

ENHANCING ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS THROUGH LITERATURE: A STUDY OF UNIVERSITY ESL LEARNERS IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

The current study investigates the effectiveness of literature-based instruction on the ESL students of English language at university in Pakistan. The study was based on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Sociocultural Theory, which placed significant importance on meaningful interaction and peer support as the key drivers of the skill development process. The mixed-method approach was used, and pre- and post-tests, classroom observations, and focus group interviews were used to measure vocabulary, reading comprehension, speaking skills, motivation, and critical thinking. Fifty undergraduate students participated in literature circle and facilitated discussions during a period of eight weeks. The analysis of quantitative data was conducted through paired-sample t-tests and calculation of the effect size, and the analysis of qualitative data was conducted through thematic analysis. Everyone had achieved a lot in vocabulary, reading comprehension, and speaking proficiency. Gain in motivation, confidence and critical thinking were also recorded. Triangulation of findings by different sources was used to support convergent validity. The findings indicate the possibility of successfully placing literature into ESL classrooms that will improve not only language abilities but also cognitive growth. Pedagogical practise and curriculum design are recommended.

Keywords: literature-based learning, ESL students, vocabulary, reading comprehension, speaking skills, motivation, critical thinking.

1.1 Background of the Study

The fact that English proficiency is considered a mandatory factor of academic success and international involvement is especially clear in terms of higher education where students have to interact with sophisticated texts, write academically minded, and convey their thoughts in an effective manner. However, in most English as Foreign Language (EFL) settings, vocabulary development, reading comprehension and spoken communication have remained among the critical areas that the university learners have not mastered. Such challenges are commonly associated with the fact that they are not exposed to real language and the teaching methods are centred on teaching grammar and discrete tasks instead of the actual use of language (Shurovi et al., 2025). This means that often, learners gain formal knowledge about the English language but they fail to master the language to be used with sufficient confidence in both academic and communicative contexts.

Over the past few years, literature-based instruction has been regarded as a viable alternative to form-based methods. Literary texts will offer real and language-contextual information input, which will subject learners to diverse vocabulary, figurative language, and complicated syntax that is hardly found in traditional textbooks. In addition to language contribution,

literature promotes interpretation, contemplation and interaction with cultural meanings reflected in literature. Calafato and Hunstadbråten (2024) suppose that the work with the literary texts helps learners to develop their skills of interpretation, language awareness, and cultural knowledge, thus, promoting more comprehensive and holistic language growth. These characteristics make literature a potentially effective tool in the development of both linguistic competence and higher order thinking.

This pedagogical possibility has also been enhanced through collaborative methods of reading literature. Frequently, literature circles are the use of small discussion groups to which learners are grouped and where they collectively read, interpret, and analyse texts. Through these discussions, there is the possibility of meaning negotiation, scaffolding among peers, and lengthy oral interaction. According to a recent meta-analysis, literature circles showed a high positive impact on the second-language reading comprehension, which means that the collaborative level of work with literature stimulates a better comprehension of the text and its critical interpretation (Ma, 2025). In addition, vocabulary study findings indicate that meaningful reading is contextualised and, therefore, helps to identify and memorise words more efficiently than simple word recognition and repetition (Ahmad Radzuan and Mohd Arif, 2025). The use of motivation and learning strategies to maintain the engagement with difficult texts is also identified in systematic reviews (Shurovi et al., 2025). All these findings make it possible to offer a conclusion that literature-based activities can contribute to the development of vocabulary, comprehension, and motivation of the learners simultaneously.

In spite of this increasing bulk of international literature, the incorporation of literature in EFL teaching is still very minimal in most of the Pakistani university classrooms. The courses that are taught in English are frequently based on the usage of prescribed textbooks, translation exercises, and grammar-oriented tasks, but with little regards to genuine texts or discussion-oriented studies. There is limited empirical evidence of the effect of literature based approaches on language development among Pakistani learners especially at tertiary level. The local research is mainly concerned with the general problems or impressions, but not about the quantitative measures of the observable improvements of language skills. Consequently, the teachers and curriculum developers do not have context-related evidence, which could be used to assess the pedagogical merit of literature in higher education.

To fill this gap, this study will examine the effectiveness of literature-based instruction to university EFL students in Pakistan. The study will employ a mixed-methods design by comparing the pre- and post-tests in the acquisition of vocabulary, reading comprehension, and speaking performance as well as investigating the perceptions, motivation, and engagement of the learners during the classroom learning through observations and focus group interviews. The study will bring together both quantitative and qualitative evidence in order to make a strong and context-dependent explanation of the potential of literary texts in language development.

By so doing, the study will also seek to not only add empirical information in a lowly represented EFL setting but also to shed light on whether literature-based instruction is a feasible and viable approach toward improving not only the linguistic competencies but also learner interest in Pakistani institutions of higher learning.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The ESL learners at the university in Pakistan tend to have poor English proficiency in terms of vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension, and oral communication. In the traditional

methods of teaching, the focus is on grammar and drills that are isolated in nature and fail to provide the learners with adequate preparation to use language meaningfully both at the academic and real world situations. Even though recent international research shows that literature based teaching may make ESL learners have better reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, critical thinking and motivation, few empirical studies have been done on the effectiveness of such interventions in Pakistani higher education. The extent to which the use of literary reading impacts on language development, classroom activities and attitude of Pakistani university students towards learning English is not yet clear. The proposed study aims to fill this gap and analyse how literature based activities can influence the development of important language skills and perceptions of learners in a Pakistani ESL setting..

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions guide the study:

1. To what extent does literature-based instruction improve university ESL learners' vocabulary acquisition?
2. How does engagement with literary texts influence students' reading comprehension and speaking skills?
3. What are learners' perceptions of literature-based ELT in terms of motivation, engagement, and critical thinking?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Literature in English Language Teaching

The application of literature in English language teaching is not new especially in the opinion of giving learners an authentic and meaningful input of the language. As opposed to the textbook approach where simplified sentences and single grammar constructions are common, literary texts subject learners to natural speech, diverse registers, idiomatic expressions, and diverse syntax. It is perceived that such exposure facilitates the development of vocabulary and leads to the understanding of how language works in the context among the learners (Shamshul, Ismail, and Nordin, 2024). With the practise of working with original texts, learners have a higher chance of observing lexical patterns and building greater retention as opposed to the decontextualised memorisation of a practise.

Along with linguistic feed, there are also interpretive and cognitive gains that are linked with literature. Character analysis, theme exploration and textual interpretation are activities where learners get a more in-depth process of language and relate form to meaning. According to Calafato and Hunstadbratens (2024), learners that actively read literary texts show better understanding and increased metalinguistic awareness, not to mention their increased awareness of cultural contexts hidden in language. Such results indicate that literature can have a role in the development of not only linguistic competence but also critical and intercultural knowledge.

This argument is enhanced by the affective dimensions. It has been shown that enjoyment, emotional involvement, and individual attachment to texts are correlated with the desire to be more motivated and persistent in learning foreign languages (Durmuş and Akman Yeşilel, 2025). Much of this evidence is however, reliant upon perception studies, or on short-term interventions and little objective language gain measurement occurs. Consequently, whereas literature is often being touted as something that is advantageous, empirical studies that show that it has a quantifiable effect on various language proficiencies are not consistently

balanced. This limitation in the methodology underscores the necessity of doing researches that integrate the attitudinal information with the observed proficiency outcomes.

2.2 Literature Circles and reading Comprehension.

Literature circles have been singled out as some of the diverse methods of literature-based instruction. Such organised small-group discussions promote reading together, interacting with peers, and interpreting texts. Pedagogically speaking, this form of interaction is supposed to encourage a negotiating of meaning and a greater understanding than teacher-fronted instruction.

This opinion is supported mainly by the findings of the empirical research. A meta-analysis conducted by Ma (2025) showed significant positive impacts of literature circles on second-language reading comprehension, which showed that the collaborative discussion of texts improves inferential and critical comprehension. Likewise, in-classroom research indicates that students who attend literature circles are more engaged and more self-directed compared to students who go through conventional understanding activities.

Although these are good trends, the available studies also have a number of constraints. Most of the studies are based on small samples, brief interventions or one-skill tests that are limited to reading. Very little studies focus on the extension of the positive effect to other language areas like talking or using vocabulary. In turn, the literature circles seem to be a promising area; however, their overall linguistic influence has not been well-reported, especially at the tertiary level EFL.

2.3 Reading and Oral Communication.

There has been a relative lack of research on the connexion between the development of speaking and the interaction with literature. Hypothetically, speaking about literary texts must prompt oral work since the learners have to provide explanations of the interpretations, support their views, and address their peers on the spot. Such activities can be compared to communicative language use and hence they can promote fluency and interactional competence.

Other researchers have documented the benefits of literature-based discussions in developing oral fluency and classroom interaction in learners, as well as confidence and readiness to talk. The latter are usually blamed on the dialogic character of literature circles that provide frequent chances of protracted conversation. However, most of the evidence is rather exploratory and context-differentiated, and few approaches involve standardised speaking measurements or the use of experimental designs. This lack of strong quantitative information means that it is hard to find out to what degree literature-based activities systematically enhance speaking proficiency as opposed to increasing the involvement.

2.4 Digital Technology and Literary Interactions.

The past academic work has also focused on the use of digital tools in literature-based teaching. Access can be increased to authentic materials and interactive learning outside the classroom through online annotation systems, multimedia text and discussion forums. Shamshul et al. (2024) mention that this type of technologies might facilitate more intensive work with texts, as well as allow learners to exercise their autonomy to explore and find meaning independently and through cooperation.

Nonetheless, studies in this field are inclined to dwell on technological affordances and not on the direct language consequences. There is little evidence found on the linkage of digital literary practises and measurable changes in vocabulary, comprehension, or speaking. This implies that although digital tools have potential support to give, their pedagogical efficacy still needs to be empirically confirmed.

2.5 Pakistani ESL Learner Problems.

Systemic and pedagogical constraints in Pakistan make the adoption of the communicative and literature-based approaches complex. According to (Shahabullah et al., 2025), most learners are faced with congested classrooms, test-driven teaching and learning, and the lack of real-life language use. These environments tend to use rote learning in preference to interaction thus limiting the growth of communicative competence.

Even though learners are increasingly resorting to digital materials and self-directed classroom-free techniques, the institutional support of innovative teaching practises is rather uneven. Notably, minimal empirical research has been done on the Pakistani setting to study structured interventions which quantify the impacts of alternative methods such as literature based instruction on language proficiency. Majority of the studies focus on obstacles or perceptions as opposed to learning outcomes which can be proven. This creates a severe evidence void to inform curriculum transformation in higher learning institutions.

2.6 Theoretical Foundations

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Sociocultural Theory can be regarded as the pedagogical justification of literature-based teaching. CLT focuses on significant interaction and natural language use as the key to acquisition. These principles resonate well with the concept of literary texts that are discussed, interpreted and negotiated. The Sociocultural Theory also emphasises the role of social interaction, mediation, and scaffold in learning. Cooperative literary conversations offer a chance to support one another and create meaning together in the areas of proximal development among learners (Vygotsky, 1978). These frameworks combined provide a theoretical foundation of the anticipation of both linguistic and cognitive gains of literature-centred tasks.

2.7 Summary and Research Gap

Overall, existing research suggests that literature-based instruction can enhance engagement, comprehension, and motivation, with emerging evidence for vocabulary and speaking development. Nevertheless, the literature reveals several shortcomings. Many studies rely on perception data, focus on single skills, or employ limited experimental controls. Empirical research at the university level, particularly in South Asian EFL contexts, remains scarce. Moreover, few studies adopt mixed-methods designs that combine objective proficiency measures with learners' experiential perspectives.

These gaps underscore the need for a systematic investigation that evaluates multiple language skills simultaneously and provides context-specific evidence from Pakistani higher education. The present study addresses this need by examining the effects of literature-based instruction on vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, and speaking performance while also exploring learners' motivation and perceptions through qualitative methods.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The current study was a quasi-experimental convergent mixed-method study. Data were gathered both in a quantitative and qualitative form and then incorporated in the interpretive stage. The quantitative part analysed vocabulary knowledge changes, reading comprehension and speaking proficiency using a pre-test post-test design. The qualitative aspect investigated learners perception, motivation factors and interaction in the classroom through observations and focus group interviews. The combination of the two strands made possible by the study allowed the statistical evaluation of the learning outcomes along with the contextual clarifications of the experience of the participants.

3.2 Context, Population and Participants.

The research was carried out in one of the Pakistani universities, which use English as a compulsory subject in the undergraduate level. The sample size included first-year EFL students who had an obligatory course in English. The sample size used in the research was 50 students ($n = 50$). Purposive homogeneous sampling was used to select the participants to guarantee similar expertise and attendance frequency. Inclusion criteria were:

- Intermediate level of English proficiency (as detected by the departmental placement test);
- At least 80% attendance at classes;
- No literature circle teaching experience.

The respondents were between 18 and 22 years in age. Most of them were either Urdu or Pashto speakers. This sampling design reduced proficiency differences and the internal validity by guaranteeing that changes realised could be linked to the instructional intervention and not to differences that existed before.

3.3 Instruments

3.3.1 Language Achievement Tests

There were three parallel instruments used:

Vocabulary test (30 items: general, academic, and literary words);

- Reading comprehension test (three passages and literal, inferential, and critical questions);
- Speaking task (discussion-based performance assessment).

Content validity was determined using tests that were based on course materials, and evaluated by two ELT experts. A pilot study was carried out on 15 students of similar nature. The coefficient of reliability was considered acceptable:

- Vocabulary $\alpha = .82$;
- Reading $\alpha = .79$;
- Speaking inter-rater reliability $r = .86$.

Two trained raters rated speaking performances independently using an analytic rubric that rated fluency, lexical range, accuracy and interaction.

3.3.2 Observations

Observations in the classroom were conducted systematically making use of a checklist that aimed at the following:

- Participation frequency;
- peer interaction;
- Use of target vocabulary;
- Discussion quality.

Systematic and consistent recording was taken care of through observation protocols.

3.3.3 Focus Group Interviews

The post-intervention semi-structured focus group interviews (six-seven students each) were carried out. Guiding questions explored:

- Motivation;
- Confidence;
- Perceived skill development;
- Obstacles in literature activities.

Audio-taped interviews were transcribed word-to-word.

3.4 Procedure

The intervention was eight weeks long.

Week 1: pre-tests administered;

Weeks 2-7 literature circle instruction;

Week 8: post-tests and interviews.

Students were split in two groups and had 90 minutes sessions twice a week.

During each session:

Students read given literary texts;

Groups: Themes and vocabulary were discussed;

- Literature-circle tasks (role: summarizer, questioner, connector, vocabulary master, etc.) were done;
- A discussion in an entire class ensued.

All the sessions were conducted by the same teacher to reduce variation due to the teacher. The instructional time and syllabus material were the same and the only difference was that one was the literature-circle strategy compared to normal instruction.

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1. Quantitative Analysis

Paired-sample t -tests in SPSS (Version 31.0) were used to compare pre and post test scores. The statistical significance was defined as $p < .05$. To determine practical significance, effect sizes (Cohen d) were determined. Each individual analysis was done on vocabulary, reading, and speaking and comparisons were made as a whole.

3.5.2. Qualitative Analysis

The interview transcripts and observation notes were analysed using thematic analysis, following a systematic and rigorous procedure. First, the researcher familiarised themselves with the data through repeated reading to gain a comprehensive understanding. Second, open coding was conducted to identify meaningful segments and assign initial labels to significant ideas. Third, related codes were grouped to develop broader categories. Finally, these categories were refined into overarching themes that represented recurring patterns across the dataset. This process aligns with the stages of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006).

The data were independently coded by two researchers. The inter-coder agreement was 88 per cent. Agreements were achieved by discussion. Quantitative results were triangulated with themes to increase the level of trust.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The department gave ethical approval. Participants were informed and gave informed consent and were informed that they could withdraw at any time. Data were coded and kept in a secured place. There were no effects on courses grades on participation.

3.7 Theoretical Framework

The research is based on the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Sociocultural Theory. CLT focuses on meaningful communication by use of authentic tasks whereas

Sociocultural Theory focuses on interactions and peer scaffolds to learn. Both principles are operationalised in literature circles that focus on meaning-making as a collaborative practise and the use of language as an active tool.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The chapter gives an in-depth discussion of how literature-based instructional activity influences English language proficiency of EFL students at the university level in Pakistan. The study we were doing was exploring the subjects of acquisition of vocabulary, reading comprehension, speaking proficiency, critical thinking and the engagement of learners. They were collected through pre and post-tests, classroom observations, and focus group interviews. Quantitative and qualitative data triangulation strengthens the soundness of the results and repetitive evaluations and raters independence enhance the accuracy of the results. Furthermore, the analysis does not only outline the outcomes but it also identifies the emergent patterns, examines the challenges of the learners, and places the results in the contexts of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Sociocultural Theory.

4.2 Quantitative Findings and Analysis

4.2.1 Vocabulary Acquisition

The vocabulary knowledge of the participants was assessed in three semantic dimensions, including general, academic, and literary expressions. The overview of the pre- and post-test scores is given in Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1

Table 4.1: Pre-test and Post-test Vocabulary Scores (n = 50)

Vocabulary Type	Pre-test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	Improvement	Effect Size (Cohen's d)	p-value
General	18.4 (3.2)	23.7 (3.1)	+5.3	1.71	<0.001
Academic	15.3 (2.8)	21.4 (2.9)	+6.1	2.10	<0.001
Literary	14.6 (3.0)	18.6 (3.2)	+4.0	1.25	<0.001
Total	48.3 (5.4)	63.7 (6.1)	+15.4	1.73	<0.001

Gains were statistically significant in all the dimensions. The best contribution was made to academic vocabulary that is arguably due to the introduction of formal, context-rich terms in literary texts, which are relevant to the academic discourse. Expressions of literature were also improved, and this implies that the learner was able to internalise figurative and idiomatic expressions. The effect sizes with values that are above 1.0 emphasise the existence of the statistical and practical significance (Cohen, 1988).

Interpretation: Within the CLT, real exposure to language leads to improved acquisition. Such contexts were provided through literary texts and thus help learners to identify the patterns in the language and apply the new vocabulary in communicative interactions. Observations conducted in classrooms supported the active use of new lexical elements in communication, whereas the results of focus-group interviews supported the idea of the motivation of students to use these terms in the speech and writing.

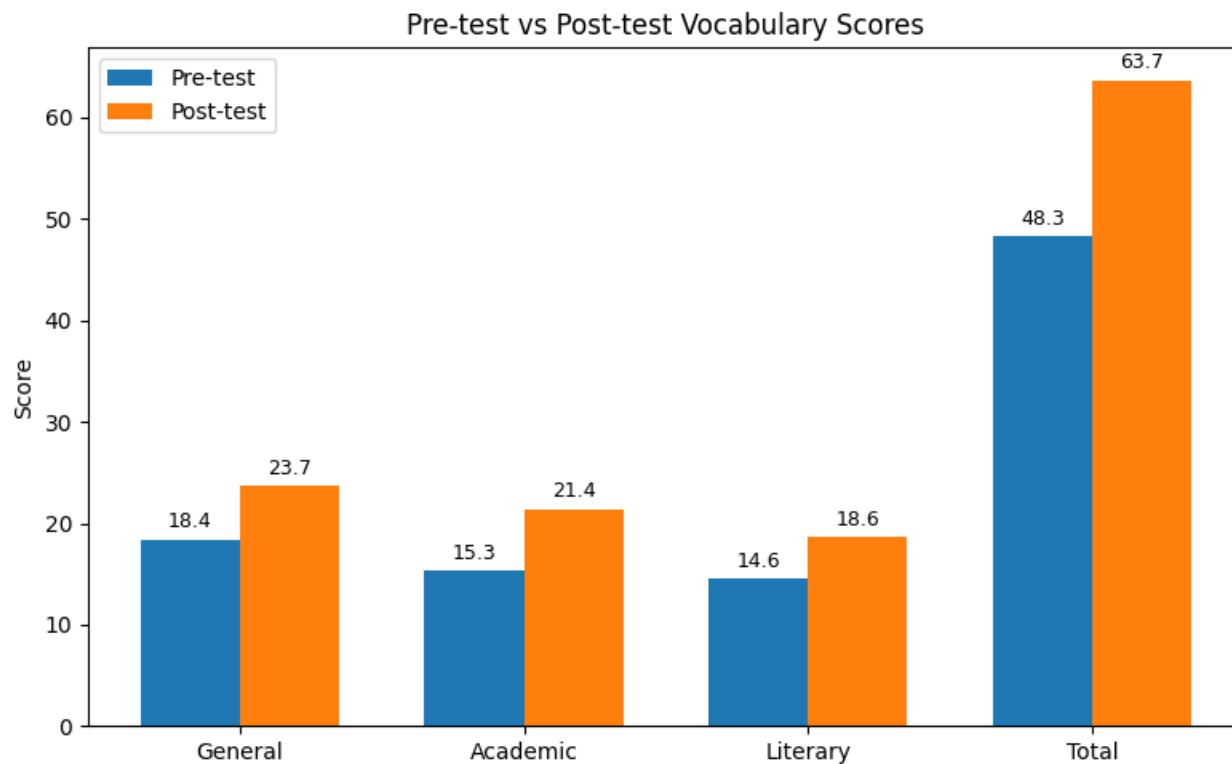


Figure 4.1. Vocabulary scores before and after literature-based intervention (n = 50).

The improvement in the vocabulary scores of the participants after the intervention is reflected in Figure 4.1 where a significant increase in the scores is seen. Academic vocabulary improvement was also the strongest and it is important to emphasise that literary texts gave the learners exposure to formal and contextually rich lexical elements common in scholarly language. At the same time, more literary expressions were used suggesting the internalisation of figurative and idioms. Such improvements are in line with self-reported instances of students actively using new words learnt in both the oral discussions and written assignments.

4.2.2 Reading Comprehension

The reading comprehension was measured in the context of the literal, inferential and critical thinking (Table 4.2, Figure 4.2).

Table 4.2: Pre-test and Post-test Reading Comprehension Scores (n = 50)

Skill Type	Pre-test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	Improvement	p-value
Literal	20.2 (2.7)	25.4 (2.6)	+5.2	<0.001
Inferential	18.6 (3.0)	23.2 (2.8)	+4.6	<0.001
Critical reasoning	16.4 (3.2)	21.2 (3.0)	+4.8	<0.001
Total	55.2 (6.3)	69.8 (5.9)	+14.6	<0.001

There was a great improvement in all comprehension subskills. Literary comprehension gains represent an improvement in the interpretation of explicit material, whereas inferential and critical reasoning gains show the improvement of more complex analytical and evaluative skills. The Sociocultural Theory is focused on the importance of mediated interaction in the learning process; literature discussion as collaboration offered scaffolding facilitating students to construct meaning collectively and achieve greater-order understanding. This interpretation was an explanation of the focus-group interviews, where students indicated that

they were better able to interpret, compare, and justify opinion. Triangulation establishes the fact that the gains witnessed were not due to chance or text specific familiarity

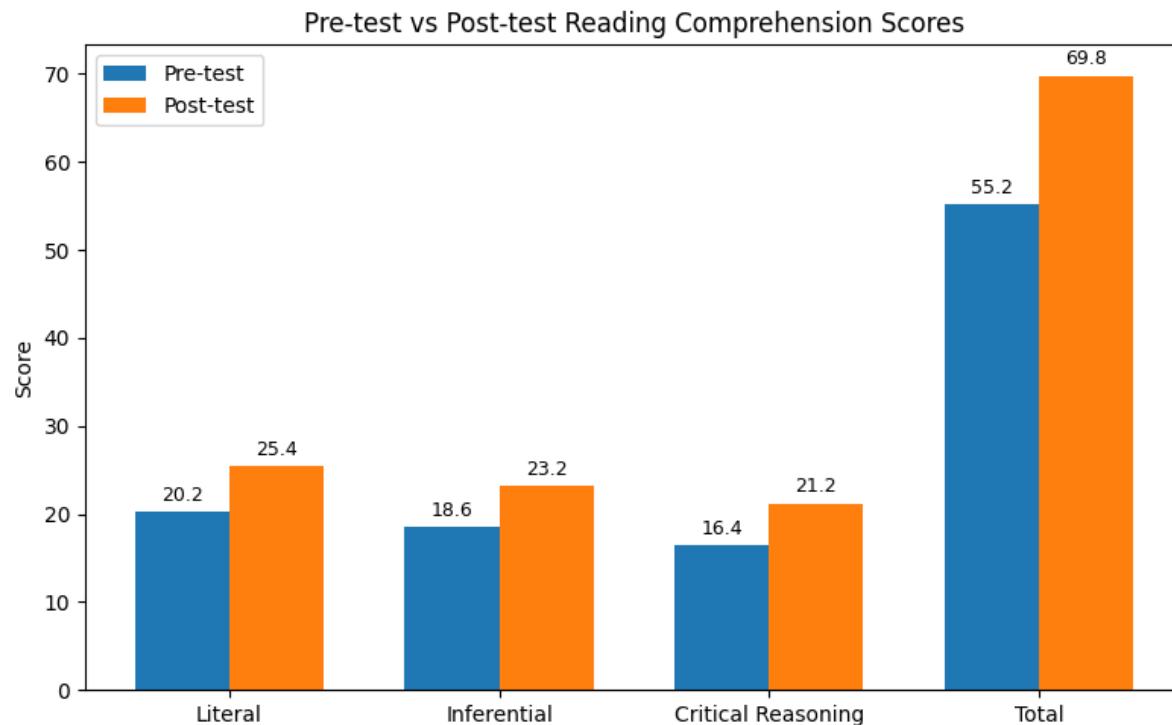


Figure 4.2: Reading Comprehension Scores Before and After Literature-Based Intervention
 All comprehension subskills had been improved following the intervention. The gains in literal comprehension represent higher ability to understand explicit information whereas the gains in the case of inferential and critical reasoning are indicative of higher analytical and critical skills. Based on the observations in the classrooms, it was found that students could comprehend texts, draw comparisons between characters, and support opinions with references to literary content

4.2.3 Speaking Skills

The speaking skills were evaluated by measuring fluency, lexical use, and interaction/turn-taking (Table 4.3, Figure 4.3).

Table 4.3: Pre-test and Post-test Speaking Scores (n = 50)

Measure	Pre-test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	Improvement	Cohen's d	p- value
Fluency	12.3 (2.5)	16.7 (2.3)	+4.4	1.76	<0.001
Vocabulary usage	10.8 (2.7)	15.2 (2.5)	+4.4	1.63	<0.001
Interaction/Turn- taking	11.5 (2.6)	16.1 (2.4)	+4.6	1.81	<0.001
Total	34.6 (5.8)	48.0 (4.9)	+13.4	1.73	<0.001

Findings indicate an increase in oral proficiency in all measures of the indicators. Increased fluency and increased lexical use is an indication of a successful integration of the new linguistic components whereas increased interaction scores indicate more willingness to take part in discussions. The credibility of observational scoring is verbalised by inter-rater reliability, which is measured by Cohens κ =

0.87.

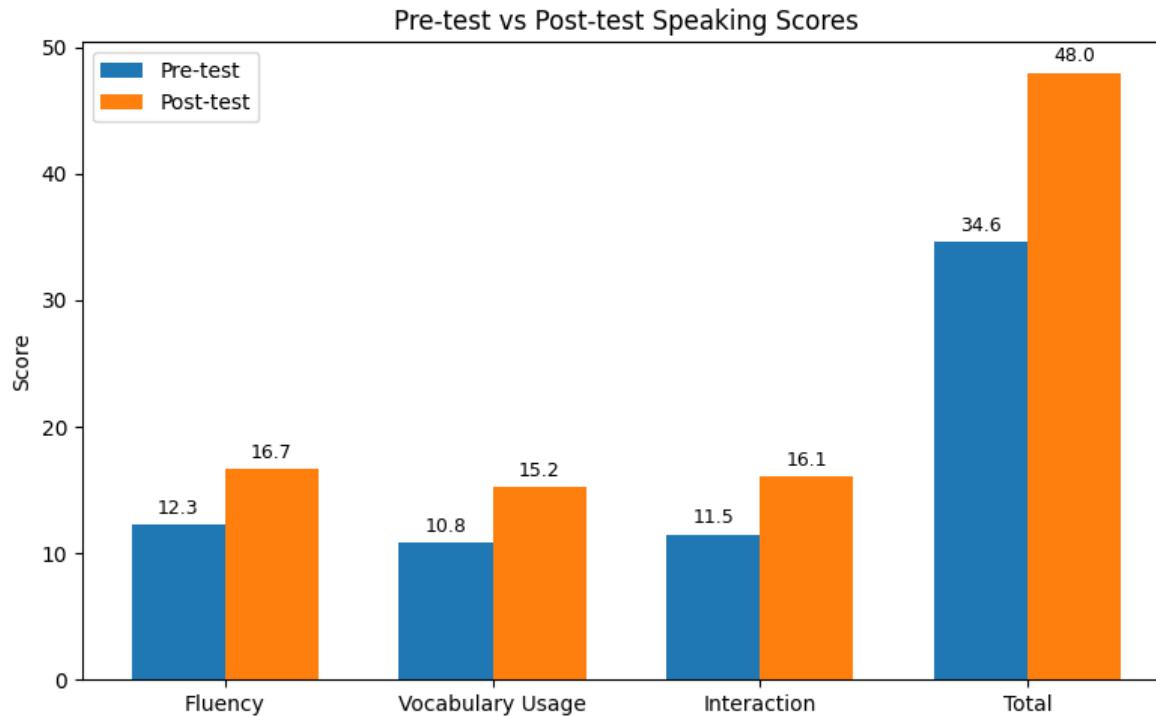


Figure 4.3: Speaking Skills Scores Before and After Literature-Based Intervention

The interpretative model follows the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) that teach that meaningful language use in real communicative situations promotes oral proficiency. At the literature-based discussions provided the real possibilities of meaning negotiation, allowing the learners to use words and rehearse fluency in a socially conducive environment.

There was an increase in overall speaking scores in all dimensions, which stresses a high level of communicative competence. Greater fluency is referred to as expressiveness, and lexical gains represent effective absorption of newly learnt terms in the literary texts. The greater the scores on interaction indicate more active participation in the discussions in a classroom, and students described their increased confidence in sharing ideas, supporting classroom observation, and inter-rater reliability values (Cohen = 0.87).

4.3 Qualitative Findings

4.3.1 Enhanced Expression and Confidence

Table 4.4: Thematic Analysis – Enhanced Expression and Confidence

Sub-theme	Frequency	Sample Quote
Increased willingness to speak	38/50	“Before, I avoided speaking. Discussing the short story made me more confident.” – Student A
Use of richer vocabulary	35/50	“I now use words like despair, resilience, and melancholy naturally.” – Student B
Active classroom participation	32/50	“I feel more involved in discussions now.” – Student C

Most students indicated improved confidence levels and levels of participation. These qualitative observations are a complement to quantitative gains made in the area of speaking

proficiency and vocabulary acquisition and hence a demonstration of how the instructional content can be applied in practise.

4.3.2 Critical Thinking and Analytical Skills

Table 4.5: Thematic Analysis – Critical Thinking and Analytical Skills

Sub-theme	Frequency	Sample Quote
Interpretation of literary texts	36/50	“Analyzing the poem made me reflect on its meaning and express ideas clearly.” – Student D
Comparative analysis of characters	30/50	“I could compare two characters and argue which decision was more appropriate.” – Student E
Argumentation and justification	28/50	“I can now justify my opinions in English using examples from the story.” – Student F

Students were always involved in high-order thinking. The obtained data are in line with the enhancement of inferential and critical thinking exercises in the field of reading, therefore, agreeing with literature in the contribution of literature to the development of analytical competencies.

4.3.3 Students' Perceptions of Literature-Based ELT

Table 4.6: Thematic Analysis – Students' Perceptions

Sub-theme	Frequency	Sample Quote
Engagement and motivation	45/50	“Stories are fun; I want to read more in English.” – Student G
Perceived language gains	42/50	“I can use words and phrases from stories in writing and speaking.” – Student H
Challenges with difficult texts	18/50	“Some stories were hard to understand because of cultural references.” – Student I

Students were describing high engagement and language progress and, consequently, validated the effectiveness of literature-based pedagogical strategies. However, challenges faced when working with complicated texts provide the importance of step-by-step scaffolding and cultural adequacy as well.

Interpretation: The qualitative findings enhance the quantitative gains through explaining the underlying processes behind the gains. The reflective reports of students depict how Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was used, in which the collaborative discussions developed confidence, fluency, and meaning-making. Socialcultural Theory is also represented in the aspect of peer mediation that helped the learners to overcome difficulties in comprehension.

5.0 Discussion

This paper has looked at the impact of literature-based instruction on language skills of EFL students at the university level in Pakistan. The results have shown that the reading of literary texts greatly promoted vocabulary, reading comprehension, and speaking activities. Also, there was an improvement in motivation, confidence, critical thinking and cultural awareness among the learners. These findings are interpreted by this chapter against the background of the previous research, theory, and contextual factors, as challenges and pedagogical implications are also addressed by the chapter.

5.1 Vocabulary Development

Quantitative data demonstrated statistically significant improvement in vocabulary of learners in general, academic and literary words. Such benefits align with the research that literary texts are a valuable source of contextual input that subjects learners to real-life language patterns, not a limited set of isolated words (Ma, Ismail, and Saharuddin, 2023). Effects size

was shown to be significant and this implied that learners did not just identify new vocabulary but were in a position to use the new vocabulary productively in speaking and writing activities.

This interpretation was based on qualitative data: students said that they discussed new words, which means that lexical items were actively internalised. It is consistent with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) that puts an emphasis on meaningful use of language as a learning mechanism (Creswell, 2014). Discussion of literature enabled the learners to use words in context which facilitated the growth on receptive and productive vocabulary.

Challenge and mitigation: There were some students who had problems with their unknown literary expressions at first. Guided facilitation is crucial in vocabulary learning, and peer support and teacher prompts were used as classroom scaffolds to ensure that learners incorporate these words to achieve successful vocabulary acquisition.

5.2 Reading Comprehension

There was a development in literacy, inferential and critical reading abilities among the participants. The literature will prompt the learners to read beyond the superficial understanding of literature, which needs interpretation, inferences, and evaluation. The findings are consistent with the results of meta-analytic studies on literature circles, showing improved reading comprehension and cognitive involvement in L2 settings (Ma, 2025).

The classroom observations and focus group interviews had shown that learners were actively engaged in terms of comparison of themes, interpretation of character motivation as well as evaluation of textual meaning. This qualitative data describes the quantitative benefits, and how a collaborative discussion leads to a better understanding. The findings also affirm the Sociocultural Theory because the interaction through peers offered scaffold in higher-order cognitive processing (Vygotsky, 1978).

Challenge and mitigation: There were students who did not cope with culturally specific references. These challenges were addressed though teacher-guided discussion and annotation techniques to aid students in gaining a deeper understanding and understanding of the culture.

5.3 Speaking Skills

There was an enhanced score in speaking on fluency and vocabulary use as well as interaction. Observations in the classroom made the participation in discussions and collaborative activities more confident. Discussion activities based on literature prompted learners to express their thoughts, support their views, and negotiate meaning in time, which aligns with the previous research on communicative activities and literature circles (Ayu, Afriani, and Aminatun, 2025).

Qualitative data showed that the students felt not as bad when they were less anxious and more ready to take risks concerning speaking activities. It is clear that the Sociocultural Theory was integrated in the following way: peer scaffolding and facilitation of the teacher provided a secure communicative environment in which learners could practise until oral proficiency improved gradually (Vygotsky, 1978).

Challenge and mitigation: Not all learners were immediately ready as some of them had a limited vocabulary. The use of structured roles and prompts assisted them to engage in such activities, and these examples demonstrate that guided interaction is necessary when performing literature-based speaking tasks.

5.4 Motivation and Engagement

Students were also found to have more engagement and intrinsic motivation in dealing with the literary texts. Individual reflection, emotional engagement, and relevance to actual language use were also learned through stories, as is the case with Shurovi et al. (2025). It was observed that there was a greater level of attention and engagement, which implies that literature may make the learning of the language significant and enjoyable.

Challenge and mitigation: Literary analysis started out as challenging to a few learners. Staged presentation of texts and scaffolded discussion were used to ensure that there was motivation as well as cognitive and linguistic development. Such results prove the affective advantages of ELT based on literature that can indirectly facilitate the learning outcomes via participation and persistence.

5.5. Critical Thinking and Cultural Awareness.

Those tasks which were based on literature helped to develop critical thinking and analytical skills. The students explored themes and made comparisons between decisions made by characters as well as justified their opinion through textual evidence, indicators of a higher-order form of thinking. These are in line with the previous studies of literature noting that literature is a cognitive development tool in the EFL settings (Ma and Ismail, 2023; Ahmad and Nugroho, 2025).

Preliminary challenges were encountered with cultural references. Nevertheless, scaffolding of teachers and peers scaffolding assisted students on their path of unfamiliar situations which increased cultural awareness. It implies that literature will not only provide the development of language skills but also intercultural competence is promoted which is essential in the globalised academic and professional environment (Abuelnour Elbashir Hussein, 2025).

Conclusion

This paper examined the effectiveness of literature-based teaching, which was applied through literature circles and facilitated discussion, in promoting English proficiency among second language learners (English as a Second Language) studying at the university level in Pakistan. With the help of a convergent mixed-method, quasi-experimental pre-post study that used fifty undergraduate students in their eight-week course, the results suggest that the integration of literary texts in communicative, collaborative classroom tasks can bring significant changes in the primary language skills. The respondents showed considerable improvements in vocabulary learning (both academic and literary) and reading (both literal, inferential, and critical) and oral speech (as indicated by fluency, lexical density, and interactive proficiency). Additional qualitative data obtained through classroom observations and focus group interviews yielded further significant gains in motivation, self-confidence, classroom engagement, and critical thinking, indicating that literature-supported teaching approach allows achieving not only language development but also more general cognitive-affective performance.

Theoretically, the findings are compatible with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Sociocultural Theory since the intervention provided long-term zones of significant interaction, meaning negotiation, and peer scaffolding, which support the language acquisition instead of the isolated, grammar-based training. Pedagogically, the research is based on the hypothesis that Pakistani ESL programmes of universities might be enhanced by the introduction of literature circles in the regular curriculum to create an authentic, discussion-based environment where the students should read, practise academic language in

contextual settings, and learn how to make inferences and arguments that can be applied to academic writing.

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