



## **A Comparison of the Impact of Simplified and Authentic Literary Texts on High School Learners' Reading**

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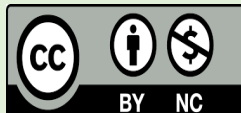
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### **Abstract**

The usefulness of using literature in language teaching has always been acknowledged by language teaching researchers who have studied the said issue from different aspects and in various contexts. The present investigation tries to discover if the use of authentic and simplified literary texts could improve learners' reading achievement, and then check if the impacts of these two types of texts on the learners' reading were significantly different. Employing a quasi-experimental design, the researchers included ninety high school students in the data collection process. These students were taught in three groups including two experimental and one control, comparing the two types of literary texts with the usual course materials. Using pre-tests and post-tests scores, the learners' performance was compared, then t-test and ANOVA were employed to analyze the significance of the differences found between the means. It appeared that the use of literary texts could assist high school learners improve their performance in reading compared to the use of usual course materials. The findings further confirmed that the use of simplified literary texts could improve the learners' reading better than the authentic literary texts. The findings are specifically important in teaching reading, which serve as the basic skill for building the required knowledge in EFL contexts. Literature-based language teaching seems to enjoy the power to change and improve language teaching programs through presenting on-demand and productive teaching materials and add to learners' life awareness besides the language knowledge.

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## Introduction

Literary texts have become exotic to EFL learners and teachers due to the recent change in the pedagogical trends in EFL, to be more exact in the ending decades of the twentieth and early decades of the twenty-first centuries. This trend led syllabus designers and other curriculum decision makers to develop the language teaching in a way in which literature could barely find a place to play any role. Hence, in the world of instructional materials for EFL learners, the existence of literary texts experienced a trend of fading from 1960s to even recent years (Rygiel, 2016). However, the willingness to make the instructional materials attractive to the learners has set off to grow, and more and more books and syllabuses tend to tailor the materials of the textbooks to interest of learners, using more literary texts in doing so. The dominant strategy driving the ELT community is the mainstream pedagogy that makes interest in learning English increase for EFL learners (Aghgolzade & Davari, 2014). The desire to include instructional materials from out-of-class sources is increasingly growing, following the horizons proposed by the new methods and strategies of EFL teaching (Gebhard, 1996). Based on the modern language teaching approaches such as content-based, task-based or other innovative methods, the use of authentic materials in class or in textbooks fosters the outcome of EFL learning (Brinton, 1991).

Language and linguistics events or topics are bound to be pictured differently by EFL learners, accordingly, some learners enjoy learning through seeing movies, others learn better by reading media articles or may get excited by reviewing adventures (Asgari, 2023). Literary texts, too, can be attractive to some EFL learners because of the many different attractions they contain. Literature is genuinely rich regarding the content, and it always includes the knowledge pertinent to different areas such as humanity, ethics, society, history and topics tangled with useful life demands (Altun, 2023). Language teaching researchers admit the power of literary texts in improving the teachers' teaching policies and learners' learning practices and strategies in foreign language learning. Literature is capable of promoting EFL learners' text knowledge (Bakhshizadeh, 2018; Khan & Alasmari, 2018; Tayebipour, 2009), knowledge of vocabulary and lexical phrases and expressions (MacKenzie, 2000), and sociolinguistic competences (McKay, 2001). Furthermore, emphasis on the reading of authentic texts with cultural contents has grown to be a strong aim in language teaching for EFL learners (Arens & Swaffar, 2000).

The use of literary texts to teach language will assist language learners grow their awareness of rhythm and intonation of language that will add to the beauty of language (Hasan & Hasan, 2019; Islam, 2021). Literature use also helps learners visualize characters, situations, contexts, and moods (Hoag, 1996; Mart, 2019). Literature can produce curiosity for students; thus it involves the potential to be recruited as a great source for language teaching, providing them with social and cultural awareness. Hall (2005) researched on the significance of employing literary texts in EFL teaching and found some impressive influence of literature in language learning.

Several investigations (Carter & Stockwell, 2008; Parkinson & Thomas, 2000) confirmed the effective role of comprehensive practices of using narratives in language teaching. Literature creates and supports perseverance that is usually taken as an importance element in long-lasting learning in general and language learning in particular, and it promotes creativity that serves as a major help to students who need innovation to learn a subject matter which is complex. Literary

texts assist learners to improve and increase their involvement and participation by sparking their critical thinking and changing the learning exercise into a lively and dynamic experience. Despite the growing research on the use of literature in EFL and ESL contexts, there are a few studies comparing the effects of simplified and authentic literary texts in language learning (Bakhshizadeh, 2018; Hirvela, 1998).

### **Literature Review**

After the demise of Grammar Translation Method, there was a general opposition to the use of literature as teaching material in language teaching. The early 1960s represented a turning point in the trend though. After some decades, using literary texts appeared again at a conference on education at the King's College. While the past decades' approach toward literature had called its capacity for developing language skills into question, in this conference, its importance was emphasized as a useful instrument in teaching and learning languages. In spite of similar efforts, the use of literature in the language teaching continued to be ignored for the following years. For almost two decades, from the mid-1960s to the 1980s, nearly no research was carried out on the use of literary texts for language teaching. Structural and functional-notional approaches to language teaching attenuated the role of literature and in fact introduced using literature as an outdated approach, which went without any communicative function (Llach, 2007). Even some experts of language teaching of that time urged the removal of literary texts from EFL teaching curriculum because of its nonconformity to the standard grammar rules and structural difficulty.

In the 1980s, the public opinion got the drawback of the approaches used in those years, which was not having basic content knowledge among language learning students (Stern, 1983). Hence there was an immediate need for introducing basic literary texts to the students, and as a result, the necessary study skills and strategies were required to help students handle demanding reading requirements in schools (Gilroy-Scott, 1983). Consequently, in this decade, the need for reusing and integrating literary texts as the effective instructional materials for communicative language teaching was evidently seen and expressed (Hasan & Hasan, 2019; Mart, 2017; Rezanijad, Zahra & Zahra, 2015; Simon, 2006). Literature was considered as language in use, as a result, literary texts could be employed for language learning purposes. Based on this attitude, literary texts could be seen as the ideal tool that was trying to develop the skills and reading experiences that could not be provided by usual texts (Yarahmadi, 2016).

These days, further studies are being performed on the role of literature in language teaching, which aim at demonstrating the helpful effects of using literary texts in EFL/ESL teaching context. Besides, most of this research is being conducted to emphasize the role of literary texts in language teaching and learning and redefine the place of these materials in syllabus design and curriculum development (Kramsch, 2013; Munna & Kalam, 2021). Also another line of research is being conducted to support multidimensional benefits of literary texts as a crucial part of language teaching syllabus that is expected to be integrative (Alderson, 2000; Babaei and Yahya, 2014; Bagherkazemi & Alemi, 2010; Rezanijad, Zahra & Zahra, 2015; Yarahmadi, 2016). However, there is not enough consensus and research findings among language teachers and educators on the use of type of literary texts (simplified or authentic) in EFL/ESL teaching.

Hauer (2001) studied the role of the poetry reading on EFL learning and found that poetry-reading could improve linguistic development of the learners and assisted them in growing their

knowledge of the target language culture. Butler (2006) incorporated literary genres into language course materials in a South African context. The course evaluation results approved of the highly positive effects of using literature on language achievement. Minkoff (2006) used an elective course consisting of literature and language content together for business management students. The course was evaluated as great and successful by most of the participants in the study. Bilal Anwar and Khan Rana (2010) investigated the attitudes of 280 university students in Pakistan, who had enrolled in different Literature and English courses. The results demonstrated that the students mostly found literature as a useful tool and effective source for language teaching.

Although literary texts are seen as valuable and comprehensive authentic materials which include both functional and linguistic forms, they are not without drawbacks. For one reason, authentic materials are prepared for natives and not for teaching or learning purposes, hence might be difficult and overwhelming for nonnatives. Besides that, it is claimed that most of materials like texts from newspapers, magazines, advertisements, forms, films, etc. do not include any emotional effect. These authentic materials without emotional connection may not be learned well by the learners based on the schema theory and affective filter hypothesis, making them usual teaching materials. As Krashen (1994) states, in language teaching, the language input needs to be comprehensible so as language learning to be successful. Thus, the texts chosen must not be far beyond the understanding levels of students.

Using tailored literary texts by the teachers can be a solution to the difficulty of some instructional materials to make them easier (Krashen, 1985). Hence, since using literary texts can provide learners with genuine instances of language and a wide range of texts and styles, investigating the importance of using literary texts as instructional materials appears to be useful. Given the benefits and challenges of using literary texts in language teaching and dearth of research on the comparison of simplified and authentic literary materials, this study aims to fill this gap by finding efficient ways to incorporate literature into language teaching. Thus, the following questions have been attended to in this study.

**Research Question 1.** Does using authentic short literary texts as instructional materials affect Iraqi high school EFL learners' reading achievement?

**Research Question 2.** Does using simplified short literary texts as instructional materials affect Iraqi high school EFL learners' reading achievement?

**Research Question 3.** Is there any significant difference between the authentic and simplified literary texts concerning their effect on Iraqi high school EFL learners' reading achievement?

## **Method**

### **Design and Participants**

A quasi-experimental design was employed to compare the Pretest and Posttest scores of the said three groups in their reading achievement. Ninety 18-to-20-yearold students studying in a high school in Iraq participated in this study. They were selected through convenience sampling to observe the accessibility and practicality matters. They were all male, and their native language was Arabic. They were selected through convenient sampling and were randomly divided into three groups, each one with 30 students. Two groups served as the experimental groups and the

other one as the control group. To ascertain the participants' reading proficiency equality before the treatment, an OPT was administered, and the scores were recorded and compared. Then, the treatment of the study continued for 6 consistent weeks, each week with three sessions.

### **Procedure**

All the participants took the OPT to give information regarding their level and tell the researchers whether they were homogenous in terms of their English reading proficiency. After that, the participants took a pretest of reading achievement at the start of work before the treatment was given. Following the pretest, the assigned units, the texts from "*English for Iraq*" along with the literary texts for the experimental groups were taught to the groups differently during six weeks. The teaching stage happened in the same day and school, but with different methods as the researcher was the teacher of all the classes. The study continued, starting the teaching for both control and experimental groups, each receiving the assigned materials (simplified literary materials, authentic literary materials and the regular English materials for the book 'English for Iraq'). The teaching continued for six weeks according to the plan of the study, that is, the two experimental groups of learners were taught using the literary texts, however, the control group was taught using the school syllabus book. The teaching was followed by the posttest stage. To discover what effect teaching the selected materials had on the participants' performance in reading achievement, the pretest and posttest scores were analyzed and compared. According to the design of the study and by the comparison of the test scores of the experimental and control groups, the answers to the research questions were found. Using ANOVA and Tukey HSD Multiple Comparisons post hoc test, the efficacy of two types of literary texts was also tested.

### **Instruments**

#### ***Oxford Placement Test (OPT)***

It is a standardized test on reading with 20 multiple-choice items, which is frequently used for ESL and EFL testing and research. Its reliability and validity have already been established. However, in this study, its reliability was calculated too, which was 0.79, an acceptable index in research terms.

#### ***English for Iraq***

Six reading texts from the book '*English for Iraq*' by Olivia Johnston and Caroline de Messieres were used as the usual texts based on the general syllabus for English teaching in Iraqi high schools. It had 8 units with the topics like 'the health service,' 'holidays,' and etc., covered in 96 pages.

#### ***Selected Authentic Literary Short Texts***

The literary texts from literature books like '*The Canary*,' '*Miss Brill*,' and '*The Daughters of the Late Colonel*' by Catherine Mansfield and similar short stories were used as the authentic texts based on their appropriateness for the participants of the first experimental group.

#### ***Selected Simplified Literary Short Texts***

The authentic literary texts from the same literary books were initially simplified by the related experts and were employed to teach the second experimental group.

### **Pre-test**

To capture the participants' performance in reading before the study, a pretest of reading achievement with 20 multiple-choice items was developed from the course materials. The pilot testing and expert assistance were used to assure the test was reliable and valid. The test validity and reliability were checked with a pilot group.

### **Post-test**

The posttest was developed from the instructional materials. The test consisted of reading passages, followed by 20 multiple-choice items. To assure the posttest validity and reliability, the expert assistance and pilot testing was employed, which showed the test as reliable and valid based on the related measures.

## **Results**

### **OPT Reading Test Results**

An OPT was conducted to check the participants' reading before the study, and the related descriptive data is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** *Descriptive Statistics for OPT Test of Experimental and Control Groups*

<b>Descriptive Statistics for OPT Test</b>									
	<b>N</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Sum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Variance</b>
E1	30	15.00	5.00	20.00	364.00	12.1333	.70749	3.87506	15.016
E2	30	15.00	4.00	19.00	356.00	11.8667	.77716	4.25671	18.120
C	30	15.00	4.00	19.00	353.00	11.7667	.80470	4.40754	19.426

\* E1= Experimental 1, E2= Experimental 2, C= Control

As seen in the Table1, the average OPT score for E1 is 12.13; the average OPT score for E2 is 11.86; the average OPT score for C is 11.76. The results of checking the significance of the difference between these average scores, using ANOVA analysis, are depicted in Table 2.

**Table 2.** *One-way ANOVA Test for OPT Test*

<b>ANOVA</b>					
<b>OPT Test</b>					
	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Between Groups	2.156	2	1.078	.062	.940
Within Groups	1524.300	87	17.521		
Total	1526.456	89			

As shown in Table 2, the results indicated no significant difference in the means across the three groups  $F(2, 87) = 0.062, p = 0.940$ , suggesting no statistically significant difference in OPT among the groups.

### **Research Question One**

Having assured the normality of the scores related to this research question, a paired samples t-test was run to see if there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores



within the first experimental group (E1) which received the treatment of authentic short literary text instruction. The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Descriptive Statistics for Reading Pre-test and Post-test Scores within E1

Descriptive Statistics									
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation	Variance
Pre-Test	30	15.00	5.00	20.00	364.00	12.1333	.70749	3.87506	15.016
Post-test	30	13.00	6.00	19.00	402.00	13.4000	.60382	3.30725	10.938

As seen in Table 3, the pre-test score is 12.13, but for the post-test it is equal to 13.40. In other words, the average score for the reading post-test is higher compared to the one of the pre-tests. To verify the significance of the difference, a paired samples t-test was run on the data, the results of which are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Paired Samples T-test for the Reading Pre-test and Post-test within E1

Paired Samples Test for E1									
	Paired Difference				T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
				Lower				Upper	
Pair 1 Pretest - Posttest	-.30000	.53498	.09767	-.49977	-.10023	-3.071	29	.005	

As displayed in Table 4, the paired samples t-test for reading pre-test and post-test scores within the first experimental group revealed a significant difference in means ( $t = -3.071$ ,  $df = 29$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ). The post-test performance is better than the pre-test, meaning that the learners' performance has been improved through using authentic literary texts.

### Research Question Two

A paired samples t-test was run to see if there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores within the second experimental group (E2). The descriptive statistics are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Descriptive Statistics for the Reading Pre-test and Post-test Scores within E2

Descriptive Statistics									
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation	Variance
PreRE2	30	15.00	4.00	19.00	383.00	12.7667	.66727	3.65479	13.357
PostRE2	30	12.00	8.00	20.00	460.00	15.3333	.47303	2.59088	6.713

As can be seen in Table 5, the average score in the pre-test is 12.76 and in the post-test was equal to 15.33, which is higher than the average score in reading pre-test. Given the normality of the data, a paired samples t-test was run to check the significance of the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores within E2, which received the simplified literary text instruction. The related results are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Paired Samples T-test for Reading Pre-test and Post-test Scores within E2

		Paired Samples Test					t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Paired Differences							
Pair		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	PreRE2 PostRE2	-2.56667	1.25075	.22835	-3.03370	-2.09963	-11.240	29	.000

As displayed in Table 6., the paired samples t-test for reading pre-test and post-test scores within the second experimental group revealed a significant difference in means ( $t = -11.240$ ,  $df = 29$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). It can be concluded that the learners' reading achievement has improved as a result of using simplified literary texts.

#### *The Pre- and Post-test Scores within Control Group (C)*

Before referring to the t-test results, it is good to report the descriptive statistics related to the tests results for pre-test and post-test within the control group (C). The descriptive statistics are demonstrated in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Descriptive Statistics for the Reading Pre-test and Post-test Scores in Control Group

		Descriptive Statistics							
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation	Variance
Pretest	30	14.00	5.00	19.00	387.00	12.9000	.64568	3.53651	12.507
Posttest	30	12.00	7.00	19.00	410.00	13.6667	.60140	3.29402	10.851

As seen in Table 7, the average score in the pre-test is equal to 12.9 and in the post-test is equal to 13.66. A paired samples t-test was run to check the significance of the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores within the control group (C). The related results are shown in Table 8.

**Table 8.** Paired Samples T-test for the Reading Pre-test and Post-test within the Control Group

		Paired Samples Test					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Paired Differences							
Pair		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest Posttest	-.76667	.77385	.14129	-1.05563	-.47770	-5.426	29	.000



As per Table 8, the paired samples t-test for reading pre-test and post-test scores within the control group revealed a significant difference in means ( $t = -5,426$ ,  $df = 29$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). These results suggest that the control group learners' performance in reading post-test was better than their performance in pre-test.

### Research Question Three

To answer this research question, the average scores of E1 and E2 and C in post-test were compared to see if the learners had performed differently as a result of the different treatments. The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 9.

**Table 9.** Descriptive Statistics for the Reading Post-test

Descriptive Statistics									
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation	Variance
E1	30	13.00	6.00	19.00	402.00	13.4000	.60382	3.30725	10.938
E2	30	12.00	8.00	20.00	460.00	15.3333	.47303	2.59088	6.713
C	30	12.00	7.00	19.00	410.00	13.6667	.60140	3.29402	10.851

As seen in Table 9, the mean scores in the post-test were E1=13.4, E2=15.33 and C=13.66. Given the normality of the data, a one-way ANOVA test was run to see if there was any significant difference between post-test scores in the two experimental groups and the control group. The related data is shown in Table 10.

**Table 10.** One-Way ANOVA Results for Reading Post-Test

ANOVA					
Posttest Scores					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	65.867	2	32.933	3.467	.036
Within Groups	826.533	87	9.500		
Total	892.400	89			

As mentioned previously, the third research question aimed to determine if there was any difference between the authentic and simplified literary texts concerning their effect on Iraqi high school EFL learners' reading achievement. The one-way ANOVA results indicate a significant difference between at least one pair of group means in terms of their post-test scores.

To further investigate which specific groups differed significantly from each other, a post hoc Tukey test was conducted. The aim was to check which pairs had higher differences. The related statistics are given in Table 11.

**Table 11.** Tukey HSD Post Hoc Test Results for Reading Post-Test Scores

		Multiple Comparisons				
		Tukey HSD				
(I) Posttest	(J) PostR	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Posttest E1	Posttest E2	-1.93333*	.79584	.045	-3.8310	-.0357
	Posttest C	-.26667	.79584	.940	-2.1643	1.6310
Posttest E2	Posttest E1	1.93333*	.79584	.045	.0357	3.8310
	Posttest C	1.66667	.79584	.097	-.2310	3.5643
Posttest C	Posttest E1	.26667	.79584	.940	-1.6310	2.1643
	Posttest E2	-1.66667	.79584	.097	-3.5643	.2310

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The Tukey HSD post hoc test results indicate that there was a significant difference between the reading post-test scores of E1 and E2, with a mean difference of -1.93333 ( $p = 0.045$ ), suggesting that simplified literary texts resulted in higher reading scores compared to the authentic literary texts. Consequently, it can be concluded that the treatment with simplified texts was more effective in improving reading achievement compared to the treatment with authentic texts, as indicated by their post-test scores.

## Discussion

The current investigation aimed to measure the possible impacts of two types of literary texts on the reading achievements of Iraqi EFL learners, finally trying to make some improvements in EFL learning and teaching process. The first research question was, "Does using simplified literary texts as instructional materials affect Iraqi high school EFL learners' reading achievement?" The results revealed that using simplified literary texts could assist learners improve their performance in reading compared to the use of usual course syllabus materials. This is consistent with the previous research results (e.g. Ghosn, 2002; Khan & Alasmari, 2018; Sage, 1987; Shaaban, 2015), which reported the usefulness of employing authentic and literary texts in improving the learning performance. The results actually confirmed the positive impact of simplified literary texts on the reading performance of the learners. To state it simply, the results showed that selecting simplified literary texts can lead to better learning outcomes in reading. The findings imply that attending to literature in language teaching serves as an effective change in EFL teaching, and it has the potential to provide learners with satisfaction in their learning. However, the findings were inconsistent with the ideas and findings reported by other researchers (e.g. Bagher-kazemi & Alemi, 2010; Yuksel, 2007) who believed that the literature texts usually sound difficult for learners because including rich and difficult texts can make the learning hard for the learners as the literary texts include rich phrases, difficult vocabulary, and complex structures.

The results can be justified by the fact that literary texts are efficient in improving learners' reading as they provide them with better knowledge of words and phrases (Viana & Zyngier, 2020; Mackenzie, 2000) that equals promoting their language knowledge. The findings can also

be attributed to the fact that literary texts help learners increase their grammar knowledge as they involve rich sources of different rich grammatical structures, which serve as a useful element in understanding and interpreting texts (Tayebipour, 2009). Another justification could be when learners face and work with literary texts, they feel excited and attracted by the type of content that teach them cultural points (Savvidou, 2004; Ur, 1996), integrated into their syllabus. Still another reason is that the created excitement and attraction will probably add to the motivation level of students, which in turn directly contributes to the improvement of learning (Khamknien, 2010).

Based on the results found concerning the first research question, it can also be concluded that employing literary texts for language teaching purposes is bound to have an enormous effect on the learners' determination for doing the tasks and their learning (Alemi, 2011; Yilmaz, 2012; Yuksel, 2007), which can subsequently serve as a catalyst to the learning process.

The second research question was, "Does using authentic short literary texts as instructional materials affect Iraqi high school EFL learners' reading achievement?" It was disclosed that there was a statistically significant difference in the reading pre-test and post-test scores within the second experimental group, suggesting that the learners' reading achievement had improved after taking the treatment. The results indeed were confirming the usefulness of using authentic literary texts in boosting the learning outcome for Iraqi EFL learners in reading. The finding was cogent evidence that using literary texts for language teaching purposes could contribute to the learners' success.

The results are generally supporting the earlier research results and views (e.g. Maley, 2001; Sanchez, 2008; Ur, 1996), insisting on the positive role of integrating literature into the language teaching process. The findings on the effectiveness of using authentic literary texts imply that reading literary texts affects the reading skill through increasing the linguistic knowledge, language practice, and reading competence (Brown, 2000; Hirvela, 1998; Kellem, 2009; Parkinson & Thomas, 2000; Simpson, 1997; Tutas, 2006). In contrast, the results did not echo the findings or opinions presented by a few language teaching experts (Yuksel, 2007) that viewed literary texts consisting of too rich language structures that can sound hard or complex for learners, which naturally appear in literary texts. That is, the use of literature serves an efficient role by providing rich language materials with attractive and various structures of high language quality.

It is argued that using authentic literature for language teaching creates some diverse and rich content for learners, where they learn more than merely the language itself. Teaching language through authentic literary texts provides learners with the knowledge of cultural, social, and historical issues related to the society where the learners live. Literary texts provide learners with awareness of the beauty of the phrase or sentence rhythm, which can ultimately turn the language learning into a delightful experience. Learners learn different social points in a beautiful and attractive text or context, which makes the learning situation more fascinating, leading to some promoted learning outcome (Brown, 2000; Hoag, 1996; Mckay, 2001).

In addition to that, texts with literature content promotes reading by assisting learners attain a thorough knowledge that is not restricted merely to linguistic points, but also related to diverse life issues that can be of contribution to learners in different aspects of real life (Becker, 2020;

Galda & Cullinan, 2003). Authentic literary texts can produce positive impact on learners' mentality and attitudes towards reading and language learning by opening new horizons to learn about the world and connecting to its various dimension (DeFord, 1984; Lancia, 1997).

The third question was, "Is there any difference between the authentic and simplified literary texts concerning their effect on Iraqi high school EFL learners' reading achievement?" To answer this research question, the average scores of the learners in experimental and control groups in post-test were compared to see if learners had different performances. The aim was to try to explore the possible difference between the two independent variables of authentic or simplified texts on learners' performance in reading. The results revealed a significant difference between at least one pair of group means in terms of their post-test scores, hence, a post hoc analysis was conducted to see which groups differed significantly from each other. The related results were conforming that the use of simplified literary texts was more effective on learners' performance in reading compared to the use of authentic literary texts. The results in fact disclosed that reading was improved by simplified literature significantly better than authentic literature. The primary results, the positive role of literature on language learning skills, are highly consistent with the results of numerous studies (Amer, 2003; Holden, 2003; Kim, 2004; Krashen, 2004) that conclude that the integration of literature in EFL teaching works as an efficient tool to teach language skills. However, the results of the present study on the third research question are strongly against the findings of the research by (Bakhshizadeh, 2018) who found no significant difference between simplified and authentic literature texts on reading performance of EFL learners. Literature has also been argued as harmful and irrelevant for most learners by some scholars (Parkinson & Thomas, 2000) who argue against the usefulness of using literary texts for second or foreign language teaching and learning. These researchers discourage the use of literature for language teaching for its complexity or difficulty for learners who are mostly without enough knowledge of techniques or concepts required to learn and understand literary texts adopted for language teaching.

The results can be justified by the fact that reading is highly connected with literature due to the fact that the literary texts are rich regarding the language structures used. Literary texts commonly include some structures or features developed to add to their beauty and romance like particular sound, rhythm, rhymes and song. This generates a really natural richness and complexity in these texts, ending the reading, interpretation and comprehension uneasy for language learners and users (Bakhshizadeh, 2018). Even grammatical structures face up with some alterations for the purpose of richness addition, therefore, as any text is built up through putting words, expressions and phrases together that use grammatical regulations, grammar difficulty is a new factor to turn literature complex. The result may also be clarified by the idea that EFL learners are in beginner stages to learn, consequently, they do not enjoy good level of language knowledge that can assist them in comprehending passes simply as the native readers. The problem of the difficulty of literates exaggerates when different elements are integrated to these texts for building up grace and attraction.

## **Conclusion**

The study specifically focused on using authentic and simplified literary texts as instructional materials on Iraqi EFL learners' reading comprehension. The study also attended to see whether

there was a difference between the authentic and simplified literary texts concerning their effect on Iraqi EFL learners' reading achievement. The investigation employed a quasi-experimental design for comparing the scores related to pretest and posttest scores before and after the treatment to find any effect the treatment may have on the participants' performance in reading. The results revealed that using literary texts could assist learners improve their reading compared to the use of usual course syllabus materials. The related results also approved that the use of simplified literary texts could improve learner's' performance in reading more effectively compared to authentic literary texts.

### **Implications**

The results of the study revealed that using literary texts assisted learners in improving their reading. Consequently, syllabus designers or language teaching planners can identify the instructional materials from literature of the societies, which will make the learning a more beneficial experience. Hence, EFL teaching programs need to consider learners' interests and needs concerning the knowledge learners receive from courses designed. As the results approved the assisting role of literature in increasing learners' knowledge in different aspects of the specific and general areas, syllabus designers are suggested to use the results of the study to employ the instructional materials according to the learners' life needs. The findings are specifically important in teaching reading, which serve as the basic skill for building the required knowledge in EFL contexts. Language teaching with literature content includes the potential to provide language learners with useful content that can improve learners' language knowledge and life skills.

### **Limitations**

One of the restrictions faced was concerned with sample size, which happened due to the limited access to the participants of the investigation concerning the place and time of the study. Furthermore, the participants were chosen from the same school by using convenient sampling that usually suffers from low level of reliability or validity concerning the issue of consistency of results in different contexts. Certainly, if a randomized sampling method were employed from various classes and schools, more generalizable results could have been generated from the experiments completed in the study. In addition, the focus of the study was merely on reading skill and ignoring the other ones. Therefore, the results of current research are not generalized to other contexts and skills.

### **Suggestions for Further Study**

Literature is an important part of life for both individuals and societies. This fact highlights attending to literature extensively in all aspects of life and in education particularly. Accordingly, language teaching experts and researchers are strongly suggested to adopt the studies which can encourage learners to become excited about literature and its importance and assistance in their lives. Accordingly, they are suggested to pick more topics and areas related to literature in their investigations. In doing so, they are recommended to attend to the areas that assist learners to become more motivated in learning and dealing with literature.

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