The Role of Literary Texts in Developing EFL Learners’ Comprehension Skills:

A case Study of Secondary Schools, El Hassahiesa Locality, Gezira State Sudan

By

Mohammed Abaas Abedalla Abaas

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A case Study of Secondary Schools, El Hassahiesa Locality, Gezira State Sudan

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November / 2017
DEDICATION

To my parents
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am heartily thankful to my main supervisor, Dr. AlHaj Ali Adam whose encouragement, guidance from the first to the final step enabled me to develop and understand the subject. Also, words alone can not express the thanks I owe to my co-supervisor Dr. Mubarak Elsidig and the department of foreign language for his encouragement and assistance. Lastly, I offer my regards to my family and all those who supported me during the process of this study.
The Role of Literary Texts in Developing EFL Learners’ Comprehension Skills:
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ABSTRACT

Reading comprehension is an important skills for mastery of a foreign language. Literary texts can be used as a source for increasing the amount of comprehensible input students receive. This study aims at: Reducing EFL learners’ problems in reading comprehension, developing EFL learners’ comprehension skills through literary texts, encouraging teachers to use visual aids in EFL classes for developing learners’ comprehension skills and stressing the use of group activity in improving learners comprehension. The study adapts the descriptive and analytical method. The data for the study were collected by means of a questionnaire to the teachers of secondary schools, (50) teachers from Hasaheisa Locality secondary schools responded to the questionnaire. Then it were analyzed by SPSS program. The results indicate that: Some EFL learners at secondary schools face difficulties in reading comprehension, reading literary texts improves EFL learners comprehension skills, intensive and extensive reading improve EFL students comprehension, comprehension skill can be developed through opportunity for reading school activities, motivation encourages EFL learners develop their comprehension skills, group reading activity improves learners’ comprehension, using teaching aids helps EFL learners memorize vocabulary and meanings, using phonics strategy develops learners reading comprehension, using literature circles technique promotes EFL learners critical thinking skills and higher reading levels of comprehension. The study has the following recommendations: EFL teachers should motivate the learners through using literary texts in the classroom, teachers should encourage EFL learners to read extensively, reading comprehension should be practiced in turn among learners in the classroom, EFL Teachers should use different teaching techniques for improving learners’ comprehension. EFL classes should not be crowded with the learners, teachers should be trained how to teach English language skills and modern technology should be used to support teaching and learning of EFL courses.
دور قراءة النصوص الأدبية في تحسين مهارات قراءة الفهم لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

دراسة حالة طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية بالمدارس الثانوية محلية الحصصي س ولاية الجزيرة السودان

محمد عباس عبدالله بباس

ملخص

قراءة الإستيعاب لهادر هام في الإلمام باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. يمكن استخدام النصوص الأدبية كمصدر لزيادة الورد اللغوي لدي الدارسين. تهدف هذه الدراسة لتقليل الصعوبات التي تواجه الطلاب في دروس قراءة الفهم كما تهدف إلى تطوير قراءة الفهم لدارسي اللغة الإنجليزية عن طريق استخدام النصوص الأدبية وتشجيع المعلمين على استخدام الوسائل التدريسية لتحسين مهارات قراءة الفهم وإستخدام أنشطة القراءة الجماعية لتقوية مهارة القراءة لدى الدارسين. لفرض هذه الدراسة استخدم الباحث نظام الاستبانة كوسيلة لجمع المعلومات من 50 معلم و معلمة لغة إنجليزية بالمرحلة الثانوية بمحلية الحصصي س ولاية الجزيرة. إنبعت الدراسة الطريقة الوضعية التحليلية وبرنامج SPSS (برنامج الحزم الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية) لتحليل المعلومات.

وتوصلت الدراسة إلى نتائج أهمها: أن بعض الطلاب يواجهون صعوبات في قراءة الفهم. أن قراءة النصوص الأدبية تقوي مهارة قراءة الفهم كما أن أسلوب القراءة الشاملة والمركزية تساعد في تحسين قراءة الفهم كما مكن تطوير مهارة القراءة خلال تغريقرات المشاركة في التفاعل الصفي للدارسين. وأن التحقق يشجع الطلاب على تحسين المهارات اللغوية كما أن استخدام الوسائل التدريسية يحسن من مهارات القراءة لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية وأن دروس الاستماع تحسن مهارات القراءة كما أن النشاط القراءة الجماعية تقوي مهارات الطلاب في قراءة. الفهم كما أن إنشاء الدوائر الأدبية تقوي مهارات التفكير النقدي وأعلى لقراءة للأدراك لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

توصي الدراسة بتحفيز الطلاب لممارسة القراءة من خلال استخدام النصوص الأدبية كما توصي بممارسة القراءة المكثفة والشاملة وأستخدام طريقة تبادل الأدوار بين الدارسين في قراءة الفهم. كما توصي المعلمين باستخدام مختلف أساليب التدريس لتقوية مهارات قراءة الفهم لدارسي اللغة الإنجليزية. توصي الدراسة بعدم إنذام الطلاب في الصف الدراسي كما توصي بتدريب المعلمين واستخدام التكنولوجيا الحديثة لدعم تدريس مقررات اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background

Reading comprehension is one of the most important skills for mastery of a foreign language. Some scholars believe that ability to read is the prerequisite for autonomous learning Celce Murcia et al (1995).

Literary texts can be used as a valid and authentic source for increasing the amount of comprehensible input students receive. According to Krashen (1982) students should be provided with enough comprehensible input which is also interesting so that reduces students’ anxiety. And since literature is rarely used for pedagogical purposes it can be a good authentic source for language learners.

Effective reading is essential factor of success in learning another language. Reading is the most important instrument for academic settings (Anderson, 1994). Celce Murcia et al. (1995) believe that the ability to read in a second language is the most important way for autonomous language learning. Alptekin (2006: 494) defined reading:“as an interaction of the reader’s text based and knowledge-based processes. In processing texts, readers combine literal comprehension, based on lower level cognitive processes of reading such as lexical access and syntactic parsing, with inferential comprehension, based on higher level cognitive processes such as the text base of comprehension (to understand what the text says) and the situation model of interpretation (to understand what it is about)".
Traditionally as Chastain (1988) mentioned reading was viewed as a passive skills because readers do not produce anything; however readers are in constant interaction with reading passage and their background knowledge. Traditional approaches to reading deal with the meaning of words as isolated concepts and have nothing to do with the social dimension of reading.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Most learners in EFL contexts have little or no opportunity to contact with native speakers. EFL Learners seem to face some difficulties in reading comprehension and interacting orally. This study investigates the effectiveness of improving learners reading through literary texts as to give them the opportunity to have a better interaction with foreign culture and people

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The study aims to:

1. Reduce the problems that face EFL learners in reading comprehension.

2. Prove that using literary texts helps EFL learners develop reading comprehension skills.

3. Encourage teachers to use visual aids for developing learner's comprehension skills.

4. Stress the benefits of group activity in improving learners comprehension.
1.3 Questions of the Study

The study tries to answer the following questions:

1. What are the problems that face EFL learners in reading comprehension?

2. To what extent does reading literary texts improve EFL learners’ reading comprehension?

3. What are the roles of visual aids for developing learner’s comprehension skills?

4. How does group activity technique improve learners’ comprehension.

1.4 Hypotheses of the Study

The study tries to suggest the hypotheses that may answer the previous questions.

1- Most EFL learners are weak in reading comprehension.

2- Using literary texts develops learners’ comprehension skills

3. Using visual aids develops learner's reading comprehension skills

4. Group activity technique improves learners’ comprehension.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study directs the readers’ attention towards the importance of developing EFL young learners’ comprehension skills. It is also significant and useful to the teachers. It shows them the effectiveness of using literary texts for developing learners’ comprehension skills. To the syllabus designers, it encourages them to design the texts that suit EFL learner's situations.
1.6 Research Methodology

The study will follow the descriptive analytical method. The data for this study will be obtained by using a questionnaire for EFL teachers. Then it will be analyzed statistically with SPSS Program.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

A. The role of literary texts in improving EFL learners’ comprehension skills.

B. This study will be limited to secondary schools, in Hasaheisa locality Gezira state/Sudan.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter investigates the importance of improving EFL students’ reading comprehension. It also investigates type of reading and using literature circles as a technique for improving EFL learners’ comprehension reading. It also casts light on effective techniques that improves EFL reading skills and also suggests some practical ways to solve the problems of teaching reading comprehension. The study also sheds lights on some previous study on the same line.

2.1 EFL Learners Comprehension Reading

It is believed that reading is a vital skill for English language learners in today’s world; it enhances the development of overall proficiency and provides access to valuable information at work and in school. Reading is often characterized as a receptive skill in which one looks at and attempts to understand what has been written. According to Grellet (1987), understanding a written text means extracting the required information from it as accurately and efficiently as possible. It is not only the process of recognition, perception, and interpretation of written materials, but an active one in that it includes the cognitive abilities such as guessing / predicting, checking, and asking questions. As Carrell (1989) puts, “for many students, reading is by far the most important of the four skills in second language, particularly in English as a second or foreign language. Comprehension is an important aspect of reading. Reading comprehension is basically the essence of the reading process. Reading is seen as an activity in
which a reader usually interacts with a text in a close situation and must be studied from junior high school up to university level

**2.1.1 Definitions of Reading Comprehension**

Snow (2014) argues that reading is a process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language that consists of three elements: the reader, the text, and the activity or purpose of reading. However, comprehension is the whole point of reading. Comprehension involves prior knowledge, knowledge of text structure, and an active search for information. Accordingly, reading comprehension is the search for meaning, actively using the reader’s knowledge of vocabulary including knowledge of collocations and idioms with the text being studied to understand each new thing the reader reads.

Miller (1990: 3) claims that “reading is a process of communication of ideas from one person to another through the medium of writing or printing to seek the ideas behind words”. It means that reading is a process of understanding the meaning of a text for readers to get knowledge and new information from what they have read.

Meanwhile, reading is a construction of new meanings through manipulation of concepts already possessed by the reader with resulting meaning. However, after the reader reads the text, he tries to get the meaning word by word and sentence by sentence then later on he interprets the meaning based on the context that brings the result of what he has read. Michigan (2009:17) explains that “reading is the process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction among: (1) the reader’s existing knowledge,(2) the information suggested by the text being read, and (3) the context (purpose) of the reading situation”. According to the previous ideas, reading is an active process of reconstructing meaning from written language.
2.2 EFL Learners, Difficulties in Reading Comprehension.

According to Gabb (2000) most of EFL learners face difficulties in moving into fluency stage although they have had basic decoding skills. However, this due to their limited vocabulary and lack of background knowledge (schematic knowledge). Orasanu (1986:32) states that “the knowledge a reader brings to a text is a principal determiner of how that text will be comprehended, and what may be learned and remembered”. Moreover, the key aspect to reading fluency is the expansion of vocabulary through the use of word play, puzzles. It is believed that, readers can expand their vocabulary through phonics, which will at the end help them to become fluent, skillful readers of English texts. Spencer et al (1998:222) claim that, word recognition is an essential component in the mastery of reading and considerable evidence suggests that the major difficulty confronting the beginning reader is the development of rapid, automatic word recognition skills. Efficient readers use a variety of orthographic data to recognize word units, such as individual letters, letter clusters, morphemes, word stems, and word patterns. This will help them tackle the phoneme-grapheme irregularities found in English. Besides course books built on “word-frequency counting” are useful for SL learners. Hedge (2003) explains that the most used frequency list is that of M West (1953), which has some 2000 headwords. However, he stresses the need for presenting vocabularies in context because isolated words do not present a linguistic or a psychological reality. As Spencer & Hay (1998:224) remark: In particular, EFL learners with reading difficulties need to see the high frequency words in context if they are to better comprehend how written language works. As they master a few automatic words they should be exposed to more text that will support and
utilize that group of known words. Drucker (2003:23) argues that “differences between languages with deep orthographic structures versus shallow ones might cause difficulty for some nonnative readers of English”

2.3 The importance of Teaching Reading

Hedge (2003) claims that, any reading component of an English language course may include a set of learning goals for the ability to read a wide range of texts in English. Building a knowledge of language which will facilitate reading ability building schematic knowledge. the ability to adapt the reading style according to reading purpose developing an awareness of the structure of written texts in English taking a critical stance to the contents of the texts

However, students should be kept aware that not all Internet content is authentic since there are no “gate keepers” and anyone can post whatever he/she likes in this cyberspace. Consequently, students can check the authenticity of the text by looking at the following indicators: whether the article gives the name of the author or no, the date of publication, the aim of the article, etc.

2.3.1 The key to Reading Comprehension

Most researches on reading now focus on the effective reading strategies that increase students’ comprehension. Guthrie (1996:404) argues that “most researchers study a single cognitive strategy, rather than conducting a long-term study of multiple strategies” However, engaged reading is based on motivational and cognitive characteristics of the reader who is intrinsically motivated, builds knowledge, uses cognitive strategies, and interacts socially to learn from text. These engagement processes can be observed in student’s cognitive
effort, perseverance, and self-direction in reading. It is the teacher’s responsibilities to motivate reading by selecting the appropriate materials and especially for those at the early stages of learning. Moreover, meaningful conceptual content in reading instruction increases motivation for reading and text comprehension. It seems that, students who allow a choice of text may perform higher on reading tasks than those with no choice. However, using interesting texts is another advantages of learners choices. This conforms to Hedge’s proposal that in selecting task texts, teachers should seek interesting texts and consider variety of topics. Readers’ interest can be revealed by setting. Since “each learner will have different strengths to build on and different weaknesses to overcome”

In fact, most contemporary reading tasks include pre-reading activities. However, pre-reading activities can be followed since it helps in increasing learners' motivation. While semantic mapping is used as a tool to assess students’ schema, the experience-text-relationship (ETR) method emphasizes comprehension, i.e., reading for meaning. This method is based on discussion aimed at linking what the reader already knows to what he/she will encounter in the text. It has essentially three simple steps: experience, text, and relationship.

In the experience step, the teacher leads the students in discussion of their own knowledge or experiences that are related in some way to the passage to be read. In the text step, students read short parts of the texts, usually a page or two, and the teacher ask them questions about the content after each section is read. In this step, the teacher may also need to correct any misunderstandings of the text evidenced by the students. In the final step, the relationship sequence, the teacher attempts to help the students draw relationships between the content of the text (as developed in the
text step), and their outside experience and knowledge (as discussed in the experience step). In all three steps the teacher is attempting to model and to guide the students systematically through the cognitive processes related to understanding a written text.

2.4 Types of Reading
There are two types of reading, they can be used according to the purpose of reading as follows:

2.4.1 Extensive Reading
There have been conflicting definitions of the term “extensive reading.” Hedge, 2003: 202) explains that, it to refer to describe skimming and scanning activities. However, the pedagogical value attributed to extensive reading is based on the assumption that exposing learners to large quantities of meaningful and interesting L2 material will, in the long run, produce a beneficial effect on the learners’ command of the L2.

Hedge believes that extensive reading varies according to students’ motivation and school resources. A well-motivated and trained teacher will be able to choose suitable handouts or activities books for the students. Hedge (2003:2) also states that since extensive reading helps in developing reading ability, it should be built into an EFL/ESL programs provided the selected texts are “authentic” – i.e. “not written for language learners and published in the original language” - and “graded”. Teachers with EFL/ESL learners at low levels can either use “pedagogic” or “adapted” texts. Moreover, extensive reading enables learners to achieve their independency by reading either in class or at home, through sustained silent reading (SSR). Carrell and Eisterhold (1983:567) argue that SSR activity can be effective in helping learners become self-directed agents seeking meaning provided an
SSR program is “based on student-selected texts so that the students will be interested in what they are reading. Students select their own reading texts with respect to content, level of difficulty, and length.” Hedge (2003:204), however, argues that, comprehension input facilitates intake in SL learners since “it is difficult to know exactly how any learner will actually use his input. However, “it can bee seen as an input-enabling activity. No one can deny the fact that extensive reading helps greatly in “exposing” SL learners to English and especially when the class time is limited. Hedge briefs the advantages of extensive use in the following lines: Learners can build their language competence, progress in their reading ability, become more independent in their studies, acquire cultural knowledge, and develop confidence and motivation to carry on learning.

2.4.2 Intensive Reading

In intensive (or creative) reading, students usually read a page to explore the meaning and to be acquainted with writing mechanisms. Hedge argues that it is “only through more extensive reading that learners can gain substantial practice in operating these strategies more independently on a range of materials.” (Hedge (2003: 202) These strategies can be either text-related or learner-related: the former includes an awareness of text organization, while the latter includes strategies like linguistic, schematic, and metacognitive strategies. Hafiz and Tudor (1989:5) differentiate between extensive and intensive reading:

In intensive reading activities learners are in the main exposed to relatively short texts which are used either to exemplify specific aspects of the lexical, syntactic or discoursal system of the L2, or to provide the basis for targeted reading strategy practice; the goal of extensive reading, on the other hand, is
to ‘flood’ learners with large quantities of L2 input with few or possibly no specific tasks to perform on this material.

2.5 Activities Used in Teaching Reading

Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) argue that for the beginning reader, the Language Experience Approach (LEA) is an excellent way to control vocabulary, structure, and content. The basic LEA technique uses the students’ ideas and the students’ own words in the preparation of beginning reading materials. The students decide what they want to say and how to say it, and then dictate to the teacher, who acts as a scribe. LEA works because students tend to be able to read what they have just said. The students, in effect, write their own texts, neutralizing problems of unfamiliar content. Narrow reading refers to reading that is confined to a single topic or to the texts of a single author. However, narrow reading is more efficient for second language acquisition.

Contemporary reading tasks, unlike the traditional materials, involve three-phase procedures: pre-, while-, and post-reading stages. Zhang briefs that “comprehension is facilitated by explicitly introducing schemata through pre-reading activities” (1993:5). However, the pre-reading stage helps in activating the relevant schema. Most teachers tend to neglect the pre-reading procedure claiming that there is not enough time. In fact, pre-reading activities motivate students before the actual reading takes place. For example, teachers can ask students questions that arouse their interest while previewing the text.

2.5.1 Pre Reading Procedures:

Drucker (2003:23) suggests the following procedure teachers can take before reading a text: ...relate the passage students are going to read to something that is familiar to them. Next, provide a brief discussion question
that will engage the students and, after that, provide an overview of the section they are about to read. Name the selection, introduce the characters, and describe the plot (up to, but not including, the climax). Last, direct the students to read the story and look for particular information.

Similarly, Abraham (2002:6) states that an interactive approach “demands that the teachers activate the students’ schema” during the pre-reading phase by helping “students recognize the knowledge that they already have about the topic of a text”, i.e. through discussion of titles, subheadings, photographs, identifying text structure, previewing, etc. Such activities are called “pre-reading strategies.

Orasanu (1986:118) explains the notion of “schema” (or background knowledge) which ... can be thought of as a framework containing slots to be filled by incoming text information. For example, if a reader is presented with a text about going on vacation, he or she would likely have a slot in the vacation schema for packing a suitcase. Text statements about folding clothes or carrying bags could then fill the slot. If a reader did not have a vacation schema with a suitcase-packing slot, the information about clothes and bags might not be readily understood.

The aim of while-reading stage (or interactive process) is to develop students’ ability in tackling texts by developing their linguistic and schematic knowledge. Hedge (2003:210) argues that although some oppose the interactive activities carried during the while-reading phase, there are only few research studies that show the effects of intervention and their outcomes”. Moreover, “many students report positively on the usefulness of while-reading activities.

Paran (1996:29) believes that modern interactive reading models enable SL readers to be “less reliant on top-down processing” and enable them to
achieve “greater reliance on bottom-up strategies as they become more proficient. It seems that teachers can use a balanced approach to teaching reading by incorporating both top-down and bottom-up processes, provided they are given flexibility in choosing the reading tasks.

Haller (2000: 21-24) modeled a number of school-based post-reading activities which enhance learning comprehension through the use of matching exercises, cloze exercises, cut-up sentences, and comprehension questions. For the cloze activity, the teacher puts blanks in the story in place of some of the words, usually every fifth word but not the first or the last words in the text. A cut-up sentence activity uses sentences from the given text and helps learners to gain confidence by manipulating the text in various ways. The use of lines in matching can be sometimes confusing for beginners. Haller proposes the use of “paper strips” at the beginning where a student is given the strips and asked to match for example a name with its corresponding activity. Later students can work in pairs as they understand the concept of matching and, finally, the teacher can introduce matching through lines.

2.6 Improving EFL Learners Comprehension through Literary Texts
Parkinson and Thomas (2000:11), claim that, using literary texts help EFL students to improve their language skills, expand their linguistic and cognitive skills. So reading literary texts gives learners the opportunity to have a contact with foreign culture around the world. Moreover, literary texts enables students to understand and appreciate other cultures, societies and ideologies different from their own, it encourages personal growth and intellectual. In reading literary texts, students can improve their language skills. However, comprehension reading effectiveness can be achieved
through teaching literary texts. However, it is also highlighted the role of literature circles in motivating learners in EFL classroom for improving their comprehension skills.

2.7 Improving EFL Learners Reading through Literature Circles

Reading and understanding literary texts offers learners suggestions for how to read more, how to evaluate the artistic quality of what they read and how to analyze a text and explore the possibility of language in the text for more lights.

Furr (2004) claims that, EFL Literature Circles are fun, focused classroom based student reading and discussion groups. However, the teacher can present an interesting reading for students and choose the material that increases their motivation to study. This technique helps learners to have a group discussion leader, a summarizer, a word master, a connector, a culture collector and a passage person in each group. The technique helps the group and individual student, increases the amount of reading students, provides opportunities for inquiry and critical thinking, and teaches students how to work together co-operatively as Daniels (1994) states that:

“Literature Circles are small, temporary discussion groups composed of students who are reading the same work of literature and each group member has specific responsibilities during the discussion sessions”.

Moreover, the circles meet regularly, and the discussion roles change at each meeting; when the circle finishes a book, the members decide on a way to present the results of their study of the literary work to the rest of the class.
2.7.1 The Description of Literature Circles
There are many concepts of Literature Circles, but every concept has one basic point in common: each student is responsible for most of their own learning. All definitions also focus on students working cooperatively in order to help each other in their learning achievements. However, literature circles are cooperative approaches that give students the opportunity to control and manage their own learning. According to Daniels (2002), this technique provides an opportunity for students to engage with their peers about a selected text. They have the chance to their peers, listen respectfully to one another, sometimes disagree strongly, but dig back into the text to settle arguments or validate different interpretations.

2.8 The Values of Using Literary Texts.
Using literary text for improving reading allow learners many benefits:

a. Teaching the Language through Cultural
Teachers teach the EFL material through its culture. The two are inseparably intertwined, which is why the correct use of a language partly depends on understanding its cultural background.

b. Enriching The Language Use
EFL learners have to be aware that learning language is a constant enrichment of one’s second language vocabulary. Without vocabulary enrichment the learning process will stop at the acquisition level and a learner will never learn to use the language, at least not appropriately.

c. Personal involvement
The last reason for using literary texts in EFL classrooms is personal involvement. Personal involvement is an inevitable part of reading books or any other literary work; moreover, the writer expects from a reader to get
personally involved in order to grasp the idea(s) that she is trying to convey through her literary expressions. Many other linguists also promote the use of literature in foreign language classrooms. Parkinson and Thomas (2000, :11), for example, list ten ways that a student can benefit from literature. Some of these reasons overlap with the reasons given by Collie and Slater above. They are as follows: cultural enrichment, linguistic models, mental training, extension of linguistic competence, authenticity, memorability, rhythmic resources, motivating materials, openness to interpretation and convenience.

2.9 The Roles of Literature Circles in Language Classroom
In classrooms all across the country, literature circles are being used by teachers to promote better thinking skills and higher reading levels amongst their students. According to Maher (2013), literature circles should be set up with each student in each group having a different ‘role’ each week. This role will involve doing ‘role work,’ which they will submit to their teacher, and share with their fellow classmates. This section will address those aspects of literature circles for teachers to implement.

2.10 Vocabulary Lists before Reading
Nation (2009) stresses the importance of recycling vocabulary as a way for students to learn new words. One way to recycle important vocabulary is to create vocabulary lists or lists of idioms or collocations that students will pre-study before an actual reading.

2.11 Student Roles in Discussions
Daniels (2002) lists 6 potential student roles, such as Questioner or Discussion Leader, Illustrator, Passage Master, Connector, Summarizer and Word Wizard. Furr (2004) uses
Discussion Leader, Summarizer, Connector, Word Master, Passage Person, and Culture Connector. However, Maher (2013), a senior instructor at the English Language Centre of the University of Macau, has modified the assigned roles, and would like to share what they do, and what ‘role work’ each of his students is assigned prior to their literature circle meetings. Some of these are combined into his own assigned roles and, as well, he has created new ones. For organization of their literature circles, he creates a list of five roles, with each group consisting of five members. This means that the group will stay together for five weeks, for each student to experience each role. After five weeks, he mixes group members so that they start working with different people.

2.12 Teacher’s Role in Literature Circles

The teacher’s role is to monitor group discussions and help students collectively understand the text. Particularly, the teacher should focus on problems based around language, idioms, and cultural concepts that prove difficult to understand.

Furthermore, research conducted by Stein and Bede (2004) has studied the roles that teachers play within literature circles. These researchers identified four roles that teachers take on during these discussion groups –viz: facilitator, participant, mediator, and active listener. According to their research, the Facilitator role involved the teachers encouraging students’ interaction and talk and to monitor social interactions which interfered with discussion. This role was commonly observed especially during the first year of the study. The second role looked at the teacher as a Participant. This involved teachers interacting as readers by sharing personal connections, opinions, and questions that stemmed from their personal understanding of the book. The third role identified the teacher as a Mediator. This role
involved teachers using facilitator or participant talk to encourage students to connect their discussions about the book to their own life experiences and values.

The final role identified by the researchers was Active Listener. This role moved away from teacher dominated discussions and left the control up to group negotiation. Some behaviours noted by the researchers in this group were “active listening” behaviours such as “yeah” or “hmm”. The students were more likely to interrupt or talk on top of one another and to compete for the attention of an “adult” presence.

The Procedure for Implementing Literature Circles Lin (2004) explains their procedure for implementing literature circles, which includes: reading material selection, community building, the number of students in each circle, preparation for the discussions plus sharing and discussions

2.13 Reading Material Selection

The reading materials used in literature circles are important to stimulate lively and meaningful discussions (Farinacci, 1998) -Nash and Dutch (2000: 23), have suggested the following criteria for selecting texts to use in literature circles: comprehensible to students of different abilities and interests, reflect students' language needs and skills, address issues/topics relevant to students' lives, and provoke thinking and discussion by the students.

1 Community Building

One belief is that a primary function of literature circles is to create a classroom community in which students and teachers can learn from and with each other (King, 2001).
Farinacci (1998) recommends that the teacher discuss the following topics with students: (1) how to handle unknown words, (2) how to respond and provide feedback amongst circle participants, (3) how to select topics for discussion, and (4) how to get along as a group.

2. Number of Participants in Each Circle
In each literature circle, learners need time and opportunities to express their ideas and to respond to other members in thoughtful and probing ways (Brabham & Villaume, 2000). They suggest that four to eight participants are the ideal number for a literature circle, although effective discussion may also occur between as few as two learners or as many as an entire class.

3. Preparation for Discussion
Preparation for discussion involves students not only becoming familiar with the text being read but also being prepared to fulfill the various different roles in the discussion. These roles may either be assigned by the teacher or selected by the students themselves and are usually rotated with each new reading.

4. Sharing and Discussion
After all members in a circle have finished their reading and role preparations, they should assemble and begin their discussions. Students should bring their written responses or assignment sheets and use these as guides for the discussions, but some believe the discussion topics should not be limited by these (Gilbert, 2000). When working with students having little experience in literature circles, teachers may need to model appropriate discussion behaviours, including thoughtful responses regarding the readings, respectful feedback to the interpretations of others, and good
listening and questioning skills. Furr (2004: 6) has stated that in a Literature Circle there are six roles as follows:

1. Group Discussion Leader (GDL) The group discussion leader is the leader who controls the flow of the discussions. She asks each of the group members, one by one, to retell and explain facets of the story based on each person’s role. Then, she asks group member some open-ended questions about the story.

2. Summarizer (S) The summarizer’s job is to briefly and completely summarize the story and is given to all members of the group at the beginning of the discussion session.

3. Connector (C) The connector’s role is to try to find connections between the text and the real world in which we live. The connector has to find some experiences from the group that relate to the short story.

4. Word Master (WM) The role of word master are to find five important words, phrases or collocations in the short story and to explain the meanings of them to the members of the group but before defining them the Word Master may ask the opinions of the members about the chosen words and/or phrases with simple questions.

5. Passage Person (PP) The passage person’s job is to find and bring to the group’s attention important, interesting or difficult parts of the reading, parts that may be important for the story’s events (the plot) or to explain the characters, to find and bring to the group’s attention passages with especially interesting or powerful language.
6. **Culture Collector**

Furr (2004, p. 8) defines the Culture Collector’s job is to look at the story and note both differences and similarities between the culture represented in the story and the group’s own culture.

**The Benefit of Literature Circles in Teaching Reading Comprehension**

There are many benefits of using literature circles for teaching reading comprehension.

They not only develop the abilities of students but they also contribute to improve students’ communication skills and to foster social and interpersonal skills. As stated by Lin (2004), the benefits of literature circles which some studies have identified include: (a) stronger reader-text relationships, (b) improved classroom climates, (c) enhanced degrees of gender equity and understanding, and (d) a learning environment more conducive to the needs and abilities of English language learners.

**2.14 Previous studies**

*Alawyia Alameen Ali Said (2015) Developing Young learners' Reading Comprehension at Basic Level, Gezira University, Sudan.*

This study aims at reducing the problems that face young learners in reading comprehension, using teaching aids to help young learners memorize words and meanings, encouraging teachers use phonics and storytelling techniques for developing young learner’s comprehension skills and stressing the role of motivation in developing young learners comprehension skills. The study adopted the descriptive analytical method. A questionnaire was the used for
collecting the data from EFL teachers at basic level schools. Collected data were statistically analyzed by SPSS Program. The results show that: Using phonics develops reading comprehension at basic level. The use of short stories is a useful technique in developing EFL learners’ comprehension skills. Decoding strategy enables pupils to identify unknown words in comprehension texts. Motivation encourages young learners develop their comprehension skills. The combination of phonemic awareness and rapid naming of letters, enhances learners’ comprehension. Using teaching aids helps young learners memorize words and their meanings. Using words in context supports for young learners to read comprehension and choral repetition improves learners’ reading skills. Based on the previous finding, the study recommends the following: Learners should practice extensive reading to develop their comprehension skills, learners should be given good instructions for actual reading, writing, and discussion of texts, teaching aids should be used in every lesson to help young learners memorize words and their meanings, pupils should be enabled to read in an effortless, flowing manner, the selected texts should improve learners comprehension skills and young learners should be motivated to improve their comprehension skills.

2. Sarah Mohamed Eljak (May-2015, Problem of Teaching English Language at EFL Young Learner University of Gezera)

This study aims at reducing the problems of teaching English that face teachers and pupils. It also ensures the effectiveness of drilling exercises of English language with EFL beginners. The study also highlights using choral repetitions for improving beginners' communicative abilities. The study also
stresses the importance of using teaching aids in EFL class room. The study adapts the descriptive analytical method. The data were collected by means of a questionnaire which was given to 50 teachers at Hasahisa locality basic school level. Then they were analyzed by the (SPSS) program. The analyses lead to a number of findings: motivation is the crucial force which determines learner's participation, teachers at basic level face some difficulties class room interaction, repetition helps students gain better control of the tasks, using verb-noun collocations measures pupils productive knowledge of sentence writing, using visual aids make teaching process easier, using formative assessment helps decrease the level of anxiety and increase their comfort, using visual cues in oral inter views develops learners vocabulary. Based on the above findings the study recommends the following: pupils at basic school should be encouraged to practice conversations, EFL teachers should present their lessons in a suitable class room size, learners' interpretative skills should be develop, teachers should use group task activities to develop student's interaction, teachers should use suitable evaluation to measure young learners' progress, young learners course book should be supplemented with communicative activities.

3. **Hui-Ling Huang (2006)** The Effects of Storytelling on EFL Young Learners’ Reading Comprehension and Word Recall, National Yunlin University of Science and Technology huangje@yuntech.edu.tw

This study investigated the effects of contextualized storytelling as a teacher intervention on EFL young readers’ reading comprehension and word recall. Drawing on Dual-Code Model and the multiple sensory approach, it was hypothesized that the multi-sensory approach, by means of storytelling,
would be a better intervention than Dual-code Model in EFL reading and word retention. To test the hypothesis, 72 sixth grade students from a public primary school in Taiwan were leveled and grouped into three modes of reading: text-only reading (Group C), illustration-supplemented reading based on Dual-Code Model (Group I), and story listening plus illustrated-text reading (Group S). Story retelling tests and word recall tests were administered to see the performance differences. The results indicated that the study group outperformed the other groups in story retelling though the same effect was not found in word recall. The less proficient learners gained slightly more from this approach than their proficient peers. It was suggested that the teacher might exploit contextualized storytelling to scaffold EFL reading. Issues for further study that looks into the long-term effects of storytelling on vocabulary learning, language development, and text processing are discussed.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The study adopted the descriptive analytical method. So, this chapter provides a description of the sample of the study, how data were collected, analyzed, and statistically procedures used. Also, it discusses the responses of the EFL teachers to whom the questionnaire have been distributed, and to find the validity, reliability of the questionnaire.

3.1 Population of the Study

The populations of this study were EFL teachers at Sudanese secondary schools. There were 50 teachers were taken randomly as a sample to this study.

3.2 Sample of the Study

The sample of the study has been selected from EFL teachers secondary schools, Hasaheisa Locality Gezira State, Sudan. The questionnaire were distributed to 50 of them to fill.

3.3 The Tool of the Study

The study used a questionnaire as a tool for collecting data. It composed of thirteen statements for teachers. Each statement has three options, they are: agree, neutral and disagree. For the presentation of the results the researcher used percentages, tables and figures for more explanation. This tool was analyzed statistically with SPSS Program
3.4 The Procedures

The questionnaire is designed and used as a tool to collect data for investigating the topic. Using Errors correction technique to promote learners’ comprehension at secondary schools level this questionnaire is distributed to the EFL teachers at secondary school level.

3.5 Reliability and Validity of the questionnaire

The study used the statistical package for social sciences to analyze the data collected. The researcher used Pearson's correlation and the results obtained as follows:

In this study the researcher used Pearson correlation through half-methods. According to the equation below it is found that the validity is:

\[
r_{xy} = \frac{N(\Sigma XY) - (\Sigma X \Sigma Y)}{\sqrt{N(\Sigma X^2) - (\Sigma X)^2} \sqrt{N(\Sigma Y^2) - (\Sigma Y)^2}}
\]

Where

r = correlation
R: Reliability of the test
N: number of all items
X: odd scores
Y: even scores
\Sigma: Sum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items</th>
<th>N of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.978</td>
<td>.980</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha
Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items
N of Items
.978
.980
20

39
\[ R = \frac{2xr}{1+r} \]

\[ \text{Val} = \sqrt{\text{reliability}} \]

Correlation = 0.978
CHAPTER FOUR
DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0- Introduction:

This chapter describes data analysis. For presentation of the results the researcher used SPSS percentages, tables and figures for more explanation.

4.1-The analysis of the Questionnaire statements:

Statement (1) Some EFL learners at face difficulties in reading comprehension.

Table and diagram (4.1) EFL learners’ difficulties in reading comprehension.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>q1</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
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<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
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<td>6.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table and diagram (4.1) show that, some EFL learners at secondary schools face difficulties in reading comprehension. According to the statistical analysis of statement, most of the respondents (90%) agreed with the statement, (6%) of the sample neutral and only (4%) disagreed with the statement. Therefore this statement is accepted.
Statement (2) Intensive and extensive reading, improve EFL students comprehension

Table and diagram (4.2) EFL students comprehension through extensive reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>94.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table and diagram (4.2) show that, intensive and extensive reading, improve EFL students comprehension. (94%) of the sample agree, (4%) neutral and (2%) disagree with the statement.
Statement (3) Comprehension skill can be developed through opportunity for reading school activities

Table and diagram (4.3) show that, comprehension skill can be developed through opportunity for reading school activities. According to the statistical analysis of table (4.3) most respondents (88%) agree that with this claim (6%) neutral and (6)% disagree. Therefore, this statement is a accepted.
Statement (4) Students will not become excellent at comprehension without substantial experience reading and writing it

Table and diagram (4.4) EFL students’ comprehension without previous experience in reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neutral</td>
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<tr>
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<td>94.0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table and diagram (4.4) show that, students will not become excellent at comprehension without substantial experience reading and writing it, (94%) of the respondents agree with the statement, (4%) of the sample’s answer neutral and (2%) of the sample disagree with the statement.
Statement (5) Using literary texts develops learners’ comprehension skills

Table and diagram (4.5) Using literary texts for developing learners’ comprehension.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
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<tr>
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<td>92.0</td>
<td>92.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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</table>

Table and diagram (4.5) show that, (82%) of the respondents agree, (4%) of the sample choose the answer neutral and (4%) disagree with that, using literary texts develops learners’ comprehension skills.
Statement (6) Motivation encourages EFL learners develop their comprehension skills

Table and diagram (4.6) Motivation impact on EFL learners’ comprehension skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
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</table>

Table and diagram (4.6) show that, motivation encourages EFL learners develop their comprehension skills. According to the statistical analysis of table (4.6) most respondents (84%) agree with the statement. Only (8%) disagree and (8%) neutral. Thus this statement is accepted.
Statement (7) Group reading activity improves learners’ comprehension

Table and diagram (4.7) Group reading activity

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<tr>
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<td>6.0 12.0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>44</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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Table and diagram (4.7) show that, (88 %) of the respondents agree, (6%) of the sample neutral to see group reading activity improves learners’ comprehension and (6%) disagree with it. The statement is accepted.
Statement (8) Using teaching aids helps EFL learners memorize vocabulary and meanings

Table and diagram (4.8) Using teaching aids in EFL classes

<table>
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Table and diagram (4- 8) show that, using teaching aids helps EFL learners memorize vocabulary and meanings. According to the statistical analysis of table (4.8) most respondents (88%) disagree that, using teaching aids helps EFL learners memorize vocabulary and meanings (6% ) of the sample answer neutral and (6%) . Therefore this statement is accepted
Statement (9) Using phonics strategy develops learners reading comprehension

Table and diagram (4.9) Using phonics for strategy developing learners reading.

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
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<td>45</td>
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Table and diagram (4.9) show that, (90%) of the respondents agree with the statement, that, using phonics strategy develops learners reading comprehension (6%) of the sample disagree and (4%) answer neutral. This statement is accepted.
Statement (10) Classroom communication improves learners’ reading skills

Table and diagram (4.10) Classroom communication improves learners’ reading skills

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<td>3</td>
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Table and diagram (4.10) show the statistical results. According to the statistical analysis of statement (10) the majority of respondents (86%) agree that, classroom communication improves learners’ reading skills. Only (8%) neutral and (6%) disagree. Thus this statement is accepted.
Statement (11) Using literature circles technique promotes EFL learners critical thinking skills and higher reading levels of comprehension

Table and diagram (4.11) Using literature circles technique

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Diagram and table (4.11) show that most respondents (92%) agree while (8%) neutral that, using literature circles technique promotes EFL learners critical thinking skills and higher reading levels of comprehension. According to the statistical analysis of statement, it is accept
Statement (12) Comprehension is an important aspect of reading

Table and diagram (4.12) Comprehension is an important aspect of reading

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<td>Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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According to the statistical analysis of table (4.12) (90%) of respondents strongly agree while (4%) neutral and (6%) disagree that, comprehension is an important aspect of reading. Thus this statement is accepted.
Statement(13) Literary texts enables students to appreciate other cultures, societies and ideologies different from their own

Table and diagram (4.13) Literary texts enables students to appreciate other cultures.

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<td>Agree</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>88.0</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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</table>

According to the statistical analysis of table (4.13) most respondents (88%) agree, (6%) neutral while (6%) disagree that, literary texts enables students to appreciate other cultures, societies and ideologies different from their own. Therefore, this statement is accepted
4.2 Testing the hypotheses of the study

The topic tries to ensure and test the hypotheses that may answer previous question.

**Hypothesis One:** *Most EFL learners are weak in reading comprehension.*

According to the statistical analysis of Table (4.1), most respondents (90%) agree with the statement. Therefore, this hypothesis is accepted.

**Hypothesis Two:** *Using literary texts develops learners’ comprehension skills*

According to the statistical analysis of table and diagram (4.5), (92%) of the respondents agree, (4%) of the sample choose the answer neutral and (4%) disagree that, using literary texts develops learners’ comprehension skills.

**Hypothesis Three:** *Using visual aids develops learner's reading comprehension skills*

Table and diagram (4.8) show that, using teaching aids helps EFL learners memorize vocabulary and meanings. According to the statistical analysis of table (4.8) most respondents (88%) agree that, using teaching aids helps. Thus the hypothesis is accepted.

**Hypothesis Four:** *Group activity technique improves learners’ comprehension*
According to the statistical analysis of table and diagram (4.7), (88%) of the respondents agree that, group reading activity improves learners’ comprehension. The hypothesis is accepted.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction:

In this chapter the researcher states the, conclusion, findings and recommendation.

5.1 Conclusion:

The aim of the study is investigating the problems of EFL learners in reading comprehension at secondary schools. It tries, improving EFL learners performance of reading comprehension through literature circles and other technique. The study adapts the descriptive analytical method. The data collected by means of a questionnaire from 50 teachers of secondary school level, then it was analyzed by the SPSS program. The analyses lead to number of findings. The most important ones are the following:

5.2 Findings

After the analysis of the data, the study has received the following results:

1. Some EFL learners at secondary schools face difficulties in reading comprehension skills.

2. Intensive and extensive reading, improve EFL students comprehension skills.
3. Comprehension skill can be developed through opportunity for reading school activities.

4. Students will not become excellent at comprehension without substantial experience at reading and writing.

5. Using literary texts develops learners’ comprehension skills.

6. Motivation encourages EFL learners to develop their comprehension skills.

7. Group reading activities improve learners’ comprehension.

8. Using teaching aids helps EFL learners memorize vocabulary and meanings.

9. Using phonics strategy develops learners reading comprehension skills.

10. Classroom communication improves learners’ reading skills.

11. Using literature circles technique promotes EFL learners critical thinking skills and higher reading levels of comprehension.

12. Comprehension is an important aspect of reading.

13. Literary texts enables students to appreciate other cultures, societies and ideologies different from their own.
5.3 Recommendations

Based on the previous finding the study recommends the following:

1. EFL teachers should motivate the learners through using literary texts in the classroom.

2. Teachers should encourage EFL learners to read extensively.

3. Reading comprehension should be practiced in turn among learners in the classroom.

4. EFL Teachers should use different teaching techniques for improving learners’ comprehension.

5. EFL classes should not be crowded with the learners.

6. Teachers should be trained how to teach English language skills.

7. Presenting practical English in EFL teaching should be stressed.

8. Modern technology should be used to support teaching and learning of EFL courses.

9. EFL learners should practice language games.

10. EFL teachers should use audio visual aids in the classrooms.
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Appendix
A questionnaire

Dear teacher:

This questionnaire is designed to collect data for an MA research in ELT, which entitled “The Role of Literary Texts in Developing EFL Learners’ Comprehension Skills”. I would be Grateful if you Could Give your Opinions by putting a tick(     )in the right scale. Thank you.

Mohammed Abaas Abedalla Abaas

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Using literary texts develops learners’ comprehension skills</td>
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<td>Classroom communication improves learners’ reading skills</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Using literature circles technique promotes EFL learners critical thinking skills and higher reading</td>
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<td>Literary texts enables students to appreciate other cultures, societies and ideologies different from their own</td>
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