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The Impact of Studying English Literature in Improving English as a Second Language

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The four language skills are of varying degrees of importance to the second language learner. Listening and reading are considered as the receptive skills of language and speaking and writing are considered as the productive skills of language. Reading provides learners with a wide range of individual lexical or syntactic items. The students become familiar with many features of the written language such as syntax, discourse functions, by reading. The research aims at analysing the impact of English literature towards improving writing skills of English in the Sri Lankan context. The sample consists of 22 students who are learning English as a subject in the G.C.E. Advanced Level class, Co/Muslim Ladies College. The students have been learning English literature for a duration of 16 months. The instruments of data collection are questionnaires, interviews and analysis of texts written by the students in the 02nd week of study and in the 14th month. Specifically, in analysing the texts written by the students, the analysis was limited to subject-verb-object agreement, tenses, spellings and punctuation. An analysis of data was done descriptively and statistically, since both types of data, i.e. qualitative and quantitative data were collected. In the analysis of the texts 48% of improvement of accurate subject-verb-object agreement, 68% of improvement in the tenses, 52% of improvement of accurate spellings and 62% of accurate use of punctuation were observed. Thus, through the findings of the research, it could be discerned that learning English literature has a positive impact on improving writing skills of English as a second language.

Key words: English literature, language, productive skills, receptive skills, writing skills,