

Exploring the Perceived Benefits of Studying Literature for Algerian EFL University Students: A Cluster Analysis

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Abstract:

Reading literature provides manifold benefits beyond language development. This study explores Algerian EFL students' perceptions of studying literature, focusing on six aspects: language progress, personal growth, interpersonal skills, cultural understanding, literary proficiency, and cognitive development. Surveying 73 Algerian university students, results reject the null hypothesis on 13 items out of 24 in the one-sample Wilcoxon signed-rank test. Cluster analysis identifies two distinct student groups based on perceptions. Findings highlight the need for tailored literature curricula and instruction for Algerian EFL students. Educators should expose students to a range of literature-based activities, placing emphasis on writing skills and literary argumentation.

Keywords: Literature, Perceptions, Algerian EFL students, Survey, Cluster Analysis

Introduction:

While there may be no consensus among scholars regarding the definition of literature, they unanimously recognize its merits in language education (Showalter, 2003, p. 21). According to (Bruns, 2011, pp. 11-33), literary reading is valuable because it instructs, provides pleasure, has diverse effects, acts as a transitional object, and enables cultural exchange. Thus, teaching literature offers benefits that go beyond the classroom, fostering personal fulfillment for educators and intellectual and emotional growth for students, while also developing transferable skills (Showalter, 2003, p. 23). (Sirico, 2021, pp. 33-47) categorizes the benefits of studying literature into three primary dimensions: linguistic, motivational, and sociocultural.

According to (Bruns, 2011, pp. 4-5), the lack of a clear understanding of the importance of literary reading can contribute to its

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marginalization and ineffective literature instruction, resulting in students perceiving it as just another academic task and lacking motivation to engage with it outside of school. Thus, the teaching of literature should extend beyond sharing books, constituting a rich and multifaceted journey that exposes students to diverse perspectives, sparks a passion for reading, cultivates language appreciation, creativity, and imagination, and empowers students to develop their individual voices as readers and writers (Beach, Appleman, Fecho, & Simon, 2016).

Numerous approaches have been recommended to support learners in studying literature. (Showalter, 2003, pp. 48-57) outlines various methods utilized, such as lecturing, facilitating discussions, modeling, and incorporating technology, each with its own benefits and difficulties. (Carter & Long, 1991, pp. 2-11) put-forth three main purposes or models for teaching literature: the cultural model, the language-based model, and the personal growth model. These models are not mutually exclusive and can be combined in teaching practices, depending on educational goals and student needs. Additionally, the authors make a distinction between process-based and product-based pedagogies in literature instruction.

Likewise, (Beach, Appleman, Fecho, & Simon, 2016, pp. 6-10) delve into various theories of teaching literature, including transmission theories that focus on the teacher's expertise and knowledge transmission, student-centered theories that prioritize student choice and autonomy, and the socio-cultural learning theory that emphasizes the importance of social activities and communities in learning. The authors also discuss literature curriculum activities that include perspective-taking, constructing social worlds, explaining characters' actions, inferring symbolic and thematic meanings, making connections, posing questions, engaging in problem-solving, revisiting texts through re-reading, and applying critical lenses (Beach, Appleman, Fecho, & Simon, 2016, pp. 11-15).

Nevertheless, (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2018, p. 245) emphasize the limited empirical research dedicated to investigating the claimed benefits of literature, with much of the evidence stemming from broader studies on extensive reading and FVR in both L1 and L2 readers. This observation suggests that there is a pressing need for more targeted and rigorous research to evaluate whether students truly perceive literature as advantageous as it is often claimed to be.

Within this context, our study aims to close the gap in empirical evidence concerning EFL students' perceptions of studying literature. It focuses on two main objectives. Firstly, the paper aims to explore Algerian EFL students' perceptions on the benefits of studying literature, including language progress, personal growth, interpersonal skills, cultural understanding, literary proficiency, and cognitive development. Secondly, it aims to categorize students based on their varying perceptions.

In pursuit of these objectives, our research seeks to address the following key questions:

1. What are the perceptions of Algerian EFL students regarding the benefits of studying literature, specifically focusing on language development, personal growth, interpersonal skills, cultural understanding, literary competence, and cognitive development?
2. How can Algerian EFL students be categorized based on their varying perceptions of the benefits of studying literature, as identified through cluster analysis methods?

Review of Literature: The Perceived benefits of studying literature

Several studies have explored the benefits of studying literature for language learners. In terms of enhancing language development and motivation, (Daskalovska & Dimova, 2012) argue that literature has the potential to enhance language awareness, creativity, and motivation, emphasizing its importance in language teaching materials. (Mustakim, Lebar, & Minghat, 2018) support this claim by demonstrating that literature-related activities can enhance students' comprehension and enjoyment, thereby positively impacting language proficiency. (Magulod, 2018) highlights the importance of various skills like recognizing the author's perspective and understanding text purpose, offering innovative learning strategies for enhancing language proficiency. However, these studies focus primarily on specific aspects of literature instruction, limiting the generalizability of their findings.

(Schrijvers, Janssen, Fialho, & Rijlaarsdam, 2017) have explored the impact of literature education on students' perceptions of self and others. Their findings suggest that promoting interaction and student autonomy in the literature classroom positively correlates with students' perceptions of themselves and others as literary readers. (Ahmad & Aziz,

2009) stress the importance of students' perceptions in the teaching-learning process and advocate for cooperative teaching atmospheres. (Chittra, et al., 2017) explore adult learners' perceptions, highlighting the benefits of studying literature, such as developing active reading habits and enhancing language proficiency.

Moreover, literature has the potential to expand learners' cultural understanding and empathy. (Torres, 2012) underscores the role of literature in developing language proficiency, cultural understanding, empathy, and critical thinking skills. Effective strategies, including class discussions and Socratic Seminars, are suggested. However, their research focuses on specific strategies rather than student perceptions. (Bagui & Adder, 2020) demonstrate the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) through the study of English literary texts, effectively improving language skills and promoting cultural understanding. Yet, their study is limited to a specific geographic context (Bangladesh).

For genre-specific benefits, (Tsang, Paran, & Lau, 2023) explored learners' perceptions of different literary genres, highlighting differences in their perceptions of short stories and poems/songs. They found both language-related and non-language-related benefits, revealing the richness of literature's impact on students' language learning.

Additionally, (Yılmaz, 2011) examined EFL students' attitudes towards the study of literature, with the majority perceiving it as beneficial. (Adama, 2022) investigated the perception of students in Ghana and found a negative perception of literature, which affected their motivation and language skill acquisition. (Berrarbi, 2020) discovered that Algerian learners showed more interest when literature was approached with a focus on EFL issues and cultural knowledge. (Sanchez, 2009) focused on EFL teacher trainees' negative attitudes toward literary texts. The study demonstrated that reader-centered techniques positively influenced trainees' appreciation of the literary experience. The contradictory results of these studies suggest a need for further investigation.

The reviewed studies provided valuable insights but also revealed significant gaps and limitations, including the absence of comparative analyses, narrow focus on specific aspects of literature instruction, limited generalizability due to specific student groups and settings, a lack

of research in the Algerian context, and a need for greater methodological diversity. Furthermore, prior research on literature integration in language courses has often focused on student perceptions of teaching methods, neglecting the students' underlying attitudes towards literature itself.

The present study aims to fill gaps and overcome limitations in existing literature. This study holds theoretical significance as it advances our understanding of literature's role in EFL education, particularly for Algerian students, providing context-specific insights. On a practical level, the findings have the potential to inform how educators tailor literature curricula and literature instruction to better meet the needs of Algerian EFL students. Methodologically, this study stands out in EFL education research by utilizing a mixed-methods approach, including a cluster analysis. robust statistical analysis Compared to traditional survey methods alone, this rigorous statistical technique attempts to uncover hidden patterns in student perceptions towards literature.

Methods, Results and Discussion:

To accurately reflect how a group of Algerian EFL university students interpret the benefits of studying literature, we chose to use the term perceptions instead of attitudes in the present study. This choice is informed by the understanding that several factors, including attention, motivation, emotion, personal experiences, and expectations, collectively shape one's perception of an issue (Ribeiro, 2014), (Dember, Epstein, & West, 2023), (Moskowitz & Gill, 2013). Attitudes, on the other hand, are influenced by other factors such as social norms, cultural values, and broader evaluative tendencies (Fabringar, MacDonald, & Wegener, 2018).

1- Methods:

A survey consisting of 26 items was developed to assess students' perceptions of the benefits of studying literature. This survey employed a 7-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). It was divided into six sections, along with a biodata section.

(Brace & Bolton, 2022, p. 80) argue that researchers often treat Likert scales as interval scales for the ease of data processing, despite

their technically ordinal nature. However, due to the potential pitfalls of this assumption, caution must be exercised in statistical analyses. To address this issue in our study, we utilized data analysis with a 7-point scale and non-parametric tests to strengthen our findings. The 7-point Likert scale is popular in survey research because of its advantages, including its balance of precision and granularity, compatibility with a variety of data analysis methods, capturing nuanced responses, and minimizing neutral answers.

A total of 73 Algerian university students enrolled in first-year master-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses were selected as participants for this study using a convenient sampling method. The participants were asked to complete the survey honestly and thoughtfully during a typical class period. The present study followed ethical guidelines, securing informed consent from all participants and guaranteeing the preservation of confidentiality.

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Age	18-21	1	3	4
	22-25	6	36	42
	26-29	5	15	20
	30+	1	5	6
Σ		14	59	73

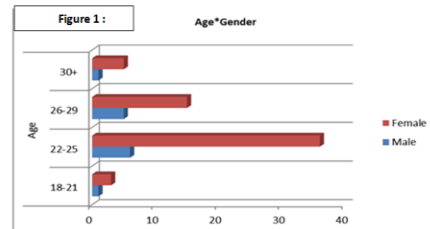


Table one represents a cross-tabulation of participants' biodata, specifically their age and gender. There are 14 males (19.2%) and 59 females (80.8%) among the 73 participants in the study. In the "22-25" age group, there are 6 males and 36 females, totaling 42 (57.5%) participants.

Data analysis using SPSS 22 includes several key steps. First, reliability analysis, where Cronbach's alpha measured internal consistency, ensuring survey items reliably measured the same construct, alongside assessing inter-item correlations. Second, descriptive statistics provide insight into each survey section through analysis of variance, frequency tables, means, medians, percentiles, and interquartile ranges. Third, hypothesis testing involves one-sample t-tests comparing partial mean scores for different reference values, and Wilcoxon signed-rank tests. Finally, cluster analysis visualizes participant response groups via hierarchical analysis, two-step cluster analysis for natural cluster

formation, and K-means cluster analysis for grouping students based on perceived similarity.

2- Results and Discussion:

Table Two displays that the survey exhibits high reliability, indicating a consistent measurement of the intended construct. However, there is only a fair inter-item correlation, indicating that some items may not be strongly related to each other. The significant differences (as indicated by the ANOVA results) suggest that there may be variations in responses among different individuals taking the survey. Sections one, two, four, and six of the survey show good internal consistency and significant differences in responses, indicating that these sections are reliable measures and discriminate among participants.

Measurement Component	Cronbach's Alpha	Inter-Item Correlations Mean	ANOVA (Within People)
Overall Survey	0.92 (Excellent)	.335 (Fair)	F (72.23) = 23.281. P = 0.000 (Significant)
Sec. 1: Language Development	0.762 (Good)	.474 (Good)	F (72.3) = 65.613. P = 0.000 (Significant)
Sec. 2: Personal Growth	0.697 (Acceptable)	.366 (Fair)	F (72.3) = 20.6. P = 0.000 (Significant)
Sec. 3: Interpersonal Development	0.532 (Marginal)	.276 (Poor)	F (72.2) = 2.430. P = 0.092 (Non-significant)
Sec. 4: Cultural Understanding	0.88 (Good)	.789 (Excellent)	F (72.1) = 0.000. P = 1.000 (Non-significant)
Sec. 5: Literary Competence	0.693 (Acceptable)	.284 (Poor)	F (72.5) = 48.407. P = 0.000 (Significant)
Sec. 6: Cognitive Development	0.751 (Good)	.377 (Fair)	F (72.4) = 1.525. P = 0.195 (Non-significant)

Sections four and five have lower internal consistency, and show weak correlations between items, indicating that the items are weakly related to each other. Section three and Section six display no significant variations in participants' responses. Section five, while having weak item correlations, does show significant differences, indicating that other factors might influence responses.

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Table 3: Item-Total Statistics				
		Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Sec 1	3. Autonomous Reading	8.757	.624	.675
	9. Vocabulary Development	8.248	.691	.637
	19. Writing Skills	9.291	.316	.859
	23. Grammatical Knowledge	8.281	.699	.634
Sec 2	10. Self-awareness	9.403	.540	.594
	17. Creativity Boost	8.807	.642	.528
	20. Self-efficacy	9.724	.426	.669
	22. Pleasure in Reading	11.031	.336	.716
Sec 3	7. Empathy with Characters	4.290	.442	.269
	14. Oral Communication	4.527	.313	.486
	16. Peer Collaboration	5.110	.287	.518
Sec 5	2. Form-Content Relationship	14.852	.519	.620
	5. Literary appreciation	14.448	.625	.586
	6. Abstract Concepts	14.303	.677	.571
	12. Literary argument analysis	18.059	.156	.739
	13. Text Analysis Skills	16.016	.428	.651
	24. Literary Theory	17.316	.231	.716
	4. Critical Thinking Skills	11.743	.502	.712
Sec 6	8. Articulating Questions	11.497	.514	.708
	11. Problem Solving	12.728	.445	.731
	15. Research Skills	11.101	.646	.660
	18. Skills Transfer	11.842	.484	.719

Table Three shows that the writing skills item has a low corrected item-total correlation (0.316), which suggests that it is not strongly correlated with the overall score of Section one. In Section two, pleasure in reading has the lowest corrected item-total correlation (0.336) and removing it would slightly improve the section's internal consistency. Section three items have relatively low corrected item-total correlations, and the Cronbach's Alpha values if items are deleted do not suggest significant improvement in section reliability. For both literary argument analysis and literary theory, the corrected item-total correlations are relatively low (0.156 and 0.231, respectively), suggesting a weak correlation with the overall score of section five.

Therefore, the survey could be improved by rephrasing or removing some items, or by adding new items that are more closely related to the intended construct. Investigating the reasons for response variations among different groups or individuals can enhance the survey, and conducting follow-up interviews or focus groups with respondents can aid in this process.

Table 4: Perceived Benefits of Studying Literature across Sections

Category	Sections	Grand Mean
Positive	1 : Language Development	4.0925
	2 : Personal Growth	3.9760
	4: Cultural Understanding	4.2603
Neutral	3 : Interpersonal Development	3.8995
Negative	6 : Cognitive Development	3.5753
	5 : Literary Competence	3.8699

The categorization in Table Four, based on comparing section grand means to the survey grand mean ($\mu=3.8995$), offers a concise overview of students' average perceptions in each section as "Neutral," "Positive," or "Negative." On average, students view literature positively for language development, personal growth, and cultural understanding, but negatively for cognitive development and literary competence. While comparing grand means provides a rough overall perception, it's advisable to complement it with additional statistical analyses for a more nuanced understanding of students' perceptions.

These findings align with (Isariyawat, Yenphech, & Intanoo, 2020), who reported similar positive views among Thai EFL students. They all recognized the benefits of literature and literary texts in integrating cultural awareness and language skills. Similarly, (Barzani, Meena, & Ali, 2021) discovered that students value literary texts for developing cultural awareness. However, (Hirvela & Boyle, 1988) found that course design often overlooks student attitudes and goals related to literary competence. While their surveys indicated some concern about language-related aspects of reading literature, this concern was less pronounced than expected. Interestingly, students in their study expressed a greater need for guidance in analyzing literary works. This implies that negative attitudes may arise, not due to a dislike of literature per se, but rather from a lack of confidence or proficiency in engaging with complex texts, or from the insufficiency of current instructional approaches in addressing the essential skills needed for students' literary competence.

Table 5: Perception Scale

Response	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Mean	From 1 to 1.857	From 1.857 to 2.714	From 2.714 to 3.571	From 3.571 to 4.429	From 4.429 to 5.286	From 5.286 to 6.143	From 6.143 to 7

By comparing the mean for each aspect with the critical intervals in the perception scale (Table 5), we can determine whether students perceive the aspect positively, neutrally, or negatively in terms of the benefits of studying literature.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics for Section 1 (Language Development)

	3. Autonomous Reading	9. Vocabulary Development	19. Writing Skills	23. Grammatical Knowledge
Mean ($\bar{x}$)	3.6438	4.7945	3.082	4.8493
Median (Me)	4	5	2	5
Interquartile Range (IQR)	1	2	2	2
$\Sigma\%$ SmD	41.1	12.3	63	11

Table Six shows that students have a neutral perception of the benefits of studying literature for autonomous reading ($\bar{x}=3.64$). The majority of students fall within the middle of the scale ($me=4$). Students generally view studying literature more positively in terms of vocabulary development ($\bar{x}=4.79$) and improving grammatical knowledge ($\bar{x}=4.85$). The majority of students have a positive view ($me=5$), with 50% of responses falling within the range of 4 to 6 (IQR) for both aspects. Conversely, there is a slightly negative perception of the benefits of studying literature for writing skills ($\bar{x}=3.08$, $me=2$). A large cumulative percentage of respondents express disagreement in the case of writing skills (63%), with 50% of responses fall within the range of 2 to 4 (IQR). It would be interesting to explore the reasons for the polarization in responses for writing skills.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics for Section 2 (Personal Growth)

	10. Self-awareness	17. Creativity Boost	20. Self- efficacy	22. Pleasure in Reading
Mean ($\bar{x}$)	4,6712	3,5753	4,2329	3,4247
Median (Me)	5	4	5	3
Interquartile Range (IQR)	2	3	2	2
$\Sigma\%$ SmD	20,5	46,6	27,4	50,7

Table Seven indicates that students have a neutral perception of the benefits of studying literature for creativity boost ($\bar{x}=3.58$). The majority of students fall within the middle of the scale ($me=4$), with 50% of responses falling within the range of 2 to 5 (IQR), accounting for 46.6%

of the cumulative percentage. Similarly, participants appear to have a neutral perception of the benefits of studying literature for self-efficacy ($\bar{x}=4.23$). However, the majority of students fall above the middle of the scale ($me=5$). This indicates that students tend to view self-efficacy slightly positively, with only 27.4% of participants expressing disagreement.

In terms of self-awareness, students have a positive perception of studying literature ($\bar{x}=4.67$, $me=5$), with 50% of responses falling within the range of 4 to 6 (IQR). Conversely, when it comes to the enjoyment of reading, there is a slightly negative perception of the benefits of studying literature ($\bar{x}=3.42$, $me=2$). A notable cumulative percentage (50.7%) expresses negative or disagreeing sentiments, with 50% of responses falling within the range of 2 to 4 (IQR).

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics for Section 3 (Interpersonal Development)			
	7. Empathy with Characters	14. Oral Communication	16. Peer Collaboration
Mean ($\bar{x}$)	3.7397	4.137	3.8219
Median (Me)	4	5	4
Interquartile Range (IQR)	2	2	2
$\Sigma\%$ SmD	43.8	27.4	41.1

Table Eight reports that students have a neutral perception of the benefits of studying literature for empathy with characters and peer collaboration ($\bar{x}=3.74$; $\bar{x}=3.82$). For both aspects, the majority of students fall in the middle of the scale ($me=4$). In terms of oral communication, although the mean ($\bar{x}=4.14$) suggests that participants have a neutral perception, the majority of students fall above the middle of the scale ($me=5$), which suggests a slightly favorable perception given that only 27.4% of students show disagreement. The neutrality in the aspects constituting section three could be a contributing factor to its weaker correlation with the overall survey, but it's not the only factor. To better understand the reasons for the weaker correlation, additional analyses may be needed.

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics for Section 4 (Cultural Understanding)		
	1.Intercultural Competence	21.Socio-historical Awareness
Mean ($\bar{x}$)	4.2603	4.2603
Median (Me)	5	5
(IQR)	2	2
$\Sigma\%$ SmD	32.9	32.9

The equal means for both items displayed in Table Nine suggest a neutral position, but the median of 5 falls above the midpoint, indicating a tendency towards agreement. The fact that only 32.9% of respondents show negative or disagreement hints to a substantial level of agreement or a positive perception regarding both intercultural competence and socio-historical awareness among the participants. The observation of strong inter-item correlations, despite a non-significant ANOVA, prompts consideration of other factors like sample size.

Table 10: Descriptive Statistics for Section 5 (Literary Competence)						
	2. Form-Content Relationship	5. Literary appreciation	6. Abstract Concepts	12. Literary argument analysis	13. Text Analysis Skills	24. Literary Theory
Mean ($\bar{x}$)	4.5205	4.7123	4.274	2.7534	4.1096	2.863
Median (Me)	5	5	4	2	4	2
(IQR)	1	1	1	1	2	2
$\Sigma\%$ SmD	19.2	13.7	21.9	76.7	30.1	71.2

Table ten reveals positive perceptions of the form-content relationship and literary appreciation, with mean scores ($\bar{x}$) of 4.52 and 4.71, respectively, and medians (Me) of 5 for both. In contrast, abstract concepts and text analysis skills elicit a more neutral response, with means ($\bar{x}$) of 4.27 and 4.11, and medians (Me) at 4. On the other hand, both literary argument analysis and literary theory are perceived negatively, with means ($\bar{x}$) of 2.75 and 2.86 and medians (Me) of 2. A significant proportion of the respondents have expressed disagreement or negative sentiments as to these aspects of literary competence, with cumulative percentages of 76.7% and 71.2%.

This finding aligns with concerns raised in other studies about the current state of literary competence. As (Gómez-Rodríguez, 2018) highlights, literary competence is multifaceted, requiring a complex

interplay of skills. This complexity makes it challenging to measure definitively, as different readers possess varying levels of ability (Witte, 2012). Similar concerns echo in the work of (Isenberg, 1990) who emphasized the cognitive processes involved in reading, suggesting that focusing solely on information retrieval might hinder deeper understanding. (Yarahmadi, 2016) argues that current teaching methods may lead to rote memorization instead of fostering true comprehension and analysis skills. The historical backdrop of attempts to define and measure "literary competence" lends further support to the idea of its complexity. The consistent challenge of this task lies in its systematic and multifaceted nature, which makes it difficult to achieve uniform outcomes. Thus, the negative results from this study regarding respondents' self-reported literary competence are not entirely unexpected.

	4. Critical Thinking Skills	8. Articulating Questions	11. Problem Solving	15. Research Skills	18. Skills Transfer
Mean ($\bar{x}$)	3.4795	3.5616	3.5342	3.4932	3.8082
Median (Me)	3	4	3	4	4
(IQR)	1	1	1	1	2
$\Sigma\%$ SmD	54.8	47.9	53.4	49.3	39.7

Table eleven illustrates that students generally hold negative perceptions of most aspects of cognitive development. Despite aspects of articulating questions and research skills having medians equal to the midpoint, it's notable that almost half of the respondents express disagreeing perceptions (47.9% and 49.3%, respectively). In contrast, skills transfer exhibits a neutral position, with a mean ($\bar{x}$) of 3.8082 and a median (Me) of 4, and a relatively lower negative cumulative percentage of 39.7%.

For the second stage of data analysis, table twelve presents the results of a one-sample t-test conducted on various survey items in relation to a test value of 3.8995, which represents the survey grand mean. The results are categorized into four levels of significance.

In the highly significant category, several survey items, including literary argument analysis, grammatical knowledge, literary theory, vocabulary development, literary appreciation, self-awareness, form-content relationship, and writing skills, exhibit highly significant

differences from the test value, with extremely low p-values ($p = 0.000$). This suggests that respondents' perceptions of these aspects significantly deviate from the survey grand mean. The direction of deviation can be either positive or negative.

Table 12: One-Sample Test			
Test Value = 3.8995, df = 72			
Highly Significant ($p = 0.000$)	Slightly Significant ($p \leq 0.05$)	Slightly Non-Significant	Highly Non-Significant ($p > 0.05$)
Literary argument analysis; Grammatical Knowledge; Literary Theory; Vocabulary Development; Literary appreciation; Self-awareness; Form-Content Relationship; Writing Skills;	Research Skills; Pleasure in Reading; Critical Thinking Skills; Problem Solving; Abstract Concepts; Articulating Questions; Intercultural Competence; Socio-historical Awareness; Creativity Boost;	Self-efficacy ($t = 1.954$, $p = 0.055$); Autonomous; Reading ($t = -1.925$, $p = 0.058$);	Text Analysis Skills; Oral Communication; Empathy with Characters; Skills Transfer; Peer Collaboration;

The slightly significant category includes items such as research skills, pleasure in reading, critical thinking skills, problem solving, abstract concepts, articulating questions, intercultural competence, socio-historical awareness, and creativity boost. Items in the slightly non-significant category such as self-efficacy, autonomous reading, text analysis skills, oral communication, and empathy with characters, imply that respondents' perceptions are somewhat in line with the survey grand mean for these aspects.

Table 13: One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Summary	
Null Hypothesis H0: ($Me = 4$) The hypothetical median equals 4	
Retain H0 ($p > 0.05$)	1. Intercultural Competence; 7. Empathy with Characters ($p = 0.061$); 13. Text Analysis Skills; 14. Oral Communication; 16. Peer Collaboration; 18. Skills Transfer; 20. Self-Efficacy; 21. Socio-historical Awareness;
Reject H0 ($p \leq 0.05$)	2. Form-Content Relationship; 3. Autonomous Reading; 4. Critical Thinking Skills; 5. Literary Appreciation; 6. Abstract Concepts ($p = 0.049$); 8. Articulating Questions; 9. Vocabulary Development; 10. Self-Awareness; 11. Problem-Solving; 12. Literary Argument Analysis; 15. Research Skills; 17. Creativity Boost; 19. Writing Skills; 22. Pleasure in Reading; 23. Grammatical Knowledge; 24. Literary Theory.

Table thirteen summarizes the results of a one-sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, which was conducted to assess whether the median values of various survey items are equal to a specified value of 4 ($Me = 4$) as the null hypothesis (H_0) or if they significantly differ from it. The test results are categorized into two groups: those where the null hypothesis is retained ($p > 0.05$) and those where it is rejected ($p \leq 0.05$).

For items such as intercultural competence, empathy with characters, text analysis skills, oral communication, peer collaboration, skills transfer, self-efficacy, and socio-historical awareness, the data does not provide strong statistical support for a significant deviation from a hypothetical median. For items like form-content relationship, autonomous reading, critical thinking skills, and others, there is statistical evidence to imply that respondents' perceptions or ratings on these aspects are not centered around a the median. Additionally, it's worth noting that for the item abstract concepts, the p-value is very close to the significance threshold ($p = 0.049$), which suggests a borderline result.

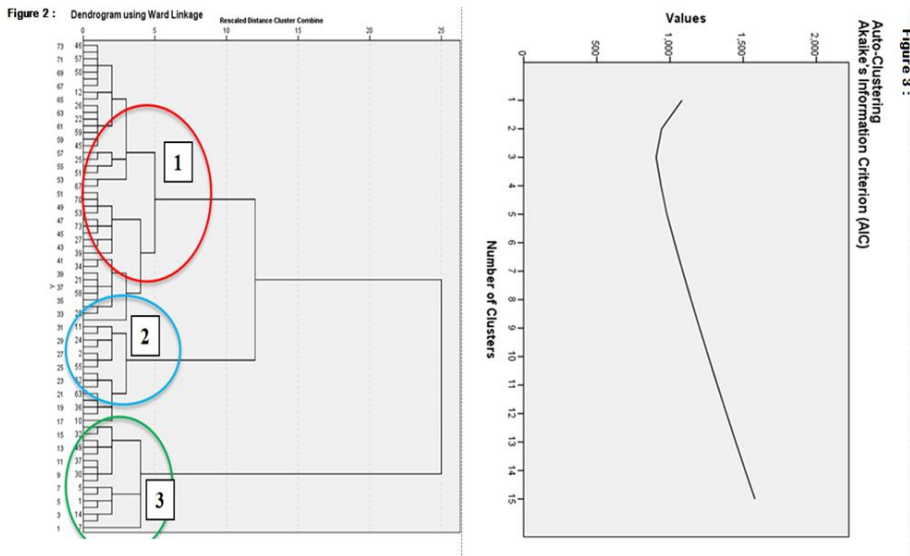
Items that Differ Positively	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Items that Differ Negatively	Mean ($\bar{x}$)
Abstract Concepts	4.43	Literary Argument Analysis	2.75
Form-Content Relationship	4.52	Literary Theory	2.86
Self-Awareness	4.67	Writing Skills	3.08
Literary Appreciation	4.71	Pleasure in Reading	3.42
Vocabulary Development	4.79	Critical Thinking Skills	3.48
Grammatical Knowledge	4.85	Research Skills	3.49
		Problem-Solving	3.53
		Articulating Questions	3.56
		Creativity Boost	3.57

Table fourteen summarizes the items that differ positively and negatively from both the median and the grand mean based on the one-sample t-test and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. It provides a clear overview of which items have perceptions significantly higher or lower than both central values of the overall survey.

The items that differ negatively in students' perceptions of the benefits of studying literature could be linked to various factors, including their prior experiences or exposure to these aspects in literature courses. They appear to encompass both social and cognitive dimensions. As such, an approach to teaching literature that combines social and cognitive strategies seems highly appropriate to address this observation. Incorporating social elements into the curriculum, such as group discussions, collaborative projects, and peer interactions, can help students relate to and engage with the material on a more personal level. Additionally, focusing on cognitive strategies like critical thinking, problem-solving, and articulating questions can enhance students'

analytical skills and empower them to explore complex literary concepts more effectively.

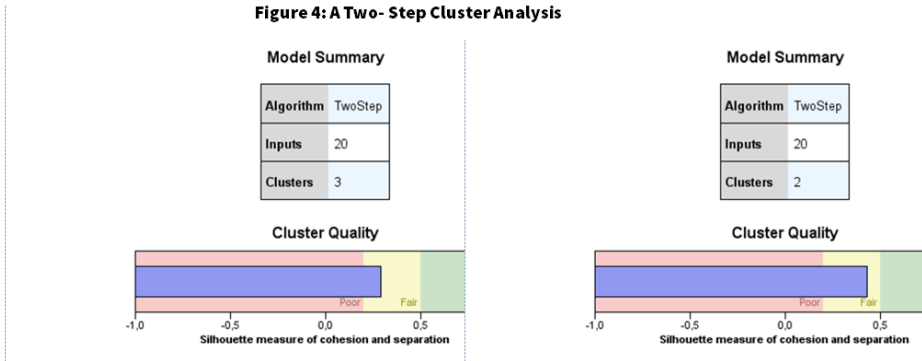
The dendrogram in figure two illustrates how the participants cluster together based on their survey responses the data. The height of the branches in the dendrogram indicates the distance between the clusters. The closer the clusters are together, the shorter the branch.



The elbow technique involves plotting the variance explained by the clusters against different values of k and looking for an "elbow" point where the increase in clusters no longer significantly reduces variance. AIC is a statistical criterion that balances model fit and complexity, helping to identify the number of clusters that provides the best balance. By examining the elbow diagram, we can understand the connection between the number of clusters and the within-cluster sum of squares. The elbow diagram in figure three shows a sharp decrease in the within-cluster sum of squares from 1 to 2 clusters, followed by a more gradual decrease (flatten out) from 2 to 3 clusters and beyond. This suggests that the optimal number of clusters is 2. In other words, the data is best clustered into two groups.

It is crucial to emphasize that the elbow method serves as just one approach for ascertaining the ideal number of clusters. It is advisable to employ various techniques, including the silhouette coefficient and the

Calinski-Harabasz index, to both identify the optimal number of clusters and make result comparisons. Thus, we conducted a two-step cluster analysis (utilizing the silhouette coefficient), as depicted in Figure Four. The outcomes affirm the elbow diagram's recommendation to classify the data into two clearly defined clusters.



The outcomes of the K-Means Cluster Analysis indicate the presence of two clearly separate groups of students with fundamentally contrasting views regarding the advantages of studying literature. An examination of the ANOVA tables, the final cluster centers tables, and the multiple comparisons tables using Turkey Hsd and Bonferroni methods revealed that, out of the 24 items in the survey, this model effectively identified two distinct clusters based on 20 of these items. This choice was made because it led to higher-quality results and showed significant disparities between the clusters. As illustrated in Figure Five, Cluster One comprises 20 cases/students characterized by predominantly negative perceptions, while Cluster Two consists of 53 cases/students with more positive viewpoints.

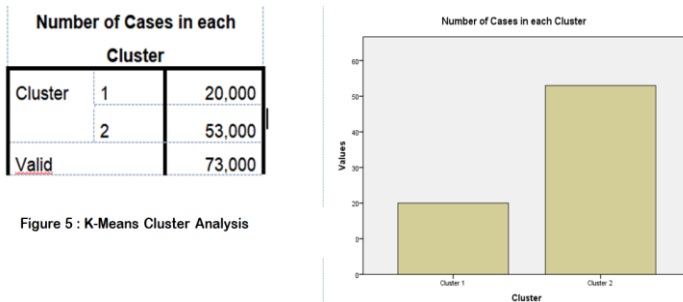


Figure 5 : K-Means Cluster Analysis

This distinction between two clusters of students presents an opportunity for valuable future interventions and research. A proposed approach involves subjecting the group with negative perceptions (cluster one) to a targeted training program designed to improve their understanding of the benefits of studying literature. This training could focus on areas or aspects of the survey where students reported negative perceptions. Simultaneously, a control group (cluster two) would not receive the treatment, serving as a basis for comparison. By administering surveys before and after the intervention and analyzing the data, researchers can assess changes in perceptions within the treatment group and compare them to the control group. The future hypothetical study aims to determine whether the treatment would effectively enhance students' perceptions and attitudes toward studying literature.

This study's findings highlight the importance of individual differences in student engagement with literature in the EFL classroom. It identified two distinct student clusters: those with positive attitudes and those with negative attitudes.

The curriculum and teaching methods employed can significantly impact student attitudes. For instance, students who enjoy literature may flourish with methods emphasizing close analysis and literary interpretation, while those who struggle might benefit more from approaches that connect literature to their personal interests or real-world experiences. For example, using graphic novels or incorporating reader's theater could spark their engagement. Furthermore, student literary preferences play a crucial role. Educators should strive to offer a variety of texts (genre, length, theme, etc...) catering to different tastes, ensuring there's something to capture the imagination of both clusters. This variety should encompass aspects like genre, length, literary movement, and theme. By providing a rich tapestry of texts, educators can ensure there's something that resonates with each student's individual preferences. Learning paces within the clusters might also relate to their perceptions. Students with positive attitudes may readily grasp complex texts and thrive on fast-paced analysis. Conversely, those who struggle might benefit from more manageable materials, scaffolding techniques (providing temporary support), and a slower pace. These adjustments can help them build confidence and enjoyment of literature.

Survey results suggest Algerian EFL students might not see the connection between literature and cognitive development or literary competence. Teachers can explicitly address these connections, demonstrating in practice how analyzing literature strengthens higher-order skills. The low perceived value of literary competence might indicate a lack of engagement. Interactive activities like debates, role-playing, or creative writing projects can transform analyzing literature from a tedious task to a stimulating exercise, shifting students' perception.

Overall, the findings of the study emphasize the need for a differentiated and flexible approach to EFL literature instruction. By considering the diverse needs of students within these clusters, including their literary preferences and learning paces, educators can tailor their teaching approaches to create a more engaging and effective learning environment for all.

Conclusion:

The present study sought to investigate Algerian EFL university students' perceptions of the benefits of studying literature across a spectrum of educational aspects such as language development, personal growth, cultural understanding, cognitive development, literary competence, and other dimensions. Besides, the study sought to determine whether natural groupings exist among students with different perceptions and to assess the feasibility of tailored interventions to improve their attitudes toward literature learning. Analyzing the data revealed discrepancies in students' perceptions, prompting an investigation into the underlying causes. Two student clusters with different characteristics have been identified, opening up possibilities for future research on interventions to improve their perception and engagement with literature.

The limitations of the study encompass various facets that might limit its generalizability. Firstly, the use of a convenience sample consisting of 73 Algerian university students may restrict its representativeness for all EFL students in Algeria. Furthermore, self-report surveys can introduce bias due to participants' inclination to present themselves favorably. Additionally, the variability in cluster analysis results, contingent on the chosen clustering algorithm and

distance metric, should be noted. Also, the cross-sectional design provides only a momentary glimpse into students' perceptions, making it impossible to track students' evolving perceptions over time or establish causal relationships between perceptions and academic outcomes. Lastly, the heavy reliance on self-reported survey data may not fully capture the intricacies of students' perceptions.

Future research on EFL literature instruction should focus on mixed-method studies. This could involve surveys to gauge student attitudes alongside focus groups or interviews to understand them in depth. Understanding their specific concerns can inform more targeted pedagogical strategies. Comparative studies exploring student attitudes across cultures and educational backgrounds would be valuable. For instance, how do EFL students view literature compared to ESL students? This might shed light on whether negative perceptions are specific to the EFL context. Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking student attitudes over time, like how EFL student attitudes change with proficiency, could provide a richer picture. Observing how they progress through the curriculum and experience different instructional approaches can reveal the effectiveness of implemented pedagogical changes. Further research on teacher perspectives is also needed: What instructional methods do teachers believe enhance student engagement? Do teacher and student views on the benefits of studying literature differ? Finally, the impact of technology on student perceptions and learning experiences deserves investigation. This could involve looking at correlations between specific technologies (e.g., interactive ebooks, online discussion platforms) and students' views on literature.

In closing, this study contributes to the ongoing discussion on the relevance of literature in EFL education. The identification of student clusters and perceptions lays the foundation for the advancement of pedagogical approaches and targeted interventions. Through a comprehensive exploration of student and teacher perspectives, future research can divulge effective methodologies for nurturing a fondness for literature. Ultimately, this can serve as a means for students to not only refine their literary skills but also gain acumen into the human condition and culture.

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