Literature-Based English Instructional Model in Improving Learners' linguistics Proficiency and Cultural Awareness: Challenges and Oppurtunities for EFL Learners

1*Muhammad Asrul Hasby, 2Zahari Ghani Mun'im, 3Kaherul Azmi

1English Language Education, Faculty of Culture, Management, & Business, Universitas Pendidikan Mandalika, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia

2English Literature, Faculty of Language and Communication, Sultan Idris Education University, Tanjong Malim, Perak, Malaysia

3Arabic Literature, Faculty of Language Arabic, Sultan Sharif Ali Islamic University, Jalan Pasar Gadong BE 1310, Brunei Darussalam

*Corresponding Author Email: muh.asrulhasby@undikma.ac.id

Abstract

This study investigates the challenges and opportunities that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners face when using literature-based language learning to improve their linguistic proficiency and cultural awareness. The research focuses on 17 EFL learners from junior and senior high schools in Mataram, Indonesia, who were exposed to local literature in their English classrooms. The study employed a qualitative approach, utilizing both structured and unstructured interviews to collect data on learners' experiences with literature-based learning. The findings reveal that while literature enhances linguistic proficiency, particularly in vocabulary acquisition, speaking, and writing, learners face challenges such as the complexity of literary texts, including advanced vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and unfamiliar cultural references. These elements sometimes hinder comprehension and engagement. Additionally, the time-consuming nature of literature-based tasks and the difficulty of connecting with culturally distant texts were identified as key obstacles. However, the study also highlights several opportunities. Literature-based learning exposes learners to authentic language use, enriching their vocabulary and enhancing their critical thinking and creativity. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that literature fosters cultural awareness by allowing learners to explore diverse societal values, traditions, and historical contexts. The exposure to different cultural perspectives enhances empathy and promotes global citizenship among learners.

Keywords: Literature-based language learning; EFL learners; Linguistic proficiency; Cultural awareness; English language learning

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INTRODUCTION

Literature-based language learning has emerged as a potent pedagogical approach that enhances language proficiency while also promoting cultural awareness (Zeece, 1997; Irwansyah, Nurgiantoro, & Sugirin, 2019; Rokhayati & Alvionita, 2022). This method integrates various literary forms, such as novels, poetry, short stories, and drama, to expose learners to authentic language use within

meaningful contexts. By immersing students in literature, educators aim to foster essential language skills, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking, while simultaneously encouraging a deeper understanding of diverse cultures. The value of literature in language education has been well-documented in past research, as it not only enhances linguistic competencies but also cultivates critical thinking, engagement, and emotional connections with the language being learned. Despite these advantages, the implementation of literature-based learning still faces challenges, particularly in terms of aligning texts with learners' proficiency levels and addressing the complexities of cultural context in a globalized educational environment.

Past studies have highlighted the effectiveness of literature in improving various language skills. For instance, Babayiğit et al. (2020) demonstrated that narrative storytelling significantly boosts vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension, providing a foundation for learners to develop robust language skills. Similarly, Uchihara and Harada (2018) emphasize the role of vocabulary in enhancing writing and speaking capabilities. These findings suggest that literature-based learning fosters an environment where students can engage with language in its most authentic forms, thus improving their linguistic proficiency across reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Despite these proven benefits, there remains a lack of direct evidence linking specific literary approaches to these skills, particularly in hybrid educational contexts that combine traditional and modern methods (Han, 2024; Vitta & Al-Hoorie, 2020). This gap underscores the need for further research to better understand the precise mechanisms through which literature-based learning influences language acquisition.

Moreover, literature has been found to stimulate intellectual curiosity and increase student motivation. Research by Ramzan et al. (2023) reveals that positive classroom experiences, particularly those enriched by literature, foster intrinsic motivation in language learners. This heightened motivation is crucial in sustaining learners' engagement, which, according to Wang (2022), leads to better academic outcomes in language learning. The connection between engagement and motivation is particularly significant because it suggests that literature-based learning does not only enhance language skills but also strengthens the emotional and intellectual commitment of students to their studies. Therefore, literature not only serves as a linguistic tool but also functions as a catalyst for student engagement and a means of fostering a more dynamic and enjoyable learning environment.

While the importance of literature in language learning is well recognized, the challenges associated with its effective implementation are also evident. One key issue is the need to adapt literary texts to different proficiency levels, ensuring that students are both challenged and supported in their learning. Talevski and Shalevska (2023) point out that teachers often face difficulties in selecting appropriate texts that align with students' language abilities while still offering opportunities for cognitive and linguistic growth. In addition, the integration of literature into language education must account for cultural context, which can sometimes pose a barrier for students who may not share the cultural backgrounds represented in the texts. This issue is particularly relevant in diverse classrooms, where students' varied cultural experiences might impact their interpretation of literary works and their ability to

connect with the material (Aprianoto & Haerazi, 2019; Haerazi, Irawan, Sotlikova, 2023; Dewi & Wibawa, 2024). Thus, a critical examination of these challenges is necessary to optimize the benefits of literature-based language learning.

In terms of improving linguistic proficiency, literature-based instruction offers a wealth of opportunities. It provides learners with exposure to complex sentence structures, idiomatic expressions, and colloquial language that are often absent from traditional language textbooks. Studies, such as those by Eslit (2023), underscore the importance of literary texts in elevating students' understanding of nuanced language use. Additionally, literature exposes learners to dialects, slang, and regional variations, helping them appreciate the diversity of language and develop sociolinguistic competencies. Smits and Kloots (2016) argue that familiarity with linguistic variations is essential for effective communication in real-world contexts. By incorporating literature into the curriculum, educators can provide students with the tools to navigate diverse communicative situations, thus enhancing their overall language proficiency.

Beyond its linguistic benefits, literature plays a vital role in fostering cultural awareness. By exploring literary works from different authors and cultural backgrounds, students gain insights into the values, traditions, and historical contexts that shape societies around the world. This exposure broadens their worldviews and enhances their understanding of cultural diversity. According to Tabasi et al. (2024), literature serves as a powerful vehicle for fostering empathy and cultural sensitivity, which are essential components of global citizenship. In an increasingly interconnected world, understanding cultural differences is not only a matter of linguistic competence but also an important aspect of social responsibility. As literature helps students engage with unfamiliar cultures, it nurtures a sense of connection to others, promoting intercultural understanding and empathy.

Furthermore, literature encourages critical thinking and reflection on societal issues, which are key components of cognitive growth. Caron et al. (2015) argue that literature provides a platform for discussing complex social, political, and ethical questions, thus promoting analytical thinking. By engaging with the themes and moral dilemmas presented in literary texts, students learn to approach problems from different perspectives, enhancing their problem-solving and decision-making skills. This is particularly important in an era where critical thinking and adaptability are essential for success in both academic and professional environments. Therefore, literature-based instruction not only improves language proficiency but also contributes to the holistic development of students as critical thinkers and informed global citizens.

The objectives of this research are to investigate the impact of literature-based language learning on EFL learners' linguistic proficiency and cultural awareness, to identify the challenges faced by learners and educators in implementing this approach, and to explore the opportunities it presents for enhancing both language skills and cultural understanding. This research will contribute to the field by offering a nuanced understanding of how literature can be leveraged in language education, and by proposing strategies for overcoming the challenges associated with its use.

The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive examination of both linguistic and cultural outcomes of literature-based language learning in an EFL context. While

much has been written about the linguistic benefits of literature in language learning, fewer studies have addressed the interplay between linguistic proficiency and cultural awareness in a single framework. This research seeks to fill this gap by investigating how literature-based instruction can simultaneously enhance both language skills and cultural competence, providing a holistic approach to language education.

The research questions that this study seeks to address are: (1) What challenges do EFL learners face in improving their linguistic proficiency through literature-based language learning? (2) What opportunities does literature-based language learning offer EFL learners in enhancing their cultural awareness and understanding? These questions are crucial in exploring both the obstacles and advantages associated with using literature in language education. By examining these challenges and opportunities, this study aims to provide practical insights for educators seeking to implement literature-based approaches effectively in their classrooms.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore how literature-based language learning influences the linguistic proficiency and cultural awareness of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. A qualitative approach is particularly suitable for this study because it allows for an in-depth exploration of learners' experiences and perceptions regarding the use of local literature in the English classroom. The research aims to uncover nuanced insights into how literature enhances language skills such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing, as well as learners' understanding of different cultural contexts embedded in literary texts. This design is especially appropriate for understanding complex phenomena where learners' personal experiences, attitudes, and reflections play a significant role, which is central to answering the research questions regarding the challenges and opportunities EFL learners encounter in improving their language proficiency and cultural awareness.

One of the strengths of qualitative research is its ability to provide rich, descriptive data that captures the subtleties of learners' individual responses and interactions with literature-based language learning. Through interviews, this research seeks to delve into the subjective experiences of the participants, uncovering the underlying processes through which literature affects their language development and cultural understanding. By focusing on qualitative data, the study gains an in-depth understanding of learners' cognitive and emotional responses to literature, which quantitative approaches may not fully capture.

Participants

The study involves 17 EFL learners from junior high schools and senior high schools in Mataram, a region in Indonesia. Specifically, the sample consists of 9 learners from state junior high schools and 8 learners from state senior high schools. These participants have been selected because they are actively engaged in English language learning that incorporates various local literary texts, such as poems, short stories, and folk tales, integrated into their curriculum by their EFL teachers. The focus on these learners ensures that they are exposed to a literature-based approach, making them ideal candidates for exploring the research questions about linguistic and cultural development.

The selection criteria for participants include: Learners must be currently enrolled in either a state junior high school or senior high school in Mataram; Participants must have been exposed to local literature in their English classrooms as part of their language learning; Participants should represent a range of proficiency levels within their respective schools, allowing for a diverse set of experiences and insights; And all participants are willing to take part in interviews and provide insights into their learning experiences.

Demographically, the sample includes learners from various socio-economic backgrounds, ensuring a diversity of perspectives. While the research does not focus on gender, the sample will naturally include male and female participants, with no gender-based exclusion. The inclusion of both junior and senior high school students provides a comparative look at how exposure to literature impacts language skills at different educational stages.

Instruments and Data Collection Technique

Data collection in this study involves two primary types of interviews: structured and unstructured interviews. The combination of these methods ensures comprehensive data collection, allowing the researcher to explore both specific, predefined aspects of the learners' experiences and broader, more open-ended reflections on their learning journeys. The structured interviews consist of a set of pre-determined questions designed to gather specific information related to the research questions. The structured nature of these interviews allows for a systematic comparison of responses across participants. The questions focus on learners' perceptions of how literature impacts their language proficiency, the types of literature used, and the challenges and benefits they experience. The structured format ensures that the data collected is consistent and focused, while still leaving room for in-depth responses.

In addition to the structured interviews, unstructured interviews are conducted to capture the more personal and in-depth perspectives of the learners. These interviews are more flexible and open-ended, allowing participants to express their thoughts freely. The unstructured format encourages participants to share their experiences and opinions in their own words, providing a richer, more nuanced understanding of the effects of literature on their linguistic and cultural development. The instruments were developed based on existing literature on literature-based language learning and EFL teaching methods. The researcher ensured the validity of the instruments by conducting a pilot study with a small group of learners, refining the questions to make them clear and relevant to the research objectives. Additionally, the validity was strengthened through expert feedback from EFL educators and literature experts, who reviewed the interview questions for accuracy and alignment with the study's objectives.

Reliability was addressed by ensuring that both types of interviews covered the same core areas of inquiry, enabling consistent comparisons across participant responses. The researcher also employed member checking by sharing initial findings with participants to confirm the accuracy and resonance of the data.

Data Analysis

The data collected through structured and unstructured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. This approach is particularly suitable for qualitative

research as it allows for the identification of patterns or themes within the data, providing a detailed understanding of learners' experiences with literature-based language learning. First, all interview data were transcribed verbatim, and the researcher carefully read through the transcripts to familiarize themselves with the content. Initial codes were generated by identifying recurring ideas or responses related to the research questions, such as challenges faced by learners, their perceptions of literature's impact on language skills, and the cultural insights gained through literary texts.

These codes were then grouped into broader themes, with each theme reflecting a key aspect of the learners' experiences. This process involved an iterative cycle of coding, re-reading, and refining the themes to ensure that they accurately represented the data. Thematic analysis also allowed for the exploration of sub-themes, such as differences in how junior and senior high school learners respond to literature or variations in the types of literature that were most effective in fostering language proficiency and cultural awareness. Data triangulation was employed by cross-referencing findings from structured and unstructured interviews, ensuring the reliability of the analysis.

Once the main themes were identified, the researcher conducted a deeper analysis to explore how these themes related to the broader research questions. This analysis aimed to answer questions such as: What specific challenges do EFL learners face when using literature in their language learning? What opportunities does literature-based learning offer for improving cultural awareness and linguistic proficiency? The findings from this analysis contributed to the understanding of how literature influences EFL learners' language development and cultural perceptions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results
Challenges Faced by EFL Learners When Using Literature in Language Learning

EFL learners face several challenges when using literature in their language learning. One of the primary challenges is the complexity of literary texts, which often contain advanced vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and complex sentence structures that can be difficult for learners, especially those at lower proficiency levels, to fully understand. Literary works frequently involve figurative language, historical references, and cultural nuances that require a higher level of cognitive processing and prior knowledge, which can be overwhelming for learners who are not familiar with these aspects. This is particularly evident in the use of local literature, where regional slang, cultural references, and specific dialects may pose significant barriers to comprehension.

Another challenge highlighted by the participants is the time required to engage with and understand literary texts. Many learners report that literature-based activities take longer than traditional language exercises due to the need for careful analysis, discussion, and reflection. This can create frustration, especially when learners are under time constraints or lack the skills to approach complex texts independently. Additionally, learners in both junior and senior high schools face difficulties in connecting with the content of the literature, particularly when the texts reflect cultures, themes, or historical contexts that are unfamiliar to them. For example, when reading local folklore or historical fiction, students may struggle with

interpreting symbolism or understanding the context in which the story was written, leading to confusion and disengagement.

Furthermore, some learners noted that teachers' ability to guide students through these texts was another limiting factor. Although literature offers rich linguistic and cultural insights, teachers may lack the training or resources to effectively use literature in the classroom, especially when they are working with texts that are culturally specific or linguistically complex. This can result in ineffective lesson planning, where learners do not receive the support needed to fully benefit from literature-based activities. As a result, learners may feel demotivated or frustrated, which in turn negatively impacts their engagement and language learning progress.

Opportunities Offered by Literature-Based Learning for Cultural Awareness and Linguistic Proficiency

Despite these challenges, literature-based learning presents numerous opportunities for enhancing both cultural awareness and linguistic proficiency among EFL learners. One of the key benefits is the exposure to authentic language use. Literature provides learners with access to varied language styles, including formal and informal speech, colloquial language, and diverse sentence structures, which help learners develop a more nuanced understanding of how language functions in real-world contexts. Through literature, learners encounter rich vocabulary and idiomatic expressions that are essential for mastering a language, allowing them to communicate more fluently and with greater accuracy. As a result, learners can improve their reading, writing, and speaking skills by interacting with texts that reflect the authentic use of language in diverse contexts.

Literature also serves as a powerful tool for cultural exploration. By reading literary works from different authors and cultural backgrounds, learners gain insights into the values, traditions, and worldviews of other societies. This exposure to different cultures fosters empathy and enhances students' understanding of global diversity. The cultural themes embedded in literary texts—such as family dynamics, social norms, and historical events—allow learners to reflect on their own cultural assumptions and broaden their perspectives. This process not only enriches learners' knowledge but also encourages them to engage in meaningful discussions about the cultural contexts represented in the texts, thereby deepening their critical thinking and analytical skills.

Moreover, literature-based learning creates opportunities for learners to engage with complex societal issues in a safe and structured environment. Through literary discussions, students are encouraged to consider diverse viewpoints and to critically assess moral, ethical, and social dilemmas. This approach cultivates the learners' ability to think critically about real-world issues, which is a valuable skill both in language learning and in broader academic and social contexts. For example, analyzing literature that deals with topics such as identity, migration, or gender roles enables students to explore these issues in depth, while simultaneously improving their language skills.

Literature encourages creativity and self-expression, both of which are integral to linguistic proficiency. By interpreting literary texts and expressing their understanding through writing or oral presentations, learners engage in higher-order

thinking and develop the ability to articulate complex ideas in their second language. The creative engagement with literature—whether through writing essays, creating summaries, or participating in group discussions—helps students practice constructing coherent and articulate responses, further enhancing their speaking and writing abilities.

Table 1. Challenges and Opportunities in Literature-Based Language Learning

Challenges	Opportunities
Complex vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and sentence structures in literary texts.	Exposure to authentic language use, including idiomatic expressions and colloquial speech.
Difficulty in understanding cultural and historical contexts embedded in the literature.	Enhanced cultural awareness through exposure to diverse cultural perspectives and societal norms.
Time-consuming nature of literature-based tasks, requiring careful analysis and discussion.	Improved linguistic proficiency across reading, writing, speaking, and listening through engagement with varied language styles.
Teacher preparedness and resources for effectively guiding students through literature-based lessons.	Opportunities for critical thinking, reflection, and discussion of societal issues, deepening students' analytical skills.
Engagement issues, particularly with texts that may not resonate with all learners.	Encouragement of creativity and self-expression through writing, oral presentations, and literary discussions.

The findings in Table 1 show that students often encounter challenges related to complex vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and intricate sentence structures, which can make texts difficult to understand. However, these challenges also present an opportunity for exposure to authentic language use, including idiomatic expressions and colloquial speech, which are essential for mastering a language in its real-world context. Another significant challenge is the difficulty in grasping the cultural and historical contexts embedded within literary works. Yet, this challenge is balanced by the opportunity to enhance cultural awareness, as literature provides exposure to diverse cultural perspectives and societal norms. By analyzing literary texts, students gain a deeper understanding of the world's histories and cultures, fostering empathy and broadening their global outlook.

The time-consuming nature of literature-based tasks, requiring careful analysis and in-depth discussion, can also be a barrier. However, this process is an opportunity for students to improve their linguistic proficiency across all areas—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—by engaging with varied language styles and perspectives, enriching their overall language skills. Teacher preparedness and the availability of resources are critical for effectively guiding students through literature-based lessons. With the right tools and training, teachers can create a supportive environment for students, offering opportunities for critical thinking, reflection, and meaningful discussions on societal issues. These discussions deepen students' analytical abilities and broaden their intellectual engagement with the material. Finally, engagement can be a challenge, particularly when the texts do not resonate with all learners. However, the study of literature provides an opportunity to encourage creativity and self-expression.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities that EFL learners encounter when using literature in their language learning. By examining the experiences of 17 learners from junior and senior high schools in Mataram, Indonesia, who were exposed to local literature in their English classrooms, the study contributes to the growing body of research on the effectiveness of literature-based language learning. These findings not only align with previous studies but also offer new perspectives, particularly in the context of EFL education in Indonesia.

One of the primary challenges identified in this study was the complexity of literary texts, which includes advanced vocabulary, figurative language, and cultural references that are difficult for learners to understand. This is consistent with findings from previous research by Babayiğit et al. (2020), who noted that the use of complex language structures in literature can be a significant barrier for language learners, especially those at lower proficiency levels. In their study, they highlighted that students often struggle with texts that include metaphors, historical references, or unfamiliar idiomatic expressions, making it difficult for them to engage meaningfully with the material. Similarly, this study found that EFL learners in Mataram experienced frustration and confusion when encountering local literature that incorporated regional slang or cultural references with which they were not familiar. These findings suggest that while literature is a rich resource for language development, its complexity can become a hurdle, especially for learners who lack the necessary background knowledge to decode the language.

Another significant challenge reported by the participants was the time-consuming nature of literature-based tasks. This finding resonates with earlier studies, such as those by Spencer and Pierce (2022), who noted that literature-based activities often take longer than traditional language exercises. The participants in this study similarly expressed that they found it challenging to allocate sufficient time to thoroughly engage with literary texts, particularly when those texts required deep analysis and discussion. This is an important consideration for educators, as it suggests that while literature-based instruction can be beneficial, it may need to be balanced with other instructional strategies to prevent learners from feeling overwhelmed or disengaged. Moreover, learners in this study cited difficulties in connecting with the literature, especially when the texts dealt with unfamiliar themes or historical contexts. This aligns with the findings of Talevski and Shalevska (2023), who found that students often struggle with texts that reflect cultures or historical periods distant from their own experiences. The difficulty in making connections with the material highlights the importance of selecting literature that is both linguistically appropriate and culturally relevant for learners.

Despite these challenges, the study also revealed numerous opportunities that literature-based learning offers for improving both linguistic proficiency and cultural awareness. One of the most notable advantages is the exposure to authentic language use. As demonstrated in this study, literature provides learners with access to varied sentence structures, vocabulary, and colloquial language that are essential for mastering a language. This is consistent with findings from Uchihara and Harada (2018), who found that the integration of literature in language classrooms enhances

students' vocabulary knowledge and speaking skills. In the present study, participants noted that reading literary texts helped them expand their vocabulary and gain a deeper understanding of how language functions in real-world contexts. Moreover, the study participants expressed that exposure to idiomatic expressions and figurative language through literature made them more confident in their ability to use the language creatively and expressively. This reflects the broader consensus in the literature, such as the work by Yusnilita et al. (2020), which emphasizes the value of literature in fostering linguistic creativity and fluency.

The study also highlighted how literature-based learning contributes to cultural awareness. This aligns with the work of Tabasi et al. (2024), who emphasized that literature plays a critical role in fostering empathy and cross-cultural understanding. In this study, participants reported that reading literature from diverse cultural backgrounds allowed them to engage with different perspectives and gain a better understanding of the values, traditions, and worldviews of other societies. For instance, learners who read local folklore or historical fiction felt that they gained insights into the social structures and cultural norms that shaped the narratives, which helped them reflect on their own cultural assumptions (Putri, 2023; Sudatama, Dehghani, & Zamorano, 2023). This process of cultural exploration through literature is particularly valuable in the context of EFL education, where learners often lack opportunities to engage with authentic cultural content. By incorporating literature into the curriculum, educators can provide learners with a window into diverse cultures, enhancing their global awareness and promoting intercultural competence.

Moreover, this study found that literature-based learning provided learners with the opportunity to engage in critical thinking and discussion of complex societal issues. This finding is consistent with research by Marzban and Davaji (2015), who argued that literature encourages learners to engage with pressing social issues, thus fostering analytical thinking and reflection. In this study, participants described how discussions about themes such as identity, migration, and family dynamics—common in literary texts—helped them develop their critical thinking skills and reflect on contemporary issues in society. This is particularly important in today's globalized world, where students need to be able to analyze and understand diverse perspectives on social, political, and ethical issues (Zhao et al., 2021; Fedorenko et al., 2021; Costa & Mair, 2022). The ability to critically engage with literature not only improves language skills but also nurtures learners' cognitive and emotional growth.

The theoretical implications of these findings are significant. This study reinforces the notion that literature-based language learning is not only an effective tool for linguistic development but also a powerful means of fostering cultural awareness and critical thinking. The findings support the argument that language acquisition should go beyond the mastery of grammatical rules and vocabulary to include a deeper engagement with the cultural and social dimensions of language use. From a theoretical standpoint, this aligns with sociocultural theories of language learning, which emphasize the role of authentic language use in real-world contexts and the importance of cultural context in shaping language competence (Vygotsky, 1978). The findings also suggest that the integration of literature in EFL classrooms aligns with communicative language teaching (CLT), which prioritizes meaningful communication and real-world language use (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

From a practical perspective, these findings suggest several recommendations for language educators. First, teachers should be mindful of the complexity of the texts they choose for literature-based learning. While literature can provide rich linguistic and cultural insights, it is important to select texts that are accessible to learners at different proficiency levels. Teachers should also consider scaffolding strategies, such as pre-reading activities or vocabulary exercises, to help learners navigate difficult texts (Eliata & Miftakh, 2021; Herwanis et al., 2021; Firdaus & Mayasari, 2022). Additionally, educators should be aware of the potential challenges posed by cultural differences and provide sufficient context to help learners connect with the material. Finally, educators should incorporate literature in a way that promotes not only language learning but also critical thinking and cultural exploration, thereby fostering a more holistic approach to language education.

The findings of this study contribute to the understanding of literature-based language learning by highlighting both its challenges and its transformative potential. While learners face difficulties with the complexity of literary texts and the time commitment required for meaningful engagement, they also gain valuable linguistic skills and cultural insights. By carefully selecting appropriate texts and providing the necessary support, educators can harness the full potential of literature-based learning, fostering linguistic proficiency, cultural awareness, and critical thinking among EFL learners. These findings reinforce the importance of literature in language education, positioning it as an indispensable tool for fostering both linguistic and intercultural competence in today's globalized world.

CONCLUSION

The study on literature-based English instructional models highlights both the challenges and opportunities for improving linguistic proficiency and cultural awareness among EFL learners. Despite the complexity of literary texts—such as advanced vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and unfamiliar cultural references—literature provides invaluable opportunities to enhance language skills. Exposure to authentic language, diverse sentence structures, and regional variations helps learners develop fluency and communication competence across reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Furthermore, the challenges of understanding literary texts due to their cultural and historical contexts offer a chance for learners to gain deeper cultural insights. By engaging with literature from various authors and cultures, students broaden their perspectives, fostering empathy and global citizenship. The study also underscores the importance of scaffolding in literature-based lessons, which allows learners to overcome obstacles such as time constraints and cultural distance from the texts, ensuring a more effective learning experience.

Moreover, the integration of literature-based learning significantly contributes to the development of critical thinking and creativity. Through engaging with complex social and moral issues presented in literary works, learners are encouraged to reflect on contemporary topics, strengthening their analytical skills. This process not only improves linguistic abilities but also nurtures cognitive and emotional growth. Teachers play a pivotal role in guiding students through the challenges associated with literature-based instruction, ensuring that texts are appropriately chosen and that sufficient support is provided. The study's findings suggest that with careful text selection and instructional strategies, literature can be a powerful tool in

EFL classrooms. As such, the study calls for further research into the long-term impact of literature on both language proficiency and cultural understanding, particularly in diverse educational settings.

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DECLARATION OF USING AI TOOLS

Researchers hereby declare that artificial intelligence tools, specifically ChatGPT, were used to assist in the language process of arranging and refining the text in this study. These tools helped with structuring the writing, improving clarity, and ensuring linguistic accuracy. However, all ideas, analysis, and interpretations presented in this research are entirely researchers' own, and the AI tool was used solely for technical and linguistic assistance. Researchers take full responsibility for the content and conclusions of this study.

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