

# Language Competence and Its Influence on Understanding English Literature

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**Abstract:** Language competence plays a vital role in the comprehension and interpretation of English literature. This study explores the relationship between linguistic proficiency and the ability to understand literary texts, focusing on how mastery of language structures, vocabulary, and contextual knowledge influences the interpretation of themes, narratives, and stylistic elements. English literature, with its diverse genres and complex expressions, often requires a high level of linguistic skill to fully grasp its depth and nuances. The research adopts a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative analyses. Data were collected through assessments of linguistic proficiency and literature comprehension among students

at different language competency levels. Findings indicate a strong correlation between language competence and the ability to understand and appreciate literary works. Students with advanced language skills demonstrated higher capabilities in interpreting symbolism, analyzing literary devices, and understanding cultural and historical contexts. This study highlights the importance of integrating language development with literature education to enhance students' literary competence. The results provide valuable insights for educators and curriculum developers in designing effective pedagogical strategies that address linguistic gaps and promote a deeper engagement with English literature.

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**Tersedia online di**

<https://ojs.unublitar.ac.id/index.php/jprp>

**Sejarah artikel**

Diterima pada : 01 – 10 – 2021

Disetujui pada : 20 – 10 – 2021

Dipublikasikan pada : 31 – 10 – 2021

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**Kata kunci: Language**

**competence, English literature,**

**linguistic proficiency, literary**

**comprehension, education**

**strategies**

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**DOI:**<https://doi.org/10.28926/jprp.1i2.1618>

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## INTRODUCTION

Language competence is a critical factor in understanding English literature, as it encompasses the mastery of linguistic structures, vocabulary, and pragmatic skills. English literature, rich in diverse themes, complex narratives, and cultural nuances, often demands a higher level of language proficiency to fully appreciate and interpret its depth. Without adequate language competence, readers may struggle to grasp the subtleties of literary works, including symbolism, metaphor, and context-specific expressions.

In the globalized era, English literature serves not only as a medium of cultural expression but also as a tool for intellectual growth and cross-cultural communication. It reflects societal changes, historical contexts, and philosophical ideas, making it an essential subject in language education. However, the ability to comprehend and analyze literary texts depends significantly on the reader's linguistic competence. Students and readers with advanced language skills are better equipped to decode complex syntactic structures, discern implied meanings, and critically evaluate literary elements.

Despite its importance, the relationship between language competence and the understanding of English literature remains an underexplored area in educational research. Understanding this correlation can provide valuable insights for educators and curriculum developers in enhancing pedagogical strategies. It is crucial to investigate how linguistic mastery influences literary comprehension, paving the way

for more effective teaching methods and resource allocation to address gaps in students' abilities.

This study aims to explore the influence of language competence on the understanding of English literature, focusing on how different levels of linguistic proficiency affect the interpretation and appreciation of literary texts.

### METHOD

This study employs a mixed-method approach to investigate the influence of language competence on understanding English literature. The methodology is divided into two main phases: quantitative data collection and qualitative analysis. Research Design, Quantitative Phase: A correlational research design is used to determine the relationship between language competence and the ability to understand English literature and a case study approach is employed to gain in-depth insights into how language competence influences literary interpretation and comprehension.

The study involves 120 undergraduate students enrolled in English literature courses at a university. The participants are selected using stratified random sampling to ensure diverse levels of language proficiency. Language Competence Test: A standardized test (e.g., TOEFL or IELTS reading section) measures the participants' language proficiency, focusing on vocabulary, syntax, and reading comprehension. Literary Comprehension Test: A researcher-designed test assesses participants' understanding of selected English literary texts. It includes questions on plot, themes, figurative language, and critical interpretation

### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study revealed a significant correlation between language competence and the ability to understand English literature. The following findings emerged:

- a) **Impact of Vocabulary Knowledge:** Participants with an extensive vocabulary demonstrated a better grasp of literary texts. They were able to decode complex terms, idiomatic expressions, and contextual nuances, which enhanced their overall understanding of the texts.
- b) **Syntactic Proficiency:** Individuals with advanced syntactic knowledge could interpret intricate sentence structures, such as embedded clauses and rhetorical devices. This proficiency enabled them to comprehend the deeper meanings and thematic elements of literary works.
- c) **Pragmatic and Cultural Understanding:** Readers with higher language competence were more adept at recognizing cultural references, societal norms, and historical contexts embedded in English literature. This understanding enriched their interpretation of the texts.
- d) **Inferential Skills:** Participants with greater linguistic competence were better equipped to make inferences and identify implicit meanings within the narratives.
- e) **Engagement and Analysis:** Readers with higher language proficiency engaged more critically with the texts, offering sophisticated analyses of character development, plot dynamics, and symbolic elements.

These findings underscore the integral role of language competence in literary comprehension. Vocabulary and syntactic knowledge form the foundation for understanding the literal meaning of texts, while pragmatic and cultural awareness allow readers to appreciate the subtleties and implied meanings. The study also highlights the importance of inferential skills in bridging gaps between the text and the reader's personal interpretation. Higher language competence facilitates this process, leading to a more immersive and analytical engagement with literature. From a pedagogical perspective, these results suggest that educators should prioritize the development of language competence alongside literary analysis skills. Incorporating vocabulary-building exercises, syntactic practice, and cultural context discussions into the curriculum can enhance students' ability to interpret and appreciate English

literature. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to explore how sustained improvements in language competence impact literary comprehension over time.

### **Language Competence as a Foundation for Literary Understanding**

Language competence is a fundamental requirement for engaging with English literature. It includes mastery of various linguistic elements such as grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and discourse, which are essential for decoding and interpreting literary texts. Literary works often utilize intricate language structures, archaic expressions, and culturally embedded references that demand advanced language skills to fully comprehend. Readers with high language competence are better equipped to navigate these complexities. For example, they can recognize the use of symbolism, understand metaphorical language, and appreciate the stylistic choices of authors. Conversely, readers with limited linguistic proficiency may face challenges in grasping the deeper meanings of literary texts, resulting in a superficial understanding of the material.

### **The Role of Vocabulary and Cultural Context**

Vocabulary plays a pivotal role in understanding literature. English literature often employs rich and diverse lexical choices, including idiomatic expressions and context-specific terms. A broad vocabulary enables readers to access and interpret the nuanced meanings embedded within the text. Furthermore, understanding the cultural and historical context of literary works is another critical aspect that hinges on language competence. Familiarity with cultural references and historical settings enhances the reader's ability to connect with the narrative and its thematic elements.

For instance, understanding Shakespearean plays requires not only a grasp of Early Modern English but also an awareness of Elizabethan culture and societal norms. Similarly, post-colonial literature demands an understanding of cultural hybridity and the dynamics of power embedded in language.

### **Language Competence and Critical Thinking in Literature**

Language competence also influences critical thinking and analytical skills when engaging with literature. Readers with advanced linguistic abilities can identify and evaluate literary devices such as irony, alliteration, and allegory. They are better positioned to engage in interpretative discussions, draw connections between texts, and critique the author's intentions. This deeper engagement allows for a more meaningful interaction with the text, enhancing both appreciation and academic study of literature.

## **CONCLUSION**

Language competence plays a pivotal role in the comprehension and appreciation of English literature. The ability to decode linguistic structures, understand vocabulary, and interpret nuanced meanings directly impacts a reader's capacity to engage with literary texts. English literature, characterized by its complexity and depth, often demands advanced language skills to uncover themes, symbolism, and cultural contexts embedded within its narratives. This study underscores the significant correlation between linguistic proficiency and literary understanding, highlighting that individuals with higher levels of language competence are better equipped to analyze and appreciate literary works. Conversely, limited language proficiency can hinder a reader's ability to fully grasp the subtleties and underlying messages of texts, potentially diminishing their engagement and enjoyment of literature.

The findings emphasize the need for educators to integrate language development and literary analysis in teaching strategies. By addressing gaps in language competence, educators can enhance students' ability to navigate complex literary works and foster deeper intellectual and emotional connections with texts. This holistic approach to language and literature education not only improves academic outcomes but also promotes cultural awareness and critical thinking. Future research should further explore this relationship, focusing on specific aspects of language competence that most significantly influence literary comprehension. Such insights will

enable the development of targeted interventions and resources to support learners in achieving both linguistic and literary proficiency.

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