ENHANCING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ENGLISH LITERATURE KNOWLEDGE THROUGH SENTENCE STRUCTURES: A "DIGITAL DIVE" OVER "TRADITIONAL TRY"

Mahalingasivam Somathasan*

Department of Languages, Eastern University, Sri Lanka

*Corresponding author: msomathasan@yahoo.com

Abstract

Conventional English literature pedagogy frequently isolates syntactic study from literary analysis, leaving language learners struggling to parse sentence structures within poetic texts. To address this pedagogical gap, this study evaluated the efficacy of *SynLit* (Syntax in Literature), a custom educational software application developed using Visual Basic 6 to facilitate interactive, pattern-focused learning. *SynLit* integrates structured Learning Modules with self-paced Testing Modules offering automated feedback, accommodating students across diverse proficiency levels. Employing a single-group pretest–post-test quantitative design, the study sampled 25 second-year B.A. undergraduate students from the Department of Languages at Eastern University, Sri Lanka (EUSL). The instructional corpus comprised 60 poetic lines categorized across seven core simple sentence patterns. Following a paper-based baseline pretest under conventional instruction (Phase 1), participants completed a one-week practice intervention using *SynLit* (Phase 2), concluded by a digitally administered post-test (Phase 3). Quantitative analysis revealed a substantial performance gain, with mean scores rising from a pretest baseline of 34.80 (SD = 13.11) to a post-test score of 62.00 (SD = 13.00), representing a net mean improvement of 27.20 marks. The stable standard deviation underscores uniform learning enhancement across the cohort, while post-test score distributions shifted dramatically with zero failing scores (0–39 range) and 36% of participants achieving 70 marks or higher. These findings demonstrate that integrating researcher-developed, pattern-focused digital tools significantly improves undergraduates' syntactic recognition and structural analysis of poetic texts, highlighting the transformative potential of educational technology in literature instruction.

Keywords: literature, sentence patterns, EUSL, traditional method, computational tool