



The role of teaching supplementary readers on promoting reading comprehension skills in Sudanese secondary schools students' Performance

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Abstract

The main purpose of this paper is to investigate the role of teaching supplementary readers on promoting reading comprehension skills in Sudanese secondary schools students' performance who study English as a foreign language. The researcher adopted descriptive analysis in his study. The method used by the researcher to collect data was mainly test. The study consisted of fifty one secondary school students. The experiment took place in Northern Sudan. The students were chosen from two different Sudanese secondary schools in Northern Sudan, for the academic year (2017-2018). Thirty out of fifty one students studied supplementary readers for a complete year and the rest (21) students did not study supplementary readers for the same period. Students test was given to secondary school students. A statistical analysis was carried out to find out the relation between teaching supplementary readers and its role in promoting the students' performance. The data of the study were analyzed by using the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS). The findings of the study indicated that there is a positive statistical significant relation between the study of supplementary readers and the standard of the students in English. On the other hand, the students who studied supplementary readers scored higher marks in the test that contained the same questions and took the same time for both students, compared with those students who did not study supplementary readers. That is to say a supplementary reader teaching has a positive effect in learning English language. In the light of these findings, it is recommended that, teachers of English language should use supplementary readers for the purpose of developing students' reading comprehension skills. Moreover, teachers of English are also recommended to teach English through literary texts.

Keywords: supplementary readers, promoting reading, foreign language

Introduction

Teaching English through supplementary readers in L2 has begun to receive attention in the EFL course in the last few years. So there is a general agreement that supplementary readers can provide a context for the process of teaching English as a foreign language. It is believed that the learners of English in Sudan are not exposed to language practice satisfactory to help improve their standards. Within the context of supplementary readers teaching much of the vocabulary needed for smooth communication will be acquired and supplementary readers can serve as an appropriate vehicle for enhancing language learning, provided that the focus will be on authentic and realistic situations. The use of literary text as a technique for teaching both basic language skills (listening and speaking) and language areas (vocabulary and grammar) is very popular with in the field of foreign language learning and teaching nowadays. According to Cellie and slater (1990:3), there are four main reasons which lead a language teacher to use literary text in the classroom. These are valuable authentic material, culture enrichment, language enrichment and personal involvement. Carter and MC Rae (2001, p10) ^[1] recommend using literary text to help students go beyond "acquiring basic knowledge of the language' to learn about the language and how it works". This paper focuses on the secondary school English teachers

of Khartoum locality who are considered to be a sample of an EFL teachers, and accordingly investigates them to elicit their points of view on the role of teaching supplementary readers on developing students reading comprehension skills, on the background of the pretty bad deterioration in secondary school students English language level, basing on the previous negligence of the curriculum designers of teaching supplementary readers, so this paper is tackling the problem from the angle of supplementary readers role on EFL learners' language skills. This study attempt to show how teachers of supplementary readers can help students develop and improve their standard in English language, through the literary texts that they study.

Problem of the study

The researcher has observed through his work as English language teacher in secondary schools that there is a huge deterioration in the level of English language amongst the Sudanese Secondary School Students. Student's weakness in answering reading comprehension questions is obvious and noticeable inside the classroom when doing their different English language lessons' tasks, and activities, and accordingly poor understanding of what they read or hear, as well as when they express themselves.

This paper is intended to go through this problem considering

the negligence of English language supplementary readers by the curriculum designer's. Thus the problem of the research is enclosed in studying that phenomenon by shedding light on, thus the researcher attempts to discover other reasons behind this weakness

Objectives of the study

This study sets out to achieve the following objectives

1. To underline the benefits of teaching supplementary readers in developing students' reading comprehension skills in secondary schools.
2. To illustrate how supplementary readers help students to answer interpretive questions.
3. To clarify how teaching supplementary reader encourages students to answer opinion questions.

The significance of the study

This study will help in emphasizing the importance of teaching supplementary readers in enhancing learners' reading comprehension skills and describes to what extent that supplementary readers could help students to answer different types of comprehension questions and how this could lead them to develop their English language skills as learners of English as a foreign language, hoping to move a stone of learning English as a foreign language and attracting the attention of teachers to give their awareness to the issues of reading comprehension skills when they plan their lessons. So it is highly essential for English teachers in secondary schools in the Sudan to benefit as much as possible from supplementary readers as a very effective tool in teaching English language that is because they are at least is a precious field for language learning.

Questions of the study

This study raises the following questions:

1. To what extent does teaching supplementary readers develop students' reading comprehension skills?
2. To what limits does teaching supplementary readers help students to answer interpretive questions?
3. To what degree does teaching supplementary readers encourage students to answer opinion questions?

Hypotheses of the study

The null hypothesis of this study is:

H₀: Teaching supplementary readers to secondary school students will have no effect on their performance in Sudan Certificate exam

The alternative hypothesis is

H_A: Teaching supplementary readers to secondary school students will have a positive effect on their performance in Sudan Certificate exam.

The Methodology of the Study

The researcher has adopted the descriptive analytical method which suits the field of the study and he has used a test as a tool for collecting data, and then statistically analyzed.

Limitation of the Study

This study is limited to investigate the effect of supplementary

readers (SRs) on improving students' reading comprehension skills among Secondary School Students in Northern state, Dongla Locality. The study conducted in the academic year (2017-2018), in different schools, both boys and girls.

Literature Review and previous study

Introduction

In order to investigate the role of teaching supplementary readers in developing reading comprehension skills it is important to review the literature and the previous studies related to it.

What is reading comprehension?

It is only recently that teachers and text-books writers have come to realize that reading comprehension has been a neglected area in English as a foreign language teaching. Grabe and Stoller (2002:17) ^[13] State: "Reading comprehension is the ability to understand information in a text and interpret it appropriately."

Reading can be defined as a highly complex process of interaction between reader and a text. Louann and Hacur man (1988) ^[15].

Reading materials an intermediate and advanced levels has consisted on the whole of a text followed by a set of direct reference question or multiple choice questions.

The main objective here is to teach the students to read the text and to understand it by understanding and relating its constituents to each other students own experience.

There are five stages on how to deal with reading comprehension:

- a. The subject should be introduced orally. The aim here is to relate the reading practice; student can see the basic vocabulary.
- b. Questions may be handed before students read the article. There may be re-questions for encouragement.
- c. Students can read the article. They are divided into pairs each pair should compare their answer to the exercise. All questions should be discussed and an arrangement reached as to what the correct answer might be.
- d. In stage four once all pairs reached agreement, the teacher creates a general discussion and students give their answers by reference to the text. The teacher should encourage students to clarify anything that has not been understood and explain grammatical points.
- e. In this stage, the students include any work done after the basic reading practice is complete. It may involve writing, listening or further oral practice related to the text.

Reading Strategies

Strategies are conscious techniques used intentionally to solve problems encountered while reading. Students study texts in the college's curriculum to get new information. Therefore, the main goal of teaching a text is to comprehend it.

Kinds of reading strategy

1. Preparational Strategy: It occurs before reading takes place. It is useful in previewing titles, illustrating, heading or subheading. Students should base mainly on their prior knowledge.
2. Organizational Strategy: It is the process of selecting main

details and making relationships between them. It includes an interaction between the reader and a text. It involves making inferences.

3. Monitoring is being aware of one's own mental process when reading. Monitoring enable the reader to verify his/her understanding and repair meaning. It also helps the students to become aware of their comprehension difficulties.

1. Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive strategies are thought operations used in learning to enhance students to deal with information in materials by working on it various ways.

Cognitive strategies are skills that involve manipulation and transformation of the language in some direct way.

2. Met cognitive strategies

Met cognitive strategies involve: planning for learning, thinking about learning and how to make it effective during learning after working on language.

3. Affective strategies

Affective strategies are techniques used by learners to help them adjust their emotions and values related to the language learning.

4. Memory strategies

Memory strategies are techniques used by learners to help them store new information in memory and call it back later. Oxford (1990:40) ^[15] points out that memory strategies are usually used to link the verbal with the visual. This is useful for four reasons:

1. The mind's capacity for storage of visual information exceeds its capacity for verbal material.
2. The most efficiently packaged chunks of information are transferred to long-term memory through visual images.
3. Visual images might be the most effective mean to aid recall of verbal material.
4. Visual learning is preferred by a large proportion of learners.

Literature and teaching approaches

The applied linguistics has played an effective role in presenting contemporary approaches of language teaching. Literature can't be parted of its language. Accordingly in teaching literature lessons; teachers should have to follow these techniques that suited the purposes of what we want to achieve through teaching literature lessons. Whitehead (1968) ^[11] mentioned that one factor for that, goes a long way in determining students lifelong learning forwards reading is how teachers approaches the teaching literature, namely the information based approach, language based approach, personal responds approach, language based approach, moral philosophical approach, and stylistic approach. Moody (1983) ^[3] explains that the importance of an approach is to provide a framework or sequences of operations to be used when we come to actualities. Knowledge of methods is a part of the knowledge base of teaching Freeman (1992).

Approaches to using literature with the language learners

Lazar (1993) ^[4] mentioned some approaches which help us to

select and design materials for classroom use:

1. A language- based approach

Studying the language of the literary text will help to integrate the language and literature syllabuses more closely. Detailed analysis of the language of the literary text will help students to make meaningful interpretations or informed evaluations of it. At the same time, students will increase their general awareness and understanding of English. Students are encouraged to draw on their knowledge of familiar grammatical, lexical categories to make aesthetic judgments of the text. Material is chosen for the way it illustrates certain stylistic features of the language but also for literary merits.

According to Carter and Long, this approach is the most common one in teaching literature in the EFL classroom. This model helps EFL students enhance their knowledge of the target language by working on familiar grammar, lexical, and discourse categories, indirectly paving the way for a better understanding of a text and the formulation of meaningful interpretations. These will facilitate a sensible and aesthetic appreciation of a text. Such an approach enables students to access a text in a systematic and methodical way to study examples of specific linguistic features, literal and figurative language, and direct and indirect speech. There are many techniques and strategies used in that approach. Some of them are: jigsaw reading, matching, gap-filling, and reading aloud. Jigsaw is borrowed from language teaching. It is easy to prepare and comprise re-ordering of a text which has been scrambled. It may suggest some sort of games and stimulates learner-learner interaction in the problem-solving technique. In this respect the term jigsaw is appropriate as it indicates a series of small increments which when added together will complete the picture (Carter and Long, 1991:71) ^[5].

Matching exercise is another wonderful technique in which students are expected to match phrases, pictures, words, sentences. The main aim of using this technique is to enable students to use responses to the parts to build up sensitivity to the whole. Carter and Long (1991:75) ^[5]. Students in secondary schools enjoy such activities especially when conducted in groups. Cloze or gap-filling is another technique in language based approach in which teachers use this activity in their classes and exams. The aim is to draw student's attention to the language and form of a text. Another aim is to draw attention to the use of particular linguistic features such as connecting words between sentences or signal words across paragraphs. Students must focus on the function and the use of these words. This technique has many advantages. Firstly, it changes the ordinary role of the teacher. Cloze makes the teacher encourager, supporter, stimulator, attentive listener, manager and motivator. Secondly, it leads to involvement with the text. Thirdly, it is a productive way of increasing the student's awareness of the patterns of words in a literary text. Finally, the strategy of cloze emphasizes the role of students as the centre of learning process (Carter and Long, 1991:80) ^[5]. Reading aloud is another technique used by both teachers and students. It is very important for teachers to open their reading task by reading the first paragraph aloud. A good teacher should read aloud in order to clarify some difficulties (Carter and Long, 1991:94-97) ^[5].

Literature as content

This is the most traditional approach, frequently used in tertiary education. Literature is the content of the course, which concentrates on areas such as the history and characteristic of literary movement; the social, political and historical background to a text. Students acquire English by focusing on course content, particularly through reading set texts and literary criticism relating to them. The mother tongue of the students may be used to discuss the texts, or they will be asked to translate texts from one language to into the other. Texts are selected for their importance as a part of a literary tradition.

As Carter and Long (1991) ^[5] cited, this model helps EFL students deal with a literary work in relation to the target culture, such as literary history or genre. It requires that students explore and interpret the social, political, literary, and historical context of a specific text. This model provides an opportunity for students to explore cultural background, which leads to a genuine understanding of literary works and encourages students to understand different cultures and ideologies in relation to their own.

Literature for personal enrichment

Literature is a useful tool for encouraging students to draw on their own personal experiences, feelings and opinions. It helps students to become more actively involved both intellectually and emotionally in learning English, and hence aids acquisition. Excellent stimulus for group work. Material is chosen on the basis of whether it is appropriate to students' interests and will stimulate a high level of personal involvement. Material is often organized thematically, and may be placed alongside non-literary materials which deal with a similar theme.

According to Carter and Long (1991) ^[5], it's called the personal growth model, or enrichment model, attempts to bridge the language model and the cultural model by focusing on the particular use of language in a text while simultaneously placing it in a specific cultural context. This model makes connections between their own personal and cultural experiences and those expressed in the text. Another aspect of this model is that it helps students develop knowledge of ideas and language content and formal schemata through different themes and topics. This function relates to the theories of reading expressed by Goodman (1970), which emphasize the interaction of readers with texts. As Cadorath and Harris point out, "text itself has no meaning; it only provides direction for reader to construct meaning from the reader's own experience" (1998, p. 188). Thus, learning is said to take place when readers are able to interpret texts and construct meaning on the basis of their own experience. From the above discussion, it can be said that these three models of teaching literature differ in terms of their focus on texts. In the language model, texts are used as a focus for grammatical and structural analysis; in the cultural model, texts are used as cultural artifacts and in the personal growth model, texts are considered a stimulus for personal growth activities. Each approach has different strengths and weaknesses. For example, Savvidou (2004) ^[2] comments that the cultural model tends to be teacher-centered, and there is little opportunity for extended language work. Therefore, what is

needed is an integrated approach model comprising key elements of all three models so that literature becomes accessible to EFL students and most beneficial for their development.

Literature and reading

Reading is one of the four skills which can be developed through literary texts. Literary texts provide students with valuable experience that would not be found in real lives. The teachers of ESL and EFL should adopt a dynamic, student-centered approach towards comprehension of a literary work. In reading lesson, discussions begin at the literal level with direct questions of fact that regarding settings, characters and plot, which they answer them by specific reference to the text. Students who mastered literal understanding move to inferential level, Making interpretations concerning the settings, characters and theme, and also where they produce the authors' point of view after comprehending a literary selection and the literal and inferential levels, students are ready to do a collaborative work. They share evaluations of the work and their personal reactions to its characters, theme and the authors' point of view. This is also the suitable time for them to share their reactions to the work's natural cultural issues and themes. The third level the personal / evaluative level stimulates students to think imaginatively about the work and provokes their problem-solving abilities. Discussions deriving from questions can be the foundation for oral and written activities (Stern 1991:332) ^[7].

The role of supplementary readers in improving reading fluency

Recent studies have proved that extensive reading in language learning increases reading speed and proficiency. When we read in our own language, we often read several words or whole blocks of words together, with one eye movement taking in several words at a time. The more familiar the words the faster we read, because we automatically recognize what we see and do not have to process it. Many learners reading in a foreign language move from one word to another. They do not 'automatically' recognize vocabulary and this can slow down their reading considerably. It can even prevent comprehension of the text as a whole. By the time they get to the end of a paragraph they have forgotten what they have read at the beginning. With Graded Readers, we enable students to read and understand more of the text by simplifying the language, controlling the amount of information and repeating new vocabulary systematically and naturally. As key vocabulary is repeated and recycled, it is 'over-learned' and becomes so familiar that students don't need to process it - it becomes 'automatic'. The more students read, the easier it becomes for them to transfer their native language reading skills to the foreign language they are studying. For European students, this increased fluency can be checked against the CEF descriptors.

Previous Studies

The studies that I have taken into account is that one which was presented by:

1-Elyagot (2012) ^[9] in a thesis (MA) under the title "Using Literature to Develop Reading Comprehension Skills", the

main purpose of the researcher in this study to find out the role of using literature in developing reading comprehension skills. The researcher adopted both descriptive analysis and empirical method in his research. In fact, the population of the study consists of (60) students of the first year in (SUST) and (30) teachers from (SUST) as well.

The methods used by the researcher to collect his data, are mainly tests (pre-test, and post tests) and also he chose a questionnaire that contains some items relevant to his study, After analyzing his data, he concluded to the following findings:

1. Using literature in language courses helps students to develop reading comprehension skills.
2. Using literature in reading lessons helps students to develop their vocabulary.
3. Literature presents valuable material to teach reading comprehension lessons.
4. Using literature in language classroom enhances students' confidence to express their responses effectively during teaching process.
5. Using literature develops students' interpretation abilities.
6. Using literature develops students' reading strategies in terms of skimming and scanning.

2-Blakolo and Anthony. (2002) ^[10]. Conducted an experimental study titled "The Effect of Literature – based Reading on Gifted students in Botswana" on a sample of 20 students (ten males and ten females) selected from community Junior school in Gabarana, Botswana. For the researchers creative reading involves gap filling, making connections, critical evaluation, synthesizing and problem solving. The study used the Torrance Test of creative Thinking (T T (T) to measure fluency, 68 originality, elaboration and other components of giftedness. On the basis of the result illustrating significant achievement of students, the study concluded; literature –based reading improves creativity, attitudes and reading skills of the gifted children.

Ali Mustafa Heiba. (2006), in thesis (M.A),under the title " The lack of literature component in high secondary schools syllabus and the decline of English standard. The main purpose of the researcher is to investigate the possible role of literature in developing language structure and reading skills in particular and also to show how to exploit and make use of literature to help students to develop their other language skills. The researcher has come out with the following findings:

1. Variation and simplicity of task and exercises distract boring and encourage students to follow on reading

because the appropriateness of language level depends to some extend on the task.

2. Students are more interested in reading, when the reading materials are enjoyable, motivated and more excited.
3. Reading texts are the good base that learners can depend on speaking.
4. Spine six doesn't provide adequate aids with reading text to present new items.
5. The reading passage in Spine Six is boring.
6. To make connection between different skills is essential that is while reading asks students listening and while speaking asks them to write.
7. Reading skill is important for improving other skills.
8. The reliability and validity of the statistical data will be calculated by using statistical analysis programme (SPSS) by using chroniakh alpha factor.

Materials and Methods

The participants of this study were the second school students in Northern State. The researcher used two different classes; one class represented the control group and the other represented the experimental group. The total number of the subjects in both group was (51) students. The test was administered to both groups.

The student's test

For measuring if the students have developed their comprehension skills through studying supplementary readers, test has been conducted by the students for both the control group and the experimental group. The test consisted of three questions the students discussed during the course.

Validity and Reliability of the instrument

For checking the test's reliability and validity, the researcher showed it to some other experts in the field.

Descriptive statistics of student's test

The test was the main tool used to collect data of the study. This test constructed and validated to investigate impact of supplementary readers on EFL Sudanese secondary school students' performance in exams. Third year, at secondary school in Northern state.

After reading the passage the student in (Superior secondary school who studied supplementary readers were 30 students compared with Dongla secondary school who didn't study supplementary readers were 21 students answered the test questions A, B and C as resulted at the below table:

Table 1

Question A	Studied supplementary (N 30) (experimental group)		Not studied supplementary (N 21) (controlled group)	
	True answers	False answers	True answers	False answers
Q1	30 (100%)	-	6 (28.5%)	15 (71.5%)
Q2	13 (43.3%)	17 (5.6%)	10 (47.6%)	11 (52.4%)
Q3	28 (93.3%)	2 (6.7%)	8 (38%)	13 (62%)
Q4	28 (93.3%)	2 (6.7%)	12 (57.1%)	9 (42.9%)
Q5	29 (96.6%)	1 (3.3%)	11 (52.3%)	10 (47.7%)

Question B	True answers	False answers	True answers	False answers
Q1	26 (86.6%)	4 (13.3%)	4 (19%)	17 (81%)
Q2	28 (93.3%)	4 (13.3%)	20 (95.2%)	1 (4.8%)
Q3	28 (93.3%)	2 (6.7%)	16 (76.1%)	5 (23.9%)
Question C	True answers	False answers	True answers	False answers
Q1	30 (100%)	-	15 (71.5%)	6 (28.5%)
Q2	27 (90%)	3 (10%)	13 (62%)	8 (38%)
Q3	27 (90%)	3 (10%)	12 (57.1%)	9 (42.9%)
Q4	21 (70%)	9 (30%)	2 (9.6%)	19 (90.4%)
Q5	30 (100%)	-	12 (57.1%)	9 (42.9%)
Q6	30 (100%)	-	11 (52.3%)	10 (47.7%)
Q7	26 (86.6%)	4 (13.3%)	8 (38%)	13 (62%)
Q8	28 (93.3%)	2 (6.7%)	11 (52.3%)	10 (47.7%)

(N) Number of students

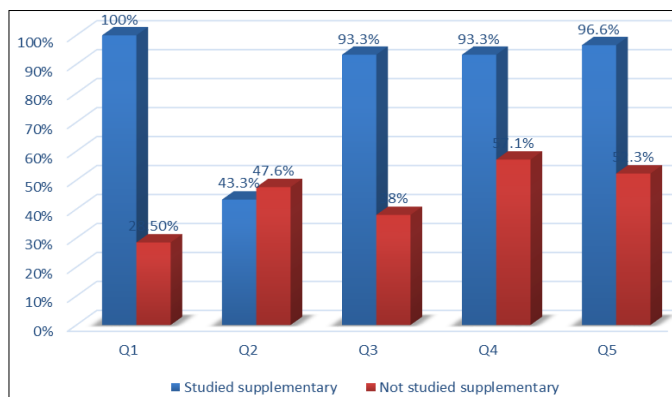


Fig 1: Compare the true answers between both schools at question A

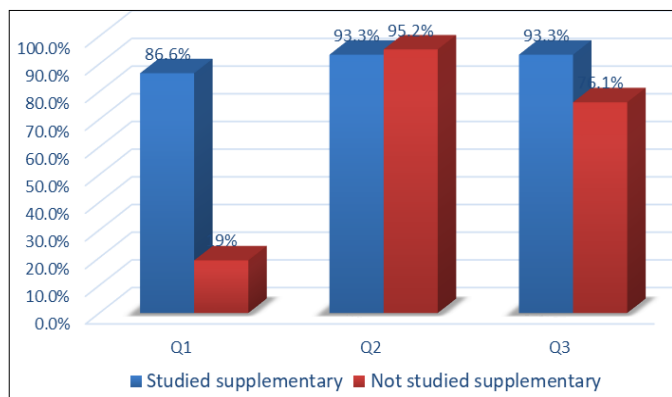


Fig 2: compare of true answers between both schools in question B

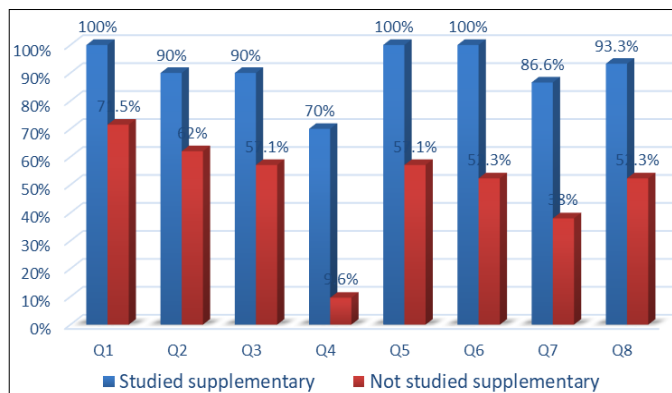


Fig 3: compare of true answers between both schools in question C

Tables and figures above show a comparison of EFL students' performance on the test (experimental and controlled group) for measuring reading comprehension skills. For comprehension question the percentage of true answers is (100%) for experimental group, whereas 28% for controlled group. For opinion question the percentage of true answers is (43%) for experimental group and 47% for controlled group. For recall question the percentage of true answers is (93.3%) for experimental group and (52.3%) for controlled group. For interpretive question the percentage of true answers is (93%) for experimental group, compared with controlled group which is (52.3%). The percentage of true answers was very high for controlled group compared with experimental group, except the percentage of true answers in opinion question the controlled group percentage is higher than experimental group percentage, so we have to put this into our consideration. This result indicates that very clear significant differences in the performance of the students on this dimension between two groups.

Findings of the Study

The study has found that: Supplementary readers are effective medium for helping EFL students to master reading skills that enable them to develop their comprehension skill, they can be used as a good source of helping students to answer recall, interpretive, predict and opinion questions. The results of the test have revealed that students who were exposed to supplementary readers scored higher marks in a test which contained the same questions than those who weren't exposed to any literary text.

Result by Hypotheses

The current study hypothesizes that " Teaching supplementary readers to secondary school students will have a positive effect on their performance in Sudan Certificate exam. " based on the analysis of the questionnaire we found that this hypothesis is considered the main hypothesis because it includes the most prominent statements which have got very high percentage of agreement from the side of the participants as presented in the analysis of the questionnaire regarding the statements analyzed above in table (1) and figures (1,2,3). Therefore, we sum up that those who were exposed to supplementary readers scored higher marks in a test which contained the same questions than those who weren't exposed to any literary text.

Secondly, the study hypothesizes that "Teaching supplementary readers to secondary school students will have no effect on

their performance in Sudan Certificate exam and according to the analysis of the questionnaire, the statements which had been built on the basis of this hypothesis got low percentage of agreement which is more clearly presented in the analysis provided in table and figures (1, 2, 3). The result justifies, the statements which have been built according to this hypothesis got high scores of agreement by the participants as explained and analyzed in table (4) which confirms the importance of teaching supplementary readers.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper is to illustrate the impact teaching supplementary readers on promoting reading comprehension skills in Sudanese secondary schools students' performance in exams.

Supplementary readers play a major role in developing the language awareness in its different aspects, so teaching them should be given priority in the English learning in our schools. These supplementary provide language within contexts as appeared in the real life. The structure of language will be rooted in supplementary readers' learners. The researcher has seen that teaching supplementary readers can improve students' comprehension skills and enriches their vocabulary. Supplementary readers should be selected to have a variety of different aims and interests. The study attempts to find a link between the language of supplementary readers and how it can promote the student language standard. The findings analyses have confirmed the conclusion of previous studies; particularly literary students are better learners in terms of performance. It concludes that, the study of supplementary readers' influences on the students in a positive way to a large extent. The future study will support the finding concerning the impact of these readers on students' performance.

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