

The Role of English Literature in Enhancing Speaking Skills among EFL University Students

Dr. Abdelrhman Ishag Oman Adam *
Dhat-ALimad University, Tripoli, Libya
*Corresponding author: abdarhmanishagosman@gmail.com

دور الأدب الإنجليزي في تعزيز مهارات التحدث لدى طلاب الجامعة الذين يدرسون الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

د. عبد الرحمن إسحق عثمان آدم*
جامعة ذات العمام، طرابلس، ليبيا

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Abstract:

This study investigates the role of teaching English literature in enhancing students' speaking skills, focusing on how literary texts can be used to promote oral communication in English. The research addresses the persistent challenge of limited oral proficiency among English as a foreign language (EFL) learner, who often struggle with fluency and confidence despite having adequate linguistic knowledge. The study adopts a descriptive analytical method to explore how literature-based instructional strategies, such as discussions, debates, and role-plays, provide authentic communicative opportunities. For data collection, a questionnaire was developed and distributed to a sample of (20) university teachers of English language at Omdurman Ahlia University, chosen randomly to ensure representative perspectives. The findings reveal a strong consensus among educators regarding the pedagogical value of literature; 95% of respondents agreed that teaching literary styles and fiction develops diverse speaking techniques and creative expression. The results validate the hypothesis that integrating literature into language teaching significantly contributes to the holistic development of speaking skills by blending creativity with communication. Ultimately, the study provides insights for teachers to implement literature as a vital tool for fostering linguistic and cognitive growth in the EFL classroom.

Keywords: communication, expression, creativity, discussions, linguistic.

الملخص

تقصي هذه الدراسة دور تدريس الأدب الإنجليزي في تعزيز مهارات التحدث لدى الطلاب، مع التركيز على كيفية استخدام النصوص الأدبية لتعزيز التواصل الشفهي باللغة الإنجليزية. بتناول الدراسة التحدى المستمر المتمثل في محدودية الكفاءة الشفهية لدى متعلم اللغة الإنجليزية ك لغة أجنبية، الذين غالباً ما يواجهون صعوبات في الطلاقة والثقة رغم امتلاكهم معرفة لغوية كافية. تتبع الدراسة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي لاستكشاف كيف توفر الاستراتيجيات التعليمية القائمة على الأدب، مثل النقاشات والمناظرات ولعب الأدوار، فرصةً تواصلية حقيقةً. ولجمع البيانات، تم تطوير استبيان وتوزيعها على عينة من (20) من أساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة أم درمان الأهلية، تم اختيارهم عشوائياً لضمان تمثيل وجهات النظر. كشفت النتائج عن إجماع قوي بين التربويين حول القيمة التعليمية للأدب؛ حيث وافق 95% من المبحوثين على أن تدريس الأساليب الأدبية والخيال يطور تقبيلات تحدث متوعةً إبداعياً. وتأكد النتائج صحة الفرضية

القائلة بأن دمج الأدب في تعليم اللغة يساهم بشكل كبير في التطوير الشامل لمهارات التحدث من خلال مزج الإبداع بالتواصل. في الختام، تقدم الدراسة رؤى للمعلمين لتنفيذ الأدب كأداة حيوية لتعزيز النمو اللغوي والمعرفي في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التواصل، التعبير، الإبداع، النقاشات، اللغوية.

Introduction

Literature plays a pivotal role in enhancing students' speaking skills by providing authentic, meaningful, and context-rich language input. Unlike mechanical language drills, literary texts expose learners to natural communication, varied linguistic forms, and expressive uses of language (Carter & Long, 1991). Through novels, plays, and poems, students encounter real-life dialogues, diverse accents, and stylistic variations that reflect authentic speech patterns (Bygate, 1987).

Furthermore, literature encourages oral expression through interactive activities such as discussions, debates, dramatizations, and role-plays. These tasks enable learners to articulate ideas, express emotions, and interpret meanings in communicative contexts (Lazar, 1993). As Collie and Slater (1987) note, literature stimulates imagination and emotional engagement, motivating students to speak more confidently and meaningfully. In addition, the cultural and moral dimensions of literary texts broaden students' perspectives, allowing them to discuss themes, values, and human experiences that require critical thinking and articulate expression. Therefore, integrating literature into language teaching significantly contributes to the holistic development of students' speaking skills by blending language learning with creativity, culture, and communication (Brown, 2001).

Statement of the Problem

Speaking proficiency is a critical dimension of communicative competence and a fundamental goal in English Language Teaching (ELT). However, numerous studies indicate that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners face significant difficulties in achieving fluency, accuracy, and confidence in oral communication (Richards, 2008). Consequently, learners' communicative abilities often remain underdeveloped despite possessing adequate linguistic knowledge (Ur, 1996). English literature, with its rich linguistic structures, cultural insights, and expressive content, offers a valuable yet underutilized resource for addressing these gaps (Carter & Long, 1991). This study, therefore, investigates how literature-based instructional strategies—such as discussion, dramatization, and role-play—can provide learners with authentic communicative opportunities and stimulate the engagement necessary for developing oral proficiency.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it addresses the persistent challenge of limited oral proficiency among EFL learners by exploring the pedagogical role of English literature. It provides practical insights for educators on implementing literature-based activities to promote fluency and confidence (Lazar, 1993). Academically, the research contributes to the field of ELT by demonstrating the value of literature in fostering integrated linguistic, cognitive, and cultural development (Collie & Slater, 1987).

Study Framework: Objectives, Questions, and Hypotheses

The primary objective of this study is to probe teachers' attitudes toward the integration of literature in enhancing speaking skills. To achieve this, the study addresses the following central question: **To what extent does teaching English literature enhance speaking skills?**

Based on this inquiry, the study attempts to validate the hypothesis that **teaching literature positively contributes to the enhancement of students' speaking abilities**.

Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive-analytical method to investigate the relationship between literary instruction and speaking skills development. This approach facilitates a detailed examination of educational practices and outcomes (Brown, 2001).

- **Population and Sample:** The study targets English language teachers at Omdurman Ahlia University. A sample of (20) teachers was selected using a random sampling technique to ensure representative perspectives.
- **Instrumentation:** Data were collected via a structured questionnaire, a tool chosen for its efficiency in gathering reliable data from a targeted professional group.
- **Data Analysis:** The questionnaire was administered to verify the hypothesis that teachers hold positive perspectives regarding the role of literature in enhancing students' oral skills.

Results and Data Analysis

key statements.

As shown in Table 1, a vast majority of the participants (95%) agreed that teaching literary styles contributes to the development of various speaking techniques. Only 5% remained neutral, while none of the participants disagreed.

Results and Data Analysis

The empirical data gathered via the research instrument were meticulously analyzed to substantiate the study's central hypothesis concerning the instructional value of English literature in augmenting oral proficiency. The following subsections provide a comprehensive analytical breakdown of the educators' responses to the three core thematic statements.

Statement (1): Teaching literary style develops different speaking techniques.

As illustrated in Table 1, the statistical evidence reveals a profound consensus among the participants. A significant majority (95%) of the respondents affirmed that the instruction of literary styles directly facilitates the acquisition of diverse speaking techniques. In contrast, a negligible minority (5%) maintained a neutral stance, while 0% of the sample expressed any form of disagreement. These results align with the pedagogical assertions of Bygate (1987) who emphasizes that exposure to varied linguistic styles is fundamental to developing oral competence.

Table (1): Teachers' responses to the statement: "Teaching literary style develops different speaking techniques."

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	19	95%
Neutral	1	5%
Disagree	0	0%
Total	20	100%

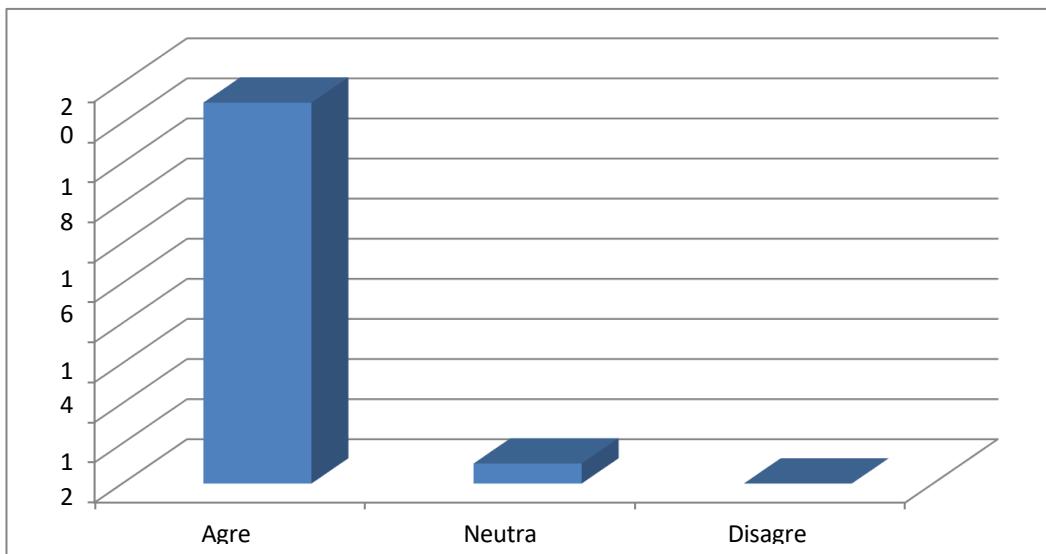


Fig (1): Teachers' responses to the statement: "Teaching literary style develops different speaking techniques."

Statement (2): Teaching the elements of stories allows students to speak English.

Table 2 indicates a more divided perspective among the educators regarding this specific pedagogical aspect. While %45 of the participants agreed that understanding the elements of fiction (such as plot, characterization, and setting) facilitates oral communication, an equal %45 remained neutral. A small minority of %10 disagreed with the statement. This variation in responses may suggest that while story elements provide the "content" for speaking, some teachers believe that additional linguistic scaffolding is required to translate that content into spoken fluency (Byrne, 1986).

Table (2): Teachers' responses to the statement: "Teaching the elements of stories allows students to speak English."

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	9	45%
Neutral	9	45%
Disagree	2	10%
Total	20	100%

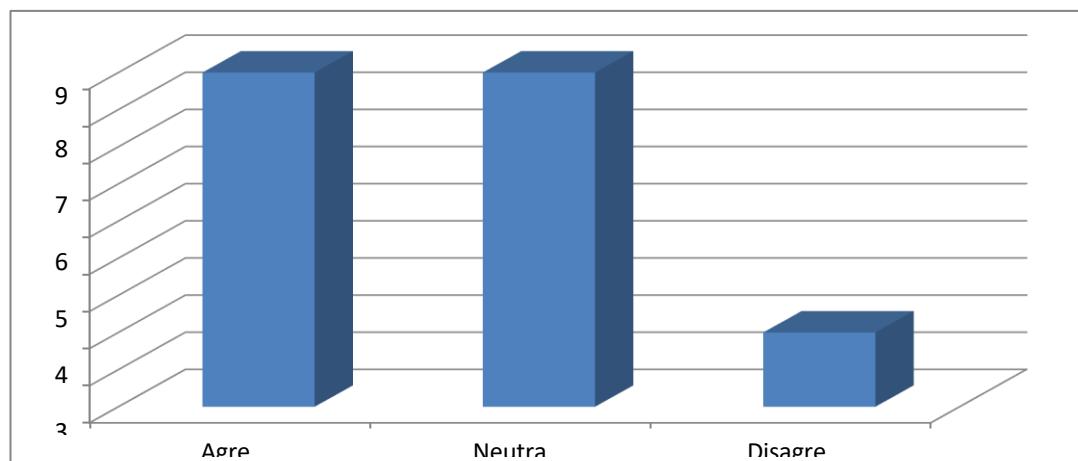


Fig (2): Teachers' responses to the statement: "Teaching the elements of stories allows students to speak English."

Statement (3): Reading fiction develops students' creative speaking.

According to the data in Table 3, there is a definitive consensus among the educators regarding the impact of fiction on students' creative oral abilities. Mirroring the results of the first statement, a vast majority of 95% of the respondents agreed that engaging with fiction fosters creative speaking. Meanwhile, only 5% maintained a neutral position, and 0% expressed disagreement. This overwhelming agreement supports the pedagogical theory that literary fiction provides a unique cognitive space for students to experiment with language beyond traditional boundaries (Lazar, 1993).

Table (3): Teachers' responses to the statement: "Reading fiction develops students' creative speaking."

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	19	95%
Neutral	1	5%
Disagree	0	0%
Total	20	100%

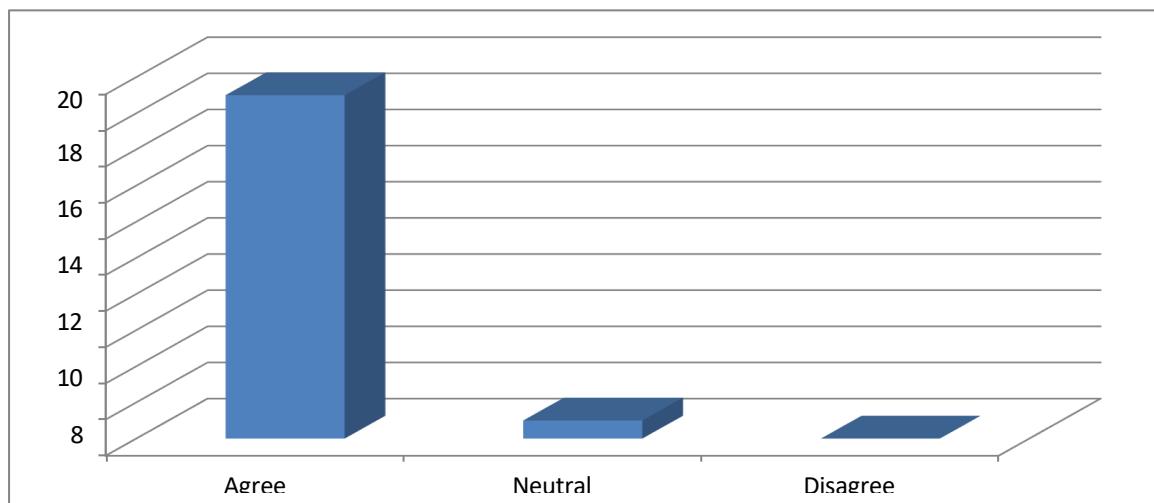


Fig (3): Teachers' responses to the statement: "Reading fiction develops students' creative speaking."

Overall Result Interpretation

A comprehensive analysis of the empirical data across all tables reveals a significant consensus among the participants. The statistical evidence indicates that a vast majority of the respondents (reaching 95% in key indicators) strongly support the study's core premise. The high frequency of "Agree" responses across various dimensions—ranging from the development of speaking techniques to the promotion of creative expression—underscores the perceived efficacy of literary texts in the EFL classroom. Consequently, the researcher concludes that the central research hypothesis—"Teaching English Literature positively contributes to enhancing students' speaking skills—"has been empirically validated and sustained. The results suggest that literature serves not merely as a subject of study, but as a dynamic pedagogical tool that bridges the gap between theoretical linguistic knowledge and practical oral proficiency (Byrne, 1986).

Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the pedagogical role of English literature as a catalyst for enhancing the speaking skills of EFL students. By synthesizing the perspectives of university educators, the research highlights the transformative potential of literary texts in the language learning process. Based on the analytical findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

- **Pedagogical Integration** :The systematic integration of literature into the EFL curriculum facilitates the development of students' oral proficiency by providing authentic, context-rich language input that mechanical drills often lack.
- **Communicative Versatility** :Literary texts provide a unique platform for diverse communicative techniques. They serve as a vital catalyst for creative expression, allowing students to navigate complex meanings and articulate ideas with greater fluency and confidence.
- **Instructional Innovation** :Beyond student outcomes, the use of literature stimulates the professional imagination of educators. It encourages teachers to adopt more interactive and humanistic approaches, recognizing that linguistic growth is deeply tied to emotional engagement and positive reinforcement.

Ultimately, this research reaffirms that literature is an indispensable resource in the quest to develop competent, confident, and creative speakers of English.

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