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The Impact of Teaching Linguistic Knowledge on EFL Learners' Language Skills

A Case study of EFL Students at Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences El Kamleen , University of Gezira, Sudan,(2022)

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Abstract

This study aims: to enhance EFL learners' language skills and promote their comprehension skills through linguistic knowledge and exposing them to language varieties. The study adopted the descriptive analytical method. The data were collected by means of a questionnaire which was given to (50) English language students at the Faculty of arts and human sciences-at ElKamleen, Gezira University, Sudan. The data were analyzed with the (SPSS) Statistical Packages of Social Science program. The analyses lead to the following results: EFL learners improve language skills through linguistic knowledge, comprehension skills require students to gain linguistic knowledge, and knowledge of linguistics exposes EFL learners to language varieties. The study recommended that: learners should improve language skills through linguistic knowledge and learners should be exposed to the language varieties.

Key Words: learners' language skills, linguistic knowledge, language varieties.

المستخلص

تهدف الدراسة إلى تحسين المهارات اللغوية لدارسي آداب اللغة الإنجليزية، تحسين فهم الطلاب للغة من خلال استخدام التطبيقات اللغوية في الصف الدراسي، تمكين الطلاب من الاضطلاع على مختلف استخدامات اللغة الإنجليزية. أتبعَت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي وتم استخدام نظام الاستبانة كوسيلة

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لجمع بيانات الدراسة من خمسين (٥٠) طالباً للغة الإنجليزية بكلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية بجامعة الجزيرة - السودان. تم تحليل البيانات ببرنامج SPSS (برنامج الحزم الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية). وتوصلت الدراسة لنتائج أهمها: يستطيع طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية تحسين لمهاراتهم اللغوية خلال دراسته علم اللغة، الإلمام بعلم اللغة يمكن الطلاب من تطوير مهارات الفهم والاستيعاب في اللغة الإنجليزية الإلمام بعلم اللغة يمكن الطلاب من معرفة مختلف استخدامات اللغة الإنجليزية. توصي الدراسة بتمكين الطلاب من تطوير المهارات اللغوية خلال دراسة علم اللغة الإنجليزية، تمكين الطلاب من تطوير مهارات الاستيعاب ومعرفي مختلف الاستخدامات اللغوية.

1.0 Introduction

Language is a means of expression and a mode of communication. Among all the other languages in the world, the English language is one of the most popular languages in the world cited in (Meng, 2009). Language is an important organism in every human being and it separates human from other creature because human has the ability of learning and creates many sentences and words. Language is a system of conventional spoken or written symbols used by people in a shared culture to communicate with each other.

A language reflects both a culture's way of thinking and changes in culture influence the development of its language. Derwing (1973) argues that language is embedded in acts of communication and cannot be properly described and understood outside of communicative contexts. This means that relevant "Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols. "Language, like culture, that other most human attribute, is notable for its unity in diversity: there are many languages and many cultures, all different but all fundamentally the

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same, because there is one human nature and because a fundamental property of this human nature is the way in which it allows such diversity in both language and culture” (Aron, 2011).

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study aims at:

1. Enhancing EFL learners’ language skills through linguistic knowledge.
2. promoting learners' comprehension skills through linguistic knowledge
3. exposing them to language varieties through linguistic knowledge.

1.3 Questions of the Study

The study will answer the following questions:

1. To what extent does linguistic knowledge. enhance EFL learners’ language skills through?
2. How does linguistic knowledge improves learners’ comprehension skills?
- 3 To what extent can linguistic knowledge help in exposing learners to language varieties?

1.4 Hypotheses of the Study

1. Gaining linguistic knowledge enhances EFL learners’ language skills.
2. Linguistic knowledge promotes learners' comprehension skills.
- 3 Linguistic knowledge exposes learners to language varieties.

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1.5 Significance of the Study

This study stresses the importance of improving EFL learners' language skills. It also advises the teachers to employ methods and materials that enhance learners' comprehension skills.

2. Literature Review

The need of learning this language is increasing rapidly day by day so a great number of teachers in education are specializing in the English Language every day to meet the needs of such a huge population. However, teachers really need a deep understanding of Linguistics so that they can come up with more refined teaching material for the language students. A language is a system of meaning". Ergin (1990) argues that "Language is a natural means to enable communication among people, a living entity that has its own peculiar laws, by means of which alone can it develop, a system of contracts whose foundation was laid in times unknown, and a social institution interwoven with sounds".

Linguistics is a subject of study that is built on languages. Therefore it can be said that language is the fundamental unit of the branch of linguistics. In fact, without languages, the subject of linguistics cannot be there. Aron (2011) argues that linguistics studies the nature of languages, the various phonetic changes that take place in the languages, the changes in the meanings of particular words in the course of time, and the like

Linguistics is to be instilled completely in English Teachers because when they are on duty, they work like correspondents, education specialists, and assessors. They

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also work as educated human beings and are also the forerunners of developing a sense of negotiators of socialization to their students. The teachers work like correspondents. As such teachers need to develop good conversational skills to be able to communicate with students from varied backgrounds. Teachers know the way to structure knowledge and deliver it to the students, Filmore, and Snow, (2000:8) state

“The language output should be designed carefully and vividly so that students understand and communicate productively in class and outside as well. Reversely, understanding the students is essential”.

Listening to the students carefully and responding to them is an important issue. It is because understanding and assessing what they know, understand, their ability to reflect and if the teaching techniques are effective on the student is a crucial part of student assessment which teachers must go through.

Linguistics is really important for teachers to instill because lately, the mode of education is innovating rapidly. The classrooms are getting diverse and there are students with diverse ethnic backgrounds and most importantly different languages, Smitherman (1977). This shows that teachers, to a great extent, will have to face students whose first language is not English mostly. In this type world of rapid innovation and diversity, a deeper knowledge of linguistics will assist teachers to notice that the speech forms they value are characteristics of their own culture and background. They are neither general nor characteristically more effective than other possible speech forms. If the teachers do not get the cultural difference, they will assume that there is something fishy with students' ways of

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utilizing language and the teachers may not expect to use the language this way completely thus, creating complicated issues again. If the teachers cannot identify the effectiveness of other ways of speaking, this can shake their student's self-esteem in their own ability to communicate.

However, it is important for the teacher to have Linguistic knowledge so that neither the child nor the teacher will be humiliated during communication in class. This is why, Linguistics can prepare English Language teachers to work with students with varied cultural, social, and linguistic backgrounds. Their understanding of the use of language would be probably different from the Native-Australian English speaker which is really a key factor in teaching.

Teachers obviously work as educational specialists, Watts, (2003). They select educational materials for specific classes, grades, and or levels for the children in that specific class. This involves a careful and thorough basis of student evaluation results and the capability to differentiate between flawed knowledge of English and cognitive learning obstacles. Language and linguistics play an essential role in the teaching process. It plays a serious developmental role throughout the school years without the student's cultural, social, or linguistic differences, Alexnoamen. (2009:12) asserts that:

“Teachers are frolicking a serious part in supporting language development which is even beyond teaching them how to read and write. English Language teachers utilize the important aspects of Language associated with the academic syllabus of the different subject courses”.



However, the teachers must fully instill the functions and systems of language operations for this will help them be able to choose materials that are helpful for improving the students' linguistic awareness. This will help the teachers to come up with effective and innovative planning of educational materials of instructions which will give the students chance to apply new forms and modes of presentation to which they are being shown (Lucas,2008). This is why a basic knowledge of educational linguistics is also a requirement to endorse language progress with all of the students in classrooms currently as the teachers need to help the students become more conscious about the linguistic functions in various types of communication through the syllabus. English Language teachers also work on a lot of assessment assignments. Teachers assess students in order to inform the students to inform them about their academic and communicative progress. Well, the feedback to students about their (students) own progress is really important as it affects their sense of "self" as learners to the more crucial decisions about reading group placement, promotion, or referral for evaluation. Teachers need to invest a lot of focus on segregating the children according to their capabilities at an as early age as possible.

Usually, in several schools, the students-to-be are tested with Readiness Test, and according to the results of these tests, the students are segregated according to the performance they have shown in the test. In order to make a just decision about the student's abilities, it is very important for these educationalists to know the different sources of variation in a community that speaks a vernacular variety of English, standard development for L2 learners of English, normal divergences from the matured standard that are allied with early development stages, or

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developmental malfunction. Wise English Language teachers must be using up a lot of time understanding and instilling educational linguistics in them so that misunderstanding a student could be prepared.

Teachers of the English language as the forerunners in developing a sense of negotiators of socialization to their students as well. According to Victor, (2014), teachers play a unique role in the field of socialization in the life of students. Socialization basically commences at home which continues at school and then later throughout the whole life. The students learn the daily routine, the moral beliefs, and the means & manners of communication of their cultural communities through the assistance of teachers. From a linguistic and communicative point of view, students without knowledge of English who enter school are asked to learn the Second language as it is the medium of instruction of that institution.

The students tend to grab the language very fast at a young age and so minimal help is required due to this, the children are able to blend in with the other students socially and academically through communicating while they learn the new language. In this situation, the parents and teachers have to work hard so that the language, the children, are being learned properly. If the parents don't know the English language, then, it is necessary for them to learn as well so that their children can be guided at home as well as in school. The language should be spoken at home as well as in school in order to improve rapidly

Linguistics is the study of languages, and as such, is of great importance to language teachers. Linguistics helps teachers convey the origins of words and languages, their historical applications, and their modern-day relevance.

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Combined, this approach to teaching language helps students gain a better, more in-depth understanding of their work product expectations. According to Mobasshera (2014), language and linguistics play an essential role in the teaching process. It plays a serious developmental role throughout the school years without the student's cultural, social, or linguistic differences. Teachers are frolicking a serious part in supporting language development which is even beyond teaching them how to read and write. English Language teachers utilize the important aspects of language associated with the academic syllabus of the different subject courses. When teaching a foreign language, linguistics is important to a language teacher in that providing historical context to word origins can help students better comprehend the language. This is especially important when it comes to comprehending the differences among conversational speech, formal speech, and abstract rules about word usage in different cultures. This can actually overlap with regional dialects within the same country. Linguistics is equally important to language teachers who provide instruction in the English language. Linguistics helps students understand regional dialects and colloquialisms. It also helps students identify the origins of sayings and phrases that have evolved over time, but sayings that may not have the same relevance or meaning in contemporary society. Linguistics can also help guard against self-embarrassment, using words that are common but have a historical context that may make them inappropriate or insulting in polite society. When a language teacher provides instruction on writing and composition, understanding linguistics is important in helping students compose material that has its intended effect. For example, linguistics plays a role in making an argumentative essay compelling, if the writer can harness their knowledge of word use to better solidify and present a position.

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Likewise, an understanding of linguistics can help a creative writing student develop prose that speaks to the reader's senses and transports them to a different state of reality. In a society in which people communicate more than ever before via electronic means, composition, meaning and even true exchange of ideas through the written word can be lacking. Teaching and studying linguistics provide the tools necessary to preserve and advance the art of reading, writing, and communication. This is essential in the educational arena, the workplace, and in society.

3. Material and Method

The participants of this study were EFL students of English language arts at the Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences El Kamleen, University of Gezira, Sudan,(2022). A questionnaire was distributed to fifty (50) of them who were randomly chosen for collecting the required data for the study. Then the collected data were statistically analyzed with the SPSS program. The tables below show the results:

4. Data Analysis and Discussions

Statement (1) Linguistics knowledge allows EFL learners to interpret language systems.

Table (4.1) allows EFL learners to interpret language systems.

ST1

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	4	8.0	8.0	8.0
Neutral	4	8.0	8.0	16.0
Agree	42	84.0	84.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table (1) shows that linguistics knowledge allows EFL learners to interpret language systems. The statistical analysis shows that most respondents (84%) agree, (8%) are neutral and (8%) of the sample disagree. Thus, this statement is justified.

Statement (2) Linguistic competence enables EFL learners to successfully implement the language in the communication process.

Table (2) EFL learners implement the language in communication.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	4	8.0	8.0	8.0
Neutral	6	12.0	12.0	20.0
Agree	40	80.0	80.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

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Table (2) shows that. (80%) of the sample agreed with the statement, (12%) were neutral and (8%) of the sample disagree. According to the statistical analysis of the statement, it is accepted.

Statement (3) EFL learners cannot develop comprehension skills without linguistic knowledge.

Table (3) developing EFL learners' comprehension skills

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	43	86.0	86.0	86.0
Neutral	5	10.0	10.0	96.0
Agree	2	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

According to the statistical analysis of table (3) most respondents (86%) disagree (10%) are neutral and (4%) agree that EFL learners can develop comprehension skills without linguistic knowledge, so this statement is not proved.

Statement (4) Knowledge of linguistics is necessary for English language learning

Table (4) developing EFL learners' linguistic knowledge.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	42	84.0	84.0	84.0
Neutral	5	10.0	10.0	94.0
Agree	3	6.0	6.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table (4) shows that knowledge of linguistics is necessary for English language learning, so (86%) agree with the statement, (8) of the sample are neutral, and (6%) disagree with it. So, the statement is justified.

Statement(5) With linguistics knowledge, learners know language varieties.

Table (5) exposing learners to language varieties

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	5	10.0	10.0	10.0
Neutral	3	6.0	6.0	16.0
Agree	42	84.0	84.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table (5) shows that most respondents (84%) agree that, without linguistics knowledge, English language learners will not be able to expose to language varieties, (6%) are neutral, and (10%) disagree with the statement. This statement is accepted

Statement (6) Knowledge of linguistics enables learners to understand what other people say

Table (6) EFL learners' understanding of what other people say

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	4	8.0	8.0	8.0
Neutral	7	14.0	14.0	22.0
Agree	39	78.0	78.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	



Table (6) shows that most respondents (78%) agree (14%) are neutral and (8%) disagree that, knowledge of linguistics enables learners to understand what other people say. Thus this statement is proved

Statement (7) Lack of linguistic awareness causes misunderstanding of what the teachers say

Table (7) EFL learners' misunderstanding of what teachers say

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	6	12.0	12.0	12.0
Neutral	5	10.0	10.0	22.0
Agree	39	78.0	78.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table (7) shows that most of the respondents (78%) agree (10%) and (12%) disagree that, lack of linguistic awareness causes misunderstanding of what the teachers say. Therefore this statement is proven.

Statement(8) EFL Teachers do not need to develop an understanding of Linguistics

Table (8) EFL Teachers' understanding of Linguistics

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	47	94.0	94.0	94.0
Neutral	3	6.0	6.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

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Table (8) shows that most respondents (94%) disagree and (6%) of the sample are neutral that, EFL teachers do not need to develop an understanding of Linguistics. This statement is not accepted.

Statement (9) EFL teachers need to develop conversational skills in order to be able to communicate with students from varied backgrounds.

Table (9) EFL teacher's needs for conversational skills

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	3	6.0	6.0	6.0
Neutral	3	6.0	6.0	12.0
Agree	44	88.0	88.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table (9) shows that most respondents (88%) agree, (6%) are neutral, and (6%) disagree that, EFL teachers need to develop conversational skills in order to be able to communicate with students from varied backgrounds. Thus this statement is justified.

Statement(10) Linguistics learning promotes reading and language skills.

Table (10) teaching and studying linguistics promote language skills

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	6	12.0	12.0	12.0
Neutral	4	8.0	8.0	20.0
Agree	40	80.0	80.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

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According to the statistical analysis of table (10), most respondents (80%) agree, (8%) are neutral, and (12%) disagree that teaching and studying linguistics provides the tools necessary to preserve and promote the art of reading, writing, and communication. Thus this statement is justified.

5. Findings and Recommendations

5.1 Findings:

The study reached the following findings:

1. Linguistics learning promotes reading and language skills.
2. Linguistics knowledge improves learners' comprehension of language systems.
3. Linguistic competence enables learners to be good communicators.
4. Through linguistics knowledge, EFL learners know language varieties.
5. Lack of linguistic awareness limits EFL learners' communication skills.
6. Practicing conversational develops learners' cross-cultural communication skills.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommended the following recommendations:

1. EFL learners should improve language skills through linguistic knowledge
2. Learners should be exposed to the language varieties through linguistic knowledge.
3. Conversations should be practiced by EFL learners for developing their cross-cultural communication skills.

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