

Enhancing EFL Students' Language Skills through Teaching Literary Texts: A Case Study of Secondary Schools, Al-hasaheisa Locality, Gezira State, Sudan, (2020- 2021)

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ABSTRACT:

This study aims at: showing the importance of developing EFL learners language skills through teaching literary texts and increasing EFL students' motivation to learn English language. The study adopted the descriptive analytical method. The population of the study were the EFL teachers at Al-hasaheisa Locality, Gezira State, Sudan,(2022).The data for the study were collected by means of a questionnaire from (50) EFL teachers at secondary schools at Al-hasaheisa Locality who were randomly chosen from the population. Then the collected data were analyzed by (SPSS) programme (statistical package of social science). The study findings are: using literary texts in EFL classes helps students to master the language skills, utilizing literary texts in EFL classes increases learners' motivation to learn English language, using literary texts in EFL classes facilitates learning English language, literary texts broaden students' horizons and familiarizing them with the uses of EFL and teaching authentic sources helps to engage students in language discussions. The study recommends: literary texts should be taught in EFL classes, students should be motivated to improve their language skills and EFL teachers should select the suitable literature for teaching EFL students.

Key Words: learners' language skills, literary texts, students' motivation, broaden students' horizons

مستخلص:

تهدف الدراسة إلى تطوير مقدرات طلاب اللغة الانجليزية في المهارات اللغوية خلال تدريس النصوص الأدبية، كما تهدف إلى زيادة تحفيز الطلاب على تعلم اللغة الانجليزية خلال تدريس النصوص الأدبية. اتبعت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي كما استخدمت نظام الاستبانة كوسيلة لجمع البيانات من خمسين (50) معلماً ومعلمة من معلمي اللغة الانجليزية بالمرحلة الثانوية بمحلية الحساحيصة، ولاية الجزيرة، السودان (2022). وتم تحليل البيانات ببرنامج الحزم الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية (SPSS) لتحليل البيانات. توصلت الدراسة لعدة نتائج أهمها: أن تدريس النصوص الأدبية يساعد الطلاب في إكتساب المهارات اللغوية، تدريس النصوص الأدبية يزيد من تحفيز الطلاب على تعلم اللغة الانجليزية، أن قراءة النصوص الأدبية تعرف الطلاب على استخدامات اللغة الانجليزية كما يتطور لديهم الأفق العلمي والمقدرة على المناقشات والتفاعل الصفي. توصي الدراسة بتدريس النصوص الأدبية في صفوف اللغة الانجليزية وتحفيز الطلاب على تطوير المهارات كما توصي بإختيار النصوص الأدبية التي تناسب الطلاب.

1.0 Introduction

Teaching literature in EFL classes is useful if it is selected carefully. Literary texts can add both to the linguistic and non-linguistic growth of students. Therefore, training teachers on the use of literary materials in EFL classes seems to be very important (Hall, 2015). Teachers' perceptions towards the inclusion of literature in language classes and their competency in using it are crucial factors that require attention. (Zengin, et al, 2019), reported that the majority of the teachers held positive beliefs about using literature in language classes and indicated that the inclusion of literature can contribute to the students' cultural awareness as well as develop language skills (e.g. reading, writing). Literary texts can be valuable in the language learning process due to the individual contribution it encourages in the reader. Once the student reads a scholarly content, he starts to engage with the content. He is drawn into the content. Comprehending the implications of lexical things or expressions turns out to be less critical than seeking after the improvement of the story. The student becomes excited to discover what happens as occasions unfurl by means of the peak; he feels near specific characters and shares their passionate reactions

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Many problems face teachers and students such as the time given to teach literature in EFL classes is not enough. Moreover, students need to be motivated to learn English language

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study is planned to achieve the following objectives:

- a. showing the importance of developing EFL learners language skills through literary texts.
- b. increasing EFL students' motivation by using literary texts in EFL classes.

1.3 Questions of the Study

This study tries to find answers to the following questions:

- a. What is the role of literary texts in developing EFL learners language skills?
- b. To what extent do literary texts increase EFL students' motivation?

1.4 Hypotheses of the Study

This study attempts to prove the following hypotheses:

- a. Teaching literary texts in EFL setting improves EFL learners language skills through.
- b. Literary texts increase EFL students' motivation to learn English language.

0.5 Significance of the Study

This study directs the teachers' attention towards the usefulness of teaching literary texts in EFL classroom. It also highlights selecting rich teaching material that improves learners' language skills. For learners it provides to them enjoyment, exposure to languages varieties. This study tries to help teachers develop learners' language skills through teaching literary texts.

1.6 Methodology of the Study

The study will adopt the descriptive analytical method. The population of this research are EFL teachers and students in Al-hasaheisa Locality, Gezira State, Sudan (2022). The sample of the

Study are fifty (50) EFL teachers who will be randomly selected from the general population of the study. A questionnaire will be used for data collection. Then the collected data will be analyzed with the SPSS program.

2. Literature Review

Students' language skills also gradually improve as they engage with literature. Through reading literary texts, students can focus on both the form and meaning of texts (Hall, 2015). They can also practice and learn lexical and grammatical structures. That is to say, they can develop many skills at the same time. The following sections explain how literature develops four primary language skills: writing, reading, listening, and speaking. According Harris and Mahon (1997) writing as a cognitive process involves the creation of meaning in visual or written language and they emphasize that literature can significantly stimulate writing. The use of creative writing in English language teaching (ELT) classes is getting more common around the world (Hall, 2015). Saito (2015) emphasizes the use literature as a creative experience rather than studying an ordinary text. Reading and writing come together under the umbrella of literature because reading literature offers valuable linguistic input that encourages learners to write (Hirvela, 2004). (Kuze, 2015) stresses the positive effects of integrating literary texts into writing classes as they are motivating and enjoyable for students and effective in improving their language skills. Through literature, learners get the opportunity to engage with a variety of real life stories and different characters, which contributes to students' creative writing.

Moreover, McKay (2014) suggests that rewriting stories from the viewpoint of different characters, responding to the texts through "personal journals and formal essays" can be very beneficial for students' writing improvement. In a similar vein, Sage (1987) proposes different activities related to short stories such as making small changes to the ending of a story, or creating a new

ending and evaluating its possible effects. Collie and Slater (1987) argue that, through reading literature, language learners find it easier to remember both lexical or syntactic structures, and since literature provides learners with a rich and meaningful context to work with, they can recognize the different forms and functions of written language.

Reading literature is like opening a door to the world, and while it can broaden your horizons, it can also improve both low and high level reading skills through active reading. Literary texts can be very useful for triggering active reading which includes “predicting, connecting, questioning, clarifying, and evaluating” (Naji et al., 2019). Rather than being passive readers that wait to be spoon-fed, students, under a teacher’s guidance, can actively participate in the process of reading literary works. That is to say, they can be encouraged to actively interact with the text, learn to read between the lines and grasp the intended meaning behind words and sentences, make inferences, question, criticize, discuss and evaluate the text from different perspectives. These tasks can all contribute to the development of more complex reading skills. In addition to this, literature also inspires learners to do extensive reading for the enjoyment and pleasure it gives (McKay, 2014). As Hall (2015) believes that, nothing is more serious or more valuable than enjoying a good story or poem. Literary texts can therefore motivate learners to read more.

Students can also improve their listening skills when they listen to their teacher reading aloud from literary texts or using recorded audio files on digital platforms (McKay, 2014). Combining literature and technology can increase the richness of these lessons. Literary texts presented through audio books and audio recordings are, without doubt, a source of valuable listening input for students. Hearing stories and poems from a variety of voices and accents can contribute significantly to students’ listening comprehension skills. Activities asking students to listen for both gen-

eral and specific information can be beneficial for literature classes. While listening to audio recordings of a literary text, students' attention can be drawn to pronunciation together with intonation, linking, stress, and emotional tone. Also, dictation activities with short stories and poems can be a fruitful exercise for developing listening skills.

Moreover, integrating literary works in second and foreign language classes can also be very helpful in developing learners' speaking skills. First, literature encourages learners to interact with each other and, in so doing, enables learners to exchange ideas, feelings, and information (Saito, A. 2015). Similarly, Sage (1987) points to the importance of asking and discussing a variety of questions related to the literary text students read. These questions give students the opportunity to express their opinions, judgments, and beliefs regarding the text, and therefore practice and improve their speaking as well. Naji et al. (2019) suggest two types of activities that can be used to improve speaking while using literary texts. The first type of activity is called "choral speaking," which refers to reading aloud poem or literary prose, which can be good practice for "pronunciation, word stress, sentence stress, and intonation" (p.45). The second type of activity is called "digital remixing" and it is used for integrating music, images, and literary text so that it motivates students to

2.1 Motivating Learners to learn EFL through Short Stories

Literature is often more interesting than the texts found in course books. Having opportunities to speak the language may motivate the students to learn during reading activities of the new language elements that may be needed in future to communicate orally. Nunan (1999) mentioned, learners should be given the maximum number of opportunities possible to practice the target language in meaningful context and situation. Here short story provides this context. As short stories commonly have a beginning, middle and an end, they may encourage students at all levels

of language proficiency to continue reading them until the end to find out how the conflict is settled. Short stories holds high status in many cultures and countries. For this reason, students can be motivated and feel a real sense of achievement at understanding a piece of highly respected literature

3. The Current Study: Method

The participants of this study were the EFL teachers of secondary schools at Al-hasaheisa Locality, Gezira States, Sudan, (2022). A questionnaire was distributed to fifty (50) of them for data collection. Then, the collected data were analyzed with the SPSS program.

4. Data Analyses and Discussions

Statement (1) Using literary texts in EFL classes helps students to master the language skills.

Table (1) helping students to expand their linguistic and cognitive skills.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	8.0
	Neutral	7	14.0
	Agree	40	80.0
	Total	50	100.0

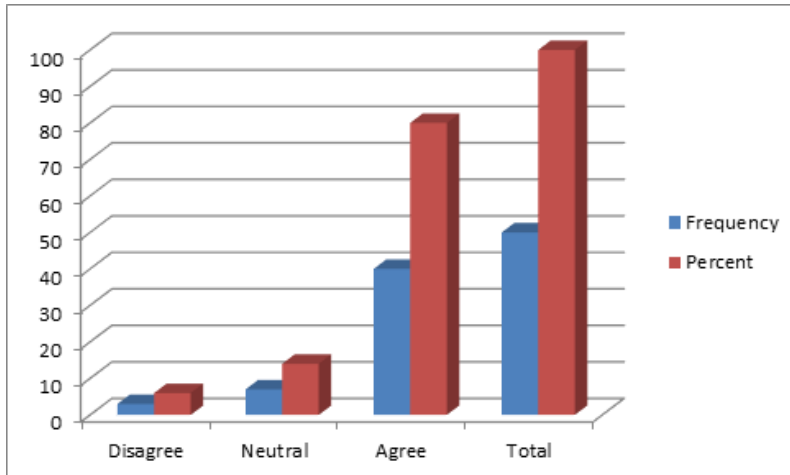


Diagram (1) helping students to expand their linguistic and cognitive skills

Table and diagram (1) show that most respondents (80%) agree that using literary texts in EFL classes helps students to master the language skills. So, this statement is justified.

Statement(2) Using literary texts increases students' motivation to learn EFL.

Table (2) increasing learners' motivation..

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	4.0
	Neutral	5	10.0
	Agree	43	86.0
	Total	50	100.0

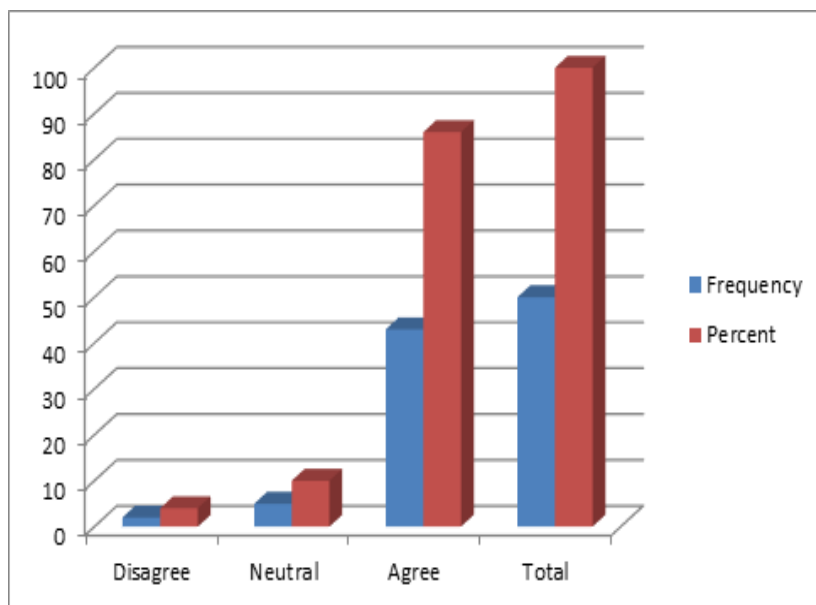


Table (2) increasing learners' motivation..

The analysis of table (2) shows that, utilizing literary texts in EFL classes increases learners' motivation to learn English language. (86%) agree, (4%) disagree and (10%) of the sample are neutral So, the statement is proved.

Statement(3) Using literary texts in EFL classes facilitates learning English language

Table (3) Using literary texts in EFL classes facilitates learning English language.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Disagree	4	8.0
	Neutral	8	16.0
	Agree	38	76.0
	Total	50	100.0

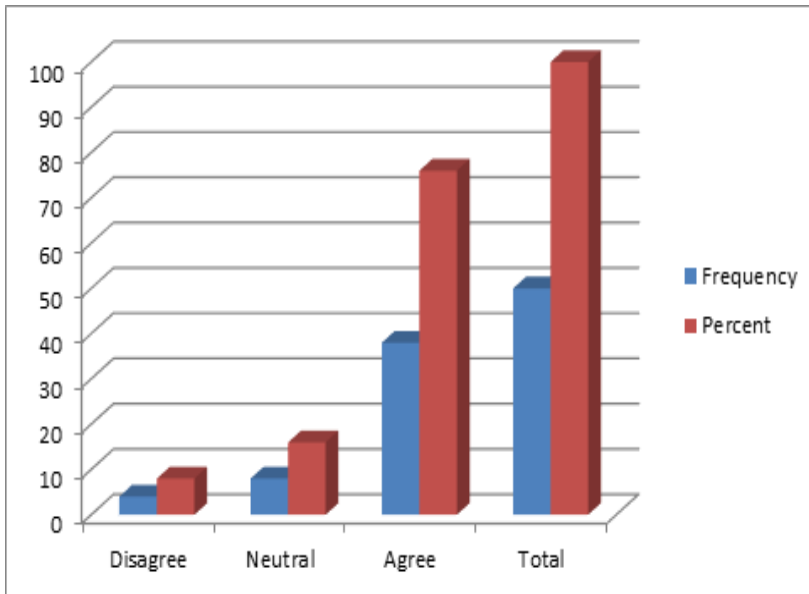


Diagram (3) Using literary texts in EFL classes facilitates learning English language.

Table (3) shows that using literary texts in EFL classes facilitates learning English language. Accordingly, (76%) of the sample agree with the statement, (16%) are neutral and (8%) disagree with the statement. Therefore, this statement is proved

Statement (4) Through reading literary texts students broaden their horizons and become familiar with the use of EFL.

Table (4) students broaden their horizons and become familiar with the uses of EFL.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Disagree	6	12.0
	Neutral	4	8.0
	Agree	40	80.0
	Total	50	100.0

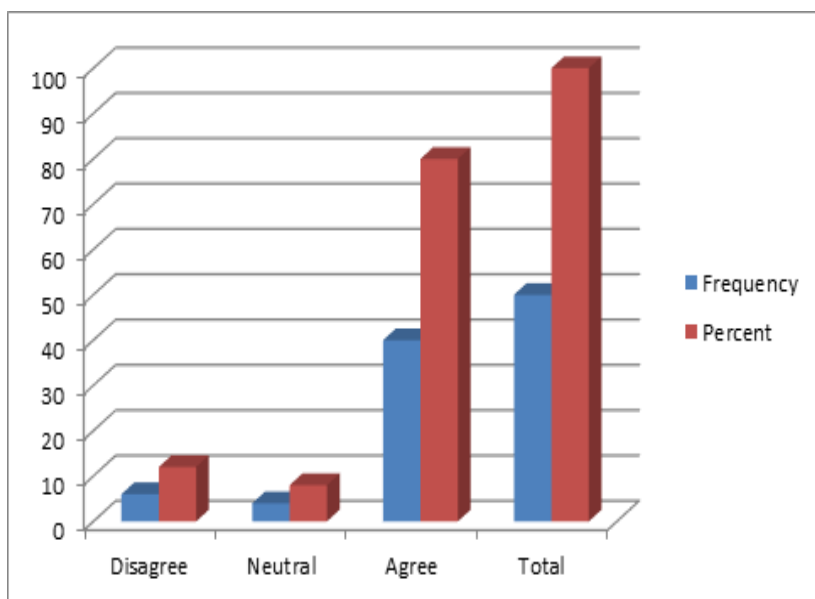


Diagram (4) students broaden their horizons and become familiar with the uses of EFL .

The statistical analysis in table and. diagram (4) show that most of the sample (80%) agree, (8%) are neutral and (12%) of the sample disagree that through reading literary texts students broaden their horizons and become familiar with the uses of EFL. Accordingly, the statement is proved

Statement (5) Teaching authentic sources from the native speech community helps to engage language discussions.

Table (5) Teaching authentic sources from the native speech community

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	4.0
	Neutral	6	12.0
	Agree	42	84.0
	Total	50	100.0

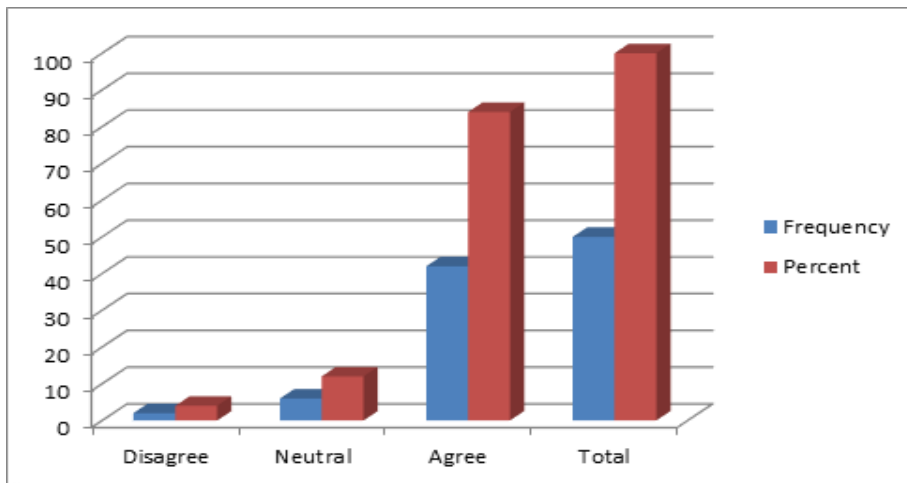


Diagram (5) Teaching authentic sources from the native speech community.

Table (5) shows that most of the sample (84%) agree that teaching authentic sources from the native speech community helps to engage language discussions. Moreover, (12%) of the sample are neutral and (4%) disagree with the statement, Therefore, this statement is accepted.

Statement(6) Literary texts arouse students' interest to the

running of events in the text.

Table (6) arousing students' interest to the running of events in the text

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Disagree	6	12.0
	Neutral	5	10.0
	Agree	39	78.0
	Total	50	100.0

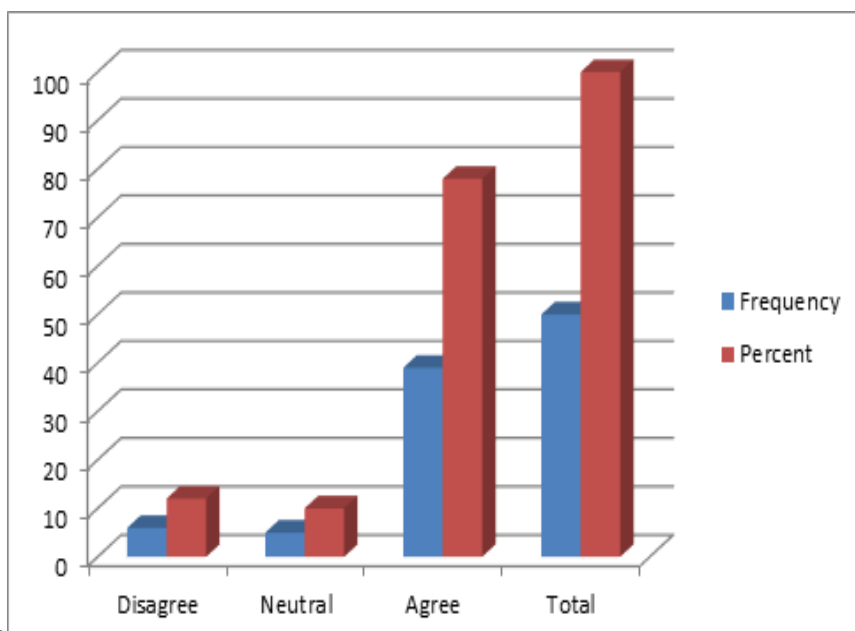


Diagram (6) arousing students' interest to the running of events in the text

Table (6) show that, most of the sample (78%) agree, (10%) are neutral and (12%) of the sample disagree that literary texts arouse students' interest to the running of literary events. Accordingly, the statement is justified.

5.0 Finding and Recommendations:

The study came out with the following results:

5.1 Findings

Teaching literary texts in EFL classes helps students to master the language skills.

2. Utilizing literary texts in EFL classes increases learners' motivation to learn English language.

3. Using literary texts in EFL classes facilitates learning English language.

4. Utilizing literary texts in EFL classes broaden students' horizons and familiarizing them with the uses of EFL.

5. Teaching authentic sources helps to engage students in language discussions.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommends:

1. Literary texts should be taught in EFL classes.

2. Students should be motivated to improve their language skills.

3. EFL teachers should select the suitable literature for teaching EFL students.

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