Impact of Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching on Communicative Competence of Secondary School Students in Gusau Metropolis, Zamfara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the Effects of the Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching on communicative Competence of Secondary School Students in Gusau Metropolis, Zamfara State, Nigeria. Pretest-post-test quasi-experimental research design was used in the study. The population of the study was 19,094 out of which four intact classes with a sample of 230 SS I students were drawn. The instrument of the study was an adapted oral test version of the English Language Speaking Test (ELST), tagged Students Communicative Competence in English Test (SCCIET). It was validated by the experts in Language Education at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. The modified SCCIET was pilot tested for two weeks. After the test-retest, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was computed and the coefficient of $r = 0.82$ was established. Three null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 levels of significance. A T-test was used in testing all three null hypotheses. After testing, all three null hypotheses were rejected. The findings showed that the experimental group performed better than the control group in English communicative competence. The study recommended the use of the Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching in teaching students because it develops proficiency in English language communication skills.

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Background to the Study

The settings of English language teaching and learning in a multilingual society affect Second Language (L2) or Foreign Language (FL) language proficiency. The first issue is Mother Tongue (MT) or First Language (L1) interference that manifested at all levels of language learning (phonology, morphology, lexis, syntax, and semantics) and the second is Second Language (L2) learners' restriction in the use of the target language especially after the school hours, especially by students in rural areas and some children of low-income earners. It is obvious that in school, students work within a different communication system from which they were brought up, to that which consists of different language structures (sound, inflection, syntax), content (meaning), and use (purposes of communication, appropriate forms of communication). Therefore, the knowledge of meaning, language function (pragmatics), discourse patterns, and more complex syntax are learned in a controlled setting.

There are different methodologies used by language teachers to improve their students' communicative competence. These methodologies were experimented and found worthy in one way or another. The Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching are one of them. It is an approach introduced by Harold and Hornby in the early 1920s and flourished up to the 1960s (Hussaini, 2015). It is a response to the Direct Method that flourished over the years. The direct method was challenged being monolingual, inductive, and demonstrative emphasizing much pronunciation (Hussaini, 2015). As an improvement over these components, Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching expatiated over the method to include situations in which students speak in context and be regularly utilizing the language to immerse it as a personal skill.

Concept of Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching

The term Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching seems to be separate terms at the base level but are used as an integrated term at a deeper level. The terms Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching when separated can be understood as: first, the oral approach is a set of assumptions and ideas about how second and foreign language can be taught. Second, situational language teaching can be said to be a method and technique about how the oral approach's ideas and assumptions are implemented (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Nehla, 2013). Nevertheless, both terms are usually integrated and rarely separated (Richards & Rogers, 2014).

Strengths of Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching

Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching has some advantages in language teaching. The utility of the approach is its suitability in introducing Second Language (L2) learners to the teaching of the language in context. In addition, it is a good approach suitable for teaching components of language such as vocabulary, pronunciation, accuracy, and fluency at the same time because of its connection with the situation in communication. Shih, (2011) identified the following as the strengths of the approach. They are as follows:

  i.   Suitable for introduction to the language.
  ii. Oral production without risk.

iii. Values practical grammar and vocabulary.
iv. An accessible method for teachers.
v. Inexpensive to use.

Weaknesses of Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching
Despite its enormous advantages, the Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching has some shortcomings which should be avoided in the English language classroom. Shih (2011) presented the following as the weaknesses of the approach. They are:
i. It is boring as the teacher faced the need to prove the situational contents at the right time.
ii. It is difficult for novice teachers who have to be skillful and be able to conquer the situation for language teaching and learning.
iii. It is condescending due to its limitation on the students' creativity.
iv. It Conflicts with natural acquisition whereby language acquisition also requires an innate predisposition that will lead the learner to a certain kind of linguistic competence.

Teachers' Guide on the Application of Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching
The following serves as a guide for the application of the approach in the teaching and learning of any language skills or components in the language classroom (Khalilova, 2021):
i. Individual Student: the language teacher shall
Assign oral activity individually in the first instance. Students are sometimes assigned an oral activity without a clear understanding of what is expected and how to be most effective. By taking the time to teach specific oral strategies in the context of your subject area, the student's confidence and performance are boosted.
ii. Pair work: the language teacher shall
Pair the students to share their ideas. Working in pairs provides students with an opportunity to "think aloud" about what they know, and a process for acquiring and reflecting on the information.
iii. Small-group discussions: the language teacher shall
Employing the strategies for small-group discussion by allowing students to develop critical thinking skills, build positive relationships, work cooperatively, and participate actively in their learning. The English language teacher takes time to guide the students to speak in the context of discourse every time they engage in discussion. This will boost students' confidence and performance
iv. Whole-class discussions: the language teacher shall
Arrange a classroom where students cooperate for language learning. Students learn readily while working in a group where there is cooperation, interaction, and a sense of belonging. By involving the whole class in shared activities, and by teaching students how to be good speakers/listeners, respect each other, and participate without fear, the English language teacher created room for maximum participation and minimized speaking anxiety for all students.
v. Presentations: the language teacher shall

a. Talk and explain as well as students talk their way into meaning and understanding through verbal rehearsal.
b. Have specific roles to fulfill and participate actively in their learning,
c. The quality of presentations improves with effective instruction, practice, and support.
d. Conclusion

The language teacher shall consider adding a writing activity as a productive follow-up to some important points discussed in the lesson.

Communicative Competence

The goal of any communicative language teaching and learning method is the development of communicative competence (Savignon, 2002). This is because it is the basic tool for mental, emotional, and social development. It occupies an important place in communication, expressing emotions and thoughts, integrating with the outer world, and human interaction. Therefore, communicative competence is regarded as an interaction of the grammatical (formally possible), psycholinguistic (implementation feasibility), sociocultural (contextually appropriate), and probabilistic (actually done) systems of language. Hymes in Sabri (2018) pointed out that communicative competence doesn't only represent grammatical competence but also sociolinguistics, strategic, discourse, and pragmatics competence. Therefore, communicative competence refers to the psychological, social, and cultural rules which disciplined the use of speech in social settings.

Theoretical Underpinning

This study employed the Stimulus Response theory (SR-Theory). The approach was grounded on the Behaviorist theory of language learning of Skinner and Pavlov. It was built on Stimulus-Response that addressed primarily the process rather than the condition of learning. The process identified that students receive the language inputs and then store them in their memory and through regular practice, it becomes a personal skill.

Situational Language Teaching is a behaviorist approach that is based on instructional modalities through an inductive approach. The approach focused on the derivation of the meaning of words or structure, not from the individual words, structures, and explanations in the native language or target language but from the way the form is used in real-life communicative situations. This means that the meaning is derived from the use of concrete objects, realia materials, and gestures of the speakers.

Review of Related Empirical Studies

There are several kinds of research conducted on the approach in different classroom contexts. For example, Christiana (2019), evaluated the communicative approach adopted in the teaching of language in Nigerian Secondary Schools. The study found that English language students face communication difficulties and that the communicative language teaching approach was in line with mitigating the English language communication difficulty of the Nigerian students. The study suggested that teachers of the English language need to be more proactive and less nonchalant in their use of the communicative approach. They also

need to implement appropriate communicative activities consciously to meet the learning styles and needs of their students in the Nigerian context.

However, Sani (2017), investigated the effects of the communicative language teaching method on senior secondary Hausa Language students' performance in Kaduna state, Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to: determine the effects of the communicative language teaching method on senior secondary Hausa language students' performance. The study found that there was a significant difference in the performance of students taught the manner of articulation using the communicative language teaching method in senior secondary schools.

Furthermore, Shekari (2015), investigated the effects of the Communicative Teaching method on the performance of students in the English Language in Junior Secondary School in Kaduna State, Nigeria. The research sought to find out if there was a significant difference or no significant difference in the performance of students in the English Language when taught using interactive teaching techniques in JSS. The study found that the students in the experimental group (taught the English Language in JSS in Kaduna state using Interactive Teaching Techniques) performed better than those in the control group (taught in conventional strategy i.e. without the techniques).

Statement of the Problem
There are hues and cries over the poor learning of communication skills and the overall performance of secondary school students in the English language in Zamfara State. Researchers (Onukaogu, 2002; Nworgu and Ellah 2019) have observed that secondary school students exhibit poor communicative competence and performance in the language. One of these problems is grammatical proficiency which manifests in the inappropriate selection and the use of English tenses in communication. The West African Examinations Council (WAEC, 2019) described the rate of failure of students in English language and Mathematics as higher in the national examinations. Therefore, the researcher thought that using Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching may enhance the communicative competence of students in the English Language in senior secondary schools.

Objectives of the Study
This study aimed to:
1. Find out the effect of Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching on the students' communicative performance in the English language classroom language.
2. Ascertain the effect of Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching on the students' communicative performance in English language social language.
3. Examine the effects of Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching on the students' communicative performance in English language process language.

Research Questions
Based on the research objectives, the following research questions are formulated to guide the conduct of the study.

1. Is there a significant effect between the communicative performance of the students taught classroom language in the English language using an Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching and those taught using a Direct Method?
2. Is there a significant effect between the communicative performance of the students taught social language in English language using Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching and those taught using Direct Method?
3. Is there a significant effect between the communicative performance of the students taught process language in English language using Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching and those taught using Direct Method?

Research Hypotheses
Ho1: There is no significant effect between the communicative performance of students taught classroom language using Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching and those taught using a Direct Method.
Ho2: There is no significant effect between the communicative performance of students taught social language using Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching and those taught using the Direct Method.
Ho3: There is no significant effect between the communicative performance of students taught process language using Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching and those taught using a Direct Method.

Methodology
This study employed the quasi-experimental research design. Specifically, it is the non-equivalent, non-randomized, pretest-posttest control group design. The design was adopted because the students used for the experiment were in intact classes and randomization would disrupt the existing structure in the school, thus posing some administrative problems. Moreover, the study utilized the design for the suitability to the demands of comparing two teaching methods (independent variables); oral approach and situational language teaching method and direct methods on dependent variable i.e., the scores of students' performance on communicative competence.

Population of the Study
The total population of this study is 19,094 Senior Secondary Students from the 24 senior secondary schools in Gusau metropolis, Zamfara State (Zamfara State Ministry of Education Science and Technology, 2018). The subjects were aged between 15 and 17 years old. The majority of the subjects under study have the Hausa language as their mother tongue. They are predominantly attending public senior secondary schools and sharing the same curriculum. The participants' gender was not considered a sub-variable.

Samples and Sampling Techniques
The subjects of this study were drawn from 24 senior secondary schools in Gusau Metropolis. The researcher cannot study the entire population due to some limitations which include limited time among others. Hence the study purposively sampled four (4) schools: Danturai Government Day Secondary School Gusau and Government Girls Day Secondary School

S/kudu (Snr 1); used as experimental group and Government Science Secondary School, Gusau and Government Girls Arabic Secondary School (Snr I) were used as the control group. This is because these sampled schools share common characteristics with the population. Moreover, the researcher sampled one intact class from each of the 4 schools and came up with a sample of 230 students.

Instrument
The instrument of the study was an adapted oral test version of the English Language Speaking Test (ELST) used by Aly, Muhammad, and Abdel-Sadeq (2013). This instrument was tagged Student Communicative Competence in English Test (SCCIET). The components of the speaking rating scale focused on comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. Thus, each correct option of the component scored 2 marks. This gave a total of 10 marks to each question of the three variables under study (classroom language, social language, and process language). The instrument was validated by the experts in Language Education at Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto. The modified SCCIET was pilot tested for two weeks. After the test-retest, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was computed and the coefficient of $r = 0.82$ was established. The co-efficient obtained signifies that the instrument for this study is very reliable

Data Collection Procedure
The experiment lasted for eight weeks but the lessons were taught in six weeks. The researcher initially divided the subjects into experimental and control groups and all the lessons were taught by the researcher. The researcher requested three English language teachers (research assistants) to act as interview raters/interviewers in pretest and post-treatment. These research assistants were trained in using the rubric and the conduct of the test.

In the first week, the trained research assistants and researcher introduce the study to the students and conducted a pretest. The researcher arranged a schedule of the pretest to determine the groups' homogeneity. The pretest was administered by the 4 raters to students individually after their regular classes in the afternoons. To control inter-rater reliability, to some extent, one-half of the experimental and one-half of the control group were graded by one pair of raters, and the other two halves of the groups were assessed by the other pair of raters. Raters were unaware of the students' grouping (control or experimental). Each student was interviewed for 10 minutes. Following each interview, the raters individually graded students' performances by the standards of the existing SCCIET analytic rubric (a speaking skills rating scale).

In the administration of the lesson, oral approach and situational language teaching method classes were carried out for the experimental group and traditional method classes were conducted for the control group. The experimental and control group were taught the same topics but via two different methods. The researcher used the normal school timetable of 40 minutes per lesson for the two methods that is, the OASLT method and the traditional method, and the teaching took a period of six (6) weeks. However, a total of twelve (12) English language lessons based on language functions and situations were presented to each

of the experimental and control groups. At the end of the treatment, a post-treatment oral test, similar to the pre-treatment test, was administered to the same groups (experimental and control) to determine the significant effect of the methods. The same procedure used in the pre-test was followed in the post-test. Students took the oral test individually after their regular classes in the afternoon as they did in the pretest.

Data Analysis Procedure

This study is quantitative research, so it needs data analysis. To analyze the data, the researcher used descriptive and inferential statistics. Hence, Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 17.0 was used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics were used to answer all the research questions and inferential statistics via t-test was used to test all the three null hypotheses at 0.05 levels of significance.

Results

The result of the study is as follows:

Research Question 1: Is there any significant effect between the communicative performance of students taught classroom language using an Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching and those taught using a Direct Method?

Table 1: Summary of Descriptive Statistics of Mean and Standard Deviation for Classroom Language

Groups	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference
Experimental	126	8.11	0.63	
				93
Control	102	7.18	0.78	

Table 1 showed the performance of students taught classroom language using an oral approach and situational language teaching and those taught using the traditional method in Gusau metropolis, Zamfara State. The result revealed that the mean performance of students in the experimental group, 8.11, is higher than the mean performance of the control group, 7.18. Therefore, the effect of students' communicative performance taught classroom language using an oral approach and situational language teaching and those taught using a direct method was significant at a mean difference of 0.93.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant effect between the communicative performance of students taught Social Language using an Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching and those taught using the direct method?

Table 2: Summary of Descriptive Statistics of Mean and Standard Deviation for Social Language

Groups	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference
Experimental	126	7.79	0.90	
				0.73
Control	102	7.06	0.91	

Table 2 showed the performance of students taught Social Language using oral approach and situational language teaching and those taught using direct method in Gusau metropolis, Zamfara State. The result revealed that the mean performance of students in the experimental group, 8.05, is higher than the mean performance of the control group, 7.42. Therefore, the effect of students' communicative performance taught classroom language using an oral approach and situational language teaching and those taught using a direct method was significant with a mean difference of 0.63.

Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference between the communicative performance of students taught Process Language using Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching and those taught using the direct method?

Table 3: Summary of Descriptive Statistics of Mean and Standard Deviation for Process Language

Groups	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference
Experimental	126	7.79	0.90	
				0.73
Control	102	7.06	0.91	

Table 3 showed the performance of students taught Process Language using oral approach and situational language teaching and those taught using direct method in Gusau metropolis, Zamfara State. The result revealed that the mean performance of students in the experimental group, 7.79, is higher than the mean performance of the control group, 7.06. Therefore, the effect of students' communicative performance taught process language using an oral approach and situational language teaching and those taught using a direct method was significant with of mean difference of 0.73.

Testing of Null Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant effect between the communicative performance of students taught classroom language using oral approach situational language teaching and those taught using the direct method.

Table 4: Summary of T-test Analysis for Students taught Classroom Language Using Oral Approach Situational Language Teaching and Those Taught Using Direct Method

Groups	N	Mean	SD	DF	t-cal	p-value	Decision
Experimental	126	8.11	0.63				
				224	9.54	0.001	Rejected
Control	102	7.18	0.78				

Table 4 showed that at the post-test level, the performance of experimental and the control groups were calculated at $(T = 9.54, P = 0.000 < \alpha = 0.05)$. Therefore, the P-value (0.001) is less than statistical level $(\alpha = 0.05)$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. It can be concluded that there is a significant effect between the performance of the students taught Classroom language using Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching and those taught via Direct Method in favor of the former group (experimental).

H_{02}: There is no significant effect between the communicative performance of students taught social language using an oral approach and situational language teaching and those taught using the direct method.

Table 5: Summary of t-test Analysis of Students Taught Social Language Using Oral Approach Situational Language Teaching and Those Taught Using Direct Method

Groups	N	Mean	SD	DF	t-cal	p-value	Decision
Experimental	126	8.05	0.63				
				224	6.54	0.001	Rejected
Control	102	7.42	0.85				

Table 5 showed that at the post-test level, the performance of experimental and the control groups were calculated at $(T = 6.54, P = 0.000 < \alpha = 0.05)$. Therefore, the P-value (0.001) is less than statistical level $(\alpha = 0.05)$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. It can be concluded that there is a significant effect between the performance of the students taught social language using the Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching and those taught via the Direct Method in favor of the former group (experimental).

H_{03}: There is no significant effect between the communicative performance of students taught process language using an oral approach and situational language teaching and those taught using the direct method.

Table 6: Summary of t-test Analysis of Students Taught Process Language Using Oral Approach Situational Language Teaching and Those Taught Using Direct Method

Groups	N	Mean	SD	DF	t-cal	p-value	Decision
Experimental	126	7.79	0.90				
				224	6.11	0.001	Rejected
Control	102	7.06	0.91				

Table 6 showed that at the post-test level, the performance of experimental and the control groups were calculated at $(T = 6.11, P = 0.000 < \alpha = 0.05)$. Therefore, the P-value (0.001) is less than statistical level $(\alpha = 0.05)$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. It can be concluded that there is a significant effect between the performance of the students taught Process language using Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching and those taught via Direct Method in favor of the former group (experimental).

Summary Findings
Based on the data collected, analyzed, and interpreted, the major findings were summarized as follows:
   i.   Oral approach and situational language teaching is effective in teaching English functional language: classroom language.
   ii. Oral approach and situational language teaching is effective in teaching the English language in social language.
   iii. The oral approach and situational language teaching is effective in teaching English functional language for communicative competence. The Experimental groups performed better than the control groups in process language.

Discussion of Findings
Hypothesis one (1) found that the experimental group (OASLT) performed significantly better than the control group (traditional) in the English language classroom language. OASLT enhanced the students' ability to arrange their dialogue in a sequence to produce coherent utterances in classroom activities. Moreover, the descriptive statistics result revealed that the mean performance of students in the experimental class 8.11 is greater than the mean performance of the control class 7.18 with 0.93 mean differences. In oral English, the experiment showed the ability to control the ordering of the sentences in terms of the language students need to communicate in the classroom than the control group. Experimental improved in their knowledge of doing peer checks ("what do you have for number 1?"), checking instructions ("what page?"), requesting things ("can I borrow a pen?", "can I be excused?"), as well as seeking clarification. Henceforth, the study seems to answer that the students who were taught classroom language through OASLT can better their articulation per situation. This is following the findings of Shekari, (2015) that, students taught the English Language in JSS using Interactive Teaching Techniques performed better than those taught without the techniques and that of Sani, (2017) that students taught the Hausa language using communicative language teaching method performed better than those taught using the traditional method in senior secondary schools' students.

Hypothesis two (2) found that the experimental (OASLT) developed more English language vocabulary than the control (direct) in social language. This was illustrated in descriptive statistics that revealed the mean performance of students in the experimental class 8.05 is greater than the mean performance of the control class 7.42 with 0.63 mean differences and the post-test academic performance where the experimental group demonstrated some mastery in the use of appropriate registers in their oral discussion. They understood that every profession has some vocabulary or terminologies that are associated with it. They understood some lexicon of the English language that is associated with a profession like seeing a doctor in a hospital, talking to the teacher in school, etc. This study found changes in students' use of language for social purposes and appropriate use of language in different social and cultural settings. The learners were confident to make conversations among their friends. They improved in the use of expressions appropriate to the convention of the professional community like talking to the teacher in school ("Sir I like English language lesson"), a doctor in hospital ("Doctor I have toothache"), and in a barber shop ("please barber I want to shave my head). Therefore, this study seems to answer that the students who were taught social language through OASLT in context form can better their lexicon and word choice in discourse making. This result agrees with the findings of the study by Christiana, (2019) that, CLT learning activities are helpful for language learning. The researchers found that the students with the situational mishap support had a better learning performance and improved behaviors.

However, hypothesis three (3) found that the experimental group (OASLT) performed significantly better than the control group (direct) in process language as well as descriptive statistics result revealed that the mean performance of students in the experimental class 7.79 is greater than the mean performance of the control class 7.06. Therefore, with a 0.73 mean difference, the experimental students were able to organize their dialogue in a sequence to produce a coherent stretch of utterances, link words, and conjunctions (first, secondly, then, often that, etc.). This includes their ability to control the ordering of the sentences in terms of topic and sequencing. They demonstrated some improvement in their ability to structure and manage dialogue in terms of thematic organization, coherence, cohesion, logical ordering, style, and registers. They improved in their communication in the community because they showed some ability to structure information under the observance of macro-functions (description, request, explanation, etc.), how to give a direction, how to borrow a book in the library, and how to use a computer. This finding is following the finding of Christiana (2019) that the communicative approach is effective in teaching language in Nigerian secondary schools and teachers need to implement appropriate communicative activities consciously to meet the learning styles and needs of their students in the Nigerian context.

Conclusion
The following conclusions were drawn from the findings of the study:
  i.   The oral approach and situational language teaching method is an effective method for teaching the English language classroom language in secondary schools.
  ii.   The oral approach and situational language teaching method is better than the Direct Method in social language.

iii. There is a significant difference in the communicative performance of students taught functional language (classroom language, social language, and process language) using oral approach and situational language teaching method and those taught using direct method in Gusau metropolis, Zamfara State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from this research, the following recommendations are made:

i. Teachers of the English Language in rural and urban settings should thoroughly study the oral approach and situational language teaching. The method develops proficiency in English language speaking skills and reduces the level of speaking anxiety and makes the student an active participant in the class activity.

ii. Curriculum planners should include an oral approach and situational language teaching in teaching the English language at secondary school.

iii. More effective training through workshops, seminars, conferences, and in-service courses on how to implement the oral method may help to give teachers more support in trying to implement the oral approach in their classroom lessons

Implications of the Study

i. The oral approach and situational language teaching as found here can be effective and serve as an alternative method to the direct method because it is a core method that students are allowed to practice on their own (that is, independently).

ii. Speaking instruction in the context of the situation, in any case, is rarely adopted in the secondary schools' classrooms in Nigeria. Thus, incorporating the oral approach and situational language teaching into senior secondary schools' classrooms would be beneficial in implementing communicative language teaching and learning.

iii. This research may contribute to the existing literature by providing reference materials for English language teachers and researchers.

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