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Research Paper

Students' Perception and Interest in Using Literary Texts for Teaching English

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Abstract

The present investigation attempted to see if using literary texts could lead into any change in learners' interest or perception toward literature. The research also attempted to find students' perception on using literary content in language learning based on learners' opinions. The investigation finally sought to discover the way learners' interest in literature changed as a result of using literary texts as the instructional content. The Research employed a mixed-method design to answer the questions proposed in the study. After analyzing data through t-test, Gain-score comparison and thematic analysis, the results showed that using literary content worked as useful and constructive for learners in language learning and life objectives. The results further confirmed that learners' interest level improved positively due to using simplified literary texts, whereas, the positive role could not be seen in using authentic literary content. Accordingly, content selection from literature along with considering learners' life needs are able to make language learning more attractive to learners. The results also support that developing newer books with literary texts can provide learners with different knowledge like cultural awareness, social knowledge or historical background, which seem to be urgent life needs in today's modern society.

Keywords: Authentic Literary Texts, Interest, Perception, Simplified Literary Texts

درک و علاقه دانش آموزان به استفاده از متون ادبی برای آموزش زبان انگلیسی پژوهش حاضر تلاش کرد تا ببیند آیا استفاده از متون ادبی می‌تواند منجر به تغییر در علاقه یا درک فراگیران نسبت به ادبیات شود یا خیر. همچنین در این تحقیق تلاش شد تا بر اساس نظرات زبان آموزان، درک دانشجویان از استفاده از محتوای ادبی در یادگیری زبان بیاید. این تحقیق در نهایت به دنبال کشف نحوه تغییر علاقه یادگیرندگان به ادبیات در نتیجه استفاده از متون ادبی به عنوان محتوای آموزشی بود. این پژوهش از یک طرح ترکیبی برای پاسخ به سوالات مطرح شده در مطالعه استفاده کرد. پس از تجزیه و تحلیل داده‌ها از طریق آزمون t، مقایسه امتیاز و تحلیل موضوعی، نتایج نشان داد که استفاده از محتوای ادبی برای زبان آموزان در یادگیری زبان و اهداف زندگی مفید و سازنده بوده است. نتایج همچنین تأیید کرد که سطح علاقه زبان آموزان به دلیل استفاده از متون ادبی ساده شده به طور مثبت بهبود یافته است، در حالی که نقش مثبت در استفاده از محتوای ادبی معتبر دیده نمی‌شود. بر این اساس، انتخاب محتوا از ادبیات به همراه در نظر گرفتن نیازهای زندگی فراگیران می‌تواند جذابیت یادگیری زبان را برای زبان آموزان بیشتر کند. نتایج همچنین تأیید می‌کند که توسعه کتاب‌های جدیدتر با متون ادبی می‌تواند دانش‌های مختلفی مانند آگاهی فرهنگی، دانش اجتماعی یا پیشینه تاریخی را در اختیار یادگیرندگان قرار دهد، که به نظر می‌رسد نیازهای ضروری زندگی در جامعه مدرن امروزی است.

کلیدواژه‌ها: متون ادبی معتبر، علاقه، ادراک، متون ادبی ساده شده

Introduction

Authentic materials are prepared for natives and not for teaching or learning purposes. Peacock (1997) contends that authentic texts serve as the content produced for creating social objectives. Literary texts are seen as valuable and comprehensive authentic materials which include both functional and linguistic forms. It is claimed that most of such 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. As Krashen (1994) states, in language teaching, the language input needs to be comprehensible so as language learning to take place successfully. Using literary texts by teachers can be a solution to the difficulty of some instructional materials to make them easier. This great source is not exploited well by syllabus designers or even language teachers in selecting or teaching the instructional materials, which seems to cause language learners to ignore a gifted chance and a potential power in their language learning adventure. Hence, it is thought that relating literary texts as instructional materials can probably grow learners' knowledge of the cultural points and boost learners' attention and interest to learn. Learners' thoughts or perceptions and their interest in literature serves as some of the important dimensions that need to be focused on as attaining more knowledge on these aspects will lead to make better decisions in encouraging language learners and teachers to welcome literature use as instructional materials.

Literature Review

Grammar translation method was dominant in the decades before the appearance of the innovative methods like functional-notional or communicative methods. Literary texts were used as the primary materials used in the methods in this period, which employed mostly literary texts of the target language as class materials. These texts were used as sources of translation work, grammar and writing for students in schools (Duff & Maley, 1990; Shakfa, 2012). The dominant purpose in this time was taking the form as the axial instrument, and as a result, learning grammar rules and lexical items were taken as major goals in language learning. Hence, following these goals, teachers used and taught the texts from literature as the best materials that were needed to be predicted and provided in the textbooks. However, these literary texts were not used because of their content, but as an element for representation on the form and structure of the language that was the goal of learning. This literature content was underscored in teaching foreign languages when grammar translation method started to disappear.

The topic studied in the current study deals theoretically with the ideas of Krashen (1994) on the role of learners' emotion, referred to as "Affective Filter Hypothesis," asserting that positive attitudes can improve learning outcome and boost desire to learn. The improvement of learner's positive feelings will mostly ease the language learning process, which will end in better learning results or more efficient performance of learners by attending to learning better (Asgari, 2023). Self-concept, interest, perseverance, attitude are the affective factors that can assist L2/FL learners, as reported by different researchers (Asgari, Ketabi & Amirian, 2019; Chastain, 1988). Using literature for language teaching creates positive impact on learners' perceptions and attitudes towards reading (Altun; 2023; Galda & Cullinan, 2003; Mart, 2017; Viana & Zyngier, 2020). Reading literary texts can discover new horizons of possibility and assist learners to explore and learn (Becker, 2020; Langer, 1997; Mart, 2017). Literature improves and promotes reading skill because of the interaction between writer of the texts and its reader, not as a reaction to the text (Mckay, 1982). Rosenblatt (1978) reported that using literature exerts a positive effect on reading in two different ways. The first method promoted reading so that the learners get connected with language skill. In the other method, learners' feeling of inner joy is focused.



Reading literature can assist learners learn and appreciate multiple meaning levels, sentence forming, phonological patterning in several different text types. In simple words, literature provides motivation for readers and students to discover the richness and power of language, and students will face with different structures for exploring paragraphs (Islam, 2021; Shakfa, 2012).

Literature efficiency has been reiterated by different language teaching experts. (Altun; 2023; Carroli, 2008; Carter, 2007; Mart, 2019; Shakfa, 2012; Zid, 2015). However, language teaching experts have different arguments over some issues like the type, the way and time of presenting literary texts in language teaching so that the desired outcome is achieved. Butler (2006) incorporated literary genres into language course materials in a South African context. The course evaluation results approved highly positive effect of using literature on language course achievement. Minkoff (2006) used an elective course consisting literature and language 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 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. Paran (2008) states classroom research may also be conducted by the testimony of teachers' daily work reports, which might be a complete experiment with literature in the class context. Hess (2006) presents a course consisting short stories and integrates the stories with the skills needed for teaching languages. Völz (2001) reports an experiment with the use of short fictions that have been employed by writers who were taught writing. A general absence of empirical investigation on the role of using literary texts in language teaching seems evident so that the need for producing “enhanced paradigms for greater empirical investigation” (Carter, 2007, p.11) sounds vital. Hauner (2001), too, argues that the lack of empirical research results concerning the comprehension of literary texts looks really plausible. Therefore, as most school students are not informed enough of the literature of the world and their countries, and the focus, in not many studies concerning the use of authentic materials, is on using literary texts, and as there is a low number of research evidence to confirm the employment of literary content in EFL learning, conducting this investigation and other similar studies look significant. And more importantly, not research has been completed on the usefulness of literature in EFL teaching in an Iraqi context, hence, it looks urgent to study the efficacy of using literary texts as lessons for EFL learners and discover the learners' perceptions.

Method

Participants

Ninety male third grade high school students from Diyala in Iraq participated in the investigation. They were reachable only in their regular classes because of some school regulations, so were chosen by convenient sampling method. The participants, were divided into experimental and control groups, each with 30 students, in a random way.

Materials and Instruments

To conduct any research, the following instruments were recruited to give the treatment and collect the data required for answering the research questions.

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. in 96 pages.

Selected Authentic Literary Short Text

The literary texts from literature books like 'The Canary' 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 Text

The same reading texts used as the authentic materials were initially simplified by the related experts and employed to teach the other experimental group students.

Perception Questionnaire

This questionnaire was developed by the researchers to attain the participants' perception on the use of literary texts as the instructional materials in an EFL teaching course. It totally had 32 items, organized in three sections. The first part covered 20 items on students' perceptions, the second part consisted 10 items on students' interest and the last part included two items surveying the students' ideas on the value of literature. The first 30 items employed the Likert Scale with 5 options varying from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree.' The questionnaire also included two Wh-questions, one with 8 options and the other with 4. The last question was a two-part question, one multiple-choice with 4 options and one open-ended to capture the learners' perspectives on the importance and attractiveness of literature in their schooling and life. The questionnaire reliability was verified with a pilot group, which was 0.79, and its validity was confirmed using expert assistance.

Data Collection Procedure

The participants took an English Reading proficiency test (OPT), then took a pretest before the treatment. Following the pretest, the assigned units were taught to the groups differently during six weeks. The teaching stage happened in the same days and school, but different classes as the researcher was teaching the materials. Each group received the assigned materials (authentic literary materials, simplified literary materials and the regular English materials for the book 'English for Iraq'). The teaching continued for six weeks due to the plan of the study, and it was followed by the posttest stage and the survey. To discover what effect teaching the selected materials had on the participants' perception and interest, the researchers analyzed and compared both pretest and posttest results using t-test and Gain-score analysis. According to the design of the study, and by the comparison of the scores taken from the questionnaires, the changes in perception and interest levels were compared. Finally, the students' ideas on using literary content in language teaching were discovered through analyzing the questionnaire results using thematic analysis.

Data Analysis Procedure

SPSS program was employed for data analysis. T-test, Gain-score Comparison and Thematic analysis were used to analyze the data. Regarding the last research questions, data collecting, categorizing, coding and theme analysis were employed to analyze the data.

Results

The first question was trying to disclose learners' perceptions on using literary content as instructional materials. The question was, "What are learners' perceptions on using literary texts as instructional materials in EFL learning?" The third part of the questionnaire, with two questions was used to provide the answer to the question. One of the questions had eight options (a -- h), from which the learners could choose one or more options. The first question used to



earn the data was, "How can incorporating literature with class materials change your life?" One or some of the following options were expected.

- a. It can help me increase my cultural awareness.
- b. It can provide me with fun in my life.
- c. It can help me have better success in my studying.
- d. It can help me promote in my future job.
- e. It will increase my knowledge of life.
- f. It can improve my life in some aspects.
- g. It will not make any big changes.
- h. It will be a waste of time and energy.

The participants of E1 (experimental 1, receiving simplified literary content and E2 (experimental 2, receiving authentic literary content) chose one or some of the options based on their own views.

Table 1

Learners' Ideas about Literature Use

How can incorporating literature with class materials change your life?			
Options	Total N	N	Percent
a. It can help me increase my cultural awareness.	60	52	86.6
b. It can provide me with fun in my life.	60	33	55
c. It can help me have better success in my studying.	60	43	71.6
d. It can help me promote in my future job.	60	28	46.6
e. It will increase my knowledge of life.	60	31	51.6
f. It can improve my life in some aspects.	60	47	78.3
g. It will not make any big changes.	60	23	38.3
h. It will be a waste of time and energy.	60	14	23.3

As seen in Table 1, the majority of learners viewed using literary texts as a helpful experience in their studying or life. The useful role of using literary content in increasing cultural awareness was agreed by 86.6 percent of participants. A high number of them, 78.3 percent, approved that literary content could improve some aspects of their lives. Similarly, a large number agreed with the assisting role of employing literature as class materials in improving their success in studying. More than half of them accepted that the use of literature could provide them with fun in their life. 51.6 percent of the students confirmed that using literary content was helpful in increasing their knowledge of life. Less than half of the participants (46.6 percent) accepted that the change could help them promote in their future job. Also, some of them (38.3 percent) confessed that the treatment would not make any remarkable change in their life. Finally, a few participants found using literature as course materials as a waste of time and energy. "Do the learners' perception on using literary texts as class materials change compared to their perception at the beginning of the study?" was the second research question. The first part of the questionnaire, with twenty questions, was used to answer the second question. Hence, the perception pre-test and post-test results for E1 were compared.

Table 2

Perception Pre-test and Post-test (E1)

	Descriptive Statistics								
	N	Range	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	SD	Variance	Std. Error
Perception	30	53	38	91	1889	62.96	2.728	14.942	223.275

Pretest E1									
Perception	30	53	42	95	2078	69.26	2.687	14.722	216.754
Posttest E1									

As seen in Table 2, the mean for perception pre-test is 62.96, but for the post-test it is 69.26 that is higher. The observed difference significance was checked using a paired samples t-test. The result can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3*Paired Samples T-test for Perception Pre-test and Post-test within E1*

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	SD	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	E1 Perception Pretest – E1 Perception Posttest	-6.30	2.276	.41564	-7.15008	-5.449	-15.15	29	.000

As displayed in Table 3, the paired samples t-test for perception pre-test and post-test scores within E1 revealed a significant difference in means ($t = -15.157$, $df = 29$, $p = 0.000$), implying that learners' perception has turned more positive after treatment.

To support the found results, the perception pre-test and post-test results of the second experimental group (E2) were also compared. The descriptive data is brought in Table 4.

Table 4*Perception Pre-test and Post-test (E2)*

Descriptive Statistics									
	N	Range	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Std. Error	SD	Variance
E2 Perception Pretest	30	48.	41	89	1942	64.73	2.7003	14.790	218.754
E2 Perception Posttest	30	51.	43	94	1976	65.86	2.6211	14.356	206.120

As seen in Table 4, the mean for Perception pre-test is 64.73, while the mean for perception post-test is 65.86 that is higher. A paired sample t-test was run to check the significance of the difference.

Table 5*Paired Samples T-test for Perception Pre-test and Post-test within E2*

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	SD	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval				
Pair 1	E2 Perception Pretest – E2 Perception Posttest	1.13	1.13	.20768	0.71457	1.54543	1.54	29	.144

				Error Mean	Interval of the Difference		t	df	p
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	E2 Perception Pretest- E2 Perception Posttest	-1.13	2.255	.4117	-1.975	-.291	-2.75	29	.010

As shown in Table 5, the paired samples t-test for perception pre-test and post-test within E2 reported a remarkable difference in means ($t = -2.753$ $df = 29$, $p = 0.010$). These results suggest that learners' perception on using literary content has become more positive after the treatment. "Based on the students' perception on the use of literary texts, what do students think about the importance of literature?" was the third research question. A four-choice question, "What do you think about the importance of literature in your life?" along with an open-ended one, "Write your idea in response to the question in one sentence" were used to provide answers to this research question. In fact, the learners in E1 and E2 were required to give their own views on the importance of literature in life by choosing one option. The related data is shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Learners' Ideas about Importance of Literature in Life

What do you think about the importance of literature in your life?		
Options	N	Percent
a. very important	23	38.33
b. fairly important	14	23.33
c. important	17	28.33
d. not important	6	10

As seen in Table 6, nearly half of the learners agreed with high importance of literature. Similarly, about a quarter of the learners thought of literature as a fairly important influence. Also, more than one-fourth of the learners believed that literature served as an important factor in life. In contrast, a small number of the studied learners (10%) had the idea that literature did not have a remarkable role in life. Considering the options arranged in the questionnaire, it can be claimed that nearly all learners agreed with the importance of literature in life.

The learners gave ideas on the way they thought about the importance of literature in life in one sentence. Their ideas varied based on the learners' views, some of which have been reported in the following part.

"I think literary course enriches my awareness of my country culture."

"They grow my knowledge of the writers and poets of the society."

"It provides us with good knowledge of the history of country."

"It was great because I learned important life issues."

"I learned and agreed literature was important to learners."

"This class got important to me as I learned more than only English."

"I did not really understand the difference made in course materials"

"The texts were harder than the usual books."

Other similar views could also be found reflecting learners' looks on the importance of literature in learning and life. Based on some similarities, these views were summarized, coded and grouped under some determined codes to extract more centralized ideas, summarized in Table 7.

Table 7
Learners' Personal Views on Use of Literature

Explored Perceptions	Total N	N	Percent
Increase in Cultural Awareness	60	24	40
Increase in Historical Awareness	60	16	26.66
Increase in Awareness about Literature Writers	60	5	8.33
Notice the Remarkable Role of Literature in Life	60	11	18.33
Emphasize the Difficulty of Literature Content	60	4	6.66

As demonstrated in Table 7, in 40 percent of statements literature was recognized as a cause of increase in cultural awareness. 26.66 percent of the statements showed literary texts as factor of growth of historical awareness. A small number (8.33 percent) of the collected views confirmed the positive role of literature in turning literature writers known. Finally, 6.66 percent considered using literary content in learning as a reason for difficulty.

"Based on the students' perception on the use of literary texts, how does their interest in literature change after the study?" was the last study question. The questionnaire ending part, with twenty questions, was used to answer the last question. Hence, the interest pre- and post-test results within E1 were analyzed.

Table 8
Interest Pre-test and Post-test within E1

	Descriptive Statistics								
	N	Range	Mi n	Ma x	Sum	Mean	SD	Std. Error	Varian ce
E1 Interest Pretest	30	31	14	45	929	30.96	1.468	8.040	64.654
E1 Interest Posttest	30	31	17	48	1033	34.43	1.625	8.904	79.289
Valid N (listwise)	30								

As witnessed in Table 8, the mean for Interest pre-test is 30.96, while the mean for interest post-test is 34.43. A paired samples t-test was run to see if the difference was significant.

Table 9
Paired Samples T-test for Interest Pre-test and Post-test within E1

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
		Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	E1 Interest Pretest - E1 Interest Posttest	-3.46	1.59	.290	-4.061	-2.8723	-11.93	29	.000

As displayed in Table 9, a significant difference in means ($t = -11.930$, $df = 29$, $p = 0.000$) was seen after running the paired samples t-test for interest pre-test and post-test scores within E, implying that E1 learners' interest has improved after the treatment.

Interest pre-test and post-test within E2 were also compared to give responses to the last research question.

Table 10
Interest Pre-test and Post-test for E2

	Descriptive Statistics								
	N	Range	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	SD	Variance	
						Std. Error			
E2 Interest Pretest	30	28	16	44	955	31.83	1.29462	7.090	50.282
E2 Interest Posttest	30	31	15	46	923	30.76	1.40825	7.713	59.495
Valid N (listwise)	30								

As depicted in Table 10, the mean for Interest pre-test is 31.83, while the mean for Interest post-test is 30.76, slightly lower than pre-test. A paired samples t-test was used to check the difference.

Table 11
Paired Samples T-test for Interest Pre-test and Post-test within E2

Pair		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
1	E2 Interest Pretest - E2 Interest Posttest	1.066	1.0482	.19139	.6752	1.4580	5.57	29	.000

As evident in Table 11, the results report a significant difference in means ($t = 5.573$, $df = 29$, $p = 0.000$), suggesting a significant difference, between pre-test and post-test results for students within E2 ($P < 0.05$). A point to consider is the treatment has resulted in a small decrease in interest.

To provide a better look of the learners' performance, a comparison was made between E1 and E2 regarding their perception post-test results. Table 12 shows the related descriptive data.

Table 12
Perception Post-test for E1 versus E2

	Descriptive Statistics								
	N	Range	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	SD	Variance	
						Std. Error Means			
E1 Perception Posttest	30	53	42	95	2078	69.26	2.687	14.722	216.754
E2 Perception Posttest	30	51	43	94	1976	65.86	2.621	14.356	206.120
Valid N (listwise)	30								

As depicted in Table 12, the mean for E1's perception post-test is 69.26, while the mean for E2's perception post-test is 65.86. The difference was verified employing a t-test. Perception post-test comparisons between E1 and E2 did not show any significant difference.

Table 13

Independent Samples T-test for Perception Post-test for E1 versus E2

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Perception Posttest	Equal variances assumed	.001	.971	.906	58	.369	3.400	3.75444	-4.11	10.915
	Equal variances not assumed			.906	57.96	.369	3.400	3.75444	-4.11	10.915

According to Table 13, no significant difference in means can be seen ($t = .906$, $df = 58$, $p = 0.36$) between the means.

Gain Score Comparison for Perception Post-test between E1 and E2

The perception post-test for E1 was higher, which was not significant based on t-test results. To have closer comparison, a gain score analysis was performed to verify the perception post-test difference. An Independent Samples t-test was then performed to compare these gain scores. Table 14 displays the pertinent results.

Table 14

Independent T-test Results for Perception Gain Scores between E1 and E2

		Independent Samples Test for Perception Gain Scores								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Perception Gain Score	Equal variances assumed	.366	.548	8.831	58	.000	5.16667	.58503	3.995	6.337

Comparison	Equal variances not assumed	8.831	57.99	.001	5.16667	.58503	3.995	6.337
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According to Table 14, the independent samples t-test for perception gain scores comparing E1 and E2 revealed a difference that was significant ($t = 8.831$, $df = 58$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that E1 perception improved better because of receiving simplified texts compared to authentic.

Interest Posts-test Comparison between E1 and E2

E1 and E2 were also compared based on their interest post-test scores. Table 15 shows the descriptive results.

Table 15

Interest Post-test Scores in E1 and E2

	Descriptive Statistics								
	N	Range	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Std. Error	SD	Variance
E1 Interest Posttest	30	31	17	48	1033	34.43	1.62572	8.904	79.289
E2 Interest Posttest	30	31	15	46	923	30.76	1.40825	7.713	59.495
Valid N (listwise)	30								

As reported in Table 15, E1 mean score is 34.43, while it is 30.76 for E2. E2 performance seems to be better. To assure the distance is remarkable, an independent samples t-test was employed, which is seen in Table 16.

Table 16

Independent Samples T-test for E1 and E2 Interest Post-test means

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
Interest Posttest means	Equal variances assumed	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Differ ence	Std. Error Differ ence	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
	Equal variances assumed	1.004	.320	1.705	58	.094	3.66	2.150	-.638	7.972
	Equal variances not assumed			1.705	56.84	.094	3.66	2.150	-.640	7.973

According to Table 16, the t-test for interest post-test did not reveal a significant difference in means ($t = 1.705$, $df = 58$, $p = 0.94$) between E1 and E2.

Interest Post-test Gain Score Comparison between E1 and E2

E1 had a better mean in perception post-test, which was not significant based on t-test results. To have closer comparison, a gain score analysis was performed to verify the interest post-test

difference. A t-test was then performed to compare these gain scores. Table 17 displays the pertinent results.

Table 17

Independent T-test Results for Interest Gain Scores between E1 and E2

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Interest Gain Score Comparison	Equal variances assumed	7.61	.008	13.02	58	.000	4.533	.347	3.836	5.229
	Equal variances not assumed			13.02	50.17	.000	4.533	.347	3.834	5.232

According to Table 17, the t-test for interest gain scores for E1 and E2 revealed a remarkable difference ($t = 13.028$, $df = 58$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that employing simplified texts enhanced interest more effectively.

Discussion

The current research assigned and followed some determined objectives. It initially tried to answer the question, "What are learners' perceptions on using literary texts as instructional materials in EFL learning?" The concerned results revealed that most participants viewed using literary content helpful in their studying, increasing cultural or social awareness, improving the knowledge of life and providing promotion in their future career. However, some surveyed participants confessed that the treatment would not make any remarkable change in their learning and life.

The discovered ideas are directly and strongly in accordance with the findings of previous related investigation (Bakhshizadeh, 2018; Hall & Williams, 2000; Viana & Zyngier, 2020) that repeatedly remark the benefit of using literary content for teaching a language. The results, in fact, confirmed that teaching language through literature served as a factor that boosted learners' performance and promoted various emotional and affective aspects from different corners of life. The outcomes were closely consistent with Maley's (2001) arguments, which approved numerous benefits of literature use in learning a language as 'universality,' interest,' 'individual relevance,' diversity.' The results also echo the findings of some research works that pointed out advantages of literature use like liberal thinking, special depth and qualities (Khamkhien, 2010; McKay, 2001; Ur, 1996). The findings are also in line with Savvidou's (2004) ideas, who contend that literature enriches the learners' skills to learn the language and contribute to language learners in promoting personal, social, cultural and even intellectual development. The results are yet against prior findings, which ignore the effective use or productivity of literature in language learning. Maley (2001), as an instance, argues against literature use in language teaching and sees literature

as irrelevant concerning language learning curriculum because of its complexity and being time consuming.

The increase in learners' interest in using literary content and its resulted benefit in language teaching can also be connected with the success the learners experience in their performance in language learning, suggesting that the feeling of excitement grows with literature that is consistent with Hidi and Reninger's (2006) idea contending that interest can be promoted by the features related to learning setting elements. The argument is also in line with the view of Ur (1996) who believes that the success in learning is a way to provide more promoted learning for language learners, and has the potential to make learning easier and more joyful.

The second research question was, "Do the learners' perception on using literary texts as class materials change compared to their perception at the beginning of the study? The outcomes suggested a statistically plausible difference in perception post-test scores, indicating the effectiveness of using literary texts on learners' perception on the importance of literature. The results echo Carroli's (2008) research results, reporting the positive change in learners' perception on the benefit of literature in EFL learning. The findings further support Paran's (2006) findings that reported the role of literature as constructive in boosting learners' personal involvement in language learning. They are also consistent with previous research results concentrating on the power of literature in moving the whole personality of learners as it affects different features of learner personality (Paran, 2006; Ur, 1991). The findings are also in accordance with the research findings (Ur, 1991) that refer to literature as a contribution that stimulates the imagination of learners and promotes their critical thinking. However, the opponents of using literary content for FL teaching (Savvidou, 2004) are skeptical about the usefulness of using such texts on language learning, as they believe that literature will not serve as a valuable source for language teaching.

The outcomes may be described by the views that see literature as a provider of cultural, motivational, social and even historical information for language learner beside linguistic benefits (Ghouti, 2013; Mart, 2019). The outcomes may further be justified by the argument that learners with higher positive perception become more encouraged to learn and even can keep their stress or fear restricted, which results in facilitated learning for them (Wasti, 2016). The improvement in learners' perception may also be justified by the argument that literature in EFL teaching promotes critical thinking skills (Stern, 1991).

"Based on the students' perception on the use of literary texts, what do students think about the importance of literature?" The related results were approving that due to the most participants' views, literature had an important role in their life. In fact, they believed the role of literature had a plausible influence on different aspects of life, with different significance extents, though. However, few participants had an opposing view, describing literature as a subject without a remarkable role.

The significance of literature was reiterated according to the results found in the current study, which were supporting the outcomes and perspectives reached in other studies (e.g. Stern, 1991; Mart, 2017; Ur, 1991; Wasti, 2016), contending that literature had the power to educate and stimulate learners and help them develop their educational, emotional and cultural awareness (Ur, 1991). The findings were compatible with views developed by Ur (1991) who argued that reading literature could be of joy and excitement, which assisted learners in advancing their world knowledge. The results revealing the importance of literature in numerous aspects of life, support the role of literature as a multi-facet factor, promoting linguistic knowledge (MacKenzie, 2000; Viana & Zyngier, 2020), sociolinguistic proficiencies (McKay, 2001), language awareness (Carroli, 2008).

In contrast, the results related to significance of literature were against the ideas argued in some related research. Akyel and Yalçın (1990), as an instance, viewed literature as not constructive since EFL learners were not successful in learning the language through their

exposure to classic literature. They contended that literary texts were not specifically written for EFL teaching classes, thus, suffered some shortcomings to be used as instructional materials. The findings were also inconsistent with the disadvantages discussed with Ur (1991) who considered literary texts as difficult to read, time-consuming, alien to learners and even destructive to learners' enjoyment and appreciation of literature.

The learners consider literature as an element that exerts influence on different aspects of life, this can be explained as literature serves as a multi-dimensional factor that can bring about changes in the learners' life through increasing global awareness (Wasti, 2016), boosting cultural awareness (Mackay, 1982; Ur, 1991) improving motivational status (Paran, 2006; Wasti, 2016) and developing language proficiency (Carter, 2007; Maley, 2001).

The results about the last question revealed a remarkable increase in learners' interest. However, the positive change had only been seen in the performance of the learners facing simplified literary texts. On the other hand, the findings reported contrastive results on using authentic literary content, where learners' interest level had even slightly dropped. The results hold up with the findings of some previous investigation (Baba, 2008; Fisrud, 2017; Maley, 2001) around using literary content in teaching languages, which viewed such texts benefit as an efficient change in language teaching process. The results also reinforce the outcomes of the studies by Wu (1998) who found that using literary content contributed to language learners develop a positive feeling toward the learning context. In the meantime, the results are against the results of mentioned research as using authentic literature hindered the growth of interest level for the learners receiving the materials in real literary texts. The primary results related to this question is also in the same line with that of Chalikendy (2015) who found literature useful in increasing learners' competence in different dimensions. Nevertheless, the outcomes did not agree with the outcomes of the research by Bakhshizadeh (2018) who found no significant difference between simplified and authentic literary texts used as EFL teaching course materials.

It sounds that the difficulty of authentic literature works as a hindering factor in language learning process (Savviduo, 2004; Stern, 2001; Viana & Zyngier, 2020). On the other side, it seems that the simplification of literary texts looks helpful and desirable to learners through generating comfortable encountering, where the difficulties of the authentic literary texts have been alleviated. The simplified literature, while holding the positive features of the literary text, looks attractive to learners as it lacks the negative aspects like text complexity or difficulty. As Oster (1989) contends, short stories have a motivating effect in teaching all different skills, enhancing the better performance. In the same way, Collie and Slater (1991) argue that factors like short length, simplicity, various interests and varied topics make turn short stories into an attractive area for language learners. Accordingly, Pardede (2011), report short stories as exciting for learners because its power to turn texts and the context enjoyable. Therefore, the argued positive features related to using simplified or short literary texts seem to increase the interest in using literature in language teaching more than authentic texts.

Conclusion and Implications

The study tried to disclose what perceptions Iraqi EFL learners had on using literary texts as instructional materials after learning English through literary texts instead of the usual texts, and how this perception varied after treatment. The investigation further aimed at disclosing the way learners' interest in literature changed when these texts were employed for class content. A mixed-method design was used to answer the research questions. Regarding the students' perceptions, the concerned results revealed that most learners viewed using literary content helpful in their language learning and life experience. The results finally revealed a statistically significant positive change in learners' interest level as a result of using simplified literary texts,

while the findings reported contrastive results on using authentic literary content, where learners' interest level slightly decreased.

The empirical research analyzing learners' perception on the use of literary texts in language teaching was rare (Carrolie, 2008; Yarahmadi, 2016; Zid, 2015). The findings on learners' perceptions on literature use in language teaching will be able to bring about new aspects to the area under study. Based on the attained outcomes, syllabus designers can select literary content as course content, which will make the learning more beneficial for learners. Hence, the results will assist to promote the role of learners' desires and needs concerning the knowledge learners receive from course content. Due to the results, literary content selection along with considering learners' life needs can make language learning more attractive through providing learners with cultural, social or historical background.

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