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## **An Investigation of Iraqi EFL Teachers' Attitudes Toward Teaching English Literature: A Case of Fourth Preparatory Teachers**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to investigate the attitude of Iraqi EFL teachers towards the teaching of literature at selected preparatory schools in Karbala, Iraq. Participants in this study are ten preparatory EFL teachers. Using semi-structured interviews as research instruments to collect the information on the phenomenon being studied. A qualitative analysis is performed on the gathered data. The results showed that, first, Iraqi EFL teachers thought that literature is a useful tool for teaching languages. Second, Iraqi EFL teachers consider that literature provides linguistic, cultural, and social values. Third, Iraqi EFL teachers see literature written by native speakers as the best source for teaching languages; therefore, the local (Iraqi) literature has not been preferred to be used by them. Fourth, despite their obvious belief in literature as a useful tool in language teaching, Iraqi EFL teachers are still struggling to promote literature as a way of teaching English. The results also show that the sample of the current study had certain challenges. The first one concerned context issues, which included a lack of resources, technology, visual aids,

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and an ideal classroom atmosphere, while the second one concerned some teachers, who have a lack of confidence in teaching literature.

Therefore, it is advised to continue training EFL teachers to share information and experience between them and provide them the new methods and strategies they need to teach literature and to strengthen their self-confidence.

**Keywords:** attitude, Iraqi EFL teachers, preparatory schools, teaching Literature.

## تحقيق في آراء مدرسي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية في العراق حول تدريس الأدب الإنكليزي: مدرسي الصف الرابع الاعدادي أنموذجا

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المديرية العامة للتربية في محافظة كربلاء المقدسة

### المستخلص

تحقق هذه الدراسة في موقف مدرسي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية حول تدريس الأدب الإنكليزي في بعض المدارس الإعدادية المختارة في كربلاء، العراق. حيث ان المشاركين في هذه الدراسة هم عشرة من مدرسي المرحلة الاعدادية للصف الرابع الاعدادي. حيث تم استخدام المقابلات شبه المنظمة كأدوات بحث لجمع المعلومات حول هذه الظاهرة قيد الدراسة. وبعد إجراء تحليل نوعي على البيانات التي تم جمعها. أظهرت النتائج ما يلي: أولاً، يعتقد مدرسو اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية في العراق أن الأدب أداة مفيدة لتدريس اللغات. ثانياً، يعتبر مدرسو اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية في العراق أن الأدب يوفر قيمة لغوية وثقافية واجتماعية. ثالثاً، رأى مدرسو اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية في العراق أن الأدب الذي كتبه متحدثون أصليون هو أفضل مصدر لتدريس اللغات؛ ولذلك لم يفضل استخدام الأدب المحلي (العراقي) عندهم. رابعاً، على الرغم من إيمانهم الواضح بالأدب كأداة مفيدة في تدريس اللغة، لا انه لا يزال مدرسو اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية في العراق يكافحون من أجل تعزيز الأدب كوسيلة لتدريس اللغة الإنكليزية. وأظهرت النتائج أيضاً أن مدرسي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية العراقيين الذين شاركوا قد واجهوا بعض التحديات. أول هذه التحديات، يتعلق بقضايا المنهج، والتي تضمنت نقص الموارد والتكنولوجيا والوسائل البصرية والجو المثالي للفصل

الدراسي، بينما يتعلق الثاني ببعض المدرسين الذين ليس لديهم ثقة في تدريس الأدب. لذلك تتصح هذه الدراسة بمواصلة تدريب مدرسي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية وتبادل المعلومات والخبرات بينهم وتزويدهم بالأساليب والاستراتيجيات الجديدة التي يحتاجونها لتدريس الأدب وتعزيز ثقتهم بأنفسهم. الكلمات المفتاحية: آراء، مدرسي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية في العراق، المدارس الإعدادية، الأدب الإنكليزي.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since linguistics and researchers concentrated on language teaching methods and techniques, most of the literature vanished from English language curriculum in the middle of the 20th century. However, these techniques of teaching language did not persist long with the appearance of numerous researchers at the end of the twentieth century who promoted the teaching of literature in teaching the language. Lazar (1993, p. 5) states that literary works "convey their message by paying considerable attention to language, which is rich and multi-layered; it is also the perfect tool for teaching English language since it is easily accessible. It should be used to teach the English language in general as well as its interpersonal, informative, and artistic value to improve students' language skills and also to encourage students to respond creatively to the language's aesthetic elements. In recent years, researchers and academics held views that support the use of literature in language learning and emphasised the benefits of combining the study of a foreign language with its literature. (Carter, 2007). In the 2000s and 2020s, a whole new paradigm of research evolved that included literature as a fundamental component of language studies. (Fabb, 2010) states that literature refers to representational language and materials, such as novels, short stories, poetry, and plays, which use language creatively to engage learners' emotions, imagination, and cognition all at once. In contrast, referential language and materials serve the sole purpose of providing information, such as an instruction manual. Several studies on the use of literary texts in foreign language classrooms emphasise how important they are for developing language learners' skills and imagination (Alvarez, Calvete, & Sarasa, 2012).

Scholars in English education, linguistics, and literary criticism have been strongly discussing the justification for using literature in foreign language instruction since the 1960s. Language experts such as Hill (1986), Collie and Slatter (1987), Duff and Tongchinsub (1990), Carter and Long (1991), and others have shown the benefits of utilising literature as a resource for teaching languages. Because of its benefits and holding power, many EFL teachers view literature as a teacher's finest tool, while some still believe it is unnecessary to teach it in the language classroom. Maley, et al (1999);

have illustrated the benefits of utilising literature as a teaching tool for languages. Along with a variety of literary-based activities, they have provided theoretical justifications for the use of literature in language instruction. It is an active, occasionally improvised, interactive space that encourages freedom from formal, established narratives and traditional action (Naiditch 2012). Supporting the same concepts as stated by Ashrafuzzaman et al. (2021), students may recognise their strengths and capabilities at every level within the literary context by employing literature text in language learning. Additionally, they emphasised the importance of using literature and claimed that it is the main vehicle and source of the real-world content found in textbooks.

Using literature to teach languages, there is a viewpoint that, since instructors and curriculum improvements interact reciprocally, modifications and innovations also have an impact on users' attitudes and behaviours. Teachers are important adopters of curricular innovation, therefore they need to be aware of it and involved. "If teachers support the innovation, it will work, and if they resist, it will not succeed," wrote Mertens, D. M. (1998). Only if they comprehend it or participate in the innovation planning process will they be able to embrace it. Additionally, the teachers are a part of and have a thorough understanding of the sociocultural system in which they operate.

An essential component of this research is figuring out what attitude of Iraqi EFL teachers implies. A person's attitudes are a component of their overall psychological functioning. According to Karavas (1996), teachers' views and opinions, even if they are frequently unconscious, influence how they behave in the classroom. Richards and Lockhart (1994: 29) assert that "teacher knowledge" and "teacher thinking" offer the underlying framework or schema that directs the teacher's classroom behaviours and that "what teachers do is a reflection of what they know and believe. "One cannot immediately observe someone's attitude towards anything. The reason for this is because a person's ideas, feelings, or beliefs are latent, concealed, and only discernible from the course and consistency of their outward behaviour. According to Gardner (1985:8), 'attitude' is a complicated concept, and several definitions have been put out to capture its core. A person's character, views, values, behaviours, and motivation may all be considered aspects of their "attitude." According to Allport (1933), "attitude is a psychological or neuronal state of readiness, organised through experience, that exerts a directive or dynamic influence on the person's response to any circumstance or object to which it is correlated."

Attitude is defined by Eagly and Chaiken (1993: 582) as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour." 'Attitude' may be noticed from visible behaviour, both verbal and nonverbal, and is defined by Good (1973) as an ability or inclination to react particularly towards an object, circumstance, or value, typically accompanied by sentiments and emotions. An attitude is a belief that influences how individuals act, either favourably or unfavourably,

towards things, people, issues, events, or phenomena. It usually examines the extent of both favourable and unfavourable consequences connected to a certain behaviour or situation.

Attitudes affect how people see the world, describe these occurrences, and interpret what they have witnessed and experienced (Pajares, 1992). When it comes to a thing, people have a set of beliefs that form the basis of their attitudes. A person's attitude towards an item influences their intentions to act in a way that is related to that thing, which is how attitudes impact behaviour. The way that teachers utilise literature in EFL classes, for instance, may depend on their beliefs about the material. According to several research, attitudes do have a beneficial or bad impact on teacher behaviour. A teacher's attitude towards a teaching resource might therefore be either positive or negative. Krahne (1986, referenced in Van Lier 1987) draws attention to teacher indifference when they are exposed to literature. The vast majority of language teachers would only "look back to how they themselves were taught" when asked to teach literature in the classroom. According to McRae (1991:9), a lot of language teachers have informed that they feel unqualified when it comes to literature, either because they lack a 'literary' degree or because they haven't studied since their college days. Because they read a lot or because it sounds like pleasure, some jump in with enthusiasm to study literature.

Numerous earlier research studies on integrating literature in language teaching mostly examined the purpose and goals of literature. The attitudes of teachers towards this topic have so far received little study. Thus, there has been an obvious ignorance of the problem of instructors' attitudes towards literature. Chantha (2000) explored the attitudes and beliefs of Cambodian EFL teachers on the use of English-language texts in foreign language classes. The findings demonstrated that every teacher supported the use of literature in language classes. Using literary materials with students presented some challenges for several of the teachers. They felt that it was challenging to employ literature with their students because of the linguistic and cultural knowledge they contained.

It is obvious that no related study has been done on this subject about the attitude of EFL teachers towards the use of literature in the Iraqi EFL, so the perspectives of Iraqi teachers about the usage of literature are difficult to cite. The actual role of literature in the Iraqi EFL will always be up for discussion unless this study is conducted. Thus, the primary objective of this research is to investigate EFL teachers' perspectives about the use of literature in EFL classes. This objective served as the foundation for the study's design as a qualitative investigation employing a phenomenological procedure. The following interview questions are employed by the researcher to get the teachers' opinions:

1. What are Iraqi EFL teachers' attitudes towards using literature to teach English to their students?
2. What are the factors that Iraqi EFL teachers who teach literature in their preparatory schools in Iraq face?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Literature is distinguished by its distinctive use of words to evoke feelings and create imaginary worlds in our minds. It symbolises a people, a language, and a culture. Without losing its didactic qualities, it presents human feelings and actions in an enjoyable, occasionally ironic way. Literature serves as a bridge between society and its learners. It exposes the sordid, the pretences, and the reality that are concealed from the natural sight while parodying human attitudes and behaviours. "People's lives are reflected in literature" (Ngugi Wa Thiongo 1986: 224). In this way, learners who read literature for enjoyment or academic objectives can learn from the lives of others. This implies that literature is more than just knowledge or information about historical events or the lives of certain people; it may be a way of life. Reading literature can also help learners pick up the language instinctively. Literature covers a wide range of social and personal topics, such as politics, society, and emotional subjects like loneliness, passion, and mortality. According to Basnett and Suzan (1993), works of literature are creations that represent various aspects of society. These are cultural records that provide a more profound comprehension of a nation or nations.

Although the idea that literature has the ability to inspire creativity and change readers lives remains valid over time, there has been ongoing debate over the role of literature in the classroom, particularly on how it should be taught and how understanding of it should be evaluated (Applebee, 1997). According to Breare (1985), the attitudes of teachers may be the key factor that decides the effectiveness of policies and programs being implemented, and lots of teachers think that the classroom instructor has one of the biggest effects on a student's academic development. language teachers are more engaged than learners, who merely obediently and mechanically follow what they are taught, according to Hui (1997: 38). Therefore, in addition to what they teach, teachers also have an impact on learners through their beliefs, behaviours, and choices both within and outside of the classroom, as well as how they feel about the teaching resources and approaches.

Grossman, P. L., & Shulman, L. S. (2002) examined how six first-year instructors are affected by their views and pedagogical content knowledge. Grossman was able to connect first-year instructors' attitudes about teaching literature to how they used their technique in the classroom by using interviews. Teachers who joined the classroom through different paths and lacked formal educational backgrounds felt that their English

training was the best approach to teach the literature. A teacher who studied in literature but had no professional training was the one and only exception. On the other hand, instructors who had completed a teacher education program were not always thought of as superior educators; rather, they taught literature with a more global perspective and used more student-centred activities to promote learning. Through interviews, Grossman was able to learn about the instructors' attitudes on teaching.

Agee (2000a) examined how well five instructors taught literature in their courses. Interviews, classroom observations, and classroom videotapes are among the sources used. "What these teachers know about effective literature instruction may not indicate what strategies or texts they use in their classes or how they use them," according to this research (p. 341). Teachers who were successful at teaching literature were more likely to ask for and critically evaluate student input. Instructors with rigid literary teaching approaches did not actively seek out student criticism, and when they did, they frequently disregarded it or blamed it on outside influences. These studies highlight the significance of teachers' attitudes on literature and literary instruction in high school English classes. To assist preservice and in-service teachers better understand how these attitudes affect their efficacy with pedagogy and student learning, it is critical to comprehend the implications on teacher decision-making about topics like instruction, text selection, and assessment.

Zengin et al. (2019) study the attitudes of 101 Turkish EFL teachers regarding the use of English literature in their English language classes in Turkey. The findings of the study demonstrated that the Turkish EFL teachers not only acknowledged the benefits of implementing literature into English classes, but they also stressed how important it is to make students acquainted with the target culture. The inclusion of English literature into language instruction is seen favourably by the Turkish teachers. However, neither the EFL teachers nor the relevant sources of literature made any clear development of their imagination. This study also suggests that there is a necessity for strategies to profit from the inventive and creative works of new literature. The teaching of literature that belongs to traditional works of literature shouldn't be considered the only method of inspiring the students' imaginations. The study also emphasised that the inclusion of English literature, Turkish literature in English, and literature in other languages in their English language classes.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3. 1. Research method**

The purpose of this study is to find out the attitudes of Iraqi EFL teachers at a few Karbala preparatory schools about teaching English literature in Iraq. It also aimed to investigate potential challenges that could face EFL teachers when teaching English

literature. The research methodology used in this study is qualitative and based on a phenomenological approach. A qualitative method known as phenomenological research design seeks to reveal the "essence of human experiences concerning a phenomenon, as described by participants in a study." This process entails examining a limited number of participants over an extended period of time in order to identify patterns and relationships of meaning (Moustakas 1994). Studies that employ the phenomenological method highlight that only participants who are directly affected by the incidents can explain them to others. In the present study, the researcher aims to analyse the attitudes of Iraqi EFL teachers about the use of literature as well as the elements that influence their usage or failure to use literature in their EFL classroom based on their personal experiences.

### **3. 2. The Sample**

The investigation's sample consists of ten English as a foreign language teachers (7 men and 3 women) who were chosen from several public high schools in Kerbala. Because the quality of the data collected is more important than the quantity of people sampled, the participants are regarded as normal. The amount of participants in a phenomenological investigation is limited, variable, and contingent upon data saturation—the point at which no new information or themes surface. while LoBiondo-Wood and Haber (1998) contend that conclusions based on a small sample (less than 10) tend to be unstable, although Creswell (1998:65 & 113) thinks that "long interviews with up to 10 people" are appropriate for a phenomenological study. Johnson and Christensen (2000) suggest that in-depth interviews with up to 10 persons are appropriate for phenomenological research. in the line of what Boyd confirm (2001) that two to ten research subjects or participants are enough to achieve saturation.

### **3.3. Data collection instrument**

A semi-structured interview is performed by using two questions was adapted from ‘‘Prospective English language teachers’ views on literary texts in their teacher education curriculum and its potential value’’ which was developed by Arda Arıkan and Hülya Küçükoğlu (2011). An interview is a technique for gathering data in which a researcher or a representative of the researcher asks an interviewee (the research participant) questions. Accordingly, the interviewee offers the data, which the interviewer then gathers. According to Forman (2008:225), a qualitative interview is conducted when researchers provide broad, open-ended questions to one or more participants and document their responses. Getting to know someone else's thoughts and feelings, as well as things we can't see with our own eyes, is the goal of conducting an interview. It can be conducted in-person, over the phone, or electronically, depending on the participant-researcher relationship. The researcher can learn about participants' actual experiences, attitudes, motivations, behaviours, emotions, and meanings through interviews. In this study, in-depth interviews are conducted. Boyce and Neale (2006) state that a qualitative research method called "in-depth interviewing" is conducting in-depth one-on-one interviews with a limited number of respondents to learn more about their viewpoints on a certain concept, initiative, or circumstance. They go on to say that in-depth interviews are helpful when you want to go deeply into a new topic or get specific details about



someone's ideas and actions. Polit and Beck (2004) carry out a pre-test of the interview schedule with a male and a female participant. Pretesting is the process of using a data-collecting tool with a limited number of participants to ensure that it is understandable and well-worded. Following the pre-test, a few questions were reworded to be more inquisitive. The actual vague lasted around fifteen minutes for each participant.

#### **4. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

The findings of the study are displayed for each of the following open-ended research questions.

*Research Question 1: What are Iraqi EFL teachers' attitudes towards using literature to teach English to their students?*

According to the responses of the majority of the Iraqi EFL teachers who participated in this study, three significant issues about the attitudes of the instructors towards the use of literature in language learning appeared from the analysing of the collected data. These are 1. Literature as a resource and a subject; 2. Values of literature 3. The use of English literature.

##### **4.1. Literature as a resource and a subject**

According to the data, the first issue that emerged from the study of Iraqi EFL teachers' attitudes towards the use of literature is the different ways in which teachers used literature. It is readily apparent that some Iraqi EFL teachers use literature as a subject of study, while others use it as a resource. Five Iraqi EFL teachers (T2, T3, T4, T7, and T10) reported using literature as a resource or material, indicating that the main goal is to teach English language. In this regard, Numerous advantages of combining literature in language classrooms have been proposed in the study literature for a range of age groups and proficiency levels. According to Hişmanoğlu, M. (2005), "literature provides students with an extremely rich source of authentic material over a wide range of registers" (p. 65) in terms of authentic, rich, and meaningful resources. Because such texts offer opportunities for learning and inspire interest in the language, they are used to teach specific aspects of the language. Four teachers (T1, T5, T6 and T9) stated that they teach literature as the subject, meaning that introducing literature in general rather than language was the primary goal. They taught literature to produce a variety of contexts: the social, political, and historical context; the author's biography and how it relates to their writings; the genre of the text; and the history and features of literary movements. A single EFL teacher (T10) suggested using literature as a subject and as a resource.

*"In my point of view, the information that literature provided to my lesson helped me to teach English skills, which made literature the best resource for teaching English." T2 (M)*

*"Because some literary texts are interesting, such as the story 'Around the World in 80 Days,' because the story was used in the famous film by the famous actor Jackie Chan so I used literature as a resource in my classes." T10 (M)*

*"While I teach literature, it gives me the opportunity to use literary texts as a resource. Especially, I use most a short story when it comes to reading. T3 (F)*

*"I intend to teach all skills through literature, because it is the best way for my students." T6 (M)*

According to the replies, teachers who instruct language skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) or components (grammar, pronunciation, structures, and creative writing) are more likely to derive from literature. ( T2, T4, T5, and T10) , for instance, demonstrated that they teach at least one language skill or set of components.

#### **4.2 Literature's social, cultural, and linguistic values.**

According to the results, the Iraqi EFL teachers who participated in this study thought that literature was a useful tool for language teaching. They held that literature provides social, cultural, and linguistic values. The use of literature for acquiring language has been appreciated well by the learners. They held that reading literature helps students acquire their vocabulary, comprehend the language's structure and syntax, and become acquainted with its emotions. It seems with no arguing that literature gives students social and cultural backgrounds. According to Kramsch (1993:1), teaching a cultural value through literature is actually regarded as the sixth language skill. (T1 , T8 and T9) discussed literature from a perspective that had links to culture and society.

The following answers clarify Iraqi EFL teacher attitudes on the values of literature:

*"Such pure short stories allow students access to the text to understand every single word in order to understand the series of events in the story. All these steps provide students ways to enrich their vocabulary." T1 (F)*

*"Literature raises cultural topics and introduces students to the cultures and customs of Western countries." T8 (M).*

*"Literature is considered the best way to present cultural and social values." T9 (M)*

Through studying literature, EFL students may also learn about social and cultural occasions. This implies that literature may teach EFL students about other people's cultures. Regarding values in society, (T4) said that literature is enjoyable, nevertheless (T6) said that literature should serve as both a source of amusement and an instruction in morality.

*"The literature contained in the fourth preparatory school book is very interesting, enjoyable, and modern, prompting students to learn more about the story." T4 (M).*

*"I keep wondering that the tale of "Treasure Island" is not just a short story; rather, it is a valuable piece of literature that entertains the students as well as conveys moral lessons. if the literature has the ability to amuse the students." T6 (M).*

That might be discovered, most teachers thought that literature helps learners enhance their vocabulary and gives them cultural and social scenarios in which they can acquire knowledge about human behaviour and values. Learners might enjoy studying literature for pleasure or amusement and comprehend the language's rules of grammar and vocabulary.

#### **4. 3 Preference for Western literature.**

The third finding of this study indicates that Iraqi EFL teachers do not prefer using local literature. There are just five responses on this topic. Literature that is written by Iraqi writers in English is called local literature. They prefer to use foreign literature authored by native speakers (British and Americans). Literature in Iraqi schools may teach students every aspect of the English language while it could additionally introduce them to the cultures of other nations whose languages they are attempting to learn, according to (T1, T5, T7, T8, T9, and T10). As a result, most Iraqi EFL teachers thought that local literature is not suitable in teaching processes because it lacks the English culture and traditions that we need our students to know. Since the literature that Iraqi EFL teachers taught in the schools is called English literature, it must correspond with the English literature name, so literature that is written by native English speakers is preferred.

*“Since we studied literary works known as English literature, I believe that we should only teach English-language literature written by English-speaking authors. We make reference to American and British literature. This does not mean that we underestimate the value and importance of Iraqi literature despite the fact that we have amazing Iraqi literature. We all agree on that. I think there is a huge benefit to using or employing Iraqi literary works, as, first of all, the subjects dealt with will be much more relatable to Iraqi students, so the Iraqi literature is taught in our schools through the Arabic language learning for its great value. ” T1 (F).*

*“The English language curriculum ( English for Iraq) for the fourth preparatory class in our school, updated in 2024, contained only two stories from English literature that were written by native English-speaking writers, and everything related to Iraqi literature was deleted from previous versions. I think the updated textbook is better than before because these stories contain foreign culture and traditions that students are intended to learn about during the learning of foreign literature.” T5 (F)*

*“Although I prefer literature by foreign writers, I work according to the instructions set by the Iraqi Ministry of Education, whether the literature is Iraqi literature translated into English or English literature written by authors who speak English.” T7 (M)*

It is obvious that EFL teachers tend to view American and British literature as the best models and instances of proper English for their students. Even though there seemed to be a negative attitude about the usage of local literature in the classroom, one of the EFL teachers said that he used Iraqi literature in the previous versions of the Iraqi textbook (English for Iraq) in his lesson for enjoyment writing.

*"Last year when I taught Iraqi literature, I used it to develop their writing skills, especially the lessons about two Iraqi writers, Nazik Al-Malaika and Maruf Al-Rusafi. I devote these lessons to help my students to have an enjoyable lesson about writing." T8 (M).*

(T9) stated that there are great benefits to teaching Iraqi literary works since much of the material is familiar to students and they may have read it before; it is simple for students to remember it.

*"In fact, I found there is a benefit to teaching Iraqi literary works last year because the subjects covered in the literary works are bound to be much more relevant to Iraqi students." T9 (M).*

According to (T10), Iraqi literature is one of the simplest literary works that students can comprehend correctly, but I believe that it fails to help them improve their English because they already know the majority of the material through Arabic.

*"In my perspective, students learn the majority of Iraqi literature from their everyday experiences; therefore, they don't rely on the textbook and just attempt to write in their mother tongue, Arabic, everything they know in their test. In my opinion, their improvement in language is less developed in local literature." T10 (M).*

It could be concluded that the teachers were not as optimistic about including local literature into their lessons. This might explain Iraqi literature on insufficient use. They could possibly be in charge of the attitudes educators have towards literature.

*Research Question 2: What are the difficulties that Iraqi EFL teachers who teach literature in their preparatory schools in Iraq face?*

According to the analysis of interview answers about the difficulties that face Iraqi EFL teachers who teach literature in their preparatory schools in Iraq in the second research question. The study found there are two primary obstacles that the majority of the Iraqi EFL teachers who participated in this study encounter through teaching literature in their schools: The first one dealt with context-related difficulties, such as a lack of resources, technology, visual aids, and a conducive learning environment. While the second one focused on teachers who lack confidence in their ability to teach literature.

#### **4.4. Context-related difficulties**

Some of the Iraqi EFL teachers who participated in this study highlighted how their teaching literature in their classes is impacted by the absence of resources for teaching literature. They claimed that one of the common challenges of teaching literature in their schools is a lack of resources to assist the students. According to five participants, the biggest obstacle to teaching English literature in Iraq is a lack of facilities.

(T1, T2, T4, T7, and T9) stated that they had lacked resources that helped them in teaching literature properly in their classroom.

*“As EFL teachers, we don’t have enough resources that helped to teach literature in our schools.” T1 (F)*

*““Iraqi schools didn't have the equipment that was suitable for teaching literature, and the Iraqi curriculum includes the English books with CDs, but these CDs are usually unavailable; in addition, the majority of the schools didn't have CD players. Therefore, we just ignore that portion of the course and concentrate on reading and answering the literary questions.” T2 (M)*

*“Our schools lack the resources that enhance learning English literature, just like a movie depicting the stories in the fourth preparatory literature book in Iraq.” T4 (M)*

*“Due to a lack of support, most Iraqi EFL teachers rely on textbooks only.” (T7)*

*“Most of our schools do not have laboratories.” T9 (M)*

The lack of technology in Iraqi schools is an important issue that is raised by some Iraqi EFL teachers. Most of the research participants claimed that almost all Iraqi schools lack the necessary technological equipment for proper literature teaching.

*“In the age of artificial intelligence and tremendous technological development, we still teach English literature using textbooks only.” T2 (M)*

*“Our schools lack the resources that enhance learning English literature, just like a movie depicting the stories in the fourth preparatory literature book in Iraq.” T6 (M)*

*“One of the most important technologies that must be available in Iraqi schools is at least the presence of a computer connected to the Internet. Unfortunately, there is no such technology in our schools.” T7 (M)*

*"The availability of a data show device in the school classroom is very important. It helps in enjoyable learning of English literature, and this is what we also lack in most of our schools." T8 (M)*

*"One of the simplest types of technology that should be available in our schools at the present time is the smart board." T9 (M)*

*"Since our schools have not yet embraced the technological revolution that has taken place in schools throughout the world, we are trying to make use of the technologies that are now accessible and that we can afford." T10 (M)*

Any sort of teaching literature could be integrated with multimedia, such as a slide show or video. When inputs are combined, there is always a larger probability that students will keep the knowledge they have just read, heard, or seen. So that the technology has scientific and practical contributions to literature, the Iraqi EFL teachers who took part in this research study emphasised the use of current technology in teaching English literature in Iraqi schools. Participants brought up the potential of using data shows to display films that embody the short stories, especially the stories that are found in the fourth preparatory textbook, as well as some of them highlighted the significance of integrating artificial intelligence into literary teaching.

In another hand, some participants pointed out another obstacle, which is related to the difficulties of the context they face in teaching English literature, which is the lack of visual aids, which is considered one of the most important influential elements in teaching literature that helps students understand more broadly. Among their reactions were:

*"It's a good idea to use pictures." Pictures may assist students in appreciating literature, but there were no available pictures that could help them compare or visualise the picture and help them remember the word." T7 (M)*

*"One of the most important visual aids used to enhance the teaching of literature is video presentation. As I mentioned previously, due to the lack of resources, it has become difficult for us to use video clips in our schools." T1 (F)*

*"In my opinion, slide shows are also a useful visual aid that most of our schools lack." T5 (F)*

*"Infographics are rarely used, which are considered an enjoyable visual aid in facilitating understanding the plot in stories." T3 (F)*

The availability of a suitable atmosphere is one of the most significant factors that contribute to the success of the teaching process in particular and the educational process in general. The availability of enough classrooms with the right equipment and classroom capacity is one of the most vital components of the learning environment. An adequate number of students in each classroom, in addition to smart boards, comfortable chairs,

and proper ventilation. The absence of this learning environment makes learning extremely challenging. Iraqi classrooms are quite small for the large amount of students in each class, and the whiteboard and the pen are among the other outdated or unsatisfactory teaching supplies. Furthermore, certain items of equipment, such as a board rubber, are simply unavailable. The Iraqi educational environment clearly needs a lot of upkeep to be at its best. It goes without saying that in an inadequate learning environment, students will not learn anything.

*"The number of students in Iraqi schools is very large compared to the class size." T1 (F)*

*"Classes are not suitable for any educational process. It is impossible to be able to teach in a class that does not even have an air conditioner, at a temperature exceeding 50 degrees Celsius, and containing more than 45 students." T2 (M)*

*"We still teach our students using very old educational devices using the whiteboard and pen, and even these devices are mostly purchased by teachers with their own money. There is not even a blackboard eraser available in our schools." T3 (F)*

*"One of the most important factors for the success of the education process is the availability of the appropriate atmosphere. So what about a row that was built at the end of the last century? The pale colours that have become on all walls are not stimulating for any learning process." T5 (F)*

*"The large number of students prevents even the appropriate use of the simple devices available to teachers, such as the speaker device that is connected to the phone to play some literary texts in the voice of the native speaker." T7 (M)*

*"In the past, I taught in a village in the countryside of Karbala, and the classrooms contained less than 25 students. I was able to use speakers and pictures that helped teach literature. I used one of the classrooms as a laboratory that helped me to play some video clips related to some literary texts." T9 (M)*

*"I cannot make sure that every student in the class understood the lesson well or give enough time to have all the students read some literary texts." T10 (M)*

Problems relating to teaching circumstances were emphasised by certain EFL teachers in Iraq in this study. They stressed that their methods of teaching were impacted by contextual factors, including the physical characteristics of the classrooms they teach in and how big they are. The challenges that EFL teachers have due to inadequate classroom environments with a huge number of students impact how teachers instruct and how much help they should provide for students' learning.

Furthermore, the study results showed that several Iraqi EFL teachers may have lacked confidence in teaching English literature in their schools. The following are the participant statements:

*"Although I am fluent in speaking the English language, the large number of students reduces my confidence that I can teach them appropriately, and so I am always concerned about the benefit of the lesson I am presenting." T3 (F)*

*"Teaching with young teenagers is very difficult and stressful." T4 (M)*

*"Some classroom environments act as a discouraging factor and reduce the teacher's motivation, for example the lack of electrical power during times of extreme heat." T5 (F)*

*"Because literature is pre-determined by the Ministry, we cannot use literature that is interesting to students and simulates the progress and development they are experiencing now." T4 (M)*

Some of the participants also mentioned issues that arise from the teachers' lack of confidence, emphasising the issues that arise when they teach literature. They underlined that a lack of adequate facilities and overcrowded classrooms are issues for certain teachers. Nevertheless, the study identifies the primary problems that should be considered while analysing the issue of teacher trust in significantly changing circumstances.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

Since literature could possibly be viewed as a product of language, language and literature are strongly connected. In light of this, the purpose of this study was to demonstrate how teachers see the use of literary texts in language instruction. According to the teachers, literature is an important tool for EFL since it helps students learn vocabularies that aren't used in regular speech, as well as comprehend the language's structure and syntax, and strengthen their language skills. A similar conclusion that literature is a useful resource in the EFL classroom is offered by Gilroy (1995). The linguistic, cultural, and social values of literature are among the many elements that impact teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards the use of literature as an instructional resource. According to Littlewood (1986), "literature offers possibilities to use language structures in understanding the material if presented with grammatical analysis and explanations."

Western literature is favoured above local literature. The results of the investigation showed that the English literature teachers in Iraqi preparatory schools tend to believe that native speakers' works of foreign literature are better than what local authors wrote and it can probably serve as standards for teaching languages. The usage of American and British literature provides students with opportunities to comprehend the



cultural values of English-speaking people and helps them recognise the similarities between both English culture and their own culture in addition to the differences that separate them. According to Basturkmen (2004), literature informs students about the culture of the people whose language they are studying. Page 18. Hill (1986) stated, "Local writers usually work with topics that are obvious to the students, so they are not faced with dealing with cultural as well as linguistic obstacles." The majority of local writers frequently write more easily than authors from the United States and England.

The study's outcomes also show that the Iraqi EFL teachers who took part in the study faced various contextual challenges when it came to teaching and learning literature. They emphasised that the challenges are teacher-specific and context-specific. The results demonstrated that most Iraqi classrooms' physical arrangements are unsuitable for teaching and learning English. EFL teachers appeared to have issues while they were teaching in overcrowded classes. Additionally, it noted that teachers were unable to teach literature suitably since there are technique problems caused by a lack of facilities, instructional aids, and technical assistance. The results also showed that the teachers themselves were responsible for some of the issues. The teachers' apparent lack of confidence as a result of the inappropriate teaching circumstances that most of them face in their daily teaching context.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this study is to find out about how Iraqi language teachers see the use of literature in teaching the English language. First, the findings of the current study show that the vast majority of participants have positive view of integrating literature in their language classroom, and thought it helped students learn various language structures. They also thought it allowed them to pick up new vocabulary and retain it more easily. Additionally, they believe that their language abilities have improved. The results of the current study tend to support the notion that the vast majority of language instructors and teachers have favourable opinions about using literature in English language classrooms. These findings are in line with the results of similar studies e.g. Kayaoğlu, M. N. (2012). Second, they declare that studying literature helps students understand different cultures and lifestyles. Students who are exposed to literary texts find that it not only helps them have fun, pick up new words, or strengthen their language skills, but it also broadens their perspective and worldview. Last but not least, most participants favour Western literature over local works authored by non-native English speakers.

The results of the current study are interpreted cautiously as they demonstrate both the participants' favourable opinions of the use of literature in English language instruction and the challenges that might arise when teaching literature in a challenging classroom environment. The results emphasise that the classrooms' physical setup is unsuitable for English instruction. For the EFL teachers, teaching in packed classrooms appeared to be problematic. Furthermore, teachers were unable to teach effectively due to a lack of facilities, instructional aids, and technology assistance, which caused methodological

issues. Furthermore, another important challenge was caused by the EFL teachers' lack of confidence.

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