaching English in Pakistan. Hence, literature-based language teaching promotes elucidative and critical thinking abilities while providing contextualized language use (Carter & Long, 1991).

1.1. Research Gap

Even though communicative competence is acknowledged to be important, little is known about how English literature can help Pakistani ESL learners develop this skill set. There is a knowledge gap regarding how literature can support language use in everyday situations because previous research has mostly concentrated on grammar-based instruction. By examining the effects of literature-enriched curricula on ESL learners' communicative skills, this study aims to close that gap.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the four primary components of communicative competence proposed by Canale and Swain (1980): grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence which are enough for a thorough emphasizing on the integration of language skills necessary for effective communication.

Furthermore, this study highlights the significance of contextual and cultural recognition in language learning process by putting Kramsch's (1993) theory of language and culture. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which stresses the value of social interaction in language learning, has also been incorporated in the theoretical framework

proving that literature is a tool that promotes pragmatic knowing, cultural acquaintance, and language skills.

This study also supports the experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), according to which knowledge is produced through the transformation of experience, by using a literature-enriched instructional approach. Therefore, reading literary works encourages reflective thinking, contextual application, and active language use all of which are accordant of experiential principles.

3. Literature Review

For an improvement in learner's language skills and awareness to the cultural norms, literature has long been used as an instrument. The fact is that literature not only develops learners' ability to construe with meaning but also enlightens the context with a variety of linguistic forms and authentic language, according to Lazar (1993). In a similar way vein, Duff and Maley (1990) stress that literary texts promote learners' critical thinking, interpretive skillfulness, and individual language use.

Incorporation of literary texts into ESL lessons can greatly improve students' communication abilities. For this purpose Lazar (1993) states that literature helps learners to become more proficient in a language by getting intimacy to a variety of idiomatic expressions, linguistic structures, and cultural environment. Besides this literature also encourages quibbling thinking and language accuracy by pushing learners to interpret and dissect texts, Duff and Maley (1990). In Pakistan teachers of English language realize very well that literature-loaded ESL pedagogy can create linguistic skillfulness beyond conventional grammar-centered methods and its getting popularity (Shamim, 2008).

Grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic skills are all part of communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). English literature provides real-world exposure to these skills through its intricate storylines and diverse dialogues.

One of the studies by Rahman (2002), In Pakistan learners who read English plays and novels show a marked addition in their discourse competency, especially in the areas of pragmatic understanding and tale telling skills. Khan (2015) also emphasized poetry fosters a magical interpretive power in learners with critical interactive communication.

A comparative study by Ali et al. (2024) shows that the CLT group loaded with literary texts demonstrated a 15–18% change of state in their communicating skills when compared to the TLT group. An effective development is hampered due to the absence of an organized combination of communicative components in Pakistani secondary-level English textbooks, according to Younis and Shah (2023). After two months of previous

research Ahmed et al. (2023) presented the view that pragmatic competency has been increased by a definitive teaching founded on literature, with permanent effects. Similarly Khalid et al. (2025) assert that learners' communicative competence is greatly reinforced by pragmatical elements present in literary texts. According to Ali et al. (2021), teaching poetry to ESL learners has an affirmative effect on their eloquence and pragmatic cognition.

Despite the fact that inclusion of literature enriched text will enhance the possibilities of language learning in a better way, Pakistani educationists and curriculum designers seem reluctant to add literary texts in ESL curricula at university level. It is thought that culturally unsuitable text selection alienates learners rather than engages them (Mustafa, 2014). Moreover, the literature's demand for critical and analytical engrossment of learners is often undermined by the traditional rote-learning method used in many Pakistani institutions (Haque, 2011). The effective development of communicative competence is slowed down by this disparity.

Therefore, in Pakistan pedagogical initiatives are necessary to qualify the power of literature on communicative competence. In order to promote discussion and debate, Ali and Mahmood (2020) recommend implementing interactive and task-based literary activities. Moreover, Sultana (2017) foregrounds that in order to sustain learner' involvement and discourse comprehension the texts must be culturally related. So, particularly in Pakistani ESL contexts, the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method has evidently displayed bright results in rising eloquence and comprehensibility through the integration of literary discussions and creative writing (Ahmed, 2019). When such discussions are mindfully incorporated into ESL courses, English literature has a great deal of potential to help Pakistani learners to become more expert communicators. However, breaking down issues with text relevancy and instructional strategies, there is an indispensable need for such integration of literature based curriculum for a significant success. Hence, for an improvement in ESL instruction in Pakistan, future research should concentrate on experiential studies evaluating the effects of particular literary genres on communicative quality.

4. Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-method approach in order to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative component includes Pre and Post tests for measuring four aspects of communicative competence (grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic). While for the qualitative component semi-structured interviews with

participants were conducted in order to learn more about their conceptualization and learning experiences

4.1.Participants

One hundred undergraduate ESL students from four Pakistani universities (two public and two private) participated in this study. The experimental group, which received instruction enriched with literature, and the control group, which adhered to a conventional grammar-based curriculum, were allotted at random to the participants.

4.2.Data Collection and Analysis

To determine evident differences between pre- and post-test scores, paired t-tests were used to examine quantitative data. To discover trends showing learners' position towards literature integrated language learning, interview data was transcribed, coded, and opened to thematic analysis.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1.Quantitative Findings

To assess the impact of literature-enriched instruction on communicative competence the collected quantitative data from pre-and post-tests was analyzed and the results exhibit a great difference between the experimental (literature-loaded) group and the control (based on traditional instruction) group. So, for measuring the learning outcomes, both the **experimental group** (open to literature-based instruction) and the **control group** (open to traditional grammar-focused learning) completed pre- and post-tests and the mean scores as well as the rate of improvement were studied.

Group	Pre-Test Mean Score	Post-Test Mean Score	Improvement (%)
Literature Group	60.4	78.2	29.4
Control Group	61.1	65.5	7.2

The group exposed to literature-loaded instructions showed a remarkable improvement of 29.4%, in comparison to only a 7.2% improvement in the control group. This considerable difference in result highlights the strength of integrating literature into ESL curricula. The literature group exhibited an enhanced fluency, pragmatic awareness, and discourse management matching with the theoretical framework that emphasizes on experiential and contextual learning.

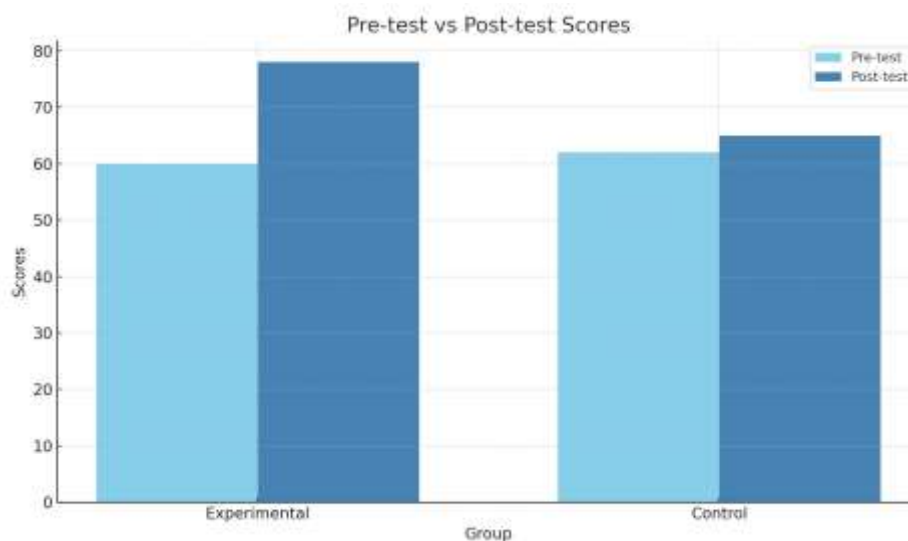


Fig1. Pre- and Post-test Score Comparison (Bar Chart Analysis)

The **bar chart** shows a severe contrast in learning outcomes between the two groups:

5.1.1. **Experimental Group:**

- Pre-test Mean: **60**
- Post-test Mean: **78**
- **Improvement:** 18 points

5.1.2. **Control Group:**

- Pre-test Mean: **62**
- Post-test Mean: **65**
- **Improvement:** 3 points

This data proposes a considerable **improvement** in the communicative performance of students who were taught English through literature-loaded syllabus, highlighting that literary texts contributed to enhance both the language and comprehension skills

5.2. Statistical Analysis

To measure the statistical significance of the differences discovered, paired t-tests were held and the results showed that the post-test scores of the literature-loaded group were considerably greater ($p < 0.01$) than those of the control group which is a point that leads toward the opinion that the observed improvements were not due to a random variation but rather a direct result of the literature-based pedagogical approach.

Pie Chart - Communicative Competence Improvement

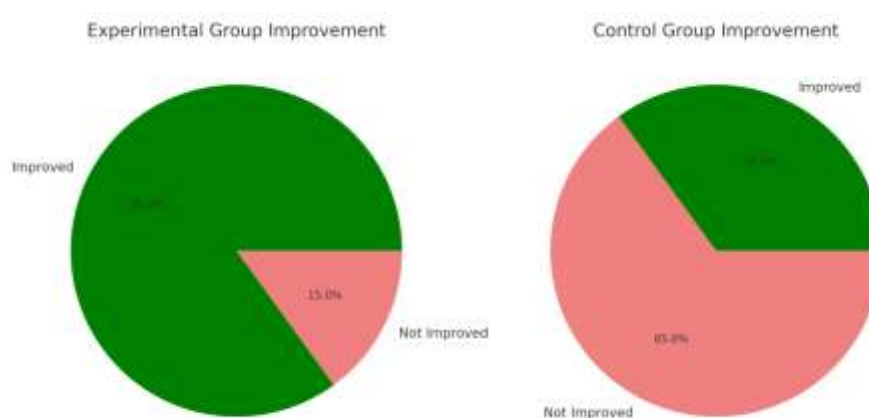


Fig2. Literature Group: 85% & Control Group: 15%

The pie chart visibly represents the proportion of students who exhibited a considerable improvement in communicative competence. The majority (85%) belong to the literature group, while only 15% belong to the control group, which is a reflection of the superior effectiveness of literature-based methods.

5.3. Qualitative Findings

Interviews with participants from the experimental group demonstrated that exposure to literature based syllabus enhanced their ability to think critically and respond impromptu in conversations. Many students expressed that reading literary texts encouraged them to move beyond rote memorization and develop a more natural language stream. One of the participants expressed, "Through stories and dialogues, I learned to think in English rather than translating from Urdu."

In contrast to them the students in the control group reported feeling less confident in practical communicative situations the reason is that their lessons' primarily focus is on grammatical accuracy without contextual application. This inequality underscores the value of incorporation of literary contexts in language learning. To complement the test scores, **interviews** were held with a selection of participants. These were analyzed using **thematic analysis**, using **NVivo-style coding**.

5.3.1. Coding Process Summary:

- **Transcription:** Interview responses were transcribed verbatim.

Initial Coding: Key phrases were extracted (e.g., "*feel connected to the language*", "*understand grammar better*").

Theme Generation: Related codes were grouped under broader themes.

Key Themes Identified:

Participant Quote	Initial Code	Theme	Tag
I feel more connected to the language when I read stories.	Connected to language	Engagement	#LearnerEngagement
It helps me understand grammar better without even realizing it.	Implicit grammar learning	Natural Language Acquisition	#ImplicitGrammarAcquisition
Literature made learning enjoyable and meaningful.	Enjoyment in learning	Emotional Engagement	#PositiveAffect
I was able to relate to characters and contexts in the stories.	Relating to content	Contextual Learning	#ContextConnection
The grammar-focused class was boring and difficult to follow.	Disinterest in traditional method	Disengagement	#Traditional Method Dislike

5.4.Data Interpretation from Results

It is clearly indicated from the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data that **literature-based ESL pedagogy** leads to **greater communicative advantage** as compared to traditional grammar teaching. The experimental group not only played better on standard testing but also expressed **higher motivating aptitude**, a **deeper understanding**, and a **greater enjoyment** in learning English. The incorporation of literature in ESL education not only improves linguistic accuracy but also supports holistic communicative competence. Literary text based syllabus providing contextual, culturally rich, and pragmatically relevant content enables learners to evolve skills that are necessary for real-world communication.

6.Discussion

The results show that incorporating literature into ESL curricula can remove the space between theoretical knowledge and real-world language use. Professional should design activities in their premises that integrate reading, discussion, and execution of literary texts to improve communicative competence. For example, role-playing scenes from drama or accommodating passages from novels for classroom performance qualifies students to experiment with tone, register, and body language or deductive discussions of prose can effect both linguistic and critical thinking. Such activities not only bring out learners to various linguistic composition and wordbook in context but also excite their interpretative and deductive ability, the skills that are essential for real-life communication (Duff & Maley, 2007). Moreover, controlled discussions around prose and poetry can intensify learners' ability to pronounce conceptional ideas and employ critical discourse, raising both verbal competency and higher-order thinking skills (Hall, 2005). This dual impact i.e. On language and cognition makes literature an unambiguously holistic pedagogical tool in ESL settings. So, these literature oriented strategies are not only better verbal aspect but also promote cultural recognition and sensitivity, which are fundamental to communicative competence in diverse ESL contexts (Rahman, 2004).

7. Conclusion

A transforming prospect has been set up through this study in bringing up communicative competency among Pakistani ESL learners through incorporating literature-enriched education. The analysis of quantitative results and qualitative knowledge uncovers that learners who are open to literary texts display not only super presentation on standardized evaluation procedure but also exhibit high levels of thrill,

action, and thoughtfulness as compared to their equivalent counter-partners in traditional grammar-centered classrooms. This analysis also recommends that English literature, with its prosperous cultural content matter, refined language, and genuine pragmatic situations functions as a strong reason for setting the complex interaction of linguistic truth, pragmatic skillfulness, and cultural attainment that attributes impressive communicating act. Furthermore, literature asks learners for a full time job with various perspectives e.g., Developing empathy and moving the nuances of language on the far side of simple placement correctness, thus loading them for real-world communication challenges. The study marks that literature in ESL education is not merely a decorative component but an educational need that fits well with the subtle score of language learning. After a comprehensive discussion on all these findings, it is suggested that Pakistani ESL curricula must incorporate an organized, genre-diverse literature part to breed not only language skillfulness but also a quibbling and intercultural competence. So, smoothing the path for upcoming research that could encourage a study based on the mechanisms of specific literary genres or culturally relevant texts would enhance the communicative outcomes. while in the meantime policymakers and educationalists are urged to re-visualize syllabus for ESL classrooms that can help in fading away the rote grammar instruction and instead hold literature as an accelerator for trans-formative language acquisition.

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