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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHING LITERATURE IN SURMOUNTING THE WRITING
PROBLEMS OF SUDANESE LEARNERS OF ENGLISH
(A Case Study with Basic Schools Students of Al-Gezira State)

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ABSTRACT

This study was set to emphasize “the effectiveness of teaching literature in enhancing the writing Skills of Sudanese EFL learners at Basic Schools of Al-Gezira State. Due to the very significance of writing skills to the learners of EFL, the researchers tried as much to explore the effective ways of how teaching literature can improve the writing skill. The descriptive, analytical and the experimental methods were adapted to conducting the study. The pre and post-test manipulated as data collection tool to measure the differences between the students who study literature and those who do not, to find out whether literature has an effective role to play in developing writing skills or not. In addition to the “questionnaire” which was distributed among (60) Sudanese EFL teachers chosen from different Basic schools inside Al-Gezira State in order to reflect their views and attitudes towards the role played by literature in developing the writing skills of EFL learners. The results the study has come out with revealed that literature has a vital role in developing the language skills in general and writing skills in particular, literature overcomes cultural problems, Sudanese English language teachers neglect teaching literature so they must be well-trained to teach literature as it supposed to be taught and literature should be a part of the curriculum, not an optional subject.

Keywords: English Literature, Writing Skills, Basic Schools, EFL learners, Curriculum, Cultures.

Introduction

Literature is a word of a qualitative implication, not just a neutral term for writing in general. Without these implications and without a belief on the part of the author that some qualities of literature are best appreciated when it is presented in a literary history. This effort to put the most memorable English writing in an intelligible historical perspective is offered as an aid to public understanding. The reader will like literature and be curious about it.

According to the researchers, all these definitions together give a general view of the term literature, therefore, the researcher concludes that literature promotes and sustains learning language process generally and plays a vital role in developing skills specifically. This is an ideal and perfect way to define the term “literature”.

Most educational systems present common features which have a strong emphasis on cognitive learning, where results can be measured objectively, the focus is on knowledge, skills and competencies.

Accordingly, competition and achievement do not produce enough preoccupation for the inner life of children. Literature holds a prominent role in children's personal development since the reader becomes emotionally attached to the story and this has positive effects not only on the personal growth but also on the whole learning process. From this point of view, the Romanian curriculum for the primary school cycle includes appropriate texts which can be used for these purposes.

Objectives of the Study

This study was set mainly to achieve the following objectives”

- This study aims at investigating the effect that teaching literature plays in developing Sudanese EFL learners’ writing skills.
- Finding out whether the absence of literature effect negatively on developing the learners’ writing skills.
- Measuring & comparing the performance of learners who study literature and those who do not.

The significance of the Study

This study was basically conducted to stress the role of teaching literature in developing the writing skills of Sudanese EFL learners at Basic schools, to enable learners to effectively write in the use of English language, to keep pace with worldwide development in the field of the foreign language learning and furthermore to expand learners’ thinking and their command of language. Also, this study is planned to aid teachers, students of English in the pursue of appreciating English literature.

Hypotheses & Questions of the Study

H1: “English teachers are not interested in improving writing skill of their student through teaching literature”.

H2: “Literature enormously surmounts the writing problems of the students”.

There are two questions have been formulated below in order to verify the hypotheses and achieving the main objectives of the study as follows:

Q1: Why English teachers are not interested in teaching literature at schools?

Q2: To what extent does literature surmount the writing problems of the students?

Literature review

Definition of Literature

The word literature comes from the Latin word “littera” which essentially means acquaintance with letters. Literature is generally taken to mean those of writings despite the passing of years, still, inspire admiration reflection and emotion in readers.

There are many ways to define literature:

Literature could be a sort of disciplined technique for arousing certain emotions. Literature is generally taken to mean those of writings which despite the passing of the years, still inspire admiration reflection and emotion in readers.

Literature is a word of a qualitative implication, not just a neutral term for writing in general. Without this implication and without a belief on the part of the author that some qualities of literature are best appreciated when it is presented in a literary history. This effort to put the most memorable English writing in an intelligible historical perspective is offered as an aid to public understanding. The reader will like literature and be curious about it.

The quest to discover a definition for “literature” is a road that is much travelled, though the point of arrival, if ever reached, is seldom satisfactory. Most attempted definitions are broad and vague, as they inevitably change over time. In fact, the only thing that is certain about literature is that the definition will change. Concepts of what is literature change over time as well. What may be considered ordinary and not worthy of comment in a period of time, maybe considered literary genius in another?

Most forays into the question of “what is literature” go into how literature works with the reader rather than how the author set about writing it. It is the reception rather than the writing which is the object of the enquiry. Largely, that we call “literature”, is often a subjective value judgment and naturally, value judgments, like a literary taster, will change.

English literature is the study of literature written in the English Language. The writers do not necessarily have to be from England but can be from all over the world.

Writing Skills

Conventional history assumes that the writing process first evolved from economic necessity in the ancient Near East. Writing likely began as a consequence of political expansion in ancient cultures. Around the 4th millennium BC, the complexity of trade and administration outgrew the power of memory, and writing became a more dependable method of recording and presenting transactions in a permanent form.

Writing has been instrumental in keeping history, maintaining the culture, dissemination of knowledge through the media and the formation of the legal system.

Writing skills can be taught, to some extent. But the number one way to become a better writer is to read often. When you read you are being immersed in the language, in the way it sounds and feels when putting together in the right ways. Students who are encouraged to read have a more intimate knowledge of the ways in which language works, and so have an advantage when it comes time for them to write. This effect can even be made transparent by encouraging students to try writing in a particular book or author's style.

Many older works of literature are still taught primarily because of their authors' way with language. Novels such as *The Great Gatsby*, *The Scarlet Letter*, and *The Catcher in the Rye* are noted for their unique style and creativity with language. And there are plenty of more recent novels that are just as well written. Literature serves as a valuable teacher and an example to students who are first learning to use written language to communicate with the world.

Writing is a medium of human communication that represents language and emotion with signs and symbols. In most languages, writing is a complement to speech or spoken language. Writing is not a language, but a tool developed by human society. Writing is the process of using symbols (letters of the alphabet, punctuation and spaces) to communicate thoughts and ideas in a readable form.

Within a language system, writing relies on many of the same structures and speech such as vocabulary, grammar and semantics, with the added dependency of a system of signs or symbols. The result of writing is called text, and the recipient of the *text* is called a *reader*. Motivations for writing include publication, storytelling, correspondence and diary.

In English, writing is usually the fourth language skill that we learn. To write clearly, it is essential to understand the basic system of a language. In English, this includes knowledge of grammar, punctuation and sentence structure. Vocabulary is also necessary as is correct spelling and formatting.

Methods & Design of the Study

The researchers employed the descriptive, analytical and the experimental methods for conducting the study, and SPSS program was also used in the analysis of the obtained data.

Subjects

The subjects of this study would be a number of randomly selected English language teachers and their students at the state of Al-Gezira. The total number of population of the teachers is composed of sixty (60) EFL teachers selected randomly from different Basic schools inside Al-Gezira state. The total number of the students is sixty (60) students from Grade Eight selected from different basic schools in Al-Gezira state; they are nearly of the same age.

Instruments

Two instruments were used in collecting the data of this study:

1. A questionnaire distributed to EFL Basic schools teachers from different schools in Al-Gezira state.
2. A T-test applied to students of Grade Eight from different Basic schools in Al-Gezira state too.

Procedures

To seek for satisfying results, the researchers subjected the students to the test and distributed the questionnaire among the teachers. The researchers tested a group of (thirty) students who do not study literature in their English lessons (Group A) and group (B) of (thirty) those who study literature in their English lessons so as to find out how literature has a role to play in developing writing skills. The two groups of students sat for the pre-test at the same time as they did when they sat for the post-test. As to the questionnaire, is composed of twenty items emphasize the teachers' perceptions towards the role that literature can play in developing the writing skills of EFL learners. The researchers considered that a questionnaire is an appropriate tool used for the data collection as it helped the researchers obtained the

required data that led to reliable findings at the end of the study. The questionnaire was designed in such organized way to attain the purposes it was intended to achieve. It was constructed and distributed to sixty teachers who teach English as a foreign language (EFL). Each of them responded according to his/her point of view by putting (√) on the alternative that expresses his/her point of view. Finally, the researchers computerized the data adopting the Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) in the analysis of the results obtained by both the test and the questionnaire.

Validity and reliability of the Questionnaire

In constructing the teachers' questionnaire, the researchers tried to ensure that the items are related to the objectives of the study. The questionnaire items were also supported by the available and relevant literature. Additionally, the reconstructed questionnaire was given to some colleagues and experts in the fields of Teaching English and literature who have done a critical assessment to validate the instrument. It was after their criticisms were taken care of that, the reconstructed questionnaire was passed to have a face and content validity. The teachers' questionnaire was administered to ten teachers other than the sample. Some of the teachers who participated in the pilot study were not involved in the formal questionnaire of the study. The reliability coefficient of 0.78 was established for the instrument. According to Carrol (1985), the reliability coefficient to be found is above **0.77**, it is said that there is a high positive reliability. Therefore these data gathering instruments proved to be stable, dependable and highly reliable.

Validity and reliability of the Test

In order to assure the validity of the instrument, it was submitted to a group of colleagues and specialists in the field of testing and measurement. The judges were asked to base their judgment on the following criteria:

- Suitability of each item to the related area,
- Clarity and accuracy of the language.

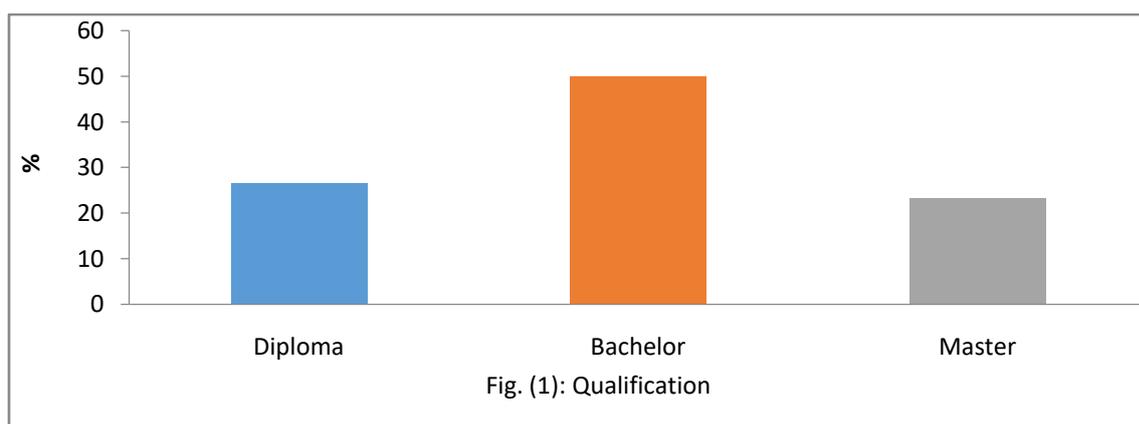
The judges' suggested amendments' changes, and deletion. Over 75% of their suggestions have been taken into consideration. The test was tried on fifteen students other than the sampled students. Then, two weeks later the test was administered to the same students. Both administrations were scored accordingly. A reliability coefficient of **0.78** was established. According to the statistical equation, such a figure for reliability is considered convincing enough.

Data analysis and Discussion of Results

Approximately, most of the teacher's responses expressed positive attitudes towards English literature and its vital role in developing writing skills.

Table (1): Frequency distribution of teachers according to academic qualification

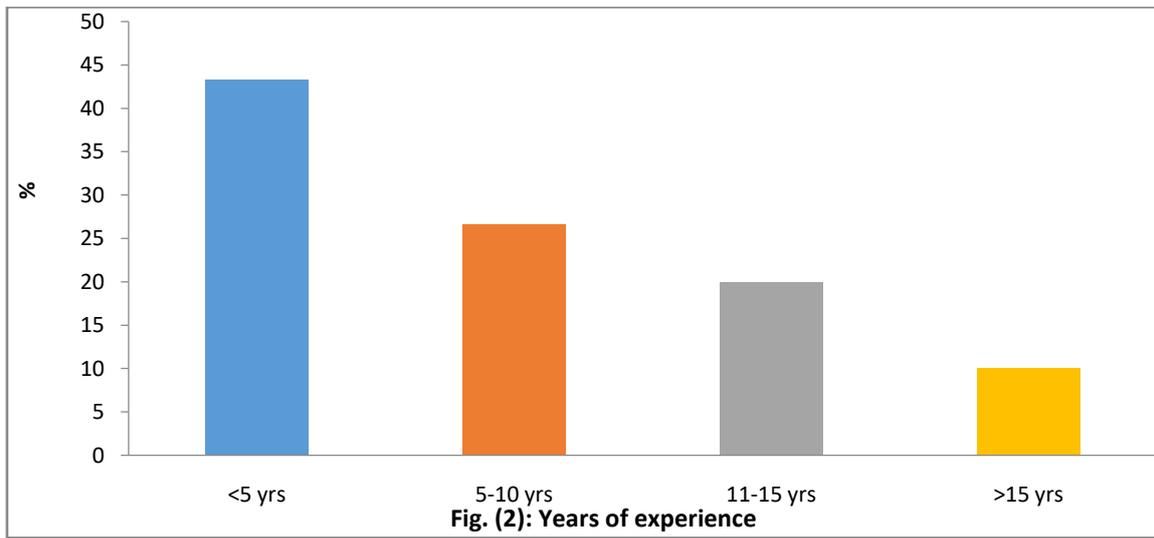
Qualification	Frequency	%
Diploma	16	26.7
Bachelor	30	50.0
Master	14	23.3
Total	60	100%



The academic qualifications of teachers understudy as shown in the table (1) and Fig (1) above. Where (26.70 of them were diploma holders, (50%) were bachelor holders and (23.3%) teachers held the master degree.

Table (2): Frequency distribution of teachers according to years of experience

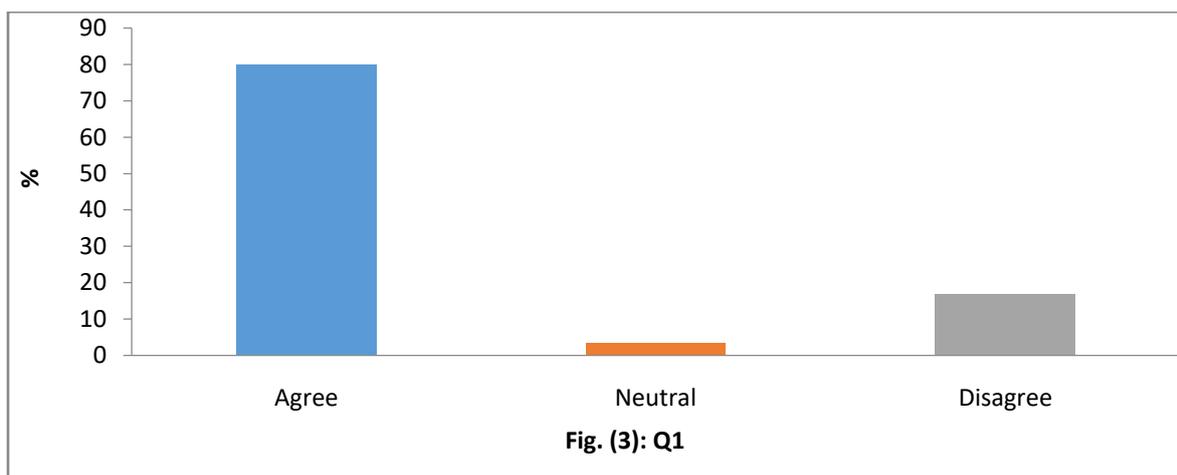
Years	Frequency	%
<5	26	43.3
6-10	16	26.7
11-15	12	20.0
>15	6	10.0
Total	60	100%



The Frequency distribution of teachers according to their years of experience was presented in table (2) and Fig. (2) above which reflected that (43.3%) of them their experience below 5 years, (26.%) between 6-10 years, (20%) between 11-15 years and (10%) were above 15 years.

Table (3): Literature overcomes cultural problems (Q1)

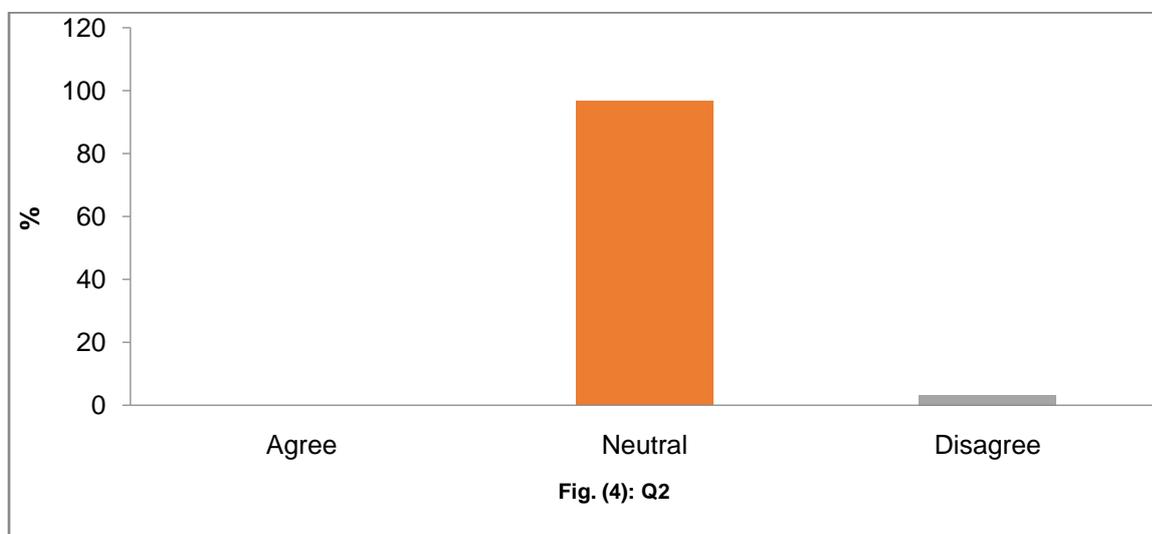
Answer	Frequency	%
Agree	48	80.0
Neutral	2	3.3
Disagree	10	16.7
Total	60	100%



The investigated teachers when they were asked, literature overcomes cultural problems, most of them 80% agreed, 3.3% neutral and 16.7% disagreed (Table 3 and Q1).

Table (4): Basic schools’ students have little interest in literature (Q2)

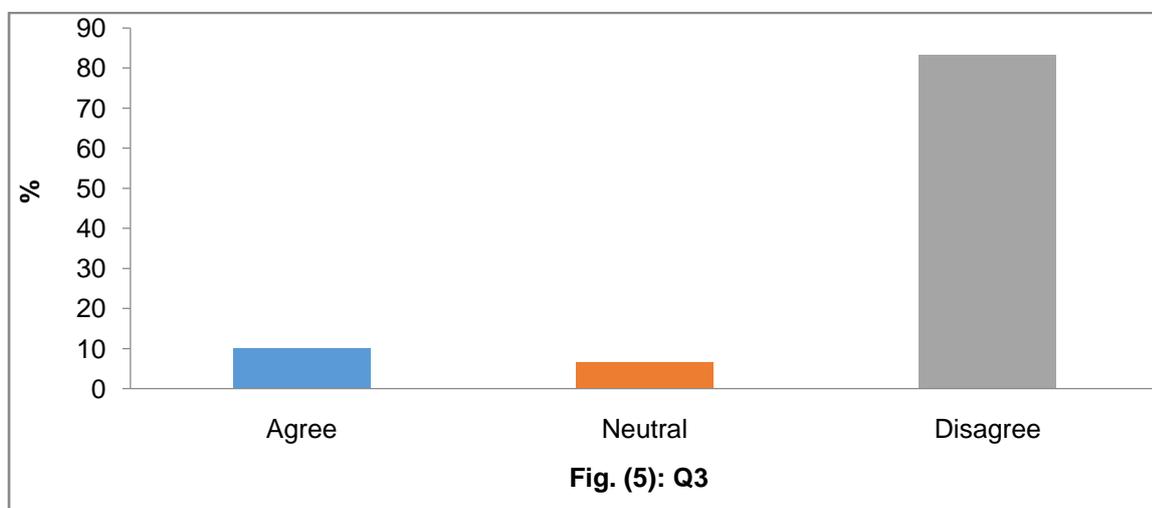
Answer	Frequency	%
Agree	0	0
Neutral	2	3.3
Disagree	58	96.7
Total	60	100%



The majority (96.7%) of the teachers disagreed that basic schools’ students have little interest in literature; while 3.3% of them were neutral (Table 4 and Q2).

Table (5): Literature in basic schools must be purely Sudanese (Q3)

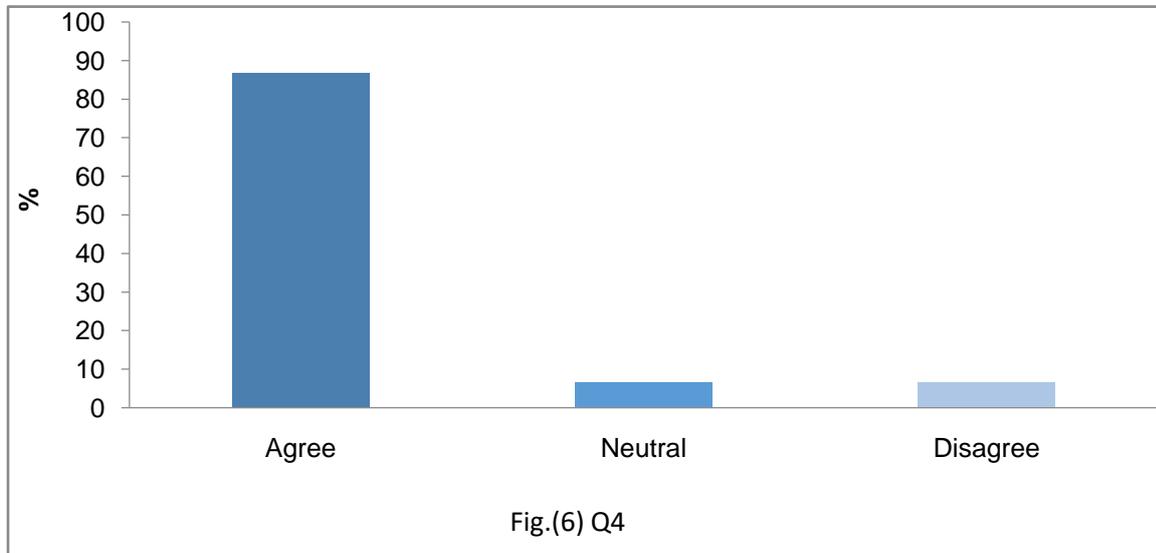
Answer	Frequency	%
Agree	6	10.0
Neutral	4	6.7
Disagree	50	83.3
Total	60	100%



Only 10% of the teachers agreed that literature in basic schools must be purely Sudanese, 83.3% disagreed and the rest 6.7% were neutral (Table 5 and Q3).

Table (6): English teachers neglect teaching literature (Q4)

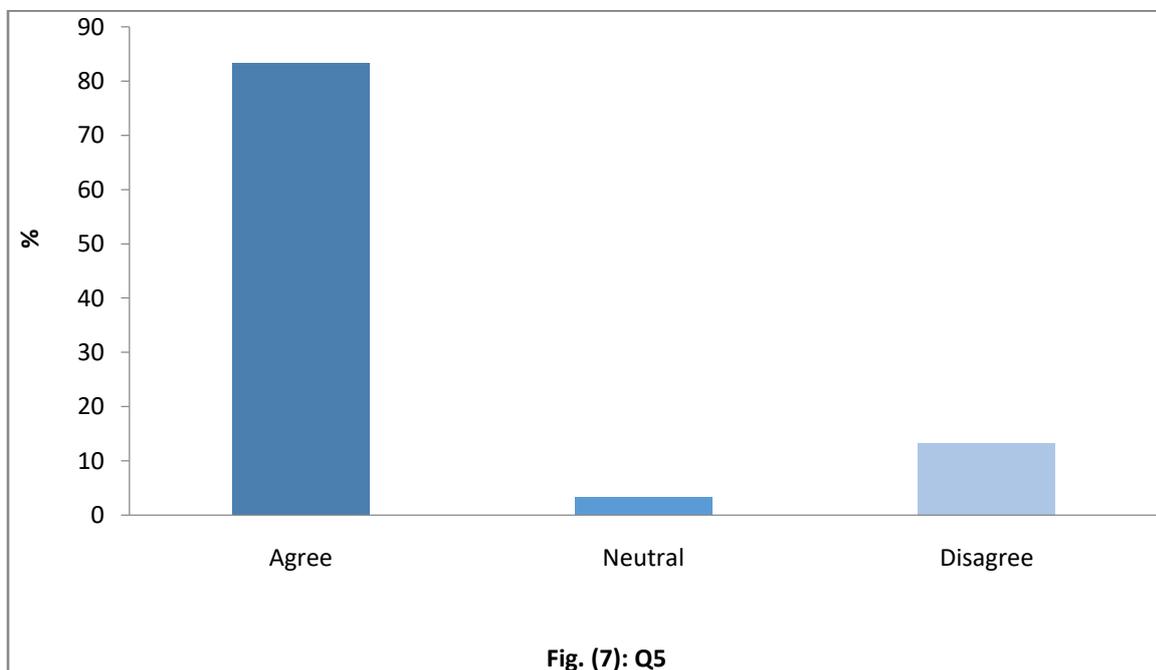
Answer	Frequency	%
Agree	52	86.7
Neutral	4	6.7
Disagree	4	6.7
Total	60	100%



The majority of the teachers (86.7%) agreed that English teachers neglect to teach literature, 6.7% disagreed and 6.7% were neutral, (Table 6 and Q4).

Table (7): English teachers are not interested in the literature (Q5)

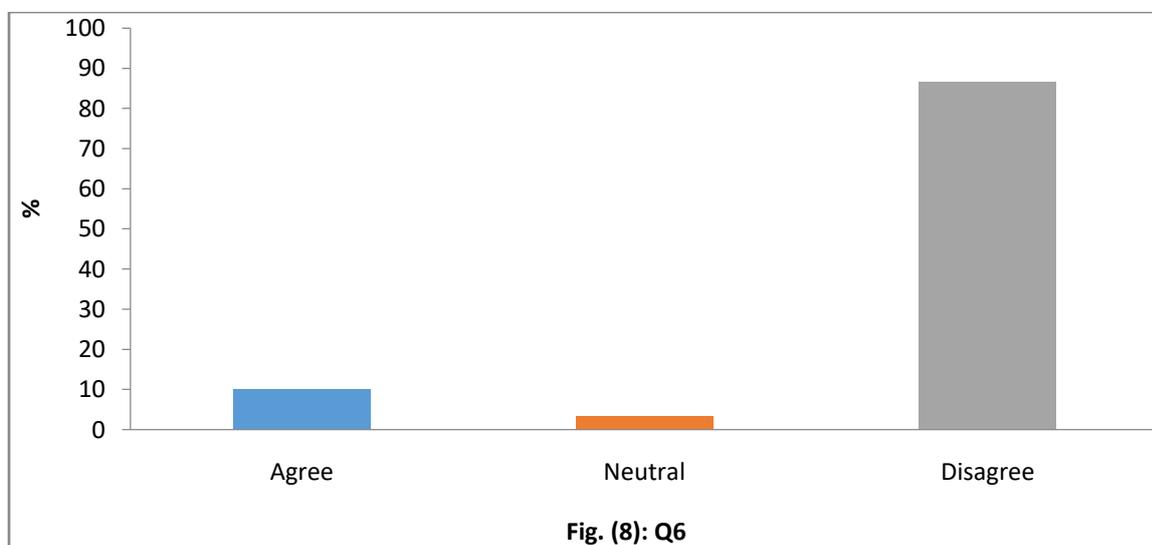
Answer	Frequency	%
Agree	50	83.3
Neutral	2	3.3
Disagree	8	13.3
Total	60	100%



As shown in Table (7) and Q5), 83.3% of teachers agreed that English teachers are not interested in literature, 13.3% disagreed and 3.3% were neutral.

Table (8): Literature should be an optional subject (Q6)

Answer	Frequency	%
Agree	6	10.0
Neutral	2	3.3
Disagree	52	86.7
Total	60	100%



The majority (86.7%) of the teachers disagreed that, literature should be an optional subject, while 10% of them agreed and 3.3% were neutral (Table 8 and Q6).

Table (9): Independent Sample T-test Between Pre & Posttest

Test	Means	STD	T-test Value	Df	Sig
Pre test	4.30	2.23	4.85	53	0.00
Post-test	7.02	2.04			

The result according to the above table shows that there is a significant difference between the means of the students' performance in the pretest and posttest. As it appears clearly, the expected means in the posttest are greater than the expected means in the pretest which reflects a significant difference between the students' performance in both tests where the sig value 0.00 is less than 0.05.

According to the above manifestation of discussion and results, it is noticed that all the above-discussed statements and students performance in the test, is in support of the hypotheses posed by the study which calls for the positive effect of literature in improving the writing skills of EFL Basic schools' students at Al-Gezira State.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis and description of the procedures that are carried out by the research, test and the questionnaire, the study offered the following findings as a result of the student's scores as reflected in the pre and post-test; these findings can be outlined as follows:

Literature overcomes the writing problems, Basic schools students have a great interest in literature, literature in basic schools should not be purely Sudanese, English teachers neglect to teach literature, English teachers are not interested in literature and literature should not be an optional subject. Moreover, as literature has an effective role to play in developing writing skills from one hand, it can enhance the learners' command of language on the other hand.

Finally, the study recommended that literature should be integrated into the spine series course as a main as other topics and should be taught at all levels at Basic school stage.

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