Maryam Jarjis Mahmood

College of Basic Education, Salahaddin University

Hazha Salih Hassan

College of Basic Education, Salahaddin University

Corresponding author: E-mail :
maryamjarjis@gmail.com

Exploring EFL Teachers' Views on Literature for Personal Enrichment

A B S T R A C T

This study examines EFL teachers' views on literature as a means of personal enrichment in university classrooms in Kurdistan region of Iraq. Although literature is often valued for language development, its role in shaping students' personal growth receives little attention. The study focuses on how teachers perceive the use of literary texts for enrichment and the extent to which they integrate this purpose into their teaching. A mixed-methods design combines questionnaires with open-ended responses to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. Participants include 29 EFL literature teachers from colleges of Languages, Education, and Basic Education at Salahaddin University-Erbil during the academic year 2024–2025. Descriptive and thematic analyses are applied to identify key insights. The study emphasizes the broader educational value of literature and offers practical implications for curriculum development and the encouragement of lifelong literary engagement. Overall, findings reveal that EFL teachers view literature as a valuable tool for fostering personal enrichment, self-reflection, and cultural awareness. They implement it to varying degrees in their classrooms, though academic goals often take precedence.

استكشاف آراء اساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية حول تدريس الأدب كوسيلة للإثراء الشخصي

مريم جرجس محمود/ كلية التربية الأساسية /جامعة صلاح الدين

حزا صالح حسن/ كلية التربية الأساسية /جامعة صلاح الدين

الخلاصة:

تتناول هذه الدراسة آراء اساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغةً أجنبية حول الأدب ووسيلةً للإثراء الشخصي في قاعات الدراسة الجامعية في إقليم كردستان العراق. على الرغم من أن الأدب يُقدّر غالبًا لتنمية اللغة والوعي الثقافي، إلا أن دوره في تشكيل النمو الشخصي للطلاب والتفكير الذاتي لا يحظى باهتمام يُذكر. تُركز الدراسة في كيفية رؤية الاساتذة لاستخدام النصوص الأدبية للإثراء، ومدى دمجهم لهذا الغرض في

تدريسهم. يعتمد تصميم الدراسة على مناهج مختلطة، يجمع بين الاستبيانات والإجابات المفتوحة لجمع البيانات الكمية والنوعية. شارك في الدراسة ٢٩ أستاذا لمادة الأدب في اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغةً أجنبية من كليات اللغات والتربية والتربية الأساسية في جامعة صلاح الدين–أربيل خلال العام الدراسي ٢٠٢٤–٢٠٢٥. طُبقت تحليلات وصفية وموضوعية لتحديد الرؤى الرئيسية. تُركز الدراسة في القيمة التعليمية الأوسع للأدب، وتُقدم تداعيات عملية لتطوير المناهج الدراسية وتشجيع المشاركة الأدبية مدى الحياة. بشكل عام، تكشف النتائج أن اساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغةً أجنبية يعدّون الأدب أداةً قيمة لتعزيز الإثراء الشخصي، والتأمل الذاتي، والوعي الثقافي. ويطبقونه بدرجات متفاوتة في فصولهم الدراسية، مع أن الأهداف الأكاديمية غالبًا ما تكون لها الأولوية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اساتذة الادب الانكليزي، الإثراء الشخصي، وجهات نظر الاساتذة، الوعي الثقافي، التأمل الذاتي.

1- Introduction

Literature has historically played a vital role in EFL pedagogy, providing not only linguistic input but also exposure to diverse cultures, historical settings, and universal human experiences (Collie & Slater, 1987; Lazar, 1993; Kramsch, 1993). Researchers in this field have long stressed its value in learners' language competencies development, intercultural understanding, and critical thinking abilities (Carter & Long, 1991; Paran, 2008; Hassan et al. 2023a; Mousa & Ayad, 2022). For EFL classrooms different methodologies have been suggested for integrating literature such as the language-based methodology that focuses on linguistic features, the content-based that stresses the context and literary movements, and the personal growth methodology that prioritizes students' personal engagement and associations with literary texts (Carter & Long, 1991; Lazar, 1993; Hassan et al. 2023; Mousa & Ayad, 2022). This personal growth or enrichment methodology has attained more attention due to its ability to outspread learning further beyond academic achievement to develop people personally (Van, 2009). Hassan et al.'s (2023a) a study on EFL university students utilizing the personal response methodology shows that when students are encouraged for purposes of interpreting texts personally, they become more involved, emotionally empowered, as well as encouraged to partake enthusiastically in discussions.

When utilized as a tool for personal enrichment, literature can promote students' self-exploration, understanding and innovation. Personal enrichment can be defined as a means of growing self-awareness,

intellectual curiosity, and emotional indulgent by meaningful connection to texts (Rosenblatt, 1995; Parkinson & Thomas, 2000). By reflecting on the experiences and dilemmas of the characters, students are encouraged to involve in self-reflection and cultivate a strong sense of identity (Van, 2009). Likewise, reading fosters empathy and emotional intelligence through assisting students to accept diverse perspectives (Nussbaum, 1997; Kidd & Castano, 2013). In addition, literary engagement motivates creativity and imagination, so that students can express themselves through creative writing, task-based- performance, classroom discussions (Maley, 2001).

From methodological point of view, incorporating personal enrichment into literature class demands student-centred methods such as reflective free writings, role-plays, creative projects, and other various reader-response strategies (Lazar, 1993; Carter, 2007; (Hassan et al. 2023b and Mousa & Ayad, 2022). Nevertheless, despite its potential effects, the implementation of the approach is not without difficulties. Curriculum constrains, restricted classroom time and exam-driven methodology that prefer educational results on personal development may be among the challenges teachers often encounter (Paran, 2008; Sell, 2005). These concerns underscore the significance of considering how EFL teachers view and practice incorporation of literature for the purpose of personal growth.

Although literary texts are integrated into EFL curricula, there remains a paucity of empirical research investigating how teachers, particularly within Iraqi universities, conceptualize the non-academic value of literature. Specifically, little is known about the extent to which EFL literature teachers actively integrate literature for personal enrichment alongside academic goals. Addressing this gap is essential to designing curricula that foster both language proficiency and holistic learner development. Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following research question:

What are EFL teachers' perspectives on studying literary materials for personal enrichment?

The significance of this study lies in its potential to highlights literature's role in fostering students' personal enrichment/growth beyond academics. By examining teachers' perspectives, it offers a holistic view of literature teaching in EFL contexts and provides insights for educators, curriculum

designers, and policymakers on balancing academic goals with personal enrichment to nurture reflective, empathetic, and creative lifelong readers.

2. Theoretical Background
2.1 Defining Personal Enrichment

Personal enrichment in the context of literature teaching refers to learners' growth in areas beyond language acquisition, including self-awareness, emotional development, and interpersonal skills. According to Lazar (1993), this model helps learners "grow as individuals" while learning a foreign language, positioning literature as a means to develop both language competence and humanistic values.

2.2 Aspects of Personal Enrichment

Within EFL literature classrooms, personal enrichment is not confined to linguistic proficiency but extends to fostering self-discovery and reflective thinking, nurturing empathy and emotional growth, and cultivating creativity and personal expression.

2.2.1 Encouraging Self-Discovery and Reflection

Literary texts often act as mirrors and windows, enabling learners to reflect on their identities while encountering new perspectives (Rosenblatt, 1995). Teachers who adopt reflective strategies such as journal writing, open-ended discussions, and personal response tasks encourage students to connect literature with their own experiences. Hassan et al. (2023); Mousa & Ayad, (2022) indorse that EFL Iraqi university students responded more encouragingly once they had been invited to engage reflectively, which reinforced both understanding and personal awareness.

2.2.2 Enhancing Empathy and Emotional Growth

Studying literary materials nurture empathy through asking students to live with and understand the perceptions of characters and people unlike their own (Nussbaum, 1997). This method supports emotional growth, tolerance, and cultural awareness. Researches in EFL classes have observed that learners who interconnect with literature demonstrate high sensitivity to human conflicts and feelings, which boosts their relational and social skills and ethical cognizance (McRae, 1991).

2.2.3 Fostering Creativity and Personal Expression

Besides empathy and emotional growth, literature supports creativity through encouraging students to express themselves via response writing, role-play, and aesthetic interpretations. Creative reactions: which include acting, rewriting tales form another point of view, or generating multimedia projects, stimulate creativeness and enable students to use language in eloquent, and personal ways (Carter, 2007; Hassan et al. 2023; Mousa & Ayad, 2022). Such routines in harmony with the personal enrichment approach, wherein creativity plays a critical position in connecting language learning with self-improvement.

2.3 Strategies for Promoting Personal Enrichment

Teachers could use numerous activities to foster enrichment via literature, along with personal-response strategies, peer discussions, reflective free writing, and creative writing exercises (Lazar, 1993; Harmer, 2015). (Hassan et al. 2023; Mousa & Ayad, 2022) research results emphasise the effects of systematized personal-response exercises in supporting profounder engagement and individual connection to literary texts within the Iraqi university EFL settings. According to (Hassan et al. 2023) the strategies are: Reading logs, response free journal writing, Socratic Questioning, drama and acting, letter writing, rewriting tales from any other character's point of view, and poster design project. Furthermore, adopting rubrics and formative assessments fosters students' capacity to reflect, self-evaluate, and identify their metiers and limitations (Andrade, 2000).

2.4 Challenges in Implementation of Literature for Personal Enrichment

Despite its potential effects, the application of personal growth methodology encounters respective challenges. Educators frequently in conflict with crowded class, examination-based curricula, restricted class time, and different levels of learner competency (Vogt & Tsagari, 2014). In several cases, instructors may prefer language-targeted or summative techniques, leaving no place for personal enrichment approach. Cultural suitability of literary texts can also have an effect on learners' engagement, making text choice an essential pedagogical matter. Hassan et al. (2023a); and Mousa & Ayad, (2022) also argue that whilst learners value personal-

response strategies, require directing and scaffolding to absolutely advantage from them.

3. Methodology
3.1 Research Design and Instrument
The current study adopts a mixed-approach design to obtain a holistic understanding of the role of literature in personal enrichment within language classes. Quantitative data from Likert-scale questionnaire pinpoints teachers' practices and perceptions, while open-ended questions offer qualitative understandings into their involvements and reflections. Linking both approaches make certain triangulation, intensifying validity and reliability. The quantitative outcomes show patterns, and the qualitative responses enhance profundity and context, both providing a nuanced knowledge of the way literature fosters learners' personal enrichment.

3.2 Population and Sampling
The current study includes 29 EFL literature instructors who are presently teaching in the Colleges of Languages, Education, and Basic Education at Salahaddin University, and it centres around their practices and perceptions throughout the academic year 2024–2025. Table (1) illustrates the descriptive statistics of the participants.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for Demographic Information in Teachers' Questionnaire:

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	12	41.4%
	Female	17	80.8%
Level of education	MA	18	62.1%
	PHD	11	37.9%
College	Language	18	62.1%
	Basic Education	2	6.9%
	Education	9	31%
Academic Rank	Assistant Lecture	12	41.4%
	Lecture	11	37.9%
	Assistant Professor	3	13.8%
	Professor	2	6.9%
Specialty	Novel	17	58.6%
	Teaching literature	7	24.1%
	Literary Criticism	3	10.3%
	Poetry	2	6.9%

3.3 Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire was first reviewed by experts in English literature and applied linguistics from Iraqi universities to ensure content and face validity. A pilot study then tested item clarity and language suitability, leading to minor revisions. Reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.804, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

4. Data Analysis and Results

4.1 Analysis of the Quantitative Data:

The findings from the quantitative part of the questionnaire are presented across three thematic domains: Self-Discovery and Personal Enrichment (Table 2), Emotional Growth and Empathy (Table 3), and Creativity, Expression, and Support in Literature Classes (Table 4).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for Self-Discovery and Personal Reflection

	SD		D		U		A		SA				
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	Mean	SD	% of Argument
A1	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	37.9	18	62.1	4.62	0.494	92.4
A2	0	0	0	0	1	3.4	13	44.8	15	51.7	4.48	0.574	89.6
A3	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	18	62.1	11	37.9	4.38	0.494	87.5
A4	0	0	0	0	2	6.9	11	37.9	16	55.2	4.48	0.634	89.6
A5	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	15	51.7	14	48.3	4.48	0.509	89.6
A6	0	0	0	0	3	10.3	15	51.7	11	37.9	4.28	0.649	85.5
A7	0	0	0	0	11	37.9	14	48.3	4	13.8	3.76	0.689	75.1

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for items relating to self-discovery and personal reflection. Overall, responses in this domain indicated consistently strong endorsement of literature's role in helping students connect personally with texts. The highest agreement was with the statement A1"*Studying literature helps students connect literary themes to their own life experiences*" (M = 4.62, SD = 0.494), where 62.1% strongly agreed and 37.9% agreed. Similarly, A2 "*Engaging with literature prompts students to reflect on their feelings, beliefs, and values, including ethical dilemmas*" (M = 4.48, SD = 0.51), A4 "*I encourage students to make connections with texts to deepen their understanding*" (M = 4.48, SD = 0.51), and A5 "*I guide students in reflecting on their emotions, beliefs, and personal experiences through literature*" (M = 4.48, SD = 0.51) all recorded high mean scores with low variation.

Moderate endorsement was observed for A3 "*Literature helps students recognize how their background influences their interpretations*" (M = 4.38, SD = 0.49) and slightly lower levels of endorsement were observed for A6 "*Studying literature enhances students' self-awareness and confidence in understanding their emotions and values*" (M = 4.28, SD = 0.49), while the statement A7 "*Students find it difficult to relate literary themes to their own life experiences*" received the lowest mean (M = 3.76, SD = 0.69), with 37.9% selected "*Uncertain.*"

These results indicate strong teacher recognition of literature's contribution to students' personal reflection and identity development, although there was more caution regarding how easily students relate literary themes to their own experiences.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for Emotional Growth and Empathy

	SD		D		U		A		SA				
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	Mean	SD	% of Argument
B1	0	0	0	0	2	6.9	20	69.0	7	24.1	4.17	0.539	83.4
B2	0	0	0	0	5	17.2	16	55.2	8	27.6	4.10	0.673	82.0
B3	0	0	0	0	4	13.8	17	58.6	8	27.6	4.14	0.639	82.7
B4	0	0	0	0	2	6.9	15	51.7	12	41.4	4.34	0.614	86.8
B5	0	0	0	0	3	10.3	12	41.4	14	48.3	4.38	0.677	87.5
B6	0	0	0	0	5	17.2	14	48.3	10	34.5	4.17	0.711	83.4

Table 3 reports participants' views on the role of literature in fostering emotional growth and empathy. In this category, responses were again positive, though with slightly more variation. The strongest agreement was with B5 "*Studying literature helps students develop emotional resilience and a greater connection to others*" (M = 4.38, SD = 0.68), and B4 "*I provide opportunities for students to discuss the emotional aspects of literature in class*" (M = 4.34, SD = 0.61).

Teachers also agreed that B1"*Studying literature helps students understand and express their own emotions*" (M = 4.17, SD = 0.54) and B3 "*I encourage students to connect with characters' emotions and struggles to foster empathy*" (M = 4.14, SD = 0.65). The statement B2 "*Engaging with literature deepens students' empathy for people with different life experiences*" showed slightly more variation (M = 4.10, SD = 65), with 17.2% of respondents uncertain. A similar level of uncertainty was noted for B6 "*I rarely find literature helpful in supporting students' emotional*

growth" (M = 4.17, SD = 0.71), though overall responses indicated disagreement with this negative statement.

These findings suggest broad recognition that literature supports emotional awareness and empathy, though perceptions of its effectiveness in certain contexts were more varied.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics for Creativity, Expression, and Support in Literature Classes

	SD		D		U		A		SA				
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	Mean	SD	% of Argument
C1	0	0	0	0.0	1	3.4	8	27.6	20	69.0	4.66	0.553	93.10345
C2	0	0	0	0.0	3	10.3	12	41.4	14	48.3	4.38	0.677	87.58621
C3	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	17	58.6	12	41.4	4.41	0.501	88.27586
C4	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	15	51.7	14	48.3	4.48	0.509	89.65517
C5	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	17.2	14	48.3	10	34.5	4.17	0.711	83.44828
C6	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	10.3	17	58.6	9	31.0	4.21	0.620	84.13793

Table 4 presents findings for items relating to creativity and classroom support. The highest-rated statement was C1 "*Literature inspires students to explore diverse cultures and experiences*" (M = 4.66, SD = 0.55), with 69.0% strongly agreeing. Similarly, C4 "*Collaborative discussions help students appreciate multiple perspectives in literature classes*" received strong endorsement (M = 4.48, SD = 0.51). High levels of agreement were also reported for C3 "*Students feel supported in expressing their interpretations and ideas in class discussions and creative assignments*" (M = 4.41, SD = 0.50).

Moderate levels of endorsement were recorded for C2 "*I encourage students to think creatively, such as imagining alternate endings or perspectives*" (M = 4.21, SD = 0.61). Responses were more mixed for C5 "*Students express themselves creatively through literature*" (M = 4.17, SD = 0.71), with 17.2% uncertain. Likewise, the negatively phrased item C6 "*I often feel that students' personal interpretations are not valued in class discussions*" also showed some variation (M = 4.21, SD = 0.69), with a small proportion of respondent expressing uncertainty, though the overall trend indicated disagreement.

These results suggest that teachers strongly perceive literature classes as spaces for creativity, cultural exploration, and personal expression, while some variability exists regarding how consistently students' creative voices are valued in practice.

4.2 Analysis of Qualitative Data:

The qualitative data were generated from teachers' responses to three open-ended questions. Their answers were thematically analyzed, and the main themes, frequencies, and percentages are presented in Tables 5–7, accompanied by Figures 1–3.

(1) Teachers' Preference for the Personal Enrichment Approach

Responses to the first question: *"As a teacher, would you prefer the personal enrichment approach over other approaches? Why or why not?"* revealed an overall positive attitude toward personal enrichment. As shown in Table 5 and Figure 1, most respondents expressed positive attitudes toward the personal enrichment approach. Out of 32 participants, 27 (84.4%) provided substantive responses, while 5 (15.6%) left the question unanswered. The largest proportion (28.1%) emphasized personal growth enhancement as the main benefit of the approach. Other frequently mentioned themes included its effectiveness in fostering empathy (12.5%), boosting confidence and understanding (9.4%), and supporting intrinsic motivation (9.4%). A smaller group noted that the approach's usefulness was context-dependent (6.3%), required diverse pedagogical practices (6.3%), or depended on the nature of the literary work (6.3%). Only 6.3% of respondents expressed a preference for other approaches over personal enrichment. Overall, the responses demonstrate strong teacher endorsement of personal enrichment, albeit with some reservations tied to context and text selection.

Table (5): Teachers' Preference for the Personal Enrichment Approach

| Theme	Frequency	%
Personal growth enhancement	9	28.1
Context- dependent effectiveness of the approach	2	6.3
Preference for other approaches	2	6.3
Empathy-driven effectiveness of the approach	4	12.5
Boosting confidence and understanding	3	9.4
Diversity of pedagogical instructions in the approach	2	6.3
Personal enrichment approach as a source of intrinsic motivation	3	9.4
Effectiveness depends on literary work	2	6.3
Total	27	84.4
Missing	5	15.6
Total	32	100.0
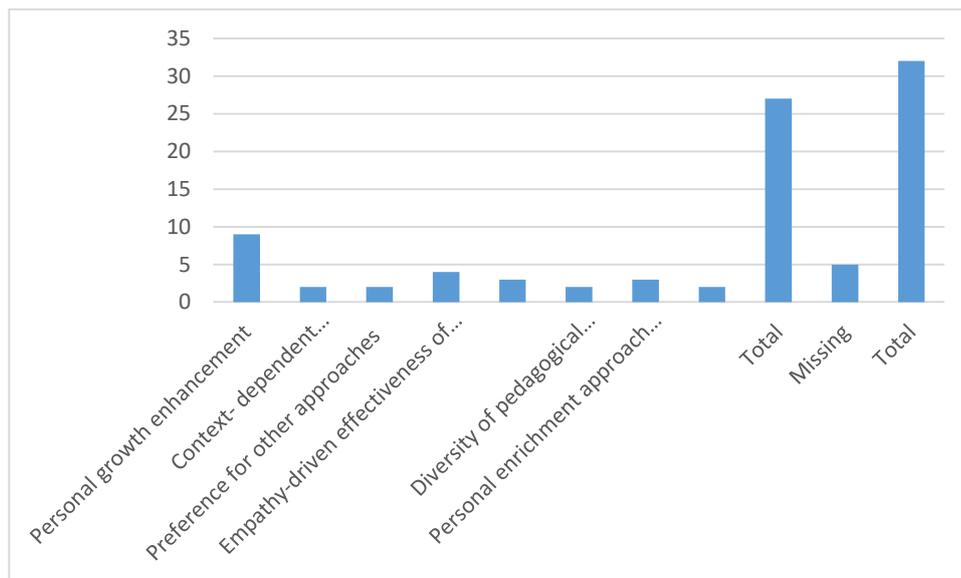
Figure 1: Teachers' Preference for the Personal Enrichment Approach

(2) Anticipated Obstacles in Applying the Approach

The second question asked: *"What obstacles do you anticipate in applying the personal enrichment strategy in your classroom?"* Table 6 and Figure 2 illustrate respondents' views on potential challenges in implementing the personal enrichment approach. A total of 26 teachers (81.3%) answered, while 6 (18.8%) did not. The most commonly cited obstacle was large class sizes (18.8%), which teachers felt limited opportunities for meaningful individual engagement. Several barriers were mentioned with equal frequency (12.5%), including lack of student interest in literature, low self-esteem, cultural and perceptual diversity, and difficulties in encouraging emotional expression. Less frequently mentioned challenges included time and resource constraints (6.3%), the difficulty of applying personal enrichment strategies in practice (3.1%), and the complexity of literary language for non-native speakers (3.1%). These results suggest that while teachers value personal enrichment, they are keenly aware of structural and affective challenges that may hinder its implementation.

Table (6): Anticipated Obstacles in Applying the Personal Enrichment Approach

Theme	Frequency	%
Lack of interest in literature	4	12.5
Low student self-esteem	4	12.5
Time, interest, and resource constraints	2	6.3
large class sizes	6	18.8
Culture and perceptual diversity	4	12.5
emotional expression challenges	4	12.5
Difficulty in practicing personal enrichment strategies in the classroom	1	3.1
Literary language difficulty for non-native speakers	1	3.1

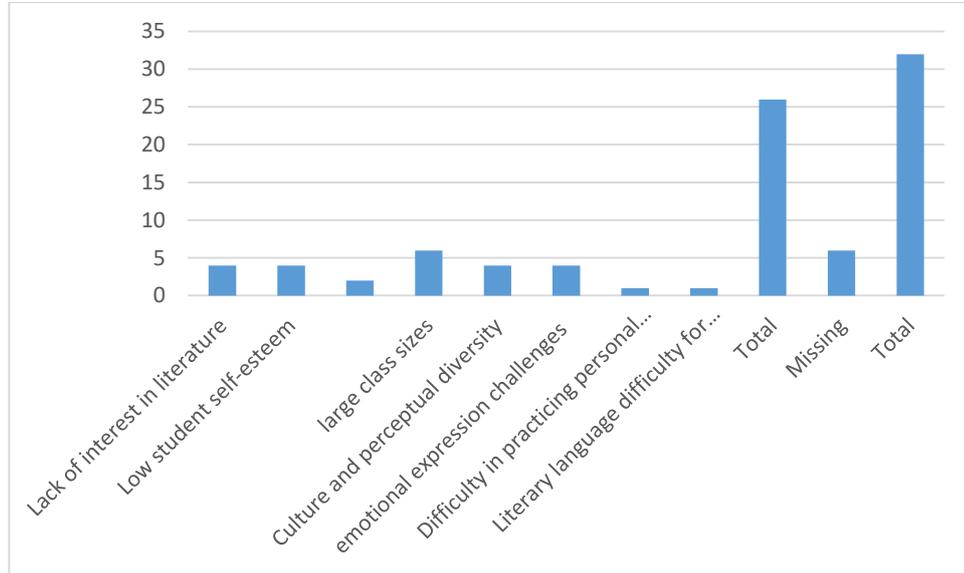| Total | 26 | 81.3 |
| Missing | 6 | 18.8 |
| Total | 32 | 100.0 |

Figure 2: Anticipated Obstacles in Applying the Personal Enrichment Approach

(3) Strategies to Encourage Personal Responses to Texts

The third open-ended question asked teachers to propose strategies for encouraging students to respond personally to texts. *"What are some strategies for encouraging students to respond personally to texts?"* As shown in Table 7 and Figure 3, 24 respondents (75.0%) provided answers, while 8 (25.0%) did not. Two themes were mentioned most frequently: relating literature to local contexts and encouraging multiple perspectives (18.8%), and fostering student motivation and responsibility (18.8%). Other strategies included daily evaluation (12.5%), creating safe classroom spaces for personal responses (12.5%), and using real-life examples to enhance engagement (9.4%). Less commonly, one respondent (3.1%) suggested employing creative and real-life activities such as open-ended questioning and discussions. These strategies reflect an emphasis on contextualization, learner agency, and supportive pedagogy as means to integrate personal enrichment more effectively into literature classes.

Table (7): Strategies to Encourage Personal Responses to Texts

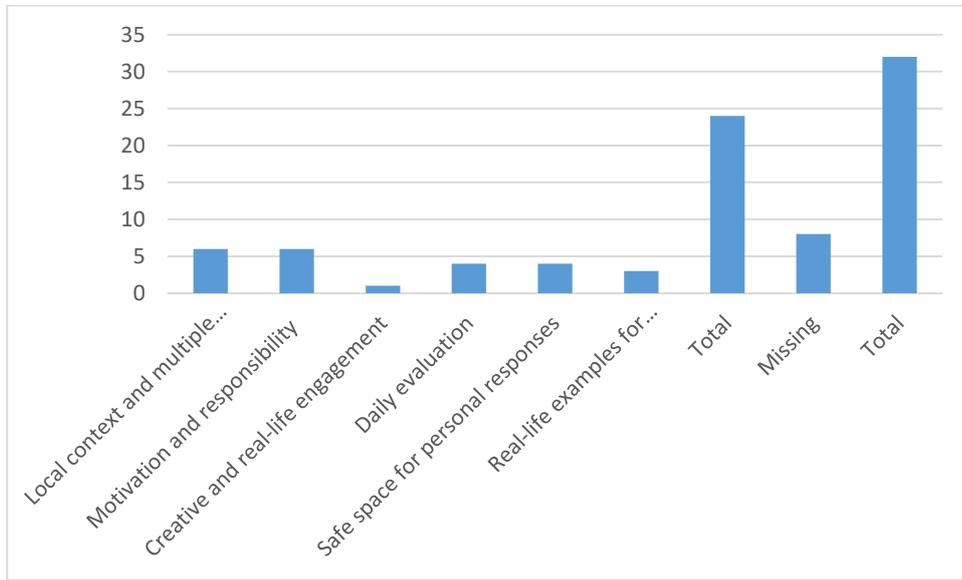| Theme	Frequency	%
Local context and multiple perspectives	6	18.8
Motivation and responsibility	6	18.8
Creative and real-life engagement	1	3.1
Daily evaluation	4	12.5
Safe space for personal responses	4	12.5
Real-life examples for engagement.	3	9.4
Total	24	75.0
Missing	8	25.0
Total	32	100

Figure 3: Strategies to Encourage Personal Responses to Texts

The qualitative results complement the quantitative findings by reinforcing teachers' recognition of literature's potential for self-discovery, emotional growth, and creativity. For example, the emphasis on personal growth, empathy, and confidence in open-ended responses mirrors the high quantitative agreement with items such as A1 *"Studying literature helps students connect literary themes to their own life experiences"* (M = 4.62, SD = 0.49) and B5 *"Studying literature helps students develop emotional resilience and a greater connection to others"* (M = 4.38, SD = 0.68). Likewise, strategies such as contextualization and open-ended discussions directly align with the quantitative endorsement of creativity and expression, particularly C1 *"Literature inspires students to explore diverse cultures and experiences"* (M = 4.66, SD = 0.55). At the same time, the challenges identified qualitatively, such as large class sizes and low student

motivation, help explain the more cautious quantitative ratings for items like A7*"Students find it difficult to relate literary themes to their own life experiences"* (M = 3.76, SD = 0.69). Taken together, the integrated results provide a comprehensive understanding of both the perceived value and the practical limitations of the personal enrichment approach in EFL literature classrooms.

5. Discussion of Results

The present study explored teachers' perspectives on the personal enrichment approach in EFL literature classrooms, focusing on its role in fostering self-discovery, emotional growth, empathy, and creativity. By integrating quantitative and qualitative data, the study provides a comprehensive account of both the perceived value of personal enrichment and the challenges teachers encounter in applying it.

The quantitative results indicated strong support for the idea that literature enables students to connect texts with their personal lives, reflect on values, and enhance self-awareness. Teachers strongly endorsed statements such as A1 *"Studying literature helps students connect literary themes to their own life experiences"* (M = 4.62, SD = 0.49). These findings are consistent with Rosenblatt's (1995) reader-response theory, which emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between reader and text, where meaning emerges through personal engagement. Qualitative responses further supported this, with teachers identifying personal growth (28.1%) and intrinsic motivation (9.4%) as central benefits of personal enrichment. However, the lower quantitative score for A7*"Students find it difficult to relate literary themes to their own life experiences"* (M = 3.76, SD = 0.69) echoes concerns raised in the qualitative data regarding cultural and perceptual diversity (12.5%) and students' lack of interest in literature (12.5%). This suggests that while literature has clear potential for fostering self-discovery, its effectiveness may vary depending on student background, motivation, and classroom context.

Teachers also recognized literature's capacity to foster empathy and emotional resilience. Items such as B5*"Studying literature helps students develop emotional resilience and a greater connection to others"* (M = 4.38, SD = 0.68) and qualitative responses highlighting empathy-driven effectiveness (12.5%) reflect strong endorsement of literature's affective role. These findings resonate with Nussbaum's (1997) argument that literature cultivates moral imagination and helps individuals understand the

experiences of others. Nevertheless, the relatively higher levels of uncertainty for items like B2 *"Engaging with literature deepens students' empathy for people with different life experiences"* (M = 4.10, SD = 0.65) reveal that empathy may not always be uniformly achieved. Teachers' concerns about students' discomfort in expressing emotions (12.5%) support this interpretation, suggesting that affective outcomes depend heavily on pedagogical mediation and the classroom environment.

The strongest endorsement across all domains was in relation to creativity and expression, with C1 *"Literature inspires students to explore diverse cultures and experiences"* (M = 4.66, SD = 0.55) receiving the highest mean score. Teachers also emphasized collaborative discussions and supportive classroom spaces as central to encouraging personal responses (12.5%). These findings align with Carter and Long's (1991) model of literature as a resource for language, culture, and personal growth, as well as Collie and Slater's (1987) advocacy for communicative and student-centered approaches. Yet, the lower rating for C5 *"Students express themselves creatively through literature"* (M = 4.17, SD = 0.71) suggests that while creativity is valued, its consistent realization may be hindered by structural challenges such as large class sizes (18.8%), limited resources (6.3%), and students' self-esteem issues (12.5%).

The qualitative findings underscore the practical barriers that constrain the effectiveness of personal enrichment. Teachers cited large class sizes, lack of student motivation, and linguistic challenges as obstacles, reflecting concerns widely noted in EFL research (Hall, 2005; Paran, 2008). These challenges complicate the integration of reflective and affective outcomes alongside linguistic objectives. The suggested strategies like contextualizing texts, cultivating safe environments, and inspiring numerous interpretations demonstrate educators' mindfulness of the way to address such obstacles. Such strategies are aligned with culturally relevant teaching Kramsch, 1993), which highlights the necessity of making literature personally meaningful and contextually related.

6. Implications for EFL Pedagogy

The results in the current study highlight the significance of seeing literature not only as a language learning tool but also as a means for personal growth. Teachers' emphasis on self-discovery, empathy, and creativity suggests that literature can foster personal and emotional growth alongside academic achievement. For curriculum designers, this highlights

the importance of incorporating literary materials that invite personal engagement and intercultural reflection. For educators who practice teaching, the findings refer to the necessity for professional development plans that provide teachers with approaches to integrate personal enrichment efficiently while handling practical obstacles, like crowded classes and various student needs.

7. Limitations and Future Directions

The current study is restricted to a small sample size and demographic makeup, which was skewed toward young female academics. This may impede the generalizability of the results to larger EFL settings. Furthermore, the study concentrated entirely on teachers' views, without involving learners' perceptions. Future research should therefore implement a more comprehensive methodology by integrating student voices and undertaking longitudinal research to measure the long-term effect of personal enrichment methods on students' personal development and academic achievement.

8. Conclusions

The current study reveals that teachers powerfully regard literature as a tool for cultivating empathy, self-discovery, and creativity in EFL classes, although its implementation is formed by contextual and structural challenges. By incorporating quantitative and qualitative results, the study emphasises both the potential and the restrictions of the personal enrichment methodology, suggesting understandings for teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers striving to balance academic and affective outcomes in language learning.

Appendix: Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear Teachers,

Thank you for participating in this questionnaire. The purpose of this questionnaire is to investigate EFL university teachers' perspectives on utilizing literature for personal enrichment. Your responses will remain anonymous and will only be used for research purposes. Please answer honestly and to the best of your ability. The questionnaire will take approximately 10–15 minutes to complete. Thank you for your valuable input!

The questionnaire consists of three sections as follows:

Section 1: Demographic information

Section 2: Items that are designed to collect data on EFL teachers' perspectives on utilizing literature for personal enrichment at the university level.

Section 3: Open-ended questions

Section 1: Demographic Information

1-Gender: Male ☐   Female ☐

2- Level of Education: MA ☐   PhD ☐

3- Academic Rank: Assistant Lecturer ☐   Lecturer ☐   Assistant Professor ☐ Professor ☐

4- Specialty: Poetry ☐   Novel ☐   Drama ☐   Literary Criticism ☐   Teaching Literature ☐

4- College: Languages ☐   Education ☐   Basic-Education ☐

Section 2: Each statement in this part is followed by a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Please select the response that best represents your opinion or experience. The following are the scale definitions:

Strongly Disagree (1): You strongly disagree with the statement.

Disagree (2): You somewhat disagree with the statement.

Neutral (3): You neither agree nor disagree.

Agree (4): You somewhat agree with the statement.

Strongly Agree (5): You strongly agree with the statement.

Item No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
	Self-Discovery and Personal Reflection					
A1	Studying literature helps students connect literary themes in to their own life experiences.					
A2	Engaging with literature prompts students to reflect on their feelings, beliefs, and values, including ethical dilemmas.					
A3	Literature helps students recognize how their background influences their interpretations.					
A4	I encourage students to make connections with texts to deepen their understanding.					
A5	I guide students in reflecting on their emotions, beliefs, and personal experiences through literature.					
A6	Studying literature enhances students' self-awareness and confidence in understanding their emotions and values.					
A7	Students find it difficult to relate literary themes to their own life experiences.					
	Emotional Growth and Empathy					
B1	Studying literature helps students understand and express their own emotions.					
B2	Engaging with literature deepens students' empathy for people with different life experiences.					
B3	I encourage students to connect with characters' emotions and struggles to foster empathy.					
B4	I provide opportunities for students to discuss the emotional aspects of literature in class.					
B5	Studying literature helps students develop emotional resilient and a greater connection to others.					
B6	I rarely find literature helpful in supporting students' emotional growth.					
	Creativity, Expression, and Support in Literature Classes					
C1	Literature inspires students to explore diverse cultures and experiences.					
C2	I encourage students to think creatively, such as imagining alternate endings or perspectives.					
C3	Students feel supported in expressing their interpretations and ideas in class discussions and creative assignments.					
C4	Collaborative discussions help students appreciate multiple perspectives in literature classes.					
C5	Students expressing themselves creatively through literature.					
C6	I often feel that students' personal interpretations are not valued in class discussions.					

Section 3: Answer the following open-ended questions:

1. As a teacher, would you prefer the personal enrichment approach over other Approaches? Why or why not?

2. What obstacles do you anticipate in applying the personal enrichment strategy in your classroom?

3. What are some strategies for encouraging students to respond personally to texts?

References:

Andrade, H. (2000). Using rubrics to promote thinking and learning. Educational Leadership, 57(5), pp. 13–18.

Black, P., & William, D. (2009). Developing the theory of formative assessment. Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability, 21(1), pp. 5–31. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11092-008-9068-5

Carter, R. (2007). Literature and language teaching 1986–2006: A review. International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 17(1), pp. 3–13. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1473-4192.2007.00130.x

Carter, R., & Long, M. N. (1991). Teaching literature. Longman.

Collie, J., & Slater, S. (1987). Literature in the language classroom: A resource book of ideas and activities. Cambridge University Press.

Hall, G. (2005). *Literature in language education*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Harmer, J. (2015). The practice of English language teaching (5th ed.). Pearson.

Hassan, H.S., Al Bajalani, F.R.H. and Ismail, K.S., (2023a). The Role of the Reader-Response Approach to Teaching Short Stories in Developing Students' Critical Thinking in EFL Literature Classes: A Quasi-Experimental Study. *Zanco Journal of Human Sciences*,*27*(SpA), pp.480-492.

Hassan, H.S., Al Bajalani, F.R.H. and Ismail, K.S., (2023b). Investigating Students' Attitudes towards the Effect of Implementing the Reader-Response Approach in Literature Classes on Developing their Critical Thinking. *Journal of Duhok University*, *26*(1), pp. 563-572.

Kidd, D. C., & Castano, E. (2013). Reading literary fiction improves theory of mind. Science, 342(6156), pp. 377–380. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1239918

Kramsch, C. (1993). Context and culture in language teaching. Oxford University Press.

Lazar, G. (1993). Literature and language teaching: A guide for teachers and trainers. Cambridge University Press.

Maley, A. (2001). Literature in the language classroom. In R. Carter & D. Nunan (Eds.), The Cambridge guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages (pp. 180–185). Cambridge University Press.

McRae, J. (1991). Literature with a small 'l'. Macmillan.

Mousa, M. O., & Ayad, R. (2022). Teaching English literary text by using personal response approach for Iraqi EFL students. Journal of Tikrit University for Humanities, 29(11), pp.1–23. https://doi.org/10.25130/jtuh.29.11.2.2022.24

Nussbaum, M. C. (1997). Cultivating humanity: A classical defense of reform in liberal education. Harvard University Press.

Paran, A. (2008). The role of literature in instructed foreign language learning and teaching: An evidence-based survey. Language Teaching, 41(4), pp. 465–496. https://doi.org/10.1017/S026144480800520X

Parkinson, B., & Thomas, H. R. (2000). Teaching literature in a second language. Edinburgh University Press.

Rosenblatt, L. M. (1995). Literature as exploration (5th ed.). Modern Language Association of America.

Sell, J. P. A. (2005). Why teach literature in the foreign language classroom? Encuentro, 15, pp. 86–93.

Van, T. T. M. (2009). The relevance of literary analysis to teaching literature in the EFL classroom. English Teaching Forum, 47(3), pp. 2–9.

Vogt, K., & Tsagari, D. (2014). Assessment literacy of foreign language teachers: Findings of a European study. Language Assessment Quarterly, 11(4), 374–402. https://doi.org/10.1080/15434303.2014.960046