Improving EFL learners language Performance Through Reading Literature.(A case Study of Secondary Schools – Hassaheisa Locality – Gezira State – Sudan Academic Year 2021 - 2022)

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Receiving article date:13-05-2022 Revision date:28-06-2022 Publication date:05-06-2023

Abstract

Literature is considered as the back of English language, therefore, this aim to shed light in the possibility of developing EFL learners performance in English language through reading literature. The study followed the descriptive analytical method. The data of the study was collected by the means of questionnaire which was distributed to (50) EFL teacher from secondary school – Hassahiesa locality – Gezira state – Sudan and the (SPSS) program was used for analyzing the data. The study reached many important results: EFL learners can develop their language performance through reading literature, discussing literature in groups can improve learners communicative skills. furthermore, reading literature enables students to be exposed in the other cultures. Based on these findings the study recommended the following: EFL learners should read more and more literature to develop their English language performance,, EFL learners should discus literature topics in groups so as to improve their communicative skill and EFL learners should be exposed with other cultures and this can be done through reading literature.

Key Word: performance – literary texts – familiar – other cultures - Motovation

تحسين أداء دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية من خلال قراءة الأدب الإنجليزي. دراسة حالة: المدارس الثانوية – محلية الحصاحيصا- ولاية الجزيرة

المستخلص:

يعتبر الأدب الإنجليزي العمود الفقري للغة الإنجليزية لذلك تهدف هذه الدراسة لتسليط الضوء على إمكانية تنمية أداء دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية من خلال قراءة الأدب الإنجليزي. اتبعت الدراسة المنهج التحليلي الوصفي وجمعت بيانات الدراسة بواسطة الاستبانة التي وزعت

على (30) معلم من معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في المرحلة الثانوية – محلية الحصاحيصا – ولاية الجزيرة – السودان. استخدم برنامج الحزم الإحصائية للعوم الاجتماعية (SPSS) لتحليل البيانات توصلت الدراسة إلي عدد من النتائج الهامة: يمكن لدارسي اللغة الإنجليزية تنمية أدائهم في اللغة الإنجليزية من خلال قراءة المزيد من الأدب الإنجليزي، مناقشة مواضيع الأدب الانجليزي مناقشة مواضيع الأدب الإنجليزي في جماعات يمكن من كسب مهارة التواصل لدى دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية إضافة إلي أن قراءة الأدب الإنجليزي تمكن الطلاب من الاطلاع على الثقافات الأخرى. بناء على النتائج أوصت الدراسة بالآتي: ينبغي على دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية قراءة المزيد من الأدب الإنجليزي لتنمية أدائهم في الأدب الانجليزي، ينبغي على دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية مناقشة مواضيع اللغة الإنجليزية في مجموعات لتحسين مهاراتهم في التواصل – كما يجب على دراسي اللغة الإنجليزية الاطلاع على الثقافات الأخرى وهذا يمكن أن يتم من خلال قراءة الأدب الانجليزي.

كلمات مفتاحية: أداء – نصوص أدبية – مألوف – دافعية - ثقافات أخرى

1.0 Background:

According to powey (1967k) reading literature familiarize students or learners with subtle vocabulary usage and new and complex syntax and through this contribute to the extension of language usage and linguistic knowledge. Another advantage of using literature in language classes is the promotion of language use or communication especially in EFL settings. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to investigate the role of literature in improving EFL learners performance.

1.1 Statement of the Problem:

It is noticed that most that most students at secondary level find difficulties in communicating with others, some of them lack vocabulary to reveal their ideas, and others are not able to interact and express their opinions about the topic discussed in the classroom. Thus

this study tries to investigate the role of literature in improving language performance.

1.2 Objectives of the Study:

1) Casting some light on the importance of literature.

2) Developing students communicative skill.

3) Improving learners performance in English language.

1.3 Significance of the Study:

This study will be of great help for both English learners and teachers. It will also be addition to syllabus designers.

1.4 Questions of the Study:

The study setts up the following questions:

1) What can improve learners performance?

2) To what extent does literature develop students writing skill?

3) What is the use of groups discussion in literature classes?

1.5 Hypotheses of the Study:

1) Reading literature can improve learners performance.

2) Literature can help in developing students writing skill.

3) Group discussion develops students communicative skill.

1.6 Methodology of the Study:

The Study adopts the descriptive analytical method. The researcher will use a questionnaire as a tool for data collection. The data will be analyzed by using (SPSS) statistical package for social science program.

1.7 Limits of the Study:

The study is limited to improving EFL learners performance in English language through literature at secondary schools – Hassaheisa Locality – Gezira state – Sudan during the academic year 2021 - 2022.

2.0 Literature Review:

Introduction:

Literature is the core source of foreign language learning. However by the emergence of direct methods literature has been generally out of favor. In recent years literature comes back to language classes. Literature has been discovered as a valuable and interesting material for improving students' language ability. It has been found that if appropriate literary texts are chosen it would be an effective tool for simulating and achieving language learning and equipping learners with relevant linguistic and socio-cultural competences.

2.1 Definition of Literature:

Prior to using literature as part of ELT classrooms the teacher should pose the question: what is literature? Literature is defined as "*writing that is considered to be a work of art*", or as Longman dictionary of contemporary English explains literature as "*books, plays, poems, etc. that people think are important and good* ". The concise dictionary of current English defines literature as "writing whose value lies in beauty of form or emotional effect defines literature as" "*literature is a slice of life that has been given direction and meaning and artistic interpretation of the world according to the percipient's point of views*". This seems to be the most interesting opinion since the

writers express creatively their perception of reality, their feelings, dreams fantasies and experience in a highly subjective way.

2.2 The Role of Literature in the Second Language Teaching:

Literature and language are closely related and this is a fact no one can deny. Literature is constituted by language and it represents one of the most recurrent uses of language. Language and linguistic analysis can also be employed to access literature from the learner's point of view.

Brunfit (1968) emphasized the role of literature as "*an ally of language*". Literature has been a widely used teaching tool in different language teaching methods. Also Elliot (1990) claims:

> "*in the grammar translation methods, literature was the control component. Literature texts of the target language were read and translated, used as examples of good writing and illustrations of the grammatical rules*".

This means the focus of this teaching method was on form, on learning the rules of grammar and lexical items as they appeared in the text. There was no literary interest, nor interest on content. Teaching language literature was discredited as a too, because it represented the old tradition. The functional-notional method ignored literature, because in this method the importance lies on communication and they present authentic language samples. Literature was not considered either to have a communicative function nor to be authentic example of language use. In the last decade or so the interest in literature as one of the most valuable language teaching resources available has revived

remarkably. This is in consonance with the new currents within communicative approach that see in the reading literature the perfect realization of the principles, namely developing communicative competence, that is teaching learners to communicate in the second language and accounting for real, authentic communicative situations. Literature reading is no doubt, a communicative activity and literary texts. Many authors, reject the idea of the existence of a specific literary language.

2.3 Reasons for Using Literature in EFL Classes:

There are four main reasons which lead a language teacher to use literature in the classroom these are valuable authentic material, cultural enrichment language enrichment and personal involvement Collie (1987) point that: there are three main reasons which lead a language teacher to use literature in the classroom. They are valuable authentic material, cultural enrichment, language enrichment.

1. Valuable Authentic Materials:

Literature is authentic material. Most works of literature are not created for the primary purpose of teaching a language, many authentic samples of language in real-life context) i.e travel timetables, city plans, forms, cartoons, advertisements, newspaper or magazines articles, are included within recently developed course materials. Thus, in a classroom context, learners are exposed to actual language samples of real life, real life like settings. In reading literary texts because students have to cope with language intended for native speakers, they

become familiar with many different linguistic forms, communicative functions and meanings.

2. Cultural Enrichment:

For many language learners the ideal way to increase their understanding of verbal/nonverbal aspects of communication in the country within which that language in spoken – a visit or an extend stay – is just not probable. For such learners, literary words, such as novel, plays, short stories, etc. facilitate understanding how communication takes place in that country, thought the world of a novel, play or short story is an imaginary one, it presents a full and colorful setting in which characters from many social/regional backgrounds can be described. A reader can discover the way the characters in such literary works see the world outside. i.e their thoughts, feelings, customs, traditions, possessions; what they buy, believe in, fear, enjoy; how they speak and behave in different setting, this colorful created world can quickly help the foreign learner to feel for the codes and preoccupations that shape a real society through visual literary of semiotics Literature is perhaps best regarded as a complement to other materials used to develop the foreign learner's understanding into the country whose language is being leane..

3. Language Enrichment:

Literature provides learners with wide range of individual lexical or syntactic items. Students become familiar with many features of the written language, reading substantial and contextualized body of text. They learn about the syntax and discourse functions, the variety of

possible structures, and the different ways of connecting ideas which develop and enrich their own writing skills, students also become more productive and adventurous when they begin to perceive the richness and diversity of the language they are trying to learn and begin to make use of some of that potential themselves. Thus, they improve their communicative and cultural competence in the authentic richness, naturalness of the authentic texts.

2.4 The Role of Literature in ELT:

The relationship between literature and English language teaching has been rather a difficult marriage throughout all these years. There have been moments of unfortunate separation and attempted reconciliations which seen to foretell they will live happily for a while. Yet, one should not be oblivious of the years they have been through under the scrutiny of contemporary scholars and have a general picture of this.

However, all the controversies and different stances taken by linguists, literary critics and practitioners have not been able to hide reasons for incorporating literature into the English language classroom. Collie (1987) mentions that:

> *"literature is the language classroom as it provides voluble authentic material, develops personal involvement and help contribute to readers' cultural as well as language enrichment. These advantages they move on to assert, can be achieved provided teachers use relevant and appealing materials to learners*

through the use of activities that promote involvement, reader response and a slid integration between language and literature comment".

Teachers indicate that they use literature in their English teaching practices to improve student's general cultural awareness, simulate students' creative and literary imagination and to develop their appreciation of literature, to introduce students to masterpiece in British and American literature as an educative experience, and to add to students' knowledge of the world at large.

Cortell (2005) states this model:

"The first model in their discussion is the cultural model which represents the possibility literature brings into the picture as regards, the understanding appreciation of different cultures and ideologies together with the developing of one's perception of feeling and artistic forms. Their second model is the language model. This model emphases the fact that language is the literary medium and that literature could be seen as an instrument to teach specific vocabulary and structures. Last, model emails".

With regards to this last model, I personally interpret this aspect as one which covers the precious two since cultural understanding presupposes some cultural knowledge and in order to engage with a text and evaluate it one must resort to language to achieve such a purpose. Even though to general categories are put forward. Lazar

(1993) asserts that: *"literature should be seen as an invaluable resource of motivating, material and as a bridge to provide access to cultural background"*. Literature moves on to say, encourages language acquisition, expands students' language awareness and interpretation abilities, claims which might be connected to the role of stylistics in the study of literary texts, Lazar (1993), it educates the whole person, position which resembles the personal growth model described above. Building on previous reasons for the teaching of literature in a second language.: "*to provides a good model for good writing, it is memorable, non-brivial and challenging, and it also helps assimilate the rhythms of a language, therefore, facilitating intelligence and sensibility training*". Last, it is further claimed that: "*literature helps enhance the psycholinguistic aspect of language learning as it focuses on form and discourse processing skills and improves vocabulary expansion and reading skills*". Literature in addition, has experienced a revival with advent of communicative approach in language teaching as it provides learners with authentic, pleasurable and cultural material. The same justifications outlined above could be also used to justify the incorporation of a novel as one type of literary text in our syllabus course plan.

2.5 The Importance of Literature to English Learners:

Literature provides students with an incomparability rich source of authentic material over a wide range of registers. Erkaya (2005) mention that:

> *"Literature helps students acquire a native-like competences in English, express their ideas in good English, learn the features of modern English, learn how the English linguistic system is used for communication, see how idiomatic expressions are used, speak clearly, precisely, and concisely, and become more proficient to English as well as become creative, critical, and analytical learners".*

Thus "*literature can open horizon of possibility, allowing students to question, interpret, connect and explore*". Literature provide students with an incompatible rich source of authentic material over a wide range of registers. If students can gain access to this material by developing literary competence, then they can effectively internalize the language at a high level. Elliot (1990) states:

> *"for students with verbal/linguistic intelligence, the language teachers' using literature in a foreign language class sense for creating a highly motivating amusing and lively lesson. Literature is not only a tool for developing the written and oral skills of the students in the target language, but also is a window opening into the culture of the target language, building up a cultural competence in students".*

Literature is like a window opening into all world's culture, it widen student knowledge and make them fully aware about what is happening in the worlda round them just through reading a novel.

3.1 Sample of the Study

The sample of this study consisted of 50 Sudanese EFL teachers at the department of English language from – Hassaheisa Locality - Gezira state high secondary schools – Sudan.

3.2 Tools of Data Collection

The information was collected through a self administered questionnaire distributed personally to the subject of this study, and it was analysed by using statistical package for social program (SPSS) .

3. 3 Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire

i. Reliability

Reliability is a term that used when the assessment tool has the ability to perform accurately its intended purpose when it is applied again over time. The basic idea of reliability as stated by Huck and Cornier (1996:76) is summed up by the world consistency. The same thought on reliability has also granted before by Black and Champion (1976: 232) as "ability to measure consistently". The consistency here, is simply used to mean that the same questionnaire gives same outcome when it is repeated again, so it is a consistency of the results. A number of methods have been adopted in measuring the reliability, the researcher uses the "Split-half reliability" method. First, the common measure of correlation "Pearson's Correlation Coefficient" is applied with its following formula:

$$R\,xy = \frac{N \sum X\,Y - \sum X \sum Y}{\sqrt{[N \sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2]\,[N \sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2]}}$$

Where

r = correlation

R= Reliability of the test

N: number of all items in the test

X: odd scores

Y: even scores

∑: sum

R = 2*r/1+r

Val = $\sqrt{\text{reliability}}$

Correlation = 0.75

R = $\frac{2*r}{1+r}$ = $\frac{2(0.75)}{1+0.75}$ = $\frac{1.5}{1.75}$

Reliability = 0.86

Based on this statistical result, it is clear that the questionnaire has adequate reliability.

ii Validity:

The implementation of validity based on the presence of reliability; that is, if a questionnaire is unreliable, it is not possible to proof its validity. "Reliability analysis is often viewed as a first-step in the test validation process" (Wells and Wollack, 2003: .“Spearman-Brown” constitute a formula which is applied (based on the calculation of reliability) to calculate the validity (v), it is simply:

v = $\sqrt{r}$

v = $\sqrt{0.86}$ = 0.88

This statistical result reflects an ideal questionnaire validity.

4.0 Data analysis and Discussion:

Statement (1) Learners can develop their language performance through reading literature.

Table (4.1)

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	35	70.0
Disagree	15	30.0
Total	50	100.0

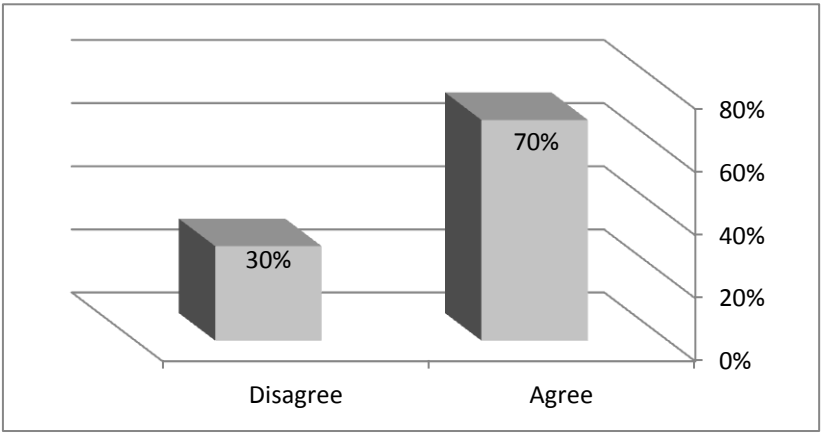


Figure (4.1)

From the above table the majority of the respondents (70%) agree that learners can develop their language performance through reading literature, whereas, (30%) disagree with the statement, therefore, this statement is accepted.

Statement (2) Teaching Literature improves EFL learners Writing Skills.

Table (4.2)

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	40	80.0
Disagree	10	20.0
Total	50	100.0

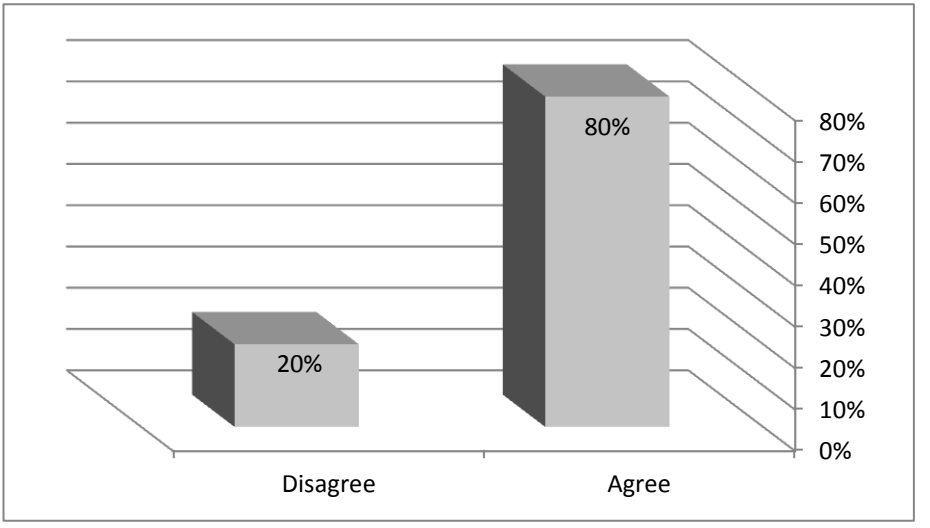


Figure (4.2)

The above table shows that (80%) of the respondents agree that teaching literature improves EFL learners writing skills. Whereas, (20%) only disagree with statement. This emphases that the teaching literature improves EFL learners writing skills. Thus this statement is accepted.

Statement (3) Reading Literature smallest Text Motivates learners to read further.

Table (4.3)

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	35	70.0
Disagree	15	30.0
Total	50	100.0

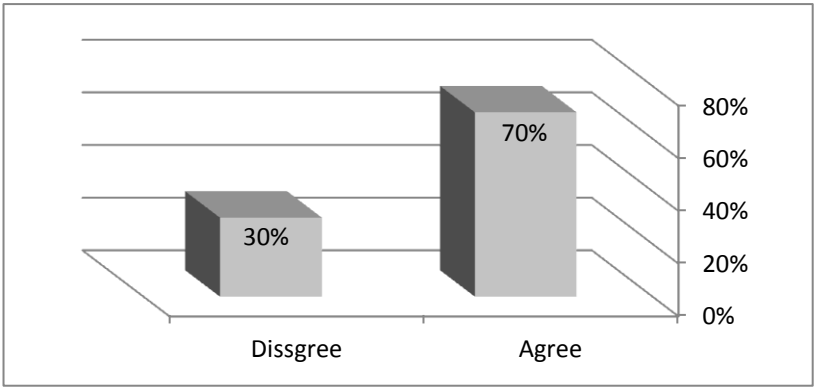


Figure (4.3)

From the above table it is noticed that the majority of the respondents (70%) agreed with the statement that reading literary texts motivates learners to read further. (30%) disagree thus this statement is accepted.

Statement(4) Reading Literature enables students to become familiar with other cultures.

Table (4.4)

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	40	80.0
Disagree	10	20.0
Total	50	100.0

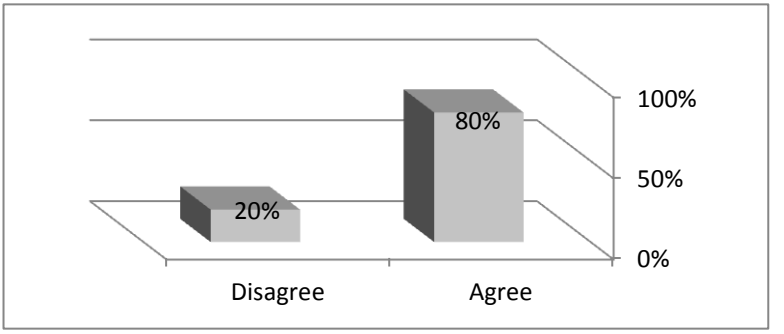


Figure (4.4)

It is noticed from the above table that (20%) of the answers disagree, whereas, the great number (80%) agree with the statement that reading literature enables students to become familiar with other cultures. Therefore, this statement is accepted.

Statement (5) Literature Lessons should Improve learners Productive Skills.

Table (4.5)

	Frequency	**Percent**
Agree	35	70.0
Disagree	15	30.0
Total	50	100.0

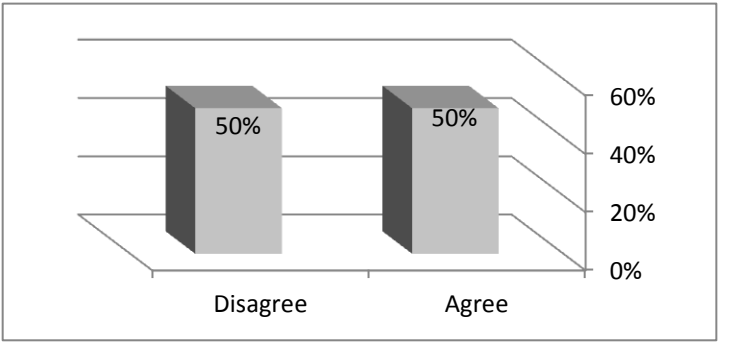


Figure (4.5)

According to the statistical analysis (70%) agree that Literature lessons should improve learners productive skills. (30%) only disagree. Thus this statement is accepted.

Statement (6) Learning Literature can improve learners critical thinking abilities.

Table (4.6)

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	25	50.0
Disagree	25	50.0
Total	50	100.0

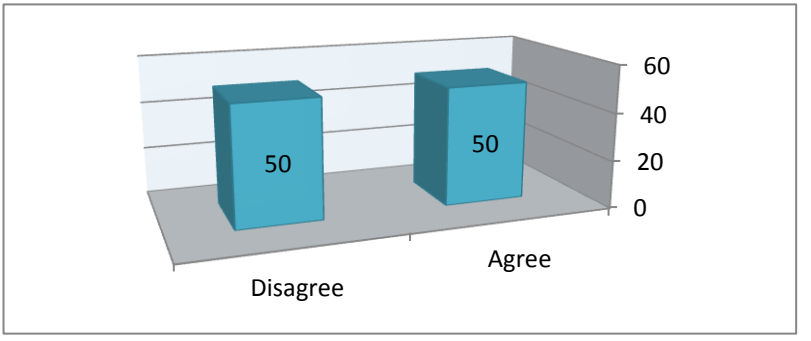


Figure (4.6)

From the above table it is noticed that the answers of agree (50%) and disagree (50%) are equal. This show that the respondents agree that learning literature can improve learners critical thinking abilities. Thus this statement is accepted.

Statement (7) Teacher's talk should create communicative interaction in the classroom.

Table (4.7)

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	40	80.0
Disagree	10	20.0
Total	50	100.0

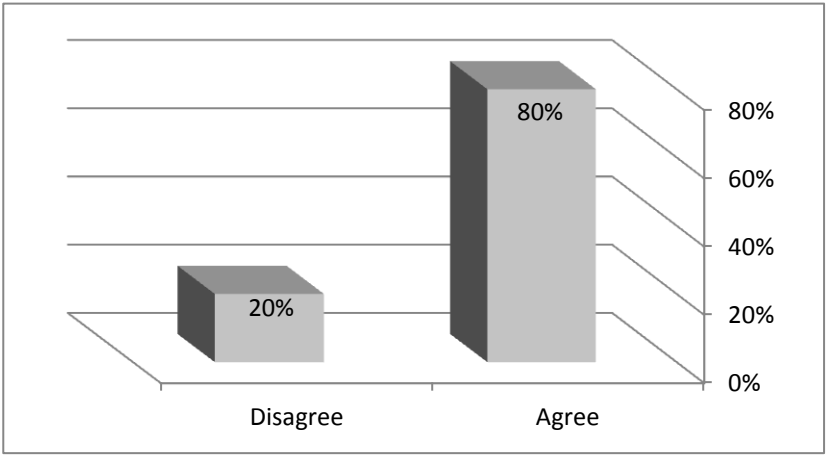


Figure (4.7)

According to the above table (20%) of the respondents disagree that teacher's talk should create communicative interaction in the classroom, whereas, (80%) the majority of the respondents agree. Thus this statement is accepted.

Statement (8) Discussing Literature in groups can improve learners communicative Skills.

Table (4.8)

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	35	70.0
Disagree	15	30.0
Total	50	100.0

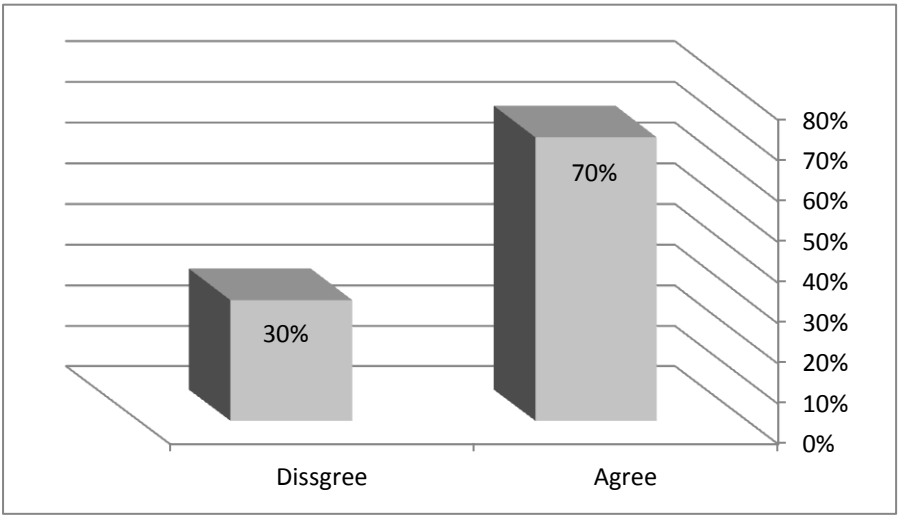


Figure (4.8)

(70%) of the respondents agree that discussing literature in groups can improve learners communicative skills, whereas (30%) only disagree. Thus this statement is accepted.

5.0 Conclusion:

Literature is very important to English language but also it is the back bone of English language. Therefore, the study discussed possibilities of developing EFL learners performance through literature. The study supported the methodology and provided some insight in to the research questions. However, the aim of the study is to enhanced students language skills and to find ways to a decrease their weakness in performing English language in the classroom. This can be done through teaching literature to EFL classes.

5.1 Findings:

The Study found the following results:

1) EFL learners can develop their language performance through reading literature.

2) Reading literature enables students to become familiar with other cultures.

3) Teaching Literature improves EFL learners writing skills.

4) Discussing literature in groups can improve learners communicative skills.

5) Literature lessons should improve learners productive skills.

5.2 Recommendations:

Based on these results the study recommended the following:

1) EFL learners should read more and more literature so as to develop their language performance.

2) EFL learners should be familiar with other cultures and this can be done through reading literature.

3) Teachers should teach literature to EFL learners so as to helps them to improve their writing skills.

4) EFL learners should discuss literature topics in groups so as to improve their communicative skill.

5) EFL learners should concentrate during literature lessons to develop their productive skill.

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