

**The Role of Literature in Developing EFL Sudanese Secondary School Students' Language Skills (A Case Study at Sudanese Secondary Schools in Butana Province)**  
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**Abstract:**

This paper aimed at investigating the role of teaching literature in developing EFL Sudanese secondary students' language skills. The study adopted the descriptive analytical method, the researcher collected data by using pretest-posttest which was given to 30 Sudanese Secondary Schools in Butana Province . To analyze the data, the researcher has used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

The findings of the study revealed that teaching literature plays a major role in developing EFL Sudanese secondary school students' language skills. In light of the findings of the study, the researcher recommended teachers should use literary materials that suit the levels, needs, interest and background knowledge of the students , teachers should expose the students to socio-cultural, factual and contextual knowledge of the target language, moreover, teachers should encourage students to interact with literary works in order to develop their language skills.

**Key words:**

Language skills, teaching literature, EFL, target language.

**المستخلص:**

هدفت هذه الدراسة لتقصي دور تدريس الادب الإنجليزي في تطوير المهارات اللغوية لدى طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية بالمدارس الثانوية السودانية . استخدم الباحثون المنهج التجريبي التحليلي وجمعت البيانات باستخدام الإختبار القبلي والفعلي الذي اجري لطلاب المدارس السودانية بمنطقة البطانة. استخدمت الدراسة برنامج الحزم الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية لتحليل البيانات (SPSS). أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن تدريس الادب الإنجليزي يلعب دور رئيسي في تطوير المهارات اللغوية لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية بالمدارس الثانوية السودانية . بناء على تلك النتائج فإن الدراسة اوصت بأنه يجب على المعلمين تدريس المواد الادبية التي تناسب مستويات واحتياجات واهتمامات وخلفية الطلاب، يجب علي المعلمين تعريض الطلاب للثقافة الإجتماعيه المتعلقه باللغه الهدف . علاوة علي ذلك يجب على المعلمين تشجيع الطلاب للتفاعل مع الاعمال الأدبية من اجل تطوير مهاراتهم اللغوية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** المهارات اللغوية, تدريس الادب الإنجليزي,دارسي اللغة الانجليزية لغة اجنبية, اللغة الهدف.

**Introduction:**

Teaching literature is useful in improving students' language abilities as literary texts serve to develop linguistic and literary skills; through teaching literature EFL students develop their language competence as they build

and extend vocabulary and improve understanding of the target language.

According to Salih(1989) literature helps students to develop their language knowledge and improves what they know about English syntax, morphology , semantics and implicitly phonetics .

This indicates that through literature students can distinguish acceptable sentences from unacceptable ones, they can learn to produce infinite set of sentences they have never heard before and they can improve their knowledge about word formation processes and idioms.

Obediat(1997:32) asserted that literature helps students to acquire a native-like competence in English, express their ideas in good English, learn the features of modern English, learn how English linguistic system is used for communication, see how idiomatic expressions are used, speak clearly, precisely and concisely and become more proficient, creative, and analytical learners.

In this paper the researcher tries to investigate the role of teaching literature in developing EFL Sudanese secondary school students' language skills.

#### 1. Statement of the Problem:

During her experience in teaching English as a foreign language for several years the researcher has noticed that EFL Sudanese secondary school students face serious deficiencies in language skills; they find it difficult to grasp the intended message, they have difficulties when they are asked to read and write in English. Furthermore, when it comes to doing exercises based on speaking and listening, they are observed to be very poor performers, resulting in comparatively poor achievement, too.

So the researcher intends to investigate the role of teaching literature in developing EFL Sudanese university students' language skills.

#### 3. Objectives of the Study:

The study is carried out to achieve the following objectives:

1. To investigate the role of teaching literature in developing EFL Sudanese secondary school students' language skills.

2. To find out how can teaching literature develops EFL Sudanese secondary school students' language skills.

#### 4. Questions of the Study:

1. What is the role of teaching literature at Sudanese secondary schools in developing EFL students' language skills?

2. How can teaching literature improves EFL Sudanese secondary school students' language skills?

#### 5. Hypotheses of the Study:

1. Literature plays a major role in developing EFL students' language skills at Sudanese secondary schools.

2. Teaching literature improves EFL Sudanese secondary school students' language skills.

#### 6. Significance of the Study:

This study derives its importance from the fact of handling a very important issue that of teaching literature and its relevance to increase students' overall knowledge. Language skills such as reading comprehension and vocabulary development seem to be the most important and useful activities in any language class, especially for the students of English as a foreign language in Sudan. In fact, most students learning English in such poor input contexts compensate their lack of exposure to spoken English by engaging in reading comprehension activities.

Moreover, students' vocabulary knowledge allows teachers to set the language goals for the course within communicative language teaching.

This study would be helpful because of the insights it offers for the cognitive processes involved in reading, writing, listening and speaking acquisition. This study also attempts to make suggestions in the field of teaching literature and techniques selection.

#### **7. Limits of the Study:**

This study is limited to EFL Sudanese secondary school students in Al Butana Province during the academic year (2020-2021) in order to investigate the role of literature in developing students' language skills.

#### **8. Methodology of the Study:**

As has been mentioned, the purpose of this study is to investigate the role of literature in developing students' language skills, to achieve this goal, data has been collected through using pre-test and post-test test . Then the data has been analyzed statistically by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

#### **9. The Nature of Literature as a Syllabus:**

A true literature syllabus does not simply use literary texts to develop students' literary competence but also uses advanced language which is related to classroom practice. Brumfit and Carter (1985) stated that although the texts being used are literary the primary intention is to teach language not literature. This suggests that using literature in EFL classrooms assists the development of language skills, and the text may be used as context for exemplification and discussion of linguistic items which have no bearing on the value of the work as students read, enjoy and are willing to perceive a literary text as important in relation to their own understanding of themselves and the world. To achieve this goals

syllabus designers should focus on the best selected books which motivate the learner and promote good conditions for learning that make reading literature purposeful because a literary response can't be given by a teacher it can only arise by the reading of the text.

Accordingly, if literature is included in the syllabus to develop the language skills of the students, communication principles can be applied to the teaching of any skill because of the wide varieties of classroom activities and exercise types discussed in literature. According to Brumfit, (1985: 162)

“Literature gives evidence of the widest variety of syntax, the richest variations of vocabulary discrimination and skills”.

Therefore, literature syllabus provides examples of language employed at its effective, subtle and suggestive ways hence it serves as encouragement, guide, target to the presently, limited linguistic achievement of EFL students.

#### **10. Types of Literature Forms and the Development of the Language Skills:**

There are various literature forms which can be used in EFL classrooms in order to develop language skills such as fiction, short stories, novels, drama, and poetry.

##### **A. Fiction :**

Fiction plays a great role in the development of language skills in the sense that the narrator had thought carefully to shape his story to suit a particular condition or he might have listened carefully to the narrator then later transfers it through speech to different situations. To guarantee reinforcement of language skills, learners must pay more attention to repeated activities.

### B. Short Stories:

Brumfit, (1985: 119) stated “A short story is the most suitable literary genre for foreign students because it is brief, contemporary, interesting and portrays modern cultural environment”.

Short stories have significant advantages in EFL classrooms. For example, a short story allows for class within a single class period; students may first read or listen to the story, then comes the second slow reading for deeper comprehension, students then take notes for discussion. After that they may analyze the story for the appreciation of its ideas by doing this, students develop their listening and speaking skills.

This range of activities provide additional practice in the language skills. Moreover, Lexis, syntax, sentence formation and function, structures are also going to be reinforced besides reading and writing.

Accordingly, if students are taught short stories properly, they are going to practice English not only in the classroom, but also at home. That is by reading short stories available. Consequently, they develop reading skills which strengthens their ability to cope with the language since they regain sufficient practice of the structure and vocabulary of the language besides the cultural patterns.

### C. Novels:

Another form of fiction is the novel. Unlike the short stories, the discussion of a novel could be carried forward chapter by chapter over a series of class periods. Hence, a variety of terminal class activities allow the students to practice the language skills adequately.

### D. Drama :

Drama is a process by which people use language to associate life with action or

human concerns. Using drama in EFL classrooms is a motivating technique which allows students to practice language in a unique way. Students gain deep understanding and appreciation of both the content and the language of the text while, simultaneously, drawing upon their listening, speaking and reading skills. This leads to deeper appreciation of the process of learning.

Drama provides pre-activities such as discussion of author, cultural context, setting dialect, or vocabulary building exercises. Besides that it provides an interactive way of introducing cultural knowledge by familiarizing the students with the folklore and literature of the target language. Students can gain insight into a diverse range of cultural topics such as gender relationships, historical events and contexts, social conflicts and contemporary issues.

Drama then, allows students to practice important aspects of linguistic competence including pronunciation and conveyance of emotional content via language. According to Brumfit (1985) “Modern drama may be closer to the language of colloquial modern speech which may reinforce the oral learning with the written”, this suggests that drama plays a major role in developing students’ language skills.

### E. Poetry :

A considerable percentage of EFL teachers seem to underestimate the pedagogical value of poems as a technique.

Besides introducing the target language culture, using a poem in EFL classroom can create a comfortable and enjoyable atmosphere for the students. Brumfit (1985) stated “It is certainly of great comfort to know that foreign students actively enjoy poetry”.

Furthermore, using poetry in EFL classrooms helps practicing the language skills; poems can be used as warm up, reading exercises, listening activities, for grammar presentation or practice as well as practicing pronunciation and writing.

One more advantage of using a poem as a technique for teaching the natural forms of pronunciation, stress and intonation. A furthermore advantage of using a poem, is a class discussion that practices listening and speaking skills combined the theme of the poem is good for class discussion. Hence the actual observation in appreciating a poem is an accurate reading. For this involves the imaginative elements of the intellect. Then what to imagine is an open and ongoing discussion that brings the significant theme, for poems usually deal with universal themes such as love, hatred, etc. which are familiar to all students.

Concerning the language, the teacher should be very selective and cautious about what poems to teach to suit the predetermined teaching points which suit the interest and the language level of the students, moreover, poems should be meaningful and enjoyable.

Therefore, integrating poetry into EFL classrooms allows the teachers to vary types of activities that promote class interaction.

#### **11. Models of Teaching English Literature:**

Carter and Long(1991) identified the following three models which are involved in the teaching of English literature:

##### **1. The Cultural Model:**

This model views literature as teacher-centered since the teacher's role is to delegate knowledge and information to the students; it requires the students to explore and interpret the social, political, literary and historical context of a specific text.

Using this model to teach literature enables students to understand different cultures, ideologies, mentalities, traditions, feelings, and artistic forms within heritage.

##### **2. The Language Model:**

This is the most common model to teaching literature in EFL classrooms, it is sometimes referred to as "language-based approach".

This model helps EFL students to access the text in a systematic and methodological way in order to specify certain linguistic features such as literal and figurative language; through this model students are exposed to different language strategies such as prediction exercises, summary writing, creative writing...etc.

One of the main goals of teachers who use this model for teaching literature is to provide students with the creative use of language which would enable them to improve their language proficiency as this model is based on the assumption that " literature is made of language".

The teachers' task here is to employ strategies used in language teaching to deconstruct literary texts in order to achieve specific language goals, it is crucial to note that in this model there is little engagement of the learner with the text other than purely linguistic practice as literature is used in order to provide a series of language activities presented by the teacher.

##### **3. The Personal Growth Model:**

This model attempts to focus on the participation of language in a text and the cultural context as it helps students to express their opinions, feelings and compare their own personal and cultural experiences with those expressed in the text. This model also helps students to improve their knowledge of ideas, language content and formal schemata through different themes and topics.

In this model the teachers' main goal is to help students to engage with the text and to read literature more effectively i.e. to grow mature as individuals and to strengthen their relationship with others; this model focuses on both the actual use of language and the cultural context, as a result students' growth in terms of language, emotions and characters are stimulated.

The teacher should select texts that suit the levels of the students to which they can express their ideas creatively.

### **12.Previous Related Studies:**

Cheekeong (2014) conducted a study entitled "Using Literature in Yemeni High School for EFL Students ", the data was collected through a questionnaire and interviews, the results of the study revealed that students' poor performance in English language skills was due to: firstly, teachers neglect teaching language skills and pay more attention to grammar and they do not encourage the students to communicate in English in the classroom setting.

Secondly, the curriculum is not designed to promote and enhance oral English language skills. Thirdly, most of the students were not confident enough to use English in and outside the classroom.

Zakari(2015) conducted a study entitled" The Role of Literature in Enhancing Communication Problems among Sudanese EFL University Learners" , he employed the analytic descriptive approach and collected data by using a questionnaire and an audio-recorder interview with the students, the results of the study showed that the students could understand the message addressed to them but they experienced difficulties responding properly , the students faced difficulties in speaking because of their

limited knowledge about the target language , lack of confidence besides that the environment in which the students learnt and practiced English did not encourage them to develop their communicative abilities.

Ahmed (2011) investigated " Using Literature in Teaching Language Skills in Large Classes" , the study took place at Sudan University of Science and Technology during the academic year 2011 , the researcher used the descriptive analytical method , to collect data two tools were used a questionnaire for teachers and a test for students , the main results of the study showed that the curriculum has negative impact on teaching language skills as shown in the results of the teachers' questionnaire and the students' test. The students' test also revealed that large classes have negative effects on the students' achievements and are not helpful in teaching EFL language skills.

### **13.Data Analysis and Discussion:**

The pre-test and post -test focused mainly on the grammatical rules, vocabulary, writing and reading skills to measure students' language skills.

The responses to the test of the (30) Sudanese secondary school students were tabulated and computed. The following is an analytical interpretation and discussion of the findings regarding different points related to the objectives and hypotheses of the study. Then the data has been analyzed statistically by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

The main purpose of the pre-test/posttest test was to investigate the role of teaching literature developing EFL Sudanese secondary school students' language skills.

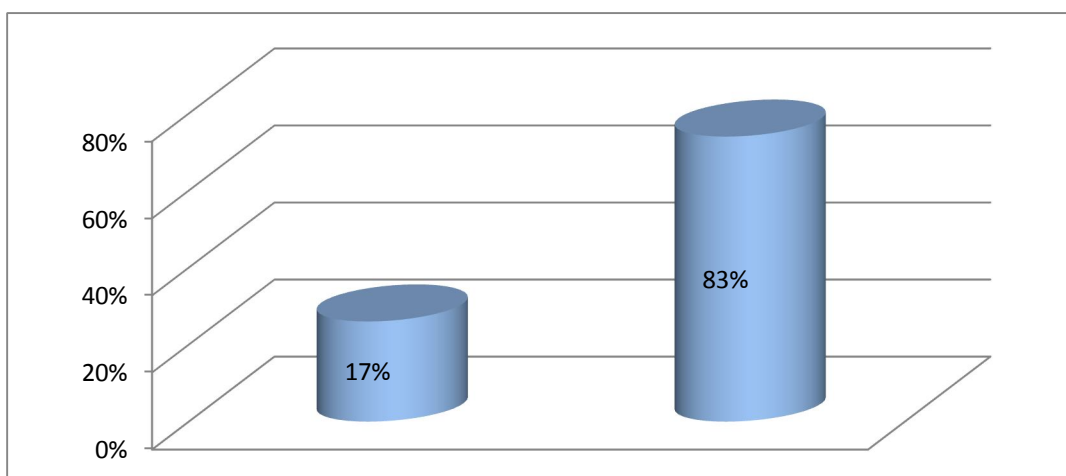
**Hypotheses of the study:**

- 1.Literature plays a major role in developing EFL students' language skills at Sudanese secondary schools.
- 2.Teaching literature improves EFL Sudanese secondary school students' language skills .

**The pre-test**

The following table shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the answers of the pre-test

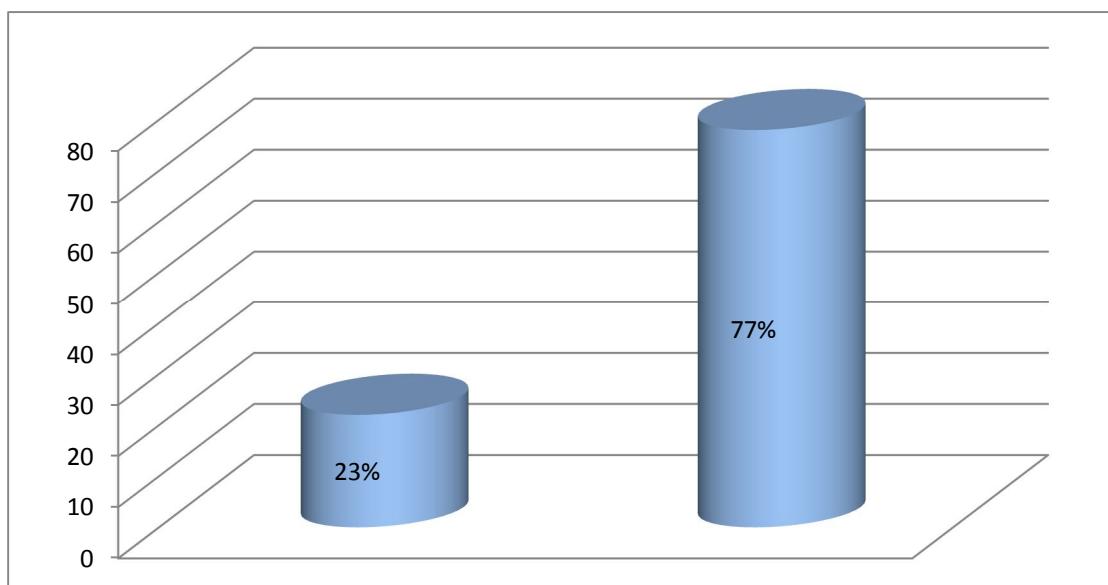
Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Pass	6	17%
Fail	24	83%
Total	30	100%



The above table and figure illustrate the percentage and frequency of the answers of the sample of the study with regard to the pre-test and shows that most of the sample of the study failed in the pre-test as it is represented by (83%).

The following table shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the answers of the respondents of the post- test.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Pass	23	77%
Fail	7	23%
Total	50	100%



The above table and figure illustrate the percentage and frequency of the answers of the sample of the study and shows that most of the sample of the study passed the post-test as it is represented by (77%).

**The Frequency Distribution and Decisions for the Respondents' Answers of the Pretest/post test**

Tests	Pass		Fail		Decision
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
pretest	6	17%	24	83%	Acceptable
Post test	23	77%	7	23%	Acceptable

**T-TEST for the questions of the study**

Tests	N	SD	T-value	DF	P-value
Pretest	30	7.2	11	29	0.00
Posttest	30	9.81	17	29	0.00

The calculated value of T -TEST for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in the overall test was (15 ) which is greater than the tabulated value of T -TEST at the degree of freedom (29 ) and the significant value level (0.05%) which was (6.54). This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (0.05 %) among the answers of the respondents. On the basis of these

findings we can conclude that the two hypotheses of this study are verified.

**14. Conclusion and Recommendations:**

According to the findings of the pre-test/post-test which investigated the role of teaching literature to develop EFL Sudanese secondary school students' language skills, the study found out that teaching literature plays a major role in developing EFL Sudanese secondary school students' language skills.



Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends the following points:

- Before reading literary works, the teacher should provide the students with background knowledge and linguistic knowledge that is required for doing the activity at hand.
- Teachers should be well-trained and experienced; having good pronunciation helps students to be good listeners and applying teaching techniques helps to improve students' language skills.
- Teachers should provide students with authentic literary materials such as films, lectures, songs, conversations, and news to help students to be aware of different accents of stress, intonation, pitch and the culture of English.
- Teachers should provide students with the necessary vocabulary that is likely to encounter them while reading.
- Syllabus designers should focus on the best selected books which motivate the learner and promote better conditions for learning that make learning literature purposeful.
- Students should learn and practice new vocabulary and expressions.
- Students should practice the grammatical structures that they are taught.
- Students should try to interact with literary works in the classroom to be active learners in order to develop their language skills.
- Teachers should use literary materials that suit the level of the students, needs, interest and background knowledge.

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