

Enhancing linguistic competence through a formalist stylistics approach

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Abstract

The major purpose of this research was to find out the pedagogic relevance of formalist stylistics practices in teaching Ethiopian poetry in English in a tertiary context. Ethiopian poems chosen for this research were: Be'alu Girma's "Crows" and Solomon Deresa's "Shifting Gears". The poems were taught with the objective of developing the linguistic competence of EFL students. The research was carried out on the basis of an experimental research design. A total of 190 students (63.3%) were selected from the population of 300 students in various programs of the Department of English and Other Languages at Adama University through a systematic random sampling procedure. These students were again randomly grouped into experimental groups (95) and control groups (95) randomly. The students in the experimental group studied the poems through five stylistics methods which included FS. Active learning methods were also integrated so that the students could vigorously dominate the learning and teaching process. However, the students in the comparison group studied the same poems with a traditional teaching method. Pre-prepared notes and lectures on themes, techniques and figures of speech were focused. The teacher (the researcher himself) often dominated the teaching and learning process. Each group was given five similar pre and five post-tests designed specifically for this research purpose. A summary of the total mean gain score showed an interesting result. It was found that the t-value of the formalist stylistics post-test was 12.992. On the other hand, the p-value of the test was .000 with 188 degree of freedom and at a significance level of 0.05. Because the p-value of .000 was less than 0.05 at two-tailed test for 188 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis was rejected. The students in the experimental group performed better and developed their linguistic competence due to the treatment compared to the students in the comparison group. Therefore, there is a significant link between the formalist stylistics teaching method and the improvement of the linguistic competence of EFL learners.

Key words: Formalist stylistics (FS), linguistic competence (LC), active learning method, ELT, EFL, Ethiopian poetry in English and communicative language teaching (CLT).

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The relevance of literature teaching has been extensively studied in L₁ situations. Educators and researchers argue that literature should be studied as a basis for communication. According to Brumfit's study of the relevance of literature teaching in the Tanzanian context, literature teaching needs to consider language in action,

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creative writing and literary relevance (1986, p. 236-243). In Brumfit's study, the relevance of literature teaching includes service to the community, development of enquiring minds and empowerment of the skills of criticism. The study also identifies the effects of literature teaching: first, it increases competence in English and understanding how language works; second, it develops a basic critical competence; third, it enhances the understanding of the historical situation of Swahili and African writing in relation to European and other traditions and of the literary arts in relation to other arts and activities of man (p.239).

Brumfit provides a list of African texts, along with the European literary texts, with twentieth century themes bearing on the world today. Disparaging Brumfit's proposal and providing an alternative list of African literary texts in English, Pettit (1986) argues that literature teaching in the East African context provides 'a construct reality with effects on the consciousness, recreation and immediate experience' (p. 244-245).

Teaching literature is regarded as a valuable and authentic means for cultural development, language enrichment and personal involvement (Collie and Slater, 1987, p. 3-5). Equally relevant functions in teaching literature include: basis for language usage and use (MacKay, 1986, p.193), advancement of intercultural competence (Nault, 2006, p.132), acquisition of literary refinement and the development of language competence (Pickett, 1986, p. 271), development of social sensitivity (Sivasubramaniam, 2006, p. 266), provision of linguistic and cross-cultural explanations (Kachru, 1986, p. 148) and development of a feeling for language (Long, 1986, p. 42).

The inquiry at this point is how one regards literary texts. If poetic texts are seen as a special use of language to communicate messages, literary texts can be authentic sources to develop the communicative competencies of the learner. This is one researchable area. Poetic texts can help teach specialised language use and achieve two goals at a time: developing both the literary and the communicative competencies of the learner.

In the Ethiopian context, however, teaching literature in English (aboriginal literature) as a subject in English as a foreign language (EFL) context has not been an integral constituent of the ELT curriculum of higher learning institutions and tertiary scholarship. This local literature is taught as a subject with the objective of augmenting the literary proficiency, personal maturity and linguistic dexterity, cultural advancement of the learner and the development of the knowledge of the literary history of the country. However, the current review of the curriculum in eight universities in Ethiopia shows that the number of literature courses is dwindling. Only five literature courses are included in the degree courses of English fulltime programmes. Courses such as "fundamentals of literature", "prose fiction", "verse and drama" and "literature as applied to language" and "African literature" are commonly offered in these universities. None of the English Departments in these universities have a course on "Ethiopian Literature in English." An appraisal of the objectives of these courses confirms that the foremost end is to improve both the

linguistic and literary proficiency of the learner. Plummeting literature courses, ELT curriculum designers incorporated a number of courses on language methodology. The reduction of literature courses entails that the relevance of literature at the Ethiopian higher education institutions has not been studied intensively. Short story and poetry courses are excluded from the current curriculum. They are either merged with other courses or totally left out. Various problems have contributed to the reduction of literature courses in the universities. Core problems include: lack of sufficient background to understand British and American literature, uninterested students in the Department of English with this field as their last choice, a critical shortage of resources, traditional literature teaching methods and backward culture of reading (literature). In these universities, the relevance of literature, especially poetry, has not been extensively studied.

Therefore, due to complex but researchable problems, literature as a subject, especially poetry, is at a disadvantage. The lack of proper poetry teaching methods, failure to envision the relevance of poetry, inaccessible poetic texts, lack of poetic motivation and low students' communicative competence to understand poetry could have been the inherent problems leading to the reduction of poetry and other literature subjects. In the Ethiopian EFL context, the prime objective of teaching and learning poetry as part of the subject (in fundamentals of literature) is not specific, measurable, achievable, reliable and timely. More critical still is the challenge faced by an EFL learner of British and American poetry. How many of the students really know the relevance of taking poetry as a subject or even part of a subject? How many of the teachers practise student-fronted poetry teaching? In the age of multiculturalism coupled with globalisation, the pedagogic relevance of teaching and reading poetry should have been incorporated with the advancement of communicative competencies. Its relevance can be enhanced through the selection of the right methods and appropriate poetic texts. Therefore, a radical shift of objectives and methods of teaching and learning poetry needs to be foregrounded to maximise its relevance.

Literature teaching at a privileged altitude of scholarship can assume manifold objectives. In a context where English is taught as a foreign language, an important objective of teaching literature is to develop the linguistic competence of the learner. Again, in EFL situations, where literature is also taught to English language majors in the tertiary context, the objective can be to develop the creative, pragmatic, sociolinguistic and the functional competence of an EFL learner. It empowers the future English teachers with both linguistic and literary competencies.

1.2. Problem statement

In the English departments of Ethiopian universities, the teaching and learning of literature: poetry, novel, drama and short story, as subjects has been a rocky problem. Equally demanding is the reading of poetry. Presently, the number of literature

subjects, which were initially designed and delivered to advance the communicative capabilities and then the literary competencies of the undergraduates who target English as a profession, has been reduced. These subjects are either being replaced by ELT methodology courses or are merged. Those classical and modern literature courses, which were sources of rich language content, are now in decline. Inundated with a cornucopia of ELT methodology subjects, the future English language teachers graduate almost with little or no knowledge of poetry. Upon graduation, they “teach” English in secondary and preparatory schools or even in the universities.

In this research, primarily, it is argued that the relevance of poetry teaching in advancing the linguistic competency of EFL learners has not yet been fully researched in the Ethiopian context. In addition, the research findings elsewhere have not been fruitfully implemented and evaluated timely. In the English departments where English is taught as a foreign language, English majors may not even recognise why they are taking a course in poetry or drama. Is it to strengthen their command of the English language or improve their literary competencies? Which one should come first: linguistic competence or literary competence?

In these contexts, the undergraduates lack both the receptive and productive skills required to understand a literary text. A minimum linguistic competence is required, according to Brumfit, to develop literary capabilities (Literature Teaching, 1985 p. 106). The field survey in eight universities in Ethiopia shows that the entry level linguistic behavior of the undergraduates requires holistic improvement. They come from preparatory schools where literary works, especially poetry, are not included in many of the texts designed for English language teaching. English as a subject does not appeal to the imagination or to the heart of Ethiopian learners. Since the subject matter at the preparatory level is dry and does not appeal to the heart of the learner, most of the learners lack the interest and vocabulary command which is the basis for foreign language learning. The dull and dry content also directly affects the methodology the teacher uses to teach English. Course writers often exclude poetry content; as a result, this has negatively affected poetry and creative writing in English. Insufficient training of future teachers of English in the universities has a cyclical impact on both literature and language teaching. English departments now are producing insufficiently trained undergraduates who will have a negative impact on English teaching in Ethiopia.

Poetry teaching methods also affect both the receptive and productive capabilities of the learners. Are the methods student-centered or teacher-fronted? How are poetry teaching methods selected? Is the effect of these methods evaluated? Is there any indigenous poem in English in literature courses? How should students take poetry as a subject? What are the theories behind language and literature teaching? While searching for solutions to these seemingly simple problems, this research faithfully relied on both the theories of stylistics and communicative language teaching (CLT). Consequently, the study grounds itself on the methodological problems of poetry teaching, analysis, reading and evaluation, on one hand and the failure to envision the relevance of poetry to ELT, on the other. In a nut shell, the present research

deals with three fundamental problems in the teaching of poetry in the Ethiopian higher education. First, it addresses the problems of selecting proper local poems relevant to the situation of Ethiopian learners of English. Second, the research deals with the problems of methodology in teaching poetry at the tertiary level. Third, it assumes that stylistics has not gone beyond the teaching of receptive and productive skills to develop the overall linguistic competencies of EFL learners. Consequently, to address these three interrelated and fundamental problems, eclectic pedagogical stylistics practices were proposed in which FS was used as one option and a major component of stylistics research.

1.3. Objectives of the research

The present research was conducted to:

- enhance the linguistic competence of EFL learners of poetry,
- improve the relevance of poetry through the selection of appropriate methods and poetic texts integrating active learning methods and formalist stylistics in the teaching of poetry
- promote the relevance of Ethiopian poetry to a higher learning and scholarly research assuming that the literature can contribute to the body of knowledge in language education following formalist stylistics methodology.

1.4. Hypothesis

The aim of the research was to test the pedagogic relevance of formalist stylistics practices in teaching Ethiopian poetry in English in a tertiary context. In order to test its relevance, an experimental research design was selected. The research hypothesised that ‘there is no significant relationship between the formalist stylistics method of teaching poetry and the development of the linguistic competence of EFL learners.’

1.5 Research design and method: Summary

The main subjects of the experiment were undergraduate students who are majoring in the English language at Adama University. An experimental research design was followed. Through a systematic random sampling procedure, out of a total population of 300 English majors, 190 students (63.33%) were taken, that is, 95 as the experiment group and 95 under the control group. Therefore, the total sample size was 190. The students in the experimental group took the course following five stylistics approaches in which the formalist stylistics method was one of the methods; whereas the students in the control group studied the poems following a traditional method. Both groups were given pre and post tests on the formalist stylistics module. The research also expanded on a formalist stylistics interpretation of two poems. In a nut shell, this research presents a summary of the test results.

2. **Developing the linguistic competence of EFL learners: A formalist stylistics approach**

Linguistic competence refers to the knowledge of using the “grammar, syntax, and vocabulary of a language” (NCLRC, 1). With the objective of developing the linguistic competence of students in the EFL context, the researcher thought that formalist stylistics may assist the analysis and teaching of phonemes, morphemes, vocabulary, syntax and grammar in a literary text. While analysing sound patterns, diction, figures of speech, syntax and grammar at the level of sentence in a literary text, students can get the platform to use, test and develop their own linguistic competence. With this aim ahead, the researcher selected the formalist stylistics tool to analyse two poems at sentence level.

The first poem studied was Solomon Deressa’s “Shifting Gears” and the second Bealu Girma’s “Crows.” Though the poems were written by Ethiopians, they raise universally applicable themes. A formalist stylistics frame work was proposed to teach these poems mainly because the researcher assumed that the approach could develop the linguistic competence of fresh EFL learners’ of poetry. While delivering these poems stylistically, active learning methods such as problem solving methods, presentations, home work, independent work, small group discussions and exercises were integrated. Aiming at student centred communicative language learning, students were acquainted with formalist stylistics tools so that they could unlock the deep and the surface syntactic structures of these poems. The researcher presented the first poem to the experimental classroom so that the students could analyse the second poem following a similar procedure. This second interpretation will enable the students to test and use their linguistic competence.

2.1. **A formalist stylistic experiment with Solomon’s “Shifting Gears”**

The main objective of practising formalist stylistics was to advance the linguistic competence of the students who already possess a rudimentary language competence and skill. To this experimental class, Solomon’s “Shifting Gears” was presented following three stages. In the first stage, the fundamental functions of language were communicated to the class following Jakobson’s (1960) “Closing Statement.” Jakobson’s six functions of language included: 1) the emotive, 2) conative, 3) referential, 4) phatic, 5) poetic and 6) metalingual function. In the second stage of presentation, the structural features of the poems were presented. Core formal features such as rhyme, assonance, alliteration, parallelism, lexis, syntax, deviation and defamiliarisation were discussed. In the third stage, cohesion and foregrounding were presented. Several questions were raised to increase the involvement of the students in the linguistic interpretation of the poems.

2.1.1. The functions of language in “Shifting Gears”

Drawing the model of communication, it was briefly discussed that formalists

hold that language plays six fundamental roles. These functions represent six factors which affect any communication situation. After discussing the functions and communication model briefly, students were asked to form a group of six and answer the questions below. Each question raised one major function of language as presented by Jakobson.

1. Is there any voice in “Shifting Gears”? What is the attitude of the speaker? Is there any first person pronoun in the poem? Are there any emotive cues in the poem?
2. Is there any listener in the poem? Are there any vocative and imperative verbs? Have you noticed the relevance of second person pronoun in the poem?
3. Is there someone or something spoken of in the poem? What is the subject of this discussion? Is there any third person pronoun?
4. Do the addressee and the addressor question the medium of communication? Is the communication two-way or just one way?
5. Is there any word, phrase or sentence used primarily to establish, prolong, discontinue or check the effectiveness of the communication situation in the poem?
6. Is the message of the poem correctly communicated so as to produce the desired effects?

Each group selected a facilitator who was responsible for presenting a summary of the small group discussion to the entire class. The questions created situations for individual investigation, reflection and brainstorming. The main objective of these six questions was to test the level of their linguistic competence which can be realised through the comprehension, reading and speaking skills of the students.

In this poem, the addressor is the poet who is represented by the first person pronoun “I”. The addressor plans to paint the “loving face” of his lover in colorless breath for her unshakable and strong love for the poet-painter. (The poet himself is a renowned painter.) Beneath the quiet curve of her lashes, he also plans to put two simple awesome dots in black. His general attitude towards her is generally positive because he thinks that her love has never been weak:

You whose love never wavered
Towards whom I forever crack
On the tip of my parched tongue.

The addressee of the poem is a silent listener represented by the second person pronoun “you” who plays a passive role throughout the poem. For all the comments and admirations the addressor makes, the listener (possibly a woman), does not reply at all. The communication, therefore, is one way. Consequently, the addressee (the woman) and addressor (Solomon, the poet) do not use any word, phrase or sentence to question the appropriateness of the medium of their communication.

Though there is no immediate feedback from the woman, the poet has determined to paint her loving face:

I shall paint your loving face
In colorless breath...
You whose love never wavered
Towards whom I forever crack
On the tip of my parched tongue

His determination and willingness are expressed through the modal verb “shall” in the lines above.

Students under the treatment group were also informed to critically read the poem again and asked to draw the model of communication identifying the elements involved in this communication situation. They were also informed to identify the missing components of the model. This exercise was carried out to create an enabling environment for speaking and reading skills. The speaking and reading skills also depend on the comprehension of the poem, which means these skills rely on the students’ linguistic competence.

After the exercises on the functions of language were over, the students interpreted the linguistic features of the poem in the second stage. The main objective of this second exercise was to test and develop the phonetic, lexical, syntactic and grammatical skills of the learners. That is, an enabling environment was created to evaluate and develop the linguistic competence. The linguistic features of the poem were approached through the analysis of the formal elements of the poem. Structural elements analysed include rhyme, assonance, alliteration, parallelism, lexis, syntax, foregrounding, deviation and cohesion. These formal features were discussed mainly to help students stress on grammar, syntactic structures, syllabification, stressed and unstressed syllables, word formation (inflection), word choice, word power and understanding parts of speech.

2.1.2. The structural elements of the poem

a. Rhyme, alliteration, assonance and phonological competence

Phonological competence refers to “the ability to recognize and produce the distinctive meaningful sounds of a language, including consonants, vowels, tone patterns, intonation patterns, rhythm patterns and stress patterns” (SIL International, 1). It is a core component in linguistic competence. For the testing and the development of the phonological competence of the learners in an EFL context, formalist stylistic analyses of a poem can create an opportunity. The first task the researcher performed was to read the poem aloud after the students read the poem silently.

Students were advised to read the poem aloud. Pleasant sound effects are created through rhyme, assonance and alliteration in Solomon Deressa’s “Shifting Gears.”

Analysis of sound effects in this poem was, therefore, integrated with improving the phonological competence of the learners' of poetry. With this objective, students were given the following instructions:

1. Describe the rhyme scheme of the poem.
2. Give examples of assonance from the poem.
3. Give examples of alliterative sounds in the poem.
4. Does the poem create a sound effect at all?
5. Comment on syllabification in the poem.
6. Is the poem rhythmical?
7. Give examples of syllables which are stressed and unstressed in the first two lines of the poem.

While describing the rhyme scheme of the poem, the learners observed that the existence of monosyllabic words such as "swim", "dream" and "scream" rhyming at the end of the lines create a pleasant sound pattern. It was also identified that words like "lack", "crack", "black" and "rack" also rhyme. The repetition of the consonant /k/ sound in these words creates musical effect. They are also monosyllabic. In these words, the reiteration of the vowel /æ/ sound also adds to the sound effect in the reader's mind. After all, the poet is creating a pleasant musical effect in his lover's mind.

Assonance, which is the prominence of vowel sounds occurring at initial, internal or final positions in words in the poem, was discussed. In the poem, assonant sounds such as /ə/ in "never", "wavered" and "forever" and /u:/ in "whose" and "you" create pleasant sound effects in the lines below:

You whose look never wavered
Towards whom I forever crack
On the tip of my parched tongue

Alliteration, which is the occurrence of initial consonant sounds in consecutive words in lines of a verse, was also used to test pronunciation skill. After discussing the meaning of alliteration, the recurrence of consonants like /s/ as in "swim", "stealth" and "scream" and /m/ as in "swim", "dream", "mind" and "scream" several times was identified in the lines below:

I who swim
In the stealth of a dream
Listening to the mind's insane silence scream

Analysis of sound effects through rhyme, alliteration and assonance can aid testing and developing the phonological competence of learners in an EFL context. They can aid in recognising and producing the distinctive meaningful sounds of a language that is phonological competence.

b. Diction and lexical competence

Diction here refers to the choice and use of words in a poem. Words in a poem are chosen not only for their meaning but also for their pleasant musical effects. While analysing the choice and use of words in “Shifting Gears”, the speaking skill and vocabulary development practices were emphasised assuming that these were core elements in linguistic competence. The following questions were also raised:

- What types of words are used in the poem?
- How are the words used?
- Are there any strange words in the poem?
- How do you find out the meaning of those strange words?
- How are the words arranged and placed?
- What are the two factors used while choosing words in the poem?

After discussing these questions in groups of three students, the entire experimental class joined a general discussion to address these six questions. Generally, it was observed that the vocabulary of the poem was not very strange to the experimental class. It was the arrangement and the placement of a few words which made the meaning of some words difficult at the first reading of the poem. The placement of adjectives, as in “insane silence”, “colour lack”, “quiet curve” and “awesome dots” defamiliarise the denotative meaning of the nouns they are modifying. Students were also told to use their own strategies to find out the meaning of these familiar words in their strange positions in the poem. It was suggested that understanding the context, addressor and addressee relations, reading the poem between the lines can help guess the meaning of other lexical items such as “rack”, “grapnel-fingers”, “wavered” and “parched tongue” which many students described as “unfamiliar.” Here, words are selected and used not only for their meaning but also for their sound effects. Therefore, the poet breaks away from the traditional arrangement of words within the sentence. Analysis of diction generally aids the lexical competence of the learner.

c. Figures of speech and defamiliarisation

Students were informed that figures of speech depart from the standard meaning and order of words. Figures of speech are often used to defamiliarise the mundane realities of life in a poetic text. Freshness and newness can be recreated using figures of speech. In the class, a distinction was made between personification, simile and metaphor. Having made the distinction, students were asked to provide examples of personification, simile and metaphor from the poem.

Students were instructed to identify figures of speech in the poem. They gave the following examples from the poem:

(I) Personification

- a. listening to the mind’s insane silence scream

b. shall paint your loving face.

(II) Metaphor

- a. the title “Shifting Gears” is a metaphor.
- b. beneath the quiet curve of your lashes.
- c. two simple awesome dots. [Meaning eyes]

The activities of the poet-painter are compared with the shifting of the gears of a car. The poet swims in a dream shifting gears as if he were driving a car. He paints his lover’s loving face. He writes a poem about his love. The title “Shifting Gears” was, therefore, taken as an example of metaphor.

d. Syntax and grammatical competence

In the experimental class, syntax was presented as the arrangement of words into phrases and phrases into sentences. On the other hand, grammatical competence was seen as the ability to organise language on the sentence level. Having explained the meaning of syntax and grammatical competence, students were grouped to identify dependent and independent clauses, phrases and other parts of speech in the poem.

Students were told to identify dependent and independent clauses, prepositional phrases, direct and indirect objects or other parts of speech in the poem. The following examples from the poem were identified.

Dependent clause

1. Because of color lack,
2. Listening to the mind’s insane scream,
3. On the tip of my parched tongue

Independent clause

I shall paint your loving face.
I forever crack.
I swim in the stealth of a dream.

Prepositional phrase

1. in the stealth of a dream
2. to the mind’s insane silence scream
3. in colorless breath
4. with grapnel fingers
5. in an empty colour lack
6. beneath the quiet curve of your lashes

The existence of these six prepositional phrases has reduced the number of direct and indirect objects in the poem. It was found that only a single sentence has a direct object, that is, “I shall paint your loving face.” It is mental processes, which the poet is describing, not physical actions in this poem.

e. Direct object

I shall paint your loving face in colorless breath.

The poem does not have any indirect object. Then, the students were asked whether they could identify the various parts of speech in the poem. The following table was used to report the parts of speech students identified:

f. Parts of speech

Bedside testing the grammatical competence of students, it was pointed out that analysing the parts of speech in the poem could also aid the understanding of the meaning of unfamiliar words. This, in turn, could help understand the meaning of the entire poem. Analysing the syntactic structure of the poem and helping the students to learn that the defamiliarisation of syntax in poetry must have its own purpose. Defamiliarising syntax in the poems supports to dehabitualise the meaning of the entire poem. Knowledge of syntactic structure is believed to assist grammatical competence.

| Noun 1 | Adj. 2 | Adv. 3 | Verb 4 | Art. 5 | Demst. 6 | Pron. 7 | Prep. 8 | Conj 9 | Interj 10 |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|------------|---------------|-----------|--------------|
| gears | insane | never | swim | the | - | I | beneath | - | - |
| stealth | colorless | forever | shifting | a | - | who | in | - | - |
| dream | empty | - | listening | an | - | your | of | - | - |
| silence | quiet | - | lack | - | - | you | to | - | - |
| color | awesome | - | paint | - | - | my | because of | - | - |
| face | parched | - | wavered | - | - | whose | with | - | - |
| breath | - | - | crack | - | - | whom | on | - | - |
| fingers | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| lashes | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| dots | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| love | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| tongue | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| rack | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| curve | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |

As given in the table above, the poet used 14 nouns, 6 adjectives, 2 adverbs, 7 verbs, 3 articles, 7 pronouns and 7 prepositions. In the poem, the poet doesn't use demonstratives, conjunctions and interjections. It can, therefore, be concluded that the poem is more of an imaginative description in which several interrelated images are captured. It is the mental picture which dominates the poem rather than actions.

2.1.2. Parallelism, coherence and organisational competence

In this section, the relationship between parallelism, coherence and organisational competence is presented. Parallelism and coherence can aid organisation of a text. Students were informed that the repetition of key words, similar syntactic structures, similar phrases and similar parts of speech in the poem can bond the entire message organically. The existence of equivalent linguistic items in the poem can also help teach text coherence to EFL learners of poetry. An exercise was given to the class to underline parallel structures in the lines below:

I shall paint your loving face
In colorless breath
With grapnel-fingers in an empty colour rack,
Beneath the quiet curve of your lashes
Two simple awesome dots in black

In the lines above, the occurrence of adjectives such as “simple” and “awesome” form equivalence. The prepositional phrases beginning with “in”, “beneath” and “with” also create equivalent prepositional phrases forming parallelism. The pronoun “I”, which appears thrice in the poem coheres the entire poem to one organic structure. The prominence of these equivalent linguistic structures not only coheres the message but also foregrounds the meaning of the poem. Therefore, parallelism and coherence are the basic foundation for organising a text.

2.2. A formalist stylistics analysis of Bealu Girma’s “Crows”

With the prime objective of testing and developing the linguistic competence of EFL learners of poetry, Bealu Girma’s “Crows” was also presented to the class. Three stages were followed. First, an interpretation of the functions of language was made. Second, the formal elements of the poem were described and interpreted. Third, the relationship between parallelism and cohesion was constructed and discussed. This part repeated all the exercises done under the previous section so that students were armed with the formalist stylistics tools to interpret poems independently. In this part of the practice in the experimental class, students were given more independence in answering some of the questions and following the model exercises of the previous section.

2.2.1. The functions of language in “Crows”

As in the previous section, the main objective of this section was to create an enabling environment for the students to develop their linguistic competence through comprehension, speaking and reading skills. They were instructed to remember Jakobson’s six functions of language discussed in the previous use.

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1. Who is the addressor in the poem?
 2. Who is the addressee in the poem? Are there imperative verbs? What are their functions?
 3. Is there any third person in the poem? What is the subject under discussion in the poem?
 4. Do the participants in the poem question the medium of communication?
 5. How do the participants in the poem sustain communication?
 6. Is the message communicated correctly?

Compared to “Shifting Gears”, “Crows” presents fewer situations for the conversation between the addressee and addressor. The addressor is not the “I” and the addressee is not the “you” like in “Shifting Gears”. It is the poet himself addressing the reader of the poem. The main focus of the poem is not the addressor and addressee but the third person which is the “crows”:

Crows from the south, west and east,
Gather round the kitchen for a morning feast
Nature gave them right to share,
But crows considered this unfair.
The dove and the sparrows shared theirs aright,

As indicated above, the subject of the poem is “crows”. The crows gather from all directions for a morning feast. In the poem, compared to the dove and sparrows, crows do not share their food. Among themselves, sharing is not their culture.

The addressor has a sharp comment and a negative attitude towards “crows” as in:

Over matters trivial they croak and moan,
And make mountains of a mole.
Contended, they need fly up and pray
And keep their tempers and dirty play.

The words “dirty”, “trivial”, “moan” and “croak” show his negative attitude towards crows. “Crow”, therefore, symbolises cruelty and gluttony. It stands for the people who are mean and cruel to other fellow creatures. In some Ethiopian cultures, crows are associated with mourning and death but in this poem crows symbolise cruelty.

2.2.2. The structural features of the poem

(a. Diction and lexical competence

Interpretation of diction aimed at determining the knowledge of word choice and word use. Students were reminded that words are chosen in a poem for both their meaning and musical effects. To achieve the objective, small groups were formed and asked to answer the following questions:

1. List those words which are unfamiliar to you.

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2. Guess the meaning of strange words in the poem.
 3. Discuss the strategies you used to guess the meaning of these strange words.
 4. How are the words used?
 5. Is there any strange way of arranging or using these words?
 6. How are the words chosen?

Many of the words in the poem are plain and their arrangement is not complex. The only two words identified as strange to many of the students in the experimental group were “croak” and “moan”. The word “crows” assumes a symbolic meaning standing for cruel people. The sentences are simple and plain. The two strategies suggested to guess the meaning of these unfamiliar words were reading the poem several a times and understanding the context.

b. Sound effects and phonological competence

In Bealu Girma’s “Crows”, carefully selected rhyming words at the end of each line and the repetition of both consonants and vowels create pleasing sound effects. The interpretation of these sound patterns is geared towards improving the phonological competence of the students. To increase involvement, students were asked the following questions:

1. Compare the rhyme scheme of “Crows” and “Shifting Gears”.
2. How does the description of assonance help improve pronunciation skill?
3. Explain the relevance of analysing alliterative sounds in the poem for improvement of pronunciation.
4. Compare the rhythm pattern of “Crows” and “Shifting Gears”.

Students were instructed to read the poem silently paying specific attention to the questions above. Then, the teacher-researcher read the poem aloud. It was indicated that compared to “Shifting Gears”, “Crows” shows a highly patterned rhyme scheme. “Crows” follows an ‘aa’, ‘bb’, ‘cc’, ‘dd’, ‘ee’, ‘ff’ and ‘gg’ rhyme scheme which by itself is musical and entertaining. Out of the 14 rhyming words in the poem, only four are disyllabic and the remaining ten are monosyllabic. Unlike “Shifting Gears”, “Crows”, therefore, exhibits many carefully metered monosyllabic words rhyming at the end of each line.

Students were also asked to depend on their phonological competence to identify vowels and diphthongs which recur in the poem so as to create musical effects. The following examples were produced:

1. /i:/ as in feast /fi:st/ and east /i:st/
2. /eə/ as in share /ʃeə(r)/ and unfair /ʌnfɛə(r)/
3. /ei/ as in nature /neɪtʃ(r)/ and gave /geɪv/
4. /ʌ/ in as in enough /ɪnʌf/ and rough /rʌf/
5. /u:/ as in whose /hu:z/ and you /ju:/

-
6. /ei/ as in way /wei/, astray /ə'strei/, pray /prei/ and play /plei/
 7. /əu/ as in croak /kræk/, moan /məun/ and mole /məul/

The transcription and pronunciation of these vowels and diphthongs was presented in the class with the objective of improving the pronunciation skill of the students.

Similar exercises were constructed on the relevance of describing alliterative sounds in a poem. Students were asked to list those words in which similar consonants reiterate. Transcribing these alliterative sounds helped improve the pronunciation of consonants. The following consonants were identified:

1. /k/ as in crows /krəʊ/, considered /kən'sidərd/, content /kən'tent/, quiet /kwaɪet/, croak /'kræk/, contended /kəntended/ and keep /ki:p/
2. /m/ as in morning /'mɔːnɪŋ/, must /məst/, moan /məun/, make /meɪk/ and mountain /'maʊntən/
3. /s/ as in south /saʊθ/ and sparrows /spærəʊz/
4. /p/ as in play /pleɪ/ and pray /preɪ/

Analysis of alliteration supported testing the knowledge and use of transcription, stressed and unstressed syllables which were relevant in the improvement of pronunciation. Pronunciation was also practised through the analysis of the rhyme scheme of the poem and reading the poem aloud. Silent reading of the poems by the students of poetry also helped to advance reading and comprehension skill.

c. Syntax and grammatical competence

Following similar discussions on syntax in the previous section, the researcher asked students to analyse the syntactic structure of the "Crows". The following questions were raised:

1. Identify dependent and independent clauses in the poem.
2. Comment on the types of sentences the poet used.
3. Find examples of direct and indirect objects in the poem.
4. Classify the parts of speech in the poem.
5. What types of subjects are used? Why?

Several examples of independent clauses were drawn from the poem. As shown below, these sentences have animate subjects except item number two:

1. Crows...gather round the kitchen.
2. Nature gave them right to share.
3. Crows considered this unfair.
4. The dove and sparrows shared theirs aright.
5. Crows must have all things their way.

6. They croak and moan.
7. They make mountain of a mole.
8. They need fly up and pray.
9. They keep their tempers and dirty play.

There are no lines in the poem containing dependent clauses. The coordinating conjunction “and” appears six times to form six compound sentences in the poem. The remaining are simple sentences. The coordinating conjunction “but” also occurs once in the poem to form a single compound sentence. Students also underlined the following direct objects.

1. Nature gave them right to share.
2. Crows considered this unfair.
3. The dove and sparrows shared theirs aright
4. They keep their tempers.

Another task was given to the students to identify parts of speech in the poem. The table below shows the parts of speech in the poem:

Parts of speech in “Crows”

| Noun 1 | Adj. 2 | Adverb 3 | Verb 4 | Art. 5 | Dem 6 | Pronoun 7 | Prep 8 | Conj. 9 | Interj. 10 |
|-----------|-----------|-------------|------------|-----------|----------|--------------|-----------|------------|---------------|
| crows | unfair | round | gather | the | their | them | from | and | - |
| west | content | aright | gave | a | - | theirs | for | but | - |
| south | quiet | astray | snare | - | - | their | to | - | - |
| east | fair | - | considered | - | - | nothing | for | - | - |
| kitchen | rough | - | shared | - | - | enough | over | - | - |
| feast | trivial | - | went | - | - | all | of | - | - |
| morning | dirty | - | is | - | - | their | up | - | - |
| nature | - | - | must | - | - | they | - | - | - |
| right | - | - | have | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| dove | - | - | live | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| sparrow | - | - | croak | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| way | - | - | moan | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| thing | - | - | make | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| rest | - | - | contended | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| matters | - | - | need | - | - | - | - | - | - |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| moun- tains | - | - | fly | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| mole | - | - | pray | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| tempers | - | - | keep | | - | - | - | - | - |
| play | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |

As shown in the table above, the poet uses 19 nouns, 7 adjectives, 3 adverbs, 18 verbs, 2 articles, 8 pronouns, 7 prepositions, 2 conjunctions and 1 demonstrative. There is no example of an interjection in the poem. The existence of more verbs than adjectives shows that the poem presents more actions than descriptions.

2.2.3. Parallelism and coherence in the “Crows”

Parallelism can be used to teach grammar and coherence. This is mainly because an authentic situation can be created for the students to help them find equivalent grammatical items in the poem. The following questions were raised:

1. List those equivalent linguistics items in the poem.
2. Can an exercise on parallelism help improve knowledge of grammar?
3. Which word in the poem is most frequently used? Why?
4. How does the poet organise the entire idea in the poem?

Equivalent linguistic items exist in the “Crows” which also create musical effects and organise the poem. The following items were classified as parallel:

1. Noun: ‘crows and sparrows,’ ‘west, south and east’
2. Adjective: ‘content and quiet’
3. Verbs: ‘croak and moan’
4. Noun phrases: ‘the crows and the sparrows’

Besides the existence of these parallel linguistic items, the reiteration of some key words organises ideas in the poem. The lexical item “crows” appeared four times. Pronouns such as “them”, “their” and “they” make anaphoric reference to the title of the poem. Here and there, reference is made to the title of the poem. This anaphoric reference coheres the main idea of the poem.

All in all, analysis of sound effects, diction, parallelism, figures of speech, rhythm and parts of speech in the poem is the gateway for understanding the deep and surface structures of the sentences, pronunciation and grammar in the poem. Interpreting the contextual meaning of each word in the poem, understanding the syntactic structure of the poem and classifying parts of speech in the poem can aid the interpretation of the meaning of the poem. The linguistic competence of the students needs to be developed for the students to appreciate the literary elements of a poem. Consequently, these help develop the literary competence

of the learner in the end. Formalist stylistics provides the tools to analyse rhyme, assonance, alliteration, parallelism, lexis, syntax, foregrounding, deviation, defamiliarisation, cohesion and the functions of language. Practical exercises which require the phonological, lexical and grammatical competence of the students also lay the foundation for the development of the linguistic competence of the students in EFL contexts. Developing and testing the linguistic competence of the learners lay the foundation for the development of the functional competence of learners in an EFL context.

3. The pedagogic relevance of formalist stylistics practice

Proper growth in linguistic competence lays the foundation for the proper growth of the literary competence of the students so that EFL students can interpret and describe a complex poetic text. Often it is the poet's greatness in playing with the words of the poem which EFL learners find difficult. A poetic text becomes more incomprehensible if the linguistic competence of the learners is below the standard. Therefore, the learners should be armed with the formalist stylistics tools to interpret and describe a complex poetic text. Here a few questions can be raised. How do we know the students have the right linguistic competence? Is it possible to test and develop the linguistic competence of the students in the EFL context at all? Does formalist stylistics help the students unlock the complexities in a complex poetic text at all? How do we know whether the students have developed the right formalist tools or not? Can formalist stylistics help develop the linguistic competence of an EFL learner? In this research, in order to answer these questions, the following hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis: *There is no significant relationship between formalist stylistic teaching methods and the improvement of the linguistic competence of EFL learners.*

The null hypothesis above was framed with the objective of testing the relationship between formalist stylistics teaching methods and the improvement of the linguistic competence of EFL learners. This in turn was assumed to help find the pedagogic relevance of formalist stylistics. The experiment was also believed to prepare favorable contexts for the development of the linguistic competence. Another fundamental assumption was that testing the linguistic competence of EFL learners, in turn, can develop the linguistic competence of these learners.

A formalist stylistic test was developed with 21 question items from two poems and formalist stylistics concepts. Chiefly the contents were taken from: "Shifting Gears" and "Crows", poems by Ethiopian writers. The test was given to both an experimental and control group before and after the experiment. However, soon after the pretest, students in the experimental class studied the poems following the formalist stylistics framework integrated with active learning methods. While designing the test, attempts were made to move from assessing the linguistic competence of the learners to a phonetic level and pass through lexical skills to sentence organisation. Therefore, the test aimed at developing the following core

areas in linguistic competence:

1. Phonological competence (at sound level)
2. Grammatical competence (at word level)
3. Organisational competence (at sentence level)

3.1. Developing the phonological competence of EFL learners

Phonological competence can be seen as the ability to recognise and produce the distinctive meaningful sounds of language, including consonants, vowels, tone patterns, intonation patterns, rhythm patterns and stress patterns. To assess and develop the phonological competence of the students in the treatment group, the researcher guided the students to carry out the following tasks focusing on formal features of the poems:

1. Describe the rhyme schemes of the two poems.
2. Analyse the relevance of consonants (alliteration) and vowels (assonance) in the poems that is interpreting sound effects in the poems.
3. Interpret the rhythms (beats) of the poems.
4. Describe the syllabification patterns of the poems.
5. Study stressed and unstressed sounds in the poems.

Though many found it difficult, the classroom continuous assessment included a description of "meter" in the poems. Every exercise in the identification and description of rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, assonance, syllabification and meter was related with the major messages of the poems. Understanding the rhyme schemes, syllabification patterns and meter was integrated with the reading and comprehension skills. Students were instructed to relate all the phonetic stylistics devices with the entire message of the poems. Relating the entire message of the poems demanded a great skill to comprehend the poems and write paragraphs on the themes.

The purpose of the exercises in this section, therefore, was to develop the phonological competence of EFL learners. Short poems can be used to teach pronunciation. With the assumption that the teaching of formal features of short poems can develop the phonological competence of EFL learners, the following major observations were made:

Major observations

Students in the experimental class:

- classified the consonants and vowels of the poems,
- described the rhyme scheme and rhythmic patterns of the poems,
- analysed the syllabic structures of the poems,
- described stressed and unstressed sounds,
- read the poems aloud correctly following the rhythm and stress patterns,
- pronounced unknown words properly.

All in all, it can be generalised that the formal features of a poem such as rhyme,

rhythm, assonance and alliteration can be used to develop the pronunciation skill, which is also fundamental in the development of the phonological competence of EFL learners. Short poems can be used to teach pronunciation in EFL contexts.

1.2 Developing the grammatical competence of EFL learners

Grammatical competence (GC) can be understood as the knowledge and use of tense, parts of speech, syntactic structures, word order and choice, transitivity and passivisation choices. Contents included in the test were parts of speech, subject-verb agreement, tense and time, structure of sentences, word choice and sentence types. The test, therefore, aimed at measuring the following areas:

1. knowledge and use of parts of speech
2. knowledge and use of syntactic structures
3. knowledge and use of diction
4. knowledge and use of word formation and meaning of strange words
5. knowledge and use of deviation of syntax from the traditional grammar rules

While testing these competence areas, it was conceptualised that EFL learners with a fairly good grammatical competence should interpret and describe parts of speech, together with grammatical and sentence structures. The test included a section on ten parts of speech where students could give examples for each from the poems. The description of syntactic structures included analysis of dependent and independent clauses, prepositional phrases, as well as direct and indirect objects in the poems. Grammatical competence should also allow the student to comment on the syntactic structures which deviate from the norm. Since poetic language often contains deviant syntax, the student should unlock both the surface and deep structures of the sentences. Interpreting and describing the syntactic structures of the poems can aid the interpretation of the messages of the poems.

Major observations

Students in the experimental class:

- classified the parts of speech in each poem
- interpreted the contextual meaning of those unknown words
- described word formation in the poems
- analysed subject -verb agreement in the poems
- described the significance of tense in representing time and action
- analysed the syntactic structures of the poems
- identified types of sentences
- classified sentences which are deviant and non-deviant from the norm
- described word choice in relation to meaning and sound effects in the poems

Generally, in this section it was observed that the formal grammatical and syntactic stylistic features of the poems such as direct and indirect objects, dependent and independent clauses, prepositional phrases, tense markers, articles, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, verbs, demonstratives, prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions and interjections were used to develop the grammatical skill, which is also fundamental

in the development of the grammatical competence of EFL learners. Short poems can be used to teach grammar in EFL contexts.

1.1. Developing the organisational competence of EFL Learners

Linguistic competence should include not only knowledge and use of acceptable pronunciation and grammar but also the knowledge of how to organise the message. Organisational competence here refers to the ability to arrange morphemes, words and sentences to construct a coherent text. Knowledge of how to organise ideas should be imparted so that students can develop a skill in interpreting the organisation of ideas in a poetic text. To evaluate the organisational competence of EFL learners of poetry, the test included:

- a. lexical cohesion in the poems including reiteration and collocation
- b. grammatical cohesion including consistent use of tense and numbers, parallelism
- c. and foregrounding
- d. consistent use of cohesive devices
- e. consistent use of pronouns

In the poems, the reiteration of key lexical items, lexical collocation, parallelism and cohesive devices and consistent use of tense and numbers cohered the messages of the poems. While describing these devices, the EFL learners were also taught to write unified, coherent and emphatic paragraphs with variety of sentence structures. Students were instructed to use reiteration, collocation, repetition, pronouns, cohesive devices, tense and numbers consistently while writing two paragraphs on the messages of the two poems. Foregrounding was presented as a significant tool in writing a paragraph with emphasis. Students in the experimental group who were given training in reiteration, repetition, cohesive devices, consistent tense and numbers organised their own paragraphs more coherently than the students in the control group. The following revised sample themes were written by two postgraduate students in the experimental group with the help of the teacher:

Sample One:

Message in Bealu Girma's "Crows"

Bealu Girma's "Crows" symbolically presents the cruelty of human beings towards other fellow creatures and man himself. Crows, which symbolize human beings in general, assume both human and animal attributes in the poem. The satanic and divine attributes of man coexist within the boundaries of the poem. This binary coexistence is made more vivid through lexical items. Lexical items such as 'kitchen', 'morning feast', 'share', 'pray' and 'play' present the divine activities of man. Conversely, lexical collocations such as 'unfair', 'rough', 'astray', 'trivial', 'croak' and 'moan' are negative descriptions which present the wild and satanic side of humanity. In

the context of the poem, this wild and satanic cruelty is shared by all races from the 'south', 'west' and 'east'. The cruelty message in the poem is made more visible when the poem gives more humanly attributes to the birds in the poem. Birds like 'dove' and 'sparrows' are more accommodating and humane than some human beings:

*The dove and the sparrows shared their aright
And went their way, content and quiet*

When it comes to sharing and concern for the fellow creatures, human beings are less humane than doves and sparrows in the context of the poem. The theme of cruelty is also made more vivid through phonetic stylistic devices. The somber mood of the poem is intensified through diphthongs and consonant sounds. For example, the sounds in 'croak' and 'moan' exemplify a somber animal voice. In the last lines of the poem, the poet presents the main sources of cruelty. Human beings become inhumane to fellow creatures because they always think of their own spiritual and economic growth. The following lines show this selfishness:

*For the crows nothing is enough
Nothing is fair, all is rough
Crows must have all things their way
And live the rest astray.*

The theme of cruelty is consistently exposed throughout the poem. This unity of thought is achieved through the reiteration of 'crows' four times in four critical positions in the poem. Structurally, parallel sentences, parallel past and present tense markers exemplify the unity of thought in the poem. All in all, phonetic stylistic devices, lexical collocation, comparison, reiteration and parallelism present the theme of cruelty coherently in the wider context of the poem.

Sample Two:

Message in "Shifting Gears"

Solomon Deressa's "Shifting Gears" is a poem about unwavering love. Several linguistic and formal features of the poem accompany the theme of love. First, the title of the poem "Shifting Gears" presents two equally important states of the lover's mind. The gerund "shifting" shows the continuity of the poet's love in the poem while "gears" stands for change and power. In the opening, obsessed with insatiable love, the poet swims in a dream ocean thinking only of his lady. Silently his mind screams. This state of the poet's mind is presented through lexical items 'swim', 'dream', and 'insane'. These lexical items present the poet in the world of dream. The phonetic

sounds /m/ and /k/ as in 'swim', 'dream', 'scream', 'rack', 'black', and 'crack' are the musical accompaniment of the poet's repertoire of love. He is singing in his dream.

Secondly, the poet shifts his gears of love to the world of reality. The practical world of love is presented through the poet's chores of painting his lady. He wakes up from his dream and shifts his gears suddenly to paint the physical beauty of his loved one. Lexical items such as 'pain', 'colour rack', 'dots', 'curve', 'colorless', 'fingers', 'tongue', 'lashes' and 'loving face'. He is painting these body parts in the physical world.

The stages of the poet's love coexist in the context of the poem. There is the continuity of his strong love throughout the poem. Besides the title, some linguistic features signify the overflow of powerful emotion throughout the poem. First his overflow of emotion is supported by graphological devices. Several propositional phrases are deliberately and continuously used with a single full stop at the end. Like a river, his emotion flows through nonstop promotional phrases. Secondly, the pronoun 'I' appears thrice in three critical places of the poem to let the powerful overflow of emotions flow throughout the poem. At the opening, 'I' is used to present the dream world. In the middle, the pronoun presents the practical world. Lastly, the pronoun presents the poet's determination to continue shifting gears to maximize and energize his love and reach his final goal of fulfillment. All in all, the formal linguistic features of the poem become the channels to communicate the theme of love in the poem. In the poem, love flows, shifting gears continuously.

The texts

above presents major issues discussed in the experimental class.

Major observation:

Compared to the students in the control group, students in the treatment group:

- applied cohesive devices, reiteration and repetition while organising messages more logically
- selected relevant details and organised those unified ideas coherently
- used tense, subject-verb agreement and pronouns correctly
- used a variety of sentence types
- applied foregrounding techniques for emphasis

It was also observed that in order for the linguistic competence (LC) to develop, EFL students should develop their phonological competence (PC), grammatical competence (GC) and the organisational competence (OC). The following formula generalises the whole concept of this argument:

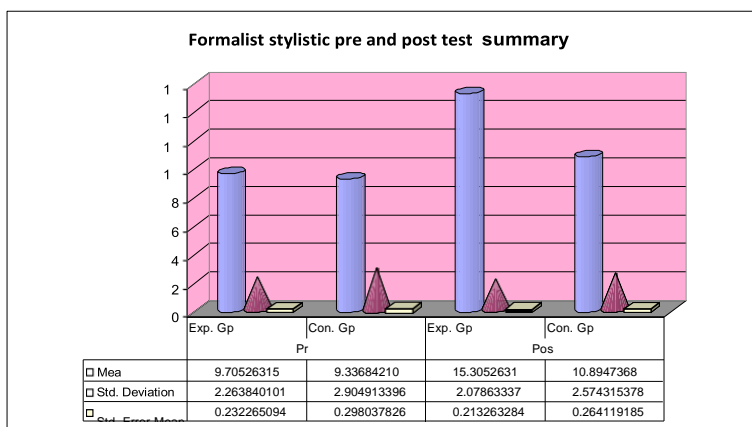
An EFL student with proper growth in linguistic competence should have a proper foundation in phonological, grammatical and organisational competence.

4. T-test summary for formalist stylistics tests

As presented under the methods section, postgraduate students in the experimental and control groups took pre and post tests in the formalist stylistics module. Each test was marked out of 20%. To determine the pedagogic relevance of formalist stylistics in teaching Ethiopian poetry in English, a t-test analysis using SPSS 16.0 was carried out. The bar graph and the table below present a summary of the t-test result for pre and post-tests in the formalist stylistics module.

Independent samples test for formalist stylistics

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|------|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|---------|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Pre | Equal variances assumed | 3.935 | .049 | .975 | 188 | .331 | .36842 | .37785 | -.37696 | 1.11380 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | .975 | 177.412 | .331 | .36842 | .37785 | -.37725 | 1.11409 |
| Post | Equal variances assumed | 4.258 | .040 | 12.992 | 188 | .000 | 4.41053 | .33947 | 3.74087 | 5.08019 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | 12.992 | 180.011 | .000 | 4.41053 | .33947 | 3.74067 | 5.08038 |



$$PC + GC + OC = LC$$

The bar graph above shows the total sample size in both experimental and control groups, the mean test score for both sample groups, standard deviation and standard error mean. As the mean pre-test score shows in the graph, both the control and experimental groups performed similarly in their formalist stylistics test which was marked out of 20%. The experimental mean score which was 9.7 was not much bigger than the control mean score of 9.33. Concluding from the pre-test mean score, it was essential to note that at the initial stage of the experiment there was no significant difference between the experimental and control group. It implied that the systematic random sampling method was valid and reliable as students in both groups were not expected to perform differently before the treatment was applied.

The table above summarises the t-test result for both pre and post-tests for the formalist stylistics module. The t-value of the formalist stylistics post-test as presented in the table above was 12.992. On the other hand, the table value of t-critical is 1.96 with 188 degree of freedom and at a significance level of 0.05. Because the t-value of 12.992 exceeded the t-critical value of 1.96 for the two tailed test at 0.05 level of significance for 188 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between the formalist stylistics teaching method and the improvement of the linguistic competence of EFL learners.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

The major purpose of this research was to discover the pedagogic relevance of stylistics practices in teaching Ethiopian poetry in English in a tertiary context. The study was pursued with the belief that Ethiopian literature in English can be brought to the tertiary scholarship and advanced learning in the context where the canonical literature has been dominating research and higher learning. With these objectives in mind, in this research process, the conclusions below were reached:

1. The inclusion of Ethiopian poetry in English can advance the motivation to learn and teach poetry. Ethiopian poetry along with African/American/British poetry/literature courses was found relevant because indigenous knowledge, indigenous wisdom and indigenous experiences of the learners and the teachers can be brought to the classroom scenario.
2. It was found that the t-value of the formalist stylistics post-test was 12.992. On the other hand, the p-value of the test was .000 with 188 degree of freedom and at a significance level of 0.05. Because the p-value of .000 was less than 0.05 at the two tailed test for 188 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis was rejected. The students in the experimental group performed better and developed their linguistic competence due to the treatment compared to the students in the comparison group. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between formalist stylistics teaching methods and the improvement of the linguistic competence of EFL learners.

5.2. Recommendations

Feasible, affordable and timely recommendations rely on sound research results to improve the situation of ELT in the Ethiopian context. This is mainly because sound judgements made on the basis of sound data can lead to affordable and feasible recommendations. On the basis of the conclusions and judgements made in the preceding section, the following recommendations are made. It is an exclusive responsibility of ELT curriculum and syllabus designers, text writers, ELT researchers, language policy makers, teachers and students who are responsible for the implementation of the recommendations. While making the recommendations, the beneficiaries are assumed to be also responsible in the implementation of the recommendations. It is their collaborative effort that can advance the betterment of the teaching of English and literature in English in Ethiopia. Therefore, all the beneficiaries of the research should work towards the fulfillment of the following recommendations:

1. *Introduce Ethiopian literature in English at all levels of ELT in Ethiopia.* Short poems, short stories, novels and drama can be integrated into other language texts at all levels. While selecting these local literary texts, however, the linguistic level of the students, the pedagogical objective of the course, the length and complexity of the text and genre representation shall be intensively studied. The students should take part in the selection of texts. Along with the European, American, Asian and African texts, more linguistically complex Ethiopian texts should be introduced at a later stage (tertiary). At the end, the course instructor should have the right competence to properly deliver the texts.
2. *Develop the linguistic competence (LC) of EFL learners through local literature in English.* In order for the students to appreciate the local literature in English, their linguistic competence, which incorporates the phonological, lexical, grammatical and organisational skills, first needs to grow properly. Local literature in itself is a field for the teaching of these skills as the research indicates. With the objective of teaching both the receptive and productive skills, short poems, short stories, short novels (or excerpts) and drama in English can be integrated with other language texts meant for the course. Through a formalist stylistics methodology literature teaching should go beyond the teaching of themes and figures of speech and develop the linguistic competence of EFL learners.

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