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Developing EFL Learners' Language Skills through Literary Texts (A Case Study of EFL Secondary Schools Teachers at Al-hasahiesa Locality, 2025)

Amal Hashim Al-tayib Al-ameen

Researcher
Hashimamal197@gamil.com

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at investigating EFL learners' problems in performing the skills of English language and also aims at developing their language skills through literary texts. The study adopted the descriptive analytical method. For the purpose of the study, the researcher distributed a questionnaire for data collection from fifty (50) teachers of secondary schools at Al-hasahiesa locality (2025). Then, the collected data were statistically analyzed. The study came out with the following findings: many EFL Sudanese learners are weak in the skills of English language. Teaching literary texts develops learners' language skills. The study recommends that. EFL Sudanese learners should be enabled to improve their performance of English language, literary texts should be taught in EFL classes and EFL learners should practice dialogues and conversations.

KEYWORDS

learners' performance, literary texts, language skills, conversations

تطوير المهارات اللغوية لطلاب اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية خلال النصوص الأدبية

حالة دراسة معلمي المدارس الثانوية بمحلية الحصاحيصا السودان (2025)

المستخلص

هدفت الدراسة إلى تقصى أسباب ضعف الأداء لطلاب اللغة الانجليزية في المدارس الثانوية، كما تهدف إلى تطوير المهارات اللغوية لدى الطلاب من خلال تدريس النصوص الأدبية. .اتبعت الدراسة المنهج التحليلي الوصفي حيث استخدمت نظام الاستبانة لجمع البيانات التي تخص الدراسة من خمسين (50) من معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية بمحلية الحصاحيصا) 2025م) . تم جمع البيانات وتحليلها إحصائياً وخرجت الدراسة بالآتي: أن الكثير من طلاب اللغة الانجليزية ضعيفي الأداء في تلك اللغة وأن تدريس النصوص الأدبية ينمي المهارات اللغوية للطلاب. توصي الدراسة بتمكين الطلاب من تحسين الأداء في اللغة الانجليزية، تدريس النصوص الأبية، وممارسة الحوارات والمحادثات وأن تدريس النصوص الأدبية يقوي ينمي مهارات الطلاب اللغوية. أوصت الدراسة بتمكين الطلاب لتحسين الأداء في اللغة الانجليزية، مع تدريس النصوص الأدبية وتدريب الطلاب على الحوارات والمحادثات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أداء الطلاب، نصوص أدبية، مهارات لغوية، حوارات.

1.0 Introduction

Language acquisition and learning has been studied from both cognitive and sociocultural perspectives. According to Harmer (2001), learners should know "language features" and the ability to process them in communication. If the student dominates these language features, this will help learners to acquire successful communication goal. Speaking does not cover just knowing the linguistic feature; linguistic feature of the message expanding oral communication requires more than memorized vocabulary and grammatical comprehension. Teachers need to facilitate the learning of speaking through using real practice in speaking; Besides, the teacher should take into account learners' interest and needs. Learners should take part in oral activities to exchange spontaneously their thought in second language speaking Derakhshan et al., (2015).

Language skills encompass the various ways in which language is used. They are typically categorized into four main skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Speaking and writing are often referred to as "active" or "productive" skills, as they involve the generation of language. In contrast, reading and listening are termed "passive" or "receptive" skills, as they primarily involve the absorption of language. These skills can further be divided into sub-skills that refine specific competencies within each area. Listening and speaking are auditory-oral skills that are often acquired naturally during early life. Conversely, reading and writing are visual-manual skills that tend to be developed later on.

The integration of literature into language education significantly enhances these skills. Ronald et al, (2000,p.10) assert that literature enables students to go beyond "acquiring basic knowledge of the language" to "learning about the language and how it works" . Similarly ,Sandra McKay, (2002) states that literature is an ideal vehicle for illustrating language use and for introducing cultural assumptions. Engaging with literary texts not only enriches vocabulary and comprehension but also deepens cultural awareness and critical thinking skills. Through literature, learners can cultivate their language skills while gaining insights into the human experience.

1.1 Problems of the Study

Many of EFL Learners are weak in the performance of English language effectively inside or outside the classroom. That is because, they do not practice the skills of English language in everyday communication and also they do not find exposure to English language during their total learning process.

1.2 Objectives of the Study:

This study aims at:

1.investigating EFL learners' problems in the English language skills.

2.developing learners' language skills through literary texts..

1.3 Questions of the Study

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1.To what extent do learners effectively perform English language skills in EFL classes?

2.What is the role literary texts play in developing learners' performance of English language ?

1.4 Hypotheses of the Study

The following are the hypotheses of the study:

1. Many of EFL learners find it difficult perform English language skills.
2. Reading literary texts helps in developing learners' performance of English language.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is important to EFL learners, teachers and syllabus designers as it shows them the techniques used for improving learners performance of English language. The study helps syllabus designers, teachers, and learners who use literary texts as a technique that can engage students in classroom interaction in the target language.

1.6 Methodology of the Study

This study adapted the descriptive analytical method. A questionnaire for secondary school teachers will be used for data collection. Then the collected data will be statistically analyzed.

1.7 Limits of the Study

This study is limited to Improving EFL learners' language skills through literary texts at secondary schools Elhasaheisa Locality (2025).

2. Literature Review

The integration of literature into language learning offers a dynamic and enriching approach that transcends traditional teaching methods. By engaging with diverse literary genres—ranging from plays and poetry to novels and short stories—students are exposed not only to the intricacies of language but also to the cultural and emotional dimensions of communication. This multifaceted engagement fosters a deeper understanding of the language while enhancing essential skills such as listening, reading comprehension, writing, and speaking. As John Povey asserts, "literature will increase all language skills because literature will extend linguistic knowledge by giving evidence of extensive and subtle vocabulary usage, and complex and exact syntax" (Povey, 1967: 43).

Numerous genuine examples of language can be found in the literature of CLT (Van, 2009), and these can be utilized to enhance reading, writing, speaking, and listening abilities. (Galda & Cullinan, 2006).Reading literary texts affects learners' attitudes and perceptions. Literature also has an impact on writing skills. In literature, reading is both enjoyable and informative. Thus, it bridges non-literary gaps. Literature aids in language learning in general and speeds up language learning in content-based instruction. Literature broadens "perspectives of possibility, enabling students to question, interpret, connect, and explore. Literary texts can help students write more creatively in EFL learning. "Writing As part of all university curricula, writing should be emphasized, not only for its practical applications, but also because it contributes to the process of learning through the facilitation of thinking. Literary works contain a wealth of figurative language, eloquent phrases, idiomatic expressions, captivating metaphors, and appropriate vocabulary words. Learning how sentences and paragraphs are constructed will be exposed learners to different language patterns, according to Khan & Alasmari (2018).

According to Mckay, (2001), literature is a perfect setting for enhancing listening skills because it familiarizes learners with a variety of voice qualities and dialects. Accordingly learners should be exposed to literary texts that help them engage intellectually and emotionally. Reading out loud to EFL learners regularly is better than other language learning activities, because they learn the pronunciation of words (Hall and Williams, 2000). Learners can also listen to audio versions of poems, short stories, or novels. Rhythm, rhyme, and intonation elements in poetry encourage learners to approximate their speaking patterns to native speaker norms, (Khatib et.al,2011).

For speaking skill development, literary texts provide students with many examples of the real use of language in various contexts, settings, and styles that they can imitate and use in practice (Khatib et.al, 2011). Although the connection between reading and speaking is not directly related, several studies of extensive reading programs suggest that students who read extensively not only improve their reading proficiency and writing skills but also their vocabulary, listening, and speaking abilities. Speaking abilities can be developed by repeating after the teacher, reciting a memorize dialogue, or responding to mechanical drills. According to Khamkhien,(2010), speaking is the most important aspect of learning a second language. Students' speaking skills can be improved by question-answer, debate, and role-playing in literature class.

Incorporating novels and short stories into language learning offers numerous benefits that significantly enhance students' educational experiences. One of the most vital advantages is cultural awareness; through engaging with these texts, students gain insights into various social, political, historical, and cultural contexts, broadening their understanding of diverse societies (Floris, 2004). Additionally, these literary forms improve reading skills by providing accessible material that fosters reading proficiency.

Moreover, novels and short stories encourage improve speaking skills as students engage in discussions about themes, characters, and events. Analyzing plots and characters also stimulates critical thinking, allowing learners to explore motivations and outcomes, thereby enhancing their engagement with the text. Furthermore, both genres inspire imagination and creativity, encouraging students to envision various scenarios and perspectives, which enriches their cognitive and emotional responses to the narratives. The authenticity and reliability of stories significantly increase motivation to read, transforming reading from a chore into an enjoyable experience. Finally, exposure to diverse experiences through novels and short stories expands learners' worldviews, promoting their understanding of different cultures and lifestyles.

To exploit these benefits, various activities can be employed in the classroom. Reading circles encourage group discussions around assigned novels or short stories, allowing learners to share insights and interpretations, which enhances both comprehension and speaking skills. Creative writing assignments prompt students to write alternative endings or character backstories, thereby applying their understanding of narrative structure while developing their writing skills.

Additionally, role-playing allows students to enact characters from stories or novels, promoting engagement with the text while improving both speaking and listening abilities. Facilitating thematic discussions encourages critical thinking and connections to real-life situations. Literary journals serve as reflective tools for students to analyze characters and connect themes to their personal experiences, fostering writing and analytical skills.

Motivation

Literary texts support students' enjoyment of reading as well as their ability to develop critical thinking skills and emotional awareness, according to (Lazar,1993). When students are exposed to things they genuinely enjoy, motivation is especially increased. (Hill, 1986) further maintains that literature benefits students as it acts as a stimulus that flourishes their interest and motivates the student by involving them on a personal and emotional level. Many people agree that motivation plays a key role in language learning and that "about 99 percent of teaching is making the learner feel interested" (Richards and Rodgers, 2001), because literature is created to be enjoyed, reading reduces stress. Although reading classic literature can be challenging, when it is seen as an accomplishment, it develops into a motivational exercise. According to Duncan and Paran's ,(2017) research, a sizable proportion of teachers and students in their focus
groups thought that reading literature boosted their motivation and helped them learn languages.

According to Long, (1986), literature is by definition, an authentic text, and both verbal response and activity response are genuine language activities. Inherently more intriguing or stimulating than synthetic or non-authentic texts, authentic texts are. Additionally, Mart (2017) supported the benefit of using authentic literary text materials rather than simplified texts in advancing learners' general language proficiency, particularly in improving reading skills. Authentic material may be found as a combination of linguistic and subject-matter of teaching certain language skill included in literature. Some of literary texts are complex when they address themes and situations that are absent from most EFL textbooks (Duff and Maley, 1990). A source of "unaltered" language, syntactic, lexical, and grammatical patterns that can be used for educational purposes is literature. Students should learn how to handle it in the classroom if the ultimate goal of language teaching is to prepare them to deal with real-world authentic language. The experiential approach to language learning, which "involves learners in authentic communication and in genuine experiences which have value, importance, or significance for them," is consistent with the use of authentic materials. In addition to inspiring students and providing opportunities for discussions and enjoyment "beyond the mere comprehension of information," these texts also provide students with the satisfaction of reading literary texts in their original form, which, on the other hand, helps them develop reading confidence and gives them assurance in their language-use skills. Finally, students will need to use the skills, strategies, and habits they developed while learning the language in the classroom if they want to continue learning it after completing their formal education. Moreover, language has a dual character: a means of communication as well as a carrier of culture. Language without culture is inconceivable, and vice versa. That is to say, not only the knowledge of a language itself, but also the knowledge of its culture is essential in such communication performances. Thus, it can be said that learning a foreign language necessitates an engagement with its culture because learning to communicate with others in the target language means communicating with their culture (Liddicoat, 2005). As far as the significance of EFL within intercultural communication is considered, it can be argued that learning/teaching of the English language has gained much importance than ever to communicate across various cultures. In this respect, it is fundamental to prepare learners 'to engage and collaborate in a global society by discovering appropriate ways to interact with people from other cultures' (Moeller and Nugent, 2014, p. 2). However, to carry out a smooth and effective intercultural communication via a shared language, i.e., English, it is necessary to have sufficient knowledge of the cultural context of the target language and its lingua-cultural conventions. It is because language and culture are acknowledged to be intrinsically connected,

and inseparable for communication (Hua, 2014). Understanding the other culture, every culture relates itself to other culture (cited in Sawant 2010)

3.0 Material and Method:

The participants of this study were (50) EFL teachers who were randomly selected from secondary schools in Al-hasahisa locality (2025). To collect the data for the study, the researchers invited them to answer some questions about developing learners language skills through teaching literary texts in EFL classes.. Then the collected data were statistically analyzed. The following tables show the results.

Data Analyses and Discussion

In this section, the data were analyzed and displayed in tables and figures according to the order of statements in the questionnaire.

Statement (1) Many of EFL learners of secondary schools face difficulties in the performance of English language .

Table (1) EFL learners' difficulties in language performance.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Disagree	1	2.0
	Neutral	5	10.0
	Agree	44	88.0
	Total	50	100.0

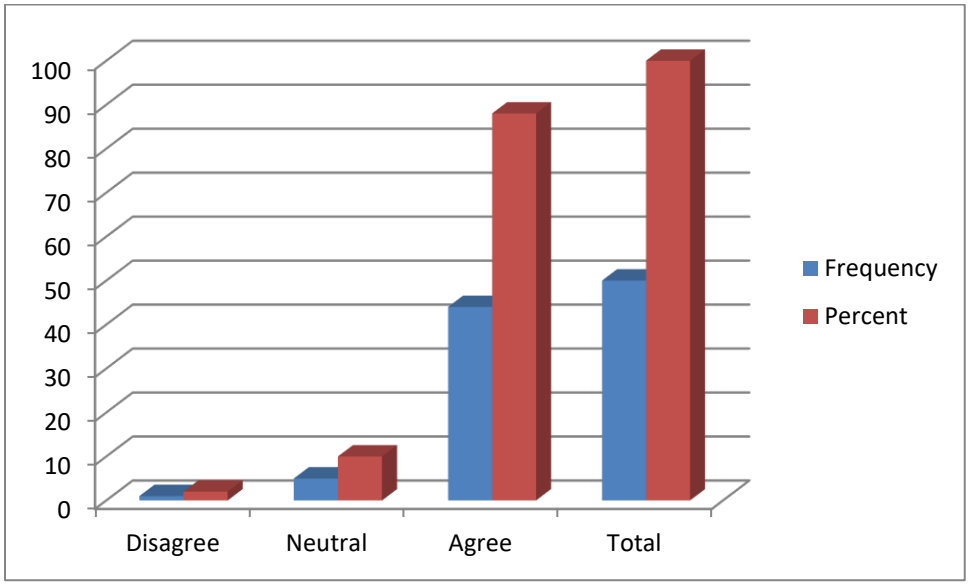


Fig. (1) EFL learners' difficulties in the performance of English language.

Table (1) reflects that , (88%) of the respondents agree with the statement, (10%) are neutral and (2%) disagree . Accordingly, the statement, it is proved.

Statement (2) Literary texts improve the language skills.

Table (2) Improving the language skills.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	4.0
	Neutral	4	8.0
	Agree	44	88.0
	Total	50	100.0

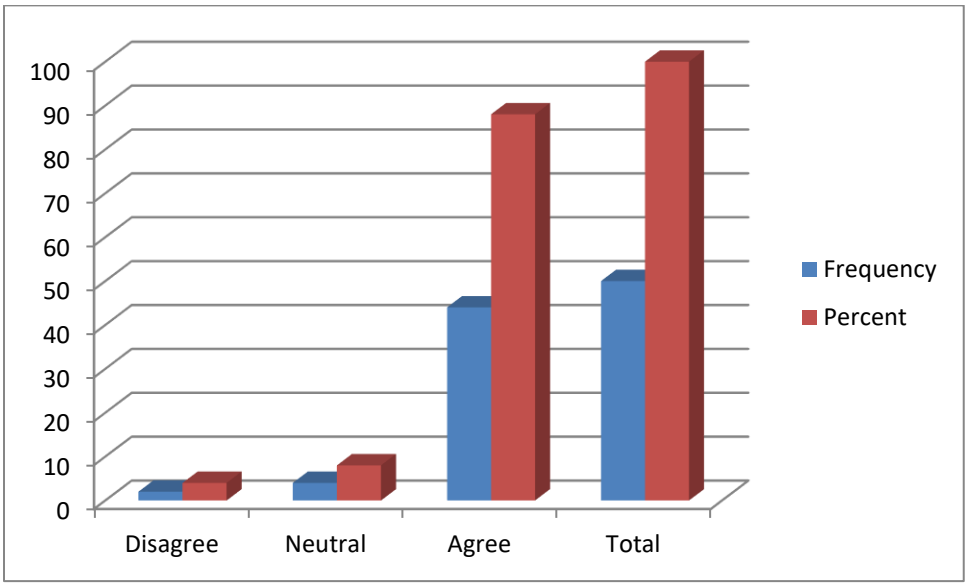


Fig. (2) Improving the language skills.

Table (2) reflects that, literary texts improve the language skills. (88%) of the respondents agree with the statement, (8%) are neutral and (4%) disagree. According to the statistical analysis of statement, it is proved.

Statement (3)Teaching literary texts increases learners motivation to learn English language

Table (3) Increasing learners motivation to learn English language

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	6.0
	Neutral	4	8.0
	Agree	43	86.0
	Total	50	100.0

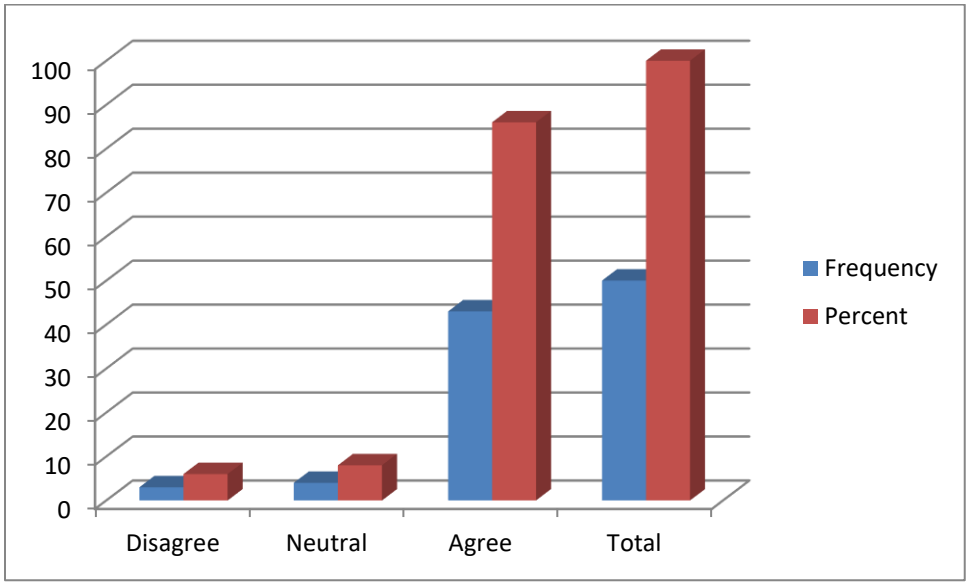


Fig.(3) Increasing learners' motivation to learn English language

Table (3) shows that, teaching literary texts increases learners motivation to learn English language. Accordingly, most respondents (86%) agree and (8%) are neutral and (6%) disagree with the statement. So, the statement is accepted.

Statement (4)Teaching literary texts improves learners' interaction.

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Table (4) Improving learners' interaction.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Neutral	6	12.0
	Agree	44	88.0
	Total	50	100.0

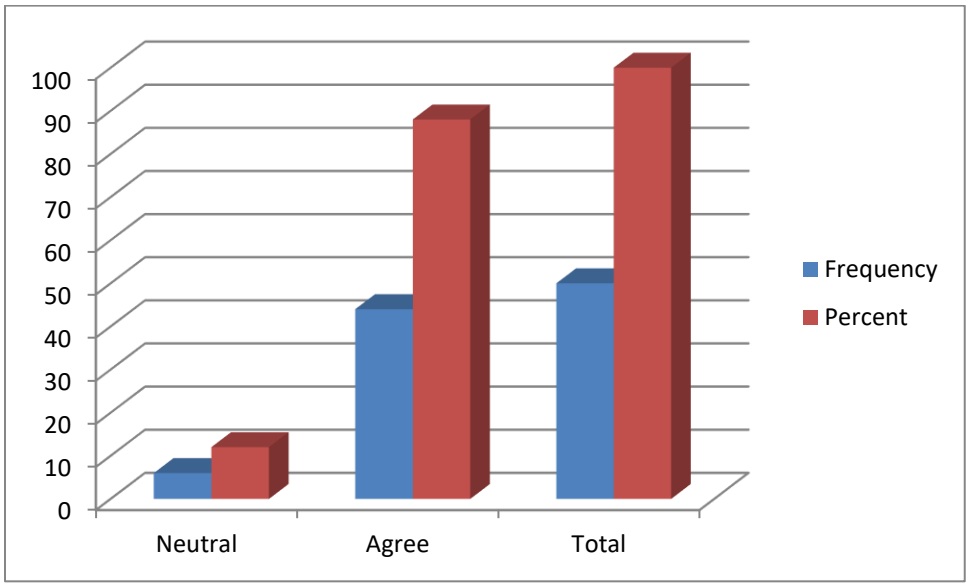


Fig.(4) Improving learners' interaction .

Table (4) shows that, most respondents (88%) agree and (12%) are neutral that.. teaching short stories improves learners interaction. So, the statement is accepted.

Statement (5) Literary texts enhance EFL learners' communicative skills.

Table (5) enhancing EFL learners' communicative skills

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	4.0
	Neutral	2	4.0
	Agree	46	92.0
	Total	50	100.0

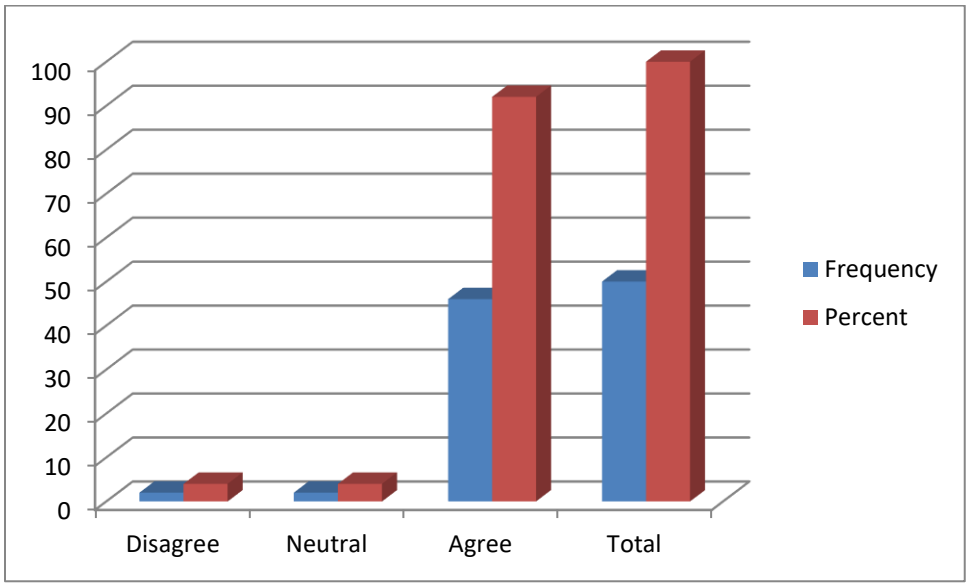


Fig.(5) enhancing EFL learners' communicative skills

According to the statistical analysis in table (5), , most of the sample(94%) agree with the statement, (4%) neutral and (2%) disagree that short stories enhance EFL learners' communication in the classroom. This statement is accepted.

Statement (6) Literary texts are a source of authentic teaching materials.

Table (6) literary texts are a source of authentic materials

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Disagree	1	2.0
	Neutral	9	18.0
	Agree	40	80.0
	Total	50	100.0

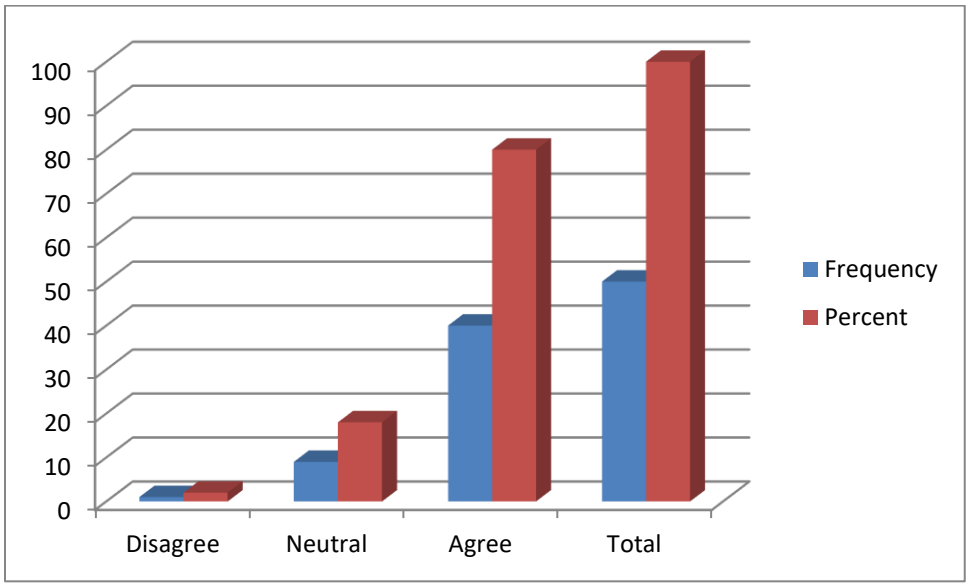


Fig. (6)Literary texts are a source of authentic materials.

According to the statistical analysis in table (6), most of the sample (80%) agree, (18%) are neutral and (2%) disagree that literary texts are regarded as a source of authentic teaching materials This statement is accepted.

Statement (7) Reading literary texts develops learners' awareness of cultures

Table (7) Improving learners' awareness about culture.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	6.0
	Neutral	5	10.0
	Agree	42	84.0
	Total	50	100.0

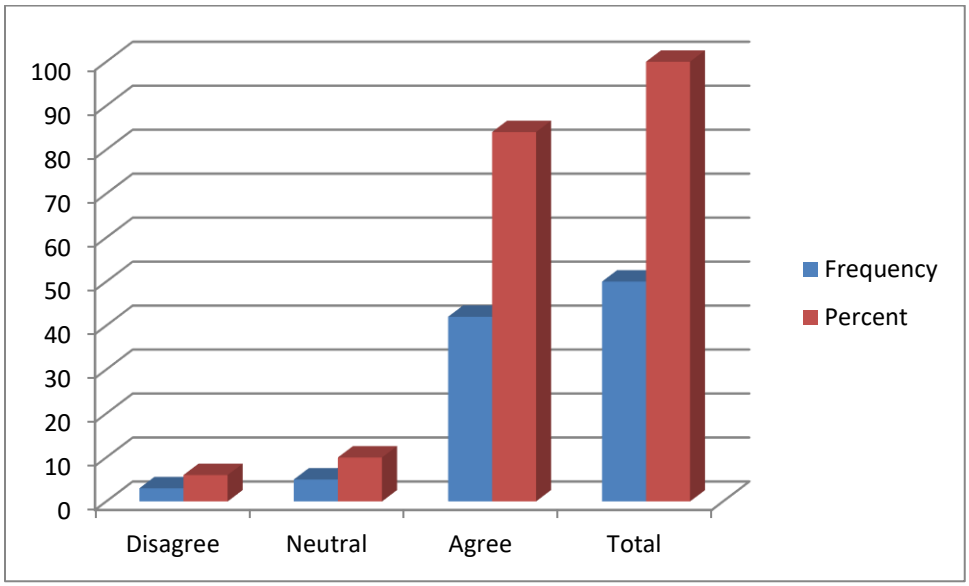


Fig. (7) Improving learners' awareness about culture.

Table (7) shows that most respondents (84%) agree that, reading literary texts develops learners' awareness of cultures, (10%) neutral and (6%) disagree that, professional development program for EFL teachers improves classroom performance. Therefore, the statement is accepted.

Statement (8) Teaching short stories develops EFL learners vocabulary knowledge.

Table (8) Developing EFL learners vocabulary knowledge.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	6.0
	Neutral	7	14.0
	Agree	40	80.0
	Total	50	100.0

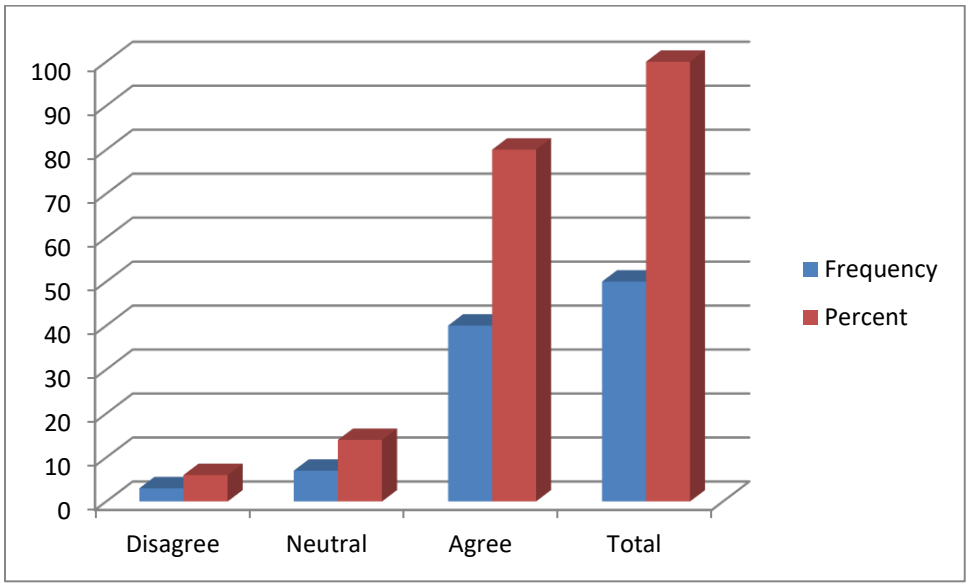


Fig. (8) Developing EFL learners vocabulary knowledge.

Table (8) shows that, teaching literary texts develops EFL learners vocabulary knowledge. Aaccording to the statistical analysis of table (8), (80%) of respondents agree, (14%) of the sample are neutral and (6%) disagree with the statement. Thus, this statement is justified.

Statement (9) Exposing EFL learners to language varieties through literary texts

Table (9) Exposing learners to language varieties

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	6.0
	Neutral	3	6.0
	Agree	44	88.0
	Total	50	100.0

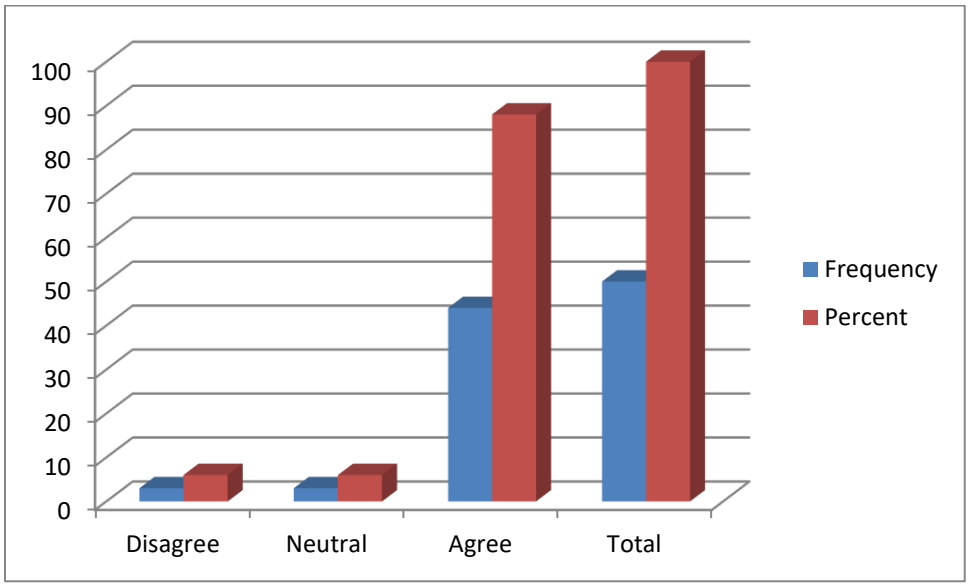


Fig (9) Exposing learners to language varieties

According to the statistical analysis in table (9), teaching literary texts exposes EFL learners to language varieties. Again, most of the sample(88%) agree with the statement, (6%) neutral and (6%) disagree. This statement is accepted.

Statement (10) Teaching literary texts sharpen students' sense of the language.

Table (10) Sharpening students' sense of the language

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	6.0
	Neutral	8	16.0
	Agree	39	78.0
	Total	50	100.0

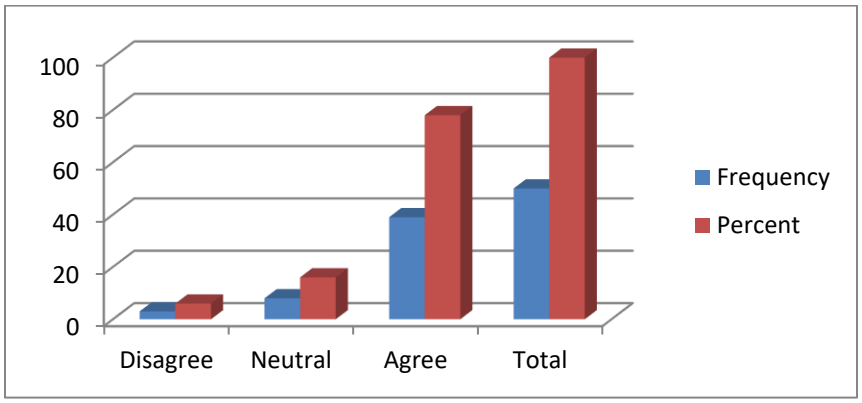


Fig (10) Sharpening students' sense of the language

According to the statistical analysis of table (10) most respondents (78%) agree, (16%) are neutral and (6%) disagree that teaching literary texts sharpen students' sense of the language. Therefore, this statement is justified.

5. Conclusion, Findings and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study aims at investigating the causes of EFL learners' weakness in the performance of English language and developing their language skills through teaching literary texts. For the purpose of the study, the researcher held with fifty (50) of teachers of secondary schools at Al--hasahiesa locality. Then, the collected data were statistically analyzed.

Findings:

The study came out with the following findings:

1.Many of EFL learners face difficulties in the performance of English language **.**

2.Utilizing literary texts in EFL classes improves the language skills of the learners.

3.Teaching literary texts increases learners' motivation to learn English language

4.Literary texts enhance EFL learners' communicative skills**.**

5.Teaching literary texts develops learners' cultural awareness.

6.Teaching literary texts develops EFL learners vocabulary knowledge.

Recommendations:

The study recommends:

1. EFL learners should be enabled to perform the English language skills effectively**.**

2. Literary texts should be taught in EFL classes to improve the language skills of the learners.

3. EFL learners should be motivated to learn EFL through literary texts.

4. EFL learners should be helped to improve their communicative skills**.**

5. Learners should be enabled to develops their cultural awareness .

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