THE USE OF CULTURALLY-FAMILIAR LITERATURE IN THE EFL

CLASSROOM

by

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, Farida Ghulam Ghaws, and my father, Khalil Ahmad for their selfless love and support all the way.

Abstract

Insights from Cultural Studies and related fields significantly influence the discipline of language learning and teaching recently. Literature shares an intrinsic relationship with language and culture and therefore can serve as a teaching/learning resource for both language and culture. Literature was highly valued in language teaching during the flourishing days of the Grammar Translation Method, driven out of the language classroom with the advent of Communicative Language Teaching, but it is now gradually finding its way back to the language classroom with the increasing significance of intercultural awareness in second and foreign language teaching. However, the diversified nature of English literature today due to the unprecedented spread of the language raises the question whether the focus should remain on American and British literature in foreign language classrooms. Cultural Schema Theory anticipates that cultural-familiarity facilitates the reader's comprehension of literature. This study seeks to learn about the views of EFL instructors at post-secondary level in UAE on the significance of literature in language teaching and the use of culturally-familiar literature in EFL classrooms. In addition, it aims to find out whether reading culturally-familiar literature positively impacts the reading comprehension of EFL students compared to culturally less-familiar literature. A questionnaire is used to learn about the instructors' views and an exploratory study involving 76 EFL students is designed to test whether cultural-familiarity has any effect on reading comprehension. Quantitative and qualitative measures are employed to discuss the findings of the study. Analysis of the research data reveals that instructors acknowledge the significance of literature in teaching the target language and are in favor of using culturally-familiar literature in EFL classrooms. The results of the comprehension tests confirm that cultural-familiarity positively impacts reading comprehension of EFL students.

Search Terms: Literature in EFL classroom, culturally-familiar literature, cultural schema theory, reading comprehension, nonnative English literature.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Working in the Achievement Academy Bridge Program (AABP) at the American University of Sharjah (AUS) as an instructor during my graduate studies for two years guided me to conceptualize this research project. Students who apply to AUS and score below the required 530 on the TOEFL are advised to join an English language and university preparation program called the Achievement Academy Bridge Program (AABP). Students registered in the program are commonly referred to as "Bridge students." AABP students can belong to any of the beginner, intermediate, or advanced level in the program depending on their TOEFL score. As an instructor in AABP during my graduate studies, I taught a TOEFL preparation course and helped students, who were basically English language learners, during their independent learning hours in the Learning Enhancement Center (LEC). LEC was more than just a library because it was equipped with books, computers, movies, language exercises, TOEFL test preparation material, and tutors willing to help students. Apart from their regular classes, AABP students were required to spend 3 hours per week in the LEC. While beginner-level students spent the entire three hours in LEC, intermediate-level and advanced-level students had to attend a TOEFL preparation class for one of those three LEC hours. They worked for the remaining 2 hours per week on their language skills independently in the LEC, albeit supervised by the LEC coordinator.

Statement of the Problem

"Inattentive" silent reading was a common activity among students in the LEC. For the extensive reading program, instructors required their students to read a number of books ranging from 10 to 15 graded readers as part of their coursework per semester. The graded readers in LEC included beginner, intermediate, upper-intermediate, and advanced-level books. Alternatively, students could choose to read unabridged novels instead of graded readers. The required number of novels differed from instructor to instructor. Some instructors accepted one novel, while others required at least two novels to be read during the course of the semester. Reading their selected books was one of the most common activities when students came to the LEC, as it allowed them to work on their reading skill and at the same time complete

their extensive reading assignments. During my working hours in LEC, I observed that students were generally not interested in reading their books even if they pretended to be reading. I often found students staring out the window, talking to their friends, chatting on Blackberry messengers or listening to music on their phones hidden inside their open books.

My position as a student-instructor helped me develop a close relationship with AABP students which allowed us to talk to each other without any reservations. They treated me more like a fellow classmate than a teacher, perhaps due to the fact that, after all, we were both students in the same university. When I asked them in informal conversations to explain their inattentiveness in reading, students said that either the books or reading itself was "boring." Sometime later, an Emirati student in LEC requested that I help him find an interesting book. I suggested *The Drive to Dubai* by Julie Till. As he flipped through the pages, I sat on my desk observing him. After some time, he closed the book, scanned the bookshelf, and pulled out another book. Quite interestingly, he soon closed the second book and returned it to the shelf to get *The Drive to Dubai*, which he read during his LEC hour. The first part of the incident was easy to understand: the student did not enjoy reading *The Drive to Dubai*, so he looked for a different book. What amazed me, however, is the fact that he opted for the book even though he found it boring.

The ensuing curiosity remained with me until I had the chance to look into the matter again some days later. During my LEC hours again, another Emirati student complained to me that he found it difficult to write a pending plot summary for his extensive reading assignment. To do his assignment, he had been reading the graded reader, *The Love of a King*, the love story of King Edward VIII, by Peter Dainty. When I asked him to summarize the story orally, he had problems remembering the details and mentioned that he could not understand parts of the story. Having been frustrated, the student decided to replace the book. I agreed to help him write the summary on the condition that he allowed me to choose the new book. In addition, I required him to compare the two books after he finished reading the second one and let me know about his reading experience. I asked the student to read *The Drive to Dubai*; the plot concerns the love story of an Emirati boy and contains an element of suspense when his father is trapped in a scandal. I met the student three days later outside LEC to obtain his feedback. He said that he was not very impressed by the

storyline but he would nevertheless use Till's book for his summary-writing assignment, as he found it a lot easier to understand the book. To assess his understanding, I asked him to summarize what he understood orally. I clearly saw that he remembered the correct sequence of events and many more details than Dainty's book. I also encouraged him to think and state the reason behind his increased understanding of the second book. Since he was not very proficient in English, he said that he was not too sure but there were more "natural things" in *The Drive to Dubai* which made it a lot easier to understand the text. The student was very confident about his comprehension this time and therefore did not seek my help in writing the summary. This encounter also explained the behavior of the first Emirati student I observed in LEC. He did not enjoy reading the story, but he found it easier to understand and thus continued with it.

It appears that cultural familiarity facilitates reading comprehension. In the case of the Emirati students who chose to read *The Drive to Dubai* by Julie Till over *The Love of a King* by Peter Dainty, language was clearly not the issue because both the books were graded readers of the same level. Another important difference would be the different sociocultural backgrounds of the two narratives. Given that the two students were UAE nationals, Julie Till's narrative, based in Dubai, was culturally more familiar to them than Peter Dainty's narrative based in England. It seems that the students' cultural knowledge facilitated their comprehension of Julie Till's narrative. For instance, the second student stated how the protagonist Karim's falling in love with Samira after seeing her at a family wedding and insisting that his parents should visit her family with a formal proposal was a common cultural behavior. This also explains what he meant by "natural." So anything that conformed to his cultural values and practices appeared as "natural" or common sense to him. The important point to note is that these "natural" elements helped in the recall of the narrative. This piece of information was interesting, but not surprising to me since I had similar experiences as an undergraduate student of English literature. I chose to analyze Khalid Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* for my senior research project. In terms of its sociocultural background, the novel is divided into two halves: the first part takes place in Afghanistan, whereas the second part takes place in the USA. As an Afghan who has never been to the USA, I found it easier to understand the first half of the novel than the second half even though both parts were written by the same author.

Occupied with these thoughts, I began to seek more information from students in the LEC and noted them down in my journal. My conversation with an advanced-level Saudi female student who took great interest in reading literature was perhaps the most interesting of all. At the time of our conversation, she was reading an English translation of *Dr. Zhivago* by the Russian author Boris Pasternak. She mentioned that it was difficult to remember Russian names of the characters such as Yuri Zhivago, Sashenka, Yevgraf Andreievich, and Viktor Komarovsky. So she came up with a strategy of switching their names in her mind. She replaced the "difficult" names with English names like George, William, and Kate. I asked her why she did not opt for Arabic names such as Ahmad, Mohammad, and Sarah, as it should make it easier for her to remember. Very instinctively, she replied, "No! Arabs don't do such things." Assuming that Americans would act like Russians in terms of their cultural practices was an oversimplification on her part, but the important point is her understanding of what Arabs can or cannot do. In other words, she had a clear picture of what cultural practices are socially acceptable for Arabs. Not surprisingly, my next question was whether or not she would find it easier to understand literature from a familiar cultural context, and she responded, "I don't know!" I was slightly annoyed by her indecisive response but soon understood her position when she added, "How would I know until I read such literature?" These insightful observations were the driving force behind designing a research study that yielded an informed answer to the question whether reading culturally familiar literature positively impacts the reading comprehension of EFL students.

Significance of the Research

Stephen Greenblatt (1995) maintains that culture and literature share an intrinsic relationship because he perceives literary texts as cultural entities that "are not merely cultural by virtue of reference to the world beyond themselves; they are cultural by virtue of social values and contexts that they have themselves successfully absorbed" (p. 227). Thus, literature becomes a representation of the particular culture in which it is produced. When readers are unfamiliar with the representative culture of the literary text, they are likely to face difficulty in understanding the content. EFL students could face this problem as Floris (2005) states that English literature in second and foreign language classrooms mainly consists of American and British

literature. Lima (2005) maintains that cultural unfamiliarity is a roadblock that prevents EFL students from understanding American or British literature. Lima makes a valid argument because literary texts are not the same as textbooks in sociology, anthropology or cultural studies. Unlike informative texts, literature does not seek to inform the reader about a potentially foreign culture. Authors of literature work on the assumption that their audience would be familiar with the culture that their works represent.

Even though literature is considered a rich language resource, McKay (1982) states that the issue of cultural gap constitutes one of the primary reasons cited against the use of literature in EFL classrooms; it is believed to increase conceptual difficulty for EFL learners reading English literature. However, EFL students can be provided with culturally-familiar literature (CFL) in English given the global status of the language in the modern world. Talib (2002) discusses the multi-dimensional meaning of the word 'English' as it may refer to ethnicity, language, or nationality. He explains that the term 'English literature' precisely refers to literature by writers residing in Britain while those who write in English but live outside Britain contribute to what is known as 'literature in English.' O'Sullivan (1991) points out that global expansion of the English language has led to large numbers of nonnative English writers adopting the English language. Therefore, in today's world Arab, African, and South Asian writers write in English and contribute to what Talib (1992) refers to as "non-native English literature." This suggests that language instructors can provide English language learners with culturally-familiar literature in English (CFLE). Given that cultural unfamiliarity is perceived as an obstacle to understanding literature, reading CFL should aid the reading comprehension of EFL students. This assumption is attested by Schema Theory which holds that the reader's background knowledge plays an important role in reading comprehension (Li & Lai, 2012). Li and Lai (2012) state that cultural knowledge is a type of background knowledge that the reader brings to the reading process.

However, CFL is not usually included in English Language Teaching (ELT). Mukundan (1998) reports on the problems associated with the Malaysian Class Reader's Program implemented by the ministry of education in 1990. The motive behind this reform was to introduce literature in English language classrooms and encourage students to read more. Mukundan states that more than 90% of the books

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listed in the reading program were written by western authors, including titles such as *Great Expectations Wuthering Heights* and *The Diary of Ann Frank*. The researcher concluded after his observation of five classrooms in different schools that students were largely unresponsive and generally relied on stereotypes to understand character motives in their assigned literary readings. Out of the five groups, only one group of students showed reasonable understanding of the assigned book because their teacher spent several hours in preparing them for the reading which included watching films (Munkandan, 1998). But this kind of pre-reading preparation is not feasible or practical in most extensive reading programs such as the one in the AABP, where students select their own books and read independently. To find out whether CFL was available for AABP students in LEC, I printed a list of the books that the students could borrow. In total, we had 2413 books, but only 480 titles, as every title had several copies. Almost all of the books were fiction with a small number of non-fictional books. The population of students in the Achievement Academy is made up of an Arab majority followed by African students. Keeping this student population in view, I highlighted the following titles of fictional books that could be deemed culturally-familiar: *The Drive to Dubai* by Julie Till, *No Longer at Ease* by Chinua Achebe, *Weep Not Child* by Ngugi Wa Tiong'O, *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, *Does My Head Look Big in This* by Randa Abdel-Fattah, *Minaret* by Leila Aboulela, and *The Harafish* by Najib Mahfouz. While the first four were graded readers, the last three were unadapted books. *A Passage to India* by E. M. Forster could be considered culturally-familiar to any South Asian student in the AABP, as I once had a Pakistani student in my class. Non-fictional titles included: *From Rags to Riches: A Story of Abu Dhabi* by Mohammad Fahim, *Saladin* by Nina Prentice, and *The Secret of Dubai's Long Term Economic Success* by Ohan Balian. Taken together, they were quite a few titles, but not many when measured against the total sum of titles available in LEC since they constituted only 2.3% of the 480 titles. Confirming Floris' (2005) observation, LEC was primarily equipped with American and British literature; recurring names included Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, and John Grisham.

The inclusion of CFLE in the selection of LEC was an important decision as there are several studies that provide empirical evidence to support the use of culturally-familiar texts in ELT. Li and Lai (2012) conducted a study with 53 Chinese students who were required to read a culturally-familiar text on a traditional

Chinese holiday and a culturally-unfamiliar text on an Irish holiday. Both the texts were written in Mandarin and after reading each text, the participants were required to take a cloze test. The researchers found that the mean score of the cloze tests on the traditional Chinese holiday text was higher than that of the cloze tests on the Irish holiday and accordingly conclude that cultural familiarity with a given text positively impacts reading comprehension. Erten and Razi (2009) investigated the effect of cultural familiarity on the comprehension of short stories in the Turkish context. 44 EFL university students in the experimental research were required to read the short story "The Girls in their Summer Dresses" by Irwin Shaw based in the New York City either in its original form or in its "nativized" form. To nativize the story, the researchers changed the names of the characters to Turkish names and the original New York City to a coastal Turkish city. The results of the study showed that students who read the nativized version of the short story outperformed those who read the short story in its original form and thus the researchers conclude that "cultural familiarity has significant impact on reading comprehension" (Erten & Razi, 2009, p. 69).

Despite the existence of these insightful studies, it was important to conduct the current research for three reasons. The study by Erten and Razi (2009) is very revealing. However, language instructors cannot be expected to undergo the cumbersome process of nativizing literary texts to facilitate the reading comprehension of their students. Doing so also makes the text somewhat inauthentic. Moreover and perhaps the most important of all, culture is much more than familiar names of people and places. Hence, the Saudi EFL student referred to above refused to give Arabic names to characters in the Russian narrative, believing that the characters did not behave culturally like Arabs. Therefore, it is important to find out whether cultural familiarity improves the reading comprehension of EFL students when they are engaged with authentic literary texts. I could not find a study in the literature that sought to answer this question. Either one or both the texts in the studies aimed at measuring the influence of cultural familiarity on reading comprehension are adapted/developed for research purposes.

Secondly, Li and Lai (2012) state that according to research in the field of ELT, it is important to test the effectiveness of background knowledge on the reading comprehension of different student populations. I could not find a study on the topic

of cultural familiarity and comprehension of literary texts conducted in the UAE. Finally, it is very important to include the instructors' opinion in the study because they are the decision makers in the classroom and according to Atay, Kurt, Camlibel, Ersin, and Kaslioglu (2009) research suggests that the conceptions of language instructors greatly influence their teaching practices. Therefore, it is important to learn about the instructors' views on the role of literature in language teaching first and then their views about the use of culturally-familiar literature in ELT. If the instructors are not convinced that reading literature aids in the process of language acquisition, it is expected that they will not be interested in using culturally-familiar literature in their language classrooms. Floris (2011) mentions that literature is not included in EFL classrooms in Indonesia because the curriculum supervisors and language instructors maintain that literary texts are "difficult," "hard to understand," and "not relevant" to the lives of the language learners (p. 1). There has been no such study to learn about the views of the language instructors in the UAE. Keeping these concerns in view, this study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. How do EFL instructors at the post-secondary level in the UAE view the use of literature in the language classroom?
2. What are the perspectives/concerns of EFL instructors at the post-secondary level in the UAE regarding having students read culturally-familiar literature?
3. Does reading culturally-familiar literature positively impact the reading comprehension of EFL students more than reading culturally less-familiar literature?

Overview of the Chapters and Appendices

Chapter one has presented the statement of the problem and the research gap that this study intends to fill. Chapter two reviews the literature related to the topic to define the key terms, establish a theoretical framework, and identify relevant case studies. Chapter three provides a detailed description of the educational institutions where the research was conducted, the research participants, the research instruments, and the data collection method. Chapter four presents the results and elaborates on the findings. Chapter five briefly recaps the primary findings of the research, presents the implications of the study, lists the limitations of the study, and offers suggestions for further research.

There are five appendices. Appendix A is the Instructors' Questionnaire. Appendix B is the Vocabulary Test given to AABP students in order to determine their reading level. Appendix C is the Reading-Level Chart used to assign students their respective reading levels based on their score on the vocabulary test. Appendix D is the Reading Comprehension Tests given to student participants. Appendix E is the Questionnaire Results in tables.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This literature review brings together research in English language studies, literary studies, anthropology, sociology, psychology, language acquisition and language teaching as they relate to the reading of literature by foreign language learners. The chapter aims to define the key concepts by tracing their historical developments. It also elaborates on the theory that underpins this research and the changing dynamics of the English language.

English Language

Since the objective of this research is to make a contribution to the overarching field of English Language Teaching (ELT), it is important to account for the relationship of the nonnative speakers to the language as it developed through history. It appears that the journey of the English language from the British Isles to different regions of the world can be summarized in three phases: colonial, global, and local. It is important not to confuse these three phases with forms of language because no single variety of the English language can be labeled as colonial, global, or local. Algeo and Pyles (2005) describe English, an Indo-European language, as "an immigrant language to Britain" introduced by the Anglo-Saxons, who arrived to aid the unprotected British Celts who were being invaded by the Picts and Scots, in the fifth century. Since the 19th century, the English language has experienced dramatic growth on three fronts: geographical area, number of speakers, and number of uses

Colonial English

The colonial history of the English language could cause resentment towards the language even in our contemporary world. Kandiah (1998) states that the colonizing movement of the English language from its home country England began as early as the twelfth century with the conquest of Ireland under Henry II and the annexation of Wales by England in the late thirteenth century. He adds that the impact of this colonizing impulse was more forceful when the dominance of English was established over Irish, Welsh, and Gaelic in the sixteenth century. Only after this dominance of the English language in the western hemisphere did it begin to move to

America and eastwards. Since this study is conducted in a Middle Eastern country, the eastern domination of the English language is of more interest in this research.

The disparity between the colonizer and the colonized was extended to the superior status of the colonial language and the relatively inferior position of the native languages. The British politician Thomas Macaulay (1800-1859) aspired to fashion anglicized Indians through educational reforms as he asserted in his infamous speech 'Minute on Indian Education,' "We have to educate a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother-tongue" and hence these natives were to be educated through a language that "stands pre-eminent even among the languages of the west" (2005, p. 428). Needless to say, he was referring to none other than his native language English. While Macaulay's colonial ambition was not so successful in some colonies, it was realized in others. Jamaica Kincaid, a Caribbean writer currently settled in California, recounts the horrors of the British colonial regime in her native land Antigua and avers that the loss of their mother tongue was "the worst and most painful of all" sufferings (2005, p. 94). The extinction of Tasmanian languages that originated in the island of Tasmania is another example of the loss of indigenous languages due to colonization.

Even the young generation of such previous colonies who might not have experienced colonialism firsthand could bear grudges that result in aversion to cultural products such as literature of the previous colonizers. Mujumdar (2010) states that EFL students in the Indian context may cleave to racial prejudice against the writers of English literature, which negatively affects their interest in British literature presented to them. The colonial past of the English language is perhaps a more central issue for nonnative English writers especially if they belong to a previous colony. Kincaid asks the rhetorical question: "isn't it odd that the only language I have in which to speak of this crime is the language of the criminal who committed the crime?" (2005, p. 94). Kincaid's dilemma was not specific to her only, as many others who shared this experience of colonialism encountered the same conflict when English became the global language in the twentieth century

Global English

From a colonial language, English moved to become a global language, but the shift was not a smooth transition. Even though largely responsible for its initial spread, the former British Empire has to share the credit for making English a global

language with America, quite ironically a former colony. Alegeo and Pyles (2005) point to the British colonial enterprise in the past and the present-day prevailing role of America in world affairs as the two principle forces behind this astonishing spread of the English language. Kandiah (1998) refers to America as "the far stronger English-using daughter of the British Empire" (p. 2). He explains that the British Empire developed sophisticated infrastructures in all major sectors of society including commerce, education, and entertainment to realize the goal of creating an "interconnected world", and these infrastructures along with the preeminent position of the English language in the 'global world' were maintained when America rose to power in the twentieth century. That is, whether it was the previous wave of Anglicization or the current driving force of Americanization, the English language maintains its superior position across the globe today. However, accepting English as a global language was not an easy decision especially for those who lived with unpleasant memories of British colonialism in the recent past.

In the midst of these global forces in favor of the English language, a large number of individuals like Kincaid who were nonnative speakers of English were bound to reflect on their relationship with the language which resulted in detachment from the language in some cases. The aversion towards the English language that took shape among African writers during the colonial period persists until today. The Nigerian critic Obi Wali (1962) expressed his unrelenting opposition to colonial languages: "until these [African] writers and their western midwives accept the fact that any true African literature must be written in African languages, they would merely be pursuing a dead end, which can lead to sterility, uncreativity, and frustration" (as cited in Oloko, 2008, p. 264). Having the same opinion as Obi Wali, the Kenyan writer Ngugi Wa Thiong'O abandoned the English language altogether and started writing in his native language Gikuyu. The logical reasoning behind Wa Thiong'O's decision to write in his mother tongue is apparent: like the need to have an existing speech community, extant literature is a primary means of preserving any language. Having said that, Wa Thiong'O's motivation behind writing in Gikuyu is slightly different, as he states, "I believe that my writing in the Gikuyu language, a Kenyan language, an African language, is part and parcel of the anti-imperialist struggles of Kenyan and African people" (Wa Tiong'O, 1995, p. 290). The inherent contradiction of using the colonial language to condemn colonialism was evident even

in Kincaid's writing. Nevertheless, like any other argument, Wa Tiong'O's intolerant view regarding the adoption of the English language as a medium of expression has its opposing perspective too.

At the other end of the spectrum, we find nonnative English speakers who fully embraced the language whether out of necessity or choice. Although there are many opponents and proponents of the view concerning the adoption of the English language as the mode of expression for indigenous literature, Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, two well-known literary figures from the African continent, represent the two ends of this debate. For this reason, Oloko (2008) states that these two "epitomise the polarity of the debate and its fallout of blunt resistance and qualified acceptance" (p. 265). Unlike Obi Wali and Wa Thiong'O, the Nigerian writer Achebe fully embraces the English language as his mode of written expression at least. Achebe (1995) perceives himself as a perfect example of a bilingual because he speaks mainly in his native language Igbo but resorts primarily to English when he writes. Believing that his circumstances did not give him the option to choose, Achebe (1975) concedes, "I have been given the language [English] and I intend to use it" (as cited in wa Thiong'O, 1995, p. 285). This is not to say that Achebe endorsed the colonial enterprise, for anyone familiar with his published works would know that he is a vehement postcolonial critic of colonialism. To borrow Adesanmi's (2006) words, Achebe's position can be aptly summarized as "the slave's seizure of the master's language and its deployment as an instrument of resistance" (as cited in Oloko, 2008, p. 266). This means that Achebe's adoption of the English language to condemn the colonial agenda is a form of reverse colonization. Wa Thiong'O and Achebe have responded to each other in writing and their debate has far-reaching effects because it decides whether or not nonnative speakers of English should write in the language. The deliberation concerning the choice between "inherited European languages" – French, Spanish, and Portuguese but mainly English – and indigenous languages for the expression of African literature that emerged in the postcolonial era was a prevailing issue in the 1960s (Oloko, 2008, p. 263). Those who sided with Wa Thiong'O had to continue writing in their native languages while those who supported Achebe's view could express themselves in English without any hesitations. It cannot be denied that the writers who chose to express themselves in English had pragmatic reasons.

Wider readership, the ultimate goal of any writer, can be secured through the use of a language understood by more of the world's population than the writer's own ethnic group. Like its colonial history, the current status of the English language as a lingua franca cannot be overlooked either. Oloko (2008) evidently sides with the group of writers represented by Achebe, as he believes that they were "pragmatic and strategic about the economic, political and cultural directions of a globalizing world" (p. 263). In our contemporary world, any writer who wishes to be read by a wider audience has to express his/her thoughts in English. To increase his readership, Oloko (2008) mentions that the Kenyan writer Ngugi Wa Thiong'O makes the additional effort of translating his work into English. What is interesting, however, is the fact that despite being a prime manifestation of the 'blunt resistance,' Wa Thiong'O fully acknowledges the global status of the English language. In any case, the increasing use of the English language in various educational, social, and political settings across the globe testifies that Achebe's position regarding the English language is more widely accepted than that of Wa Thiong'O. This is reflected in the significant growth of the English speaking population. Kandiah (1998) reviews the estimates in different sources for the number of English speakers globally to show the dramatic increase of English speakers, both first and second language users: from 5-7 million in the seventeenth century, the figure shot up to 475 million users in the late twentieth century. Kachru (1992), another source, cites a considerably higher estimate, 700-800 million users (as cited in Kandiah, 1998). Regardless of what estimate one agrees with (see also Floris, 2005), the remarkable growth in the English speaking population is a point of consensus.

Local English

Starting off with the colonial enterprise, English language was globalized and as a consequence many local varieties that have their own characteristic features emerged. This means that the entire English speaking population today does not communicate in a uniform variety of English. Kandiah (1998) explains that even in the earlier stages of its development within the confines of the British Isles, the English language, like any other national language, had remarkably different varieties. However, the language's departure from its homeland to settle in foreign territories "caused it to become even more differentiated" because it entered "new and unfamiliar contexts… marked by specific ecological, cultural, linguistic, and other

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characteristics… radically different from those of England" (p. 2). In other words, the English language had to undergo adaptation in its new sociocultural settings because as Kandiah illustrates through an example, the needs that the language had to fulfill in India were markedly different from the needs that it had to fulfill in America. Subsequently, differentiated varieties of 'New Englishes' emerged across the world (Kandiah, 1998). Kandiah (1998) aptly summarizes the journey of the English language once it leaves its homeland to settle in new sociocultural settings into three stages: "transportation, transplantation and adaptation" (p. 12). To illustrate through an example, the English language was transported by the British and transplanted in the Indian subcontinent in the 19th century, and it gradually made way for Indian English. Hence, even when the British left in early twentieth century, the language stayed. But what remained behind was Indian English, not the originally transported British English. Indian writers living in India today write in the relatively new variety of Indian English, not the originally transported British variety.

These new varieties of the language may be referred to as 'nativized' varieties of English and Kachru (1983) describes the underlying process as "acculturation of a Western language in … a new 'unEnglish' linguistic and cultural setting" (as cited in Kandiah, 1998, p. 10). Kachru (1983) elaborates on the process: when the indigenous people acquire English, their native languages comingle with the English language and thus foreign cultural and linguistic elements seep into the language (as cited in Kandiah, 1998) resulting in, as Kandiah puts it, "linguistic innovation" which according to him constitutes the prime manifestation of this acculturation process. Kachru (1983) referred to Indian English in defining the process of linguistic acculturation, but his definition can be applied to any cultural context where English was, to borrow Kandiah's term, 'transplanted.' Kachru, Kachru, and Nelson (2006) state that the unparalleled expansion of the English language has led to the notion of World Englishes and its major varieties include European, North and South American, African, and Asian English. These emerging local varieties of the English language invalidate the colonial tag attached to the language. Since English was adapted to fulfill the communicative needs of the natives and to become the linguistic medium for their cultural expressions, it can no longer be classified as the language of the colonizer.

Now critics had to devise research frameworks that could account for these changing realities of the English language. Perhaps the most famous of these paradigms would be Kachru's three-circle model. In 1985, Kachru proposed that the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand occupy the innermost circle of his model as these countries are considered the 'traditional basis of English' (as cited in Kandiah, 1998, p. 6). Next comes the outer circle which covers countries such as India, Pakistan, Nigeria and Malaysia where according to Kachru (1985) we saw the early "spread of English and its institutionalization in non-native contexts" (as cited in Kandiah, 1998, p. 6). As discussed earlier, the early spread of the English language was fuelled by the process of colonialism, so these countries in the outer circle are likely to be previous colonies. Finally, the expanding circle includes China, Saudi Arabia, and Japan among others; Kachru (1985) explains that these countries recognize the international status of the English language and thus view it as the primary foreign language to be learned (as cited in Kandiah, 1998). Kachru's model of concentric circles can function as a starting framework, but Kandiah (1998) points out that the qualifying criteria for the 'traditional bases' of the English language or the countries located in the inner circle is not clear, and the model does not account for unique situations such as Black Vernacular English in the USA, South African English, Jamaican English and creoles such as Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea. To overcome this shortcoming, Kandiah (1998) proposes an alternative framework where different varieties of the English language are classified under 'Older Englishes,' 'New Englishes,' and '(English-based) Pidgins, Creoles, and Decreolized varieties.' It can be inferred that Kandiah has not completely rejected Kachru's model because his changes include renaming the categories (inner circle becomes 'Older Englishes' and outer circle becomes 'New Englishes'), clustering together the varieties in outer and expanding circles under 'New Englishes,' and adding the third class of pidgins and creoles to make it more comprehensive.

Needless to say, all varieties of English can be considered subcategories of World Englishes except that some may be privileged over others. Confirming the cliché that 'history repeats itself' it appears that the linguistic prejudice seen during British colonial times was carried forward to discriminate between 'native' and 'non-native' varieties of English in the modern world. Kandiah (1998) reviews the literature and lists terms used to indicate the "discriminatory treatment" of New

Englishes: 'errors,' 'mistakes,' and 'aberrations' (p. 17). Depending on individual perspectives, the subsequent varieties of the English language can be interpreted as a process of enrichment or degeneration. Furthermore, due to imbalance in socio-political forces, some varieties are treated as 'second-class citizens.' For example, weigh the American variety against the Indian variety. Kandiah (1998) briefly comments on this stratification, an inevitable consequence of comparing the emergent forms to the variety spoken in England, the 'home country.' In the earlier days, the former were judged as "'aberrant' or 'broken' versions of the language which were most deplorably starting to develop outside of England" (Kandiah, 1998, p. 9). The onset of the twentieth century, however, marked the beginning of more relaxed views, but Kandiah maintains that the discrimination seen in earlier days "tends to smuggle itself back, albeit in a sophisticated, sanitized guise" (p. 10).

However, despite the attitudinal factor, there is no theoretical ground to separate the different varieties of the English language that developed in various regions around the world. Theoretically speaking at least, all the new or 'deviant' varieties of the English language should share the same status; Kandiah (1998) states, "*all* varieties of the English language outside its original home, England, may rightly be considered to be 'new' Englishes" (p. 3, emphasis in the original). This view places the New Zealand, American, Australian, and Canadian English and Indian English in the same group. Yet, Kandiah (1998) states that for an unknown reason, the process of nativization is applied to what he classifies as New Englishes or to the Englishes in Kachru's outer or expanding circles only. Singh points out that the Indianization and Africanization of the English language are widely discussed, but no one talks about 'Americanization' or 'Canadianization' of the English language (as cited in Kandiah, 1998). But there is no legitimate basis in terms of historical development or linguistic differences to set apart the class of Older Englishes from the class of New Englishes. In choosing the group titles "Older Englishes" and "New Englishes," Kandiah (1998) acknowledges that his "labels of convenience" (p. 8) cannot be taken literally in all cases because the inception of Australian English (a member of Older Englishes), for example, was considerably later in history than the arrival of English in Indian subcontinent and the subsequent formation of the Indian English (a member of New Englishes). Therefore, it would be incorrect to say that Older Englishes developed at a much earlier stage in history than New Englishes.

In terms of language, Kandiah (1998) refers to the usual approach undertaken by researchers in separating the two classes of English: a form of New English undergoes structural analysis in comparison to an Old English, usually in its standard form, to show that there are considerable structural differences between the two. So the force that binds New Englishes is not that they share some structural features but rather the fact that they all 'deviate' from the structural norms of some 'native' variety of English (Kandiah, 1998). The author points out two major theoretical flaws that question the validity of this view. In the process of adaptation, "the differential structural features" developed by New Englishes are "entirely comparable in *qualitative* terms to those that distinguish any two varieties of English" and one cannot find any "principled *structural* grounds" to mark the distinct class of New Englishes (Kandiah, 1998, p. 17, emphasis in original). The unexpected use of present progressive rather than the past or present tense of the verb in constructions such as "I am thinking he is foolish" found in Indian English is also seen in Irish English (Kandiah, 1998, p. 16). The "invariant tag feature" is cited as a characteristic feature of Indian English and Lankan English, but Kandiah (1998) points out that this structural construct is also shared by American English and Canadian English even though the final words at the end of the tag questions may be different in these four varieties. Kachru (1983), therefore, reasoned that outside of England, the language was renewed in all of its new contexts, so he can legitimately discuss the "the processes of Americanization, Australianization, or Canadianization" of the English language alongside other instances of nativization such as in the Indian context (as cited in Kandiah, 1998, p. 12).

To sum up, English entered several Asian and African contexts as a colonial language. The association of the language with colonialism caused some nonnative writers to reject English as their medium of literary expression. On the other hand, others adopted English for pragmatic reasons. The different varieties of English augmented as the language adapted in several nonnative contexts. Subsequently, the nonnative varieties were distinguished from the native varieties of English. However, there are no principled grounds to separate the native and nonnative varieties of English. Therefore, English today is a global language with local varieties and the diverse regional varieties of the language cannot be organized in a linguistic hierarchy regardless of the social and political perceptions.

English Literature

The unparalleled spread of the English language also resulted in the expansion of English literature. Whether belonging to the outer or the expanding circle, people from various countries around the world adopted English as the mode of expression for their literary works. First, it is important to agree on a concrete definition of "literature" as the term is widely debated. Then, the role of literature in language teaching/learning will be reviewed before opening the discussion on the variety of literature available for English Language Teaching (ELT).

Defining Literature

Coming up with a concrete definition of the term "literature" is not an easy task. Greenblatt (2006) remarks that the lines of demarcation between literary and supposedly 'nonliterary' texts are "constantly challenged and redrawn" (p. xxxiii). For instance, Carter (1996) considers texts such as "advertisements, newspaper headlines, jokes, and puns" as examples of literature arguing that they display the use of literary language (as cited in McKay, 2001, p. 320). However, considering any and every text as literary text makes the notion of literature very ambiguous. Van Peer (2008) states that even though an essential prerequisite, the mere presence of language does not mean literature. This qualification is important; otherwise, almost any form of language use would be considered a work of literature as suggested by Carter. Van Peer (2008) acknowledges the difficulty involved in the task of defining the term literature as it "belongs to the most intricate epistemological problems of literary studies" and therefore many scholars have chosen to treat it as an unresolved issue (p. 118). Since literature is a textual product, it might be helpful to list its features. Baym (2008) states that teachers and students expect the products of literary activity to be "both intellectually serious and formally skillful" (p. xxx). This is a very general criterion that can apply to any type of text. A journal or newspaper article's title, for example, can be intellectually serious and formally skillful. In a similar vein, Greenblatt (2006) mentions how with the passage of time the meaning of the term literature from the whole body of texts in a given language narrowed down to "a subset of that writing consisting of works that claim special attention because of their unusual formal beauty or expressive power" (p. xxxiii). Greenblatt's definition also falls short of setting definite criteria for what might be considered literature.

Having examined several scholarly attempts at defining the term literature, I must acknowledge that Van Peer's (2008) definition has a logical appeal and a substantiated theoretical basis. Since he maintains that literature is a "linguistic form of art," some forms of visual arts, for example, cinema are automatically excluded from his definition (p. 119). The author adds further that the distinction between discourse and text is another dimension that contributes to his definition of literature. He defines discourse as direct verbal communication between interlocutors who share the same spatio/temporal setting referred to as an "utterance situation" by the author. This is not necessarily the case for texts as they can be accessed by different people who do not share the same setting. With the advancement of technology, people in different places can now communicate, but Van Peer points out that the condition of time still applies because people from different time periods cannot possibly engage in discourse. Given the presence of oral texts, however, this definition is not sufficient to distinguish text from discourse. Van Peer therefore highlights a unique characteristic trait of texts: unlike discourse, texts have the ability to detach themselves from their points of origin, travel through time and space and position themselves in a new utterance situation. In other words, "texts transcend the time and space barriers that discourse is subject to" (Van Peer, 2008, p. 119). The author further adds that while discourse is produced extemporaneously, textual communication is more often than not preplanned. Nevertheless, despite making this clear distinction, Van Peer observes that text and discourse cannot be viewed as mutually exclusive entities due to the instances of intermediary examples such as ritual insults and proverbs that may be detached from a certain context given their regular structural patterns and reintroduced in a different setting. Hence, he stresses that the difference between these two forms of communication should be seen as a matter of degree rather than absolute dichotomy. This means that different forms of communication can be positioned on a continuum that ranges from discourse to text.

Having established that "textuality is a matter of degree," Van Peer explains that it is dependent on two factors: structural qualities and social standing of the text under consideration (p. 120). He maintains that the increasing amount of structural qualities in a linguistic form is directly proportional to its textuality. That is, a communicative expression acquires more textuality as its identifiable structural characteristics multiply. The second factor related to the social standing of the text

essentially means that the more frequently members of a society and its subsequent generations visit a text, the greater its textuality is which leads to Van Peers's distinction between "more *central* and more *peripheral* texts" (emphasis in the original, p. 120). To illustrate this point, he gives the example of Bible in western societies explaining that since the religious text of Christianity has been and is frequently read by members of those societies, its textuality is far greater than that of a ballad. Van Peer's example indicates that the degree of a particular text's textuality is also dependent on the sociocultural context in which it is evaluated. For instance, in contrast to the western societies, it can be inferred that the textuality of Bible is considerably decreased in non-Christian settings. These ideas related to the textuality of a text are aptly summarized by the author in the following words: "textuality is partly a linguistic characteristic and partly the result of socio-cultural forces which provide the text its place and function within society as a whole" (p. 120). It can be argued that generally the degree of textuality as defined by Van Peer is considerably greater in literary texts compared to nonliterary texts. A Shakespearen sonnet, for example, has many more structural qualities and is read much more frequently by members of a given society than a magazine article. This assumption, however, does not completely address the issue of classifying literary and nonliterary texts.

Ehlich and Rehben (1980) distinguish between *homiletical* and *institutional* discourse while they maintain that discourse is "shaped by the needs and aims of social institutions" (as cited in Van Peer, 2008, p. 121). Van Peer explains that the former refers to types of discourse that "occur outside institutional situations," so their structure and function is evidently different from institutional discourse (p. 121). Examples of *homiletical* discourse would include daily conversations, greeting people, table talk, and social introductions. Van Peer extends this distinction between homiletical and institutional discourse developed by Ehlich and Rehben to materialize his definition of literature. While Ehlich and Rehban talk about institutional versus homiletical discourse, Van Peer discusses the difference between what he terms "institutional texts" and "homiletical texts." Examples of institutional texts and their corresponding social institutions listed by the author include school textbooks in educational institutions and prayer books in religious institutions. Van Peer explains that the functions of institutional texts are generally confined to their respective social institutions. A school teacher, for instance, is unlikely to use a prayer book to teach a

lesson or a religious preacher will not, under normal circumstances, use a school textbook to deliver a sermon. The key point to note here is the one-to-one correspondence between a certain text type and its corresponding social institution because in some exceptional cases a given text may play a functional role in a different institution. Newspaper and magazine articles, for instance, are widely used outside the institution of media as teaching material in language classrooms.

Unlike institutional texts, Van Peer considers literature a non-institutional text that brings pleasure to the reader. Van Peer states that some have attempted to describe 'literature' as an institution in its own right, but this view is highly problematic for two primary reasons. Social organizations such as publishing houses may be involved in the selection, production, and dissemination of literary texts, but they cannot control the consumption of literary texts and, moreover, oral literature is not at all dependent on these social organizations (Van Peer, 2008). Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the functional role of literature remains vague which makes it impossible to infer its central aim in the social structure of the society (Van Peer, 2008). Van Peer has made a convincing case in his rejection of seeing literature as an institution because, as pointed out by the author, certain social organizations may be active in the initial stages of literary production; however, it is not possible to attribute either an identifiable social function or a single social institution to literary texts. The opposite is true in the case of institutional texts listed by the author such as school textbooks that have a specifiable social objective and are attributed to the educational institution. Therefore, unlike school textbooks, literature cannot be called institutional texts. Van Peer chooses to refer to these non-institutional texts as 'homiletical texts' that do not fulfill any task necessary for the functioning of a particular institution and therefore are not bound by any economic and institutional concerns. He adds that the goal of conferring "the experience of delight" is a central characteristic of homiletical texts because unlike institutional texts, they are not required to respond to the practical needs of the society or work towards developing its structural elements (pp. 122-123). Even according to this understanding, media texts cannot be considered as literary texts because they are expected to respond to societal needs.

Literature connects its readers and encourages them to reflect and think critically. Van Peer maintains that homiletical texts can create group solidarity

between members of literary circles since literary canons "act as cultural cement among individuals of a certain social group" (p. 123). Moreover, since they are not concerned with daily matters, Van Peer states that homiletical texts have the potential to encourage the readers to reflect on a higher level about the essence of life and the environment. In sum, Van Peer proposes four conditions to be met by any text in order to qualify as literature. It must: make reading a delightful experience, create group cohesion between members of a shared literary circle, encourage the readers to reflect critically, and not be regulated by the purpose and outlook of a certain social institution. Since all of these four benchmarks are important, even though philosophical and sociological texts tend to be highly reflective and are not generally concerned with the immediate practical needs of a society, they do not qualify as literature because, as Van Peer points out, inducement of delight is not a central aim of these texts.

This does not mean that all text types classified as literature based on these four criterions are of the same level. Van Peer mentions that the next step is to evaluate the degree of literariness in different literary texts since authors employ an array of literary devices such as metaphor, ambiguity, paradox, and allusion to varying degrees in order to effectuate aesthetic responses from the readers. According to Van Peer's criteria, both a nursery rhyme and a sonnet qualify as literature. The classical nursery rhyme "Twinkle twinkle little star/ How I wonder what you are/ Up above the world so high/ Like a diamond in the sky" creates some sort of group cohesion among nursery students who have memorized it, provokes reflectivity, and has some literary elements such as repetition, rhyme scheme, and the use of simile. This nursery rhyme, however, is markedly different from a sonnet that may employ a complex metrical structure, irony, alliteration, ambiguity, rhythmic variation, and symbolism. This distinction between literary works that fall on a continuum also allows us to differentiate between high literature and popular fiction. Acknowledging that such distinctions require more elaborate discussions, I shall not engage in discussing these matters because they are not a primary concern of this research. After a highly engaged and detailed discussion, Van Peer provides a concrete definition of literature: "a body of symbolic objects expressed in human language, possessing textual qualities of a non-institutional, homiletical kind" (pp. 124-125). To sum up van Peer's main ideas, literature, expressed through human

language, may appear in written or oral form. Moreover, literature is not a specific social institution as there are no "specifiable social aims" that can be attributed to works of literature. In terms of its function, literature has an aesthetic quality, and it brings about reflectivity and group cohesion. Finally, there are varying degrees of literariness in works of literature.

Literature in English Language Teaching

The elaborate discussion of literature above testifies to the intimate relationship that it shares with language. Yet, literature might customarily be left out of language classrooms on the assumption that it has no significance in realizing the objectives of language learning. A historical review of the developments in language teaching allows us to put the current status of literature in language classroom into perspective. Khatib (2011) traces the history concerning the role of literature in the language classrooms. He states that literature enjoyed a privileged status during the heyday of Grammar Translation Method but then its importance was downplayed with the advent of Structuralism and the Audiolingual Method and then the Communicative Language Teaching Approach. Richards and Rodgers (2001) mention that the study of classical Latin, language of the elite, influenced the curriculum of language study in Europe throughout the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. The authors refer to the works of Kelly (1969) and Howatt (1984) to describe the common approach adopted in schools to teach Latin, "rote learning of grammar rules, study of declensions and conjugations, translation, and practice in writing sample sentences" (p. 4). Richards and Rodgers (2001) add that this approach served as the model when modern languages entered the European school curriculum in eighteenth century, and the result was the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM). They describe GTM as "the offspring of German scholarship" and point out that it was initially known as the Prussian Method in the United States (p. 5).

GTM was the dominant approach from the 1840s to the 1940s and endorsed the view that being able to read its literature was the primary goal of learning a foreign language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This suggests that literary prose was an indispensable learning/teaching material in this particular language teaching approach. Since it was based on the approach to the study of Latin, Richards and Rodgers (2001) mention that grammar was taught deductively and the students' native language was the medium of instruction as well as the point of reference for the

acquisition of the second language in GTM. In other words, GTM was essentially all about learning the syntax and the lexicon of a foreign language through translation. Richards and Rodgers (2001) maintain that GTM today has practically no advocates and the primary reason behind its decline is the fact that it was not based on any theoretical underpinning supported by the findings in the fields of psychology and linguistics. Nevertheless, GTM is still in use in some parts of the world, and its principles are reflected in contemporary college-level textbooks frequently designed by "people trained in literature rather than in language teaching or applied linguistics" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 7). This brief overview explains the proximate association of literature with GTM: literary texts constituted not only the means but also the motivation for foreign language acquisition. In addition, the fact that mostly advocates of literature continue to hold onto the principles of GTM further reinforces this association.

The Reform Movement, which began in mid nineteenth century and gained momentum in the late nineteenth century, marked the beginning of opposition to GTM (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Growing interaction among the Europeans required that individuals and by extension educators shift their focus to oral proficiency (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The study of child language acquisition heavily impacted approaches to foreign language teaching and learning. Innovators and language teaching specialists such as C. Marcel (1793), T. Prendergast (1806-1886), and F. Gouin (1831-1896) turned to the development of first language acquisition in order to formulate the theoretical bases of their approaches to foreign language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Later linguists including Henry Sweet (1845-1912) and Wilhelm Viëtor (1850-1918) advanced these reformist ideas through their scholarly works (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This cause received further impetus from the establishment of the International Phonetic Association in 1886, which focused on the study of spoken language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In his well-known pamphlet published in 1882, *Language Teaching Must Start Afresh*, Viëtor strongly condemned "the inadequacies of Grammar Translation and stressed the value of training teachers in the new science of phonetics" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 10). Richards and Rodgers (2001) provide a brief summary of the shared beliefs of these innovators who emerged in the nineteenth century: teaching grammar inductively, giving precedence to spoken language, avoiding translation, and

mainly using the target language in the classroom unless resorting to the native language is an absolute necessity in a given situation. Comparing these principles to those of the traditional approach mentioned earlier, it can be inferred that GTM was subject to complete inversion, not just amendment. The deductive teaching of grammar was now replaced by inductive teaching. The focus on literacy skills shifted to the focus on oral skills. The widespread use of the native language as the medium of instruction was reduced to its minimal use in language classroom. In short, not only was the traditional approach of GTM outdated, but language educators also developed distaste for it. The Reform Movement of the nineteenth century made way for a variety of different language teaching approaches including Structuralism, the Audiolingual method, and the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) mentioned by Khatib (2011). The close association of literature with GTM explains why the subsequent decline of GTM would also unjustly drive literature out from the language classroom. Nevertheless, literature and language experts have long recognized that integration of literature in language classrooms can greatly facilitate the language learning process.

According to O'Sullivan (1991), Floris (2005), and Nodeh and Kiani (2011), there seems to be renewed interest in using literature to teach language. Many reasons contribute to the understanding that literature plays a significant role in language acquisition. First of all, literature serves as a model for language use. Widdowson (1975) states that "An understanding of what literature communicates necessarily involves an understanding of how it communicates: what and how are not distinct" (as cited in MacKay, 2001, p. 319). McKay (2001) explains that this quality of literary texts instills the awareness that how learners communicate a message is important for two reasons: fulfilling their communicative goals and determining how to express something helps them create a sense of agency.

In addition, literature is a rich source of vocabulary. English language learners (ELLs) face the difficult challenge of building the required lexical inventory to be able to communicate effectively in the target language. The debate surrounding what constitutes a word has led to significant differences among lexicographers in determining the size of the English lexicon. Schmitt (2000) refers to some figures ranging from "400,000 to 600,000, from half a million to over 2 million" and around 1 million (p. 3). For a more reliable estimate, Goulden et al. used word families as

their unit of measurement and found that *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* contained 54,000 word families after they excluded "proper names and alternative spellings" (Schmitt, 2000, p. 3). This is not to say that a native speaker of English is expected to know all of these 54,000 word families as Nation and Waring (1997) review the literature concerning the vocabulary size of native speakers and conclude that according to "the best conservative rule of thumb," a native speaker approximately acquires 1,000 word families per year. Depending on how each researcher defines the term *word*, it is not surprising that one comes across different figures concerning the vocabulary size of native speakers. Schmitt (2000) reconciles the various figures and gives an estimate of 20,000 word families for the vocabulary size of an average native English-speaking university student. Theoretically speaking, the ultimate goal of ELLs is to match this vocabulary size of native speakers. The figure of 20,000 word families may under-represent the actual immensity of the challenge involved for the ELL. Schmitt (2000) uses an interesting analogy to show that this is in fact a heavy load. He states that it is like learning 20,000 telephone numbers, remembering the person and address connected to each number, and learning the home, work, and facsimile variants of that number. Nation and Waring (1997) and Schmitt (2000) agree that ELLs can increase their vocabulary size to that of the native speaker, but it is highly ambitious. To make matters worse, a word may have multiple meanings. Using space sampling, Nagy (1997) concludes from a study of *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* that there are, on average, 2.3 meanings for every dictionary entry. He states that a single word can take on its meaning from a range of senses due to contextual variation in meaning. Given this vocabulary load, it is not surprising that Schmitt (2008) refers to vocabulary learning as "one of the greatest hurdles" (p. 332) while Yang and Dai (2011) describe it as "the most sizeable and unmanageable component" (p. 61) in second or foreign language learning.

One way of surmounting this hurdle is through incidental vocabulary acquisition defined as "'picking up' words as a by-product of reading" (Pulido, 2003, p. 234). This means that the readers do not deliberately intend to learn new vocabulary words when they read and rely primarily on contextual clues to infer word meanings. Schmitt (2000) states that even though incidental learning lacks the "focused attention of explicit learning," it is nevertheless important in vocabulary

acquisition (p. 120). Neither explicit vocabulary instruction in the classroom nor memorization of lexical items can account for the impressive lexicon of advanced ELLs. This suggests that an implicit element of incidental learning is significantly involved in the overall vocabulary acquisition of ELLs. Nagy (1997) therefore states with great conviction that "the large reading vocabularies of superior students cannot be attributed to vocabulary instruction" (p. 72) alone. Literature provides rich context for incidental learning of unfamiliar lexical items. A study conducted by Pitts, White, and Krashen (1989) demonstrates the effectiveness of incidental learning in the case of ESL learners when asked to read excerpts from an Anthony Burgess' novella *A Clockwork Orange*. The participants (61 ESL learners in two experimental groups) were asked to read two chapters of *A Clockwork Orange* and were tested through a multiple-choice vocabulary test after a short interval. The test items comprised of "nadsat" words, which are "slang words of Russian origin," to ensure that any vocabulary gain was a direct result of reading the text since these words are not found in the participants' L1 (pp. 271-272). The study also included a control group (23 ESL learners) who did not read the text but took the vocabulary test. The purpose of the control group was to ensure that the selected vocabulary words were not part of the ESL students' existing lexicon, and this was confirmed in the posttest results as "the control group scored near zero" (p. 274). The subjects in the experimental group were not informed about the post-reading vocabulary test because then they might have focused their attention on vocabulary acquisition, which would have changed "the task from incidental to intentional learning" (p. 273). After their statistical analysis, the researchers conclude that the performance of the experimental groups suggest "that some nadsat vocabulary was acquired through reading" (p. 274). Apart from experimental studies, individual readers also realize on a personal basis that literature provides an elaborate context for vocabulary acquisition. Khatib (2011) relates a personal experience of his encounter with Joseph Conrad's (1990) *Heart of Darkness*, a text "replete with so many new words," and states that it has helped him tremendously in improving his English vocabulary (p. 203). Therefore, he favors the idea of using literature to provide the necessary context for learning new words.

Other oft-cited benefits of literature include engaging the affective domain of the learners and motivating them to read, nurturing critical thinking skills, and developing intercultural communication. Lang and Evans (2008) express

disappointment about the current situation of overemphasizing the development of cognitive skills at the cost of neglecting affective education in schools despite the fact that both parents and teachers acknowledge social and emotional goals as an important part of the curriculum. Lang and Evans see learning as "a construction of personal meanings" and therefore equate it to an affective experience (p. 109). It is difficult to provide a comprehensive definition of affective education, but Lang and Evans present its fundamental understanding as an area that concerns "human meanings, human understandings, and human relationships and experiences, and focuses on attitudes and values… self-concept and self-esteem" (p. 109). This definition seems to be in line with the purpose of literature, which seeks to explore human relations and societal values. According to Sidhu, Fook and Kaur (2011), learners involved in a study of literature encounter "a range of emotional experiences and expressions that encourages self-reflection" (p. 54). As a result, readers may empathize with or dissociate themselves from the literary characters and subsequently take a personal interest in the unfolding plot. This kind of engagement with the text is not usually present in other kinds of writing. Depending on the degree of cognitive and affective elements present in the reading process, Rosenblatt (1995) distinguishes between two types of reading: *efferent* reading and *aesthetic* reading. The author explains that the reader is engaged in efferent reading while dealing with informational texts such as medical reports or sociological essays because s/he "must focus attention primarily on the impersonal, publicly verifiable aspects of what the words evoke and must subordinate or push into the fringes of consciousness the affective aspects" (p. xvii). On the other hand, in aesthetic reading "the reader must broaden the scope of attention to include the personal, affective aura" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. xvii). Aesthetic reading, according to Rosenblatt, occurs when the reader is engaged with literature on a profound level.

Paying attention to the affective domain of the learners by introducing them to literature can also positively affect their motivation. According to Gardner and Lambert (1959), many researchers have agreed that motivation and interest are two important factors that play major roles in second language (L2) acquisition. Lima (2005) states that an encounter with literature brings a pleasant reading experience usually absent in informational texts. Khatib (2011) elaborates further on this point and describes literature as "a motivating tool" or "positive catalyst," (p. 204) capable

of increasing student motivation. McKay (1982) offers an explanation for the relationship between literature and the motivation to read by stating that literature provides the "affective, attitudinal and experiential factors" necessary for motivating EFL learners to read.

An active reader should also be able to think critically about literature. Muller and Williams (1994) stress that quality literature compels the readers to "enter into a dialogue with it" because its "themes, style, content, meanings, and structure" challenges them "intellectually and imaginatively" (p. 4). The authors maintain that this characteristic is usually absent in popular fiction and other forms of writing. They further state that increasing encounters with literature make it easier and easier for the reader to highlight elements "worthy of critical analysis and further study" (p. 9). The inherent quality of literature to encourage readers to think critically is also part of Van Peer's definition of literature discussed above. Van Peer explains that since literature is not restricted to immediate social concerns, it enjoys the liberty to address larger issues, inspiring the reader to reflect on a much deeper level.

Furthermore, encounters with literature can help develop intercultural awareness. Greenblatt (1995) maintains that culture and literature share an intrinsic relationship and thus he perceives literary texts as cultural entities that "are not merely cultural by virtue of reference to the world beyond themselves; they are cultural by virtue of social values and contexts that they have themselves successfully absorbed" (p. 227). Accordingly, literature becomes a representation of the particular culture in which it is produced. Given the relationship of culture and literature, literary texts might be used as a learning/teaching material in second/foreign language classrooms to build intercultural competence. Atay, Kurt, Camlibel, Ersin, and Kaslioglu (2009) mention that the goal of language learning has shifted away from communicative competence to focus on intercultural competence in recent times. Meyer (1991) defines intercultural competence as "the ability of a person to behave adequately in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes, and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures" (as cited in Atay et. al., 2009, p. 123). Nodeh and Kiani (2011) maintain that using novels in English language classrooms helps learners not only to improve their language skills but also to acquire cultural knowledge about the target culture. Burwitz-Melzer (2001) likewise maintains that a study of literature in language classroom allows learners to "experiment with different perspectives and

culturally different points of view as well as compare their own culture to the culture in the text" (p. 30). Therefore, classroom activities based on analyzing the cultural aspects of a literary text can help students learn about the values of a foreign culture. To reap these benefits of literature, language teachers do not have to limit their class readings to American and British literature only because present-day English literature is incredibly diverse as discussed below.

Global English Literature

The changing dynamics of the English language have affected the complementary notion of English literature too. The English language has become the linguistic medium for the expression of indigenous literature as seen in the case of Achebe. The burgeoning literary tradition in English makes it almost impossible to define the geographical and/or national limits of English literature. In the preface to the *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Greenblatt (2006) discusses the difficulty involved in classifying certain recognized authors of English literature as 'English' or 'British' by giving examples of Seamus Heaney and Joseph Conrad. He states that Heaney can be considered neither 'English' as he was born in Northern Ireland nor 'British' since it cannot be assumed that the British Empire was "the most salient fact about the language he speaks and writes in or the culture by which he was shaped" (p. xxxiv). Likewise, even though Conrad showed impressive feats of language use in his literary works written in English, he was of Polish descent and Polish was his native language, so it would be misleading to refer to him as an 'English author.' After these considerations, Greenblatt concludes that authors of English literature belong to a "linguistic community that stubbornly refuses to fit comfortably within any firm geographical or ethnic or national boundaries" (p. xxxiv). Since the "*national* conception of literary history" which held that "English Literature meant the literature of England or at most of Great Britain" is no longer true, Greeblatt (2006) states that they have anthologized works by non-English/British authors such as the South African Nadine Gordimer, the West Indian Derek Walcott, the Trinidadian V. S. Naipaul, and the Indian Salman Rushdie alongside the traditional British authors including William Butler Yeats, Virginia Woolf, and Dylan Thomas in the eighth edition of their anthology (emphasis in the original, p. xxxv). Reconfirming the claim that English literature can no longer be attributed to a single nation, Greenblatt (2006) describes it as a "global phenomenon." In our

contemporary world, we usually speak of English as a global language, but it is important to note that literature in English is as global as the language itself.

Nonnative English literature. As evident, the new additions to the authors' lists of the British anthology include nonnative speakers of English such as Salman Rushdie. That they are anthologized alongside native speakers of English indicates that these two groups of authors are of equal rank for the canonists. However, given the hierarchical views related to different varieties of the English language and the relationship of language with literature, literature written in English but stemming from nonnative English speaking contexts might be criticized for its inferior language quality compared to literature that originate from the inner circle. So the English used in the Indian author Arundathi Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* might be regarded of an "inferior" quality compared to that in the English novelist Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* (This is my own hypothetical example). Talib (1992) states that practitioners in the field of ELT perceive literature by nonnative speakers of English, referred to as "non-native English literature," to be of "substandard" quality (p. 51). Talib's speculation takes us back to the discussion of New Englishes and their perceived inferior status compared to "native" varieties of English as he adds further that instructors could believe exposing students to "a non-native variety of the language in a literary work may actually teach the students a 'substandard' version of the language" (p. 51). It is important to find out whether this is actually the case. If language instructors discriminate between literature by native writers and literature by nonnative writers, it would be difficult to provide EFL students with culturally-familiar literature in English (CFLE).

To summarize, literature does not serve the same purpose as institutional texts. Reading literature nurtures critical thinking, helps ELLs build their English lexicon, engages the affective domains of the language learners, motivates them to take interest in reading, and develops intercultural awareness. Literary texts were given precedence during the flourishing days of GTM and were driven out of the language classroom with the decline of GTM. This was an unjustified move because literature was not a product of GTM but rather a rich source of language that could be used in any teaching approach. Nevertheless, literature has recently found its way back to the language classroom.

As English became a global language, its literary canon was globalized too. Writers from African and Asian countries adopted English as their mode of literary expression. Language teachers, therefore, do not have to focus on American and British literature only. Literature that stems from nonnative contexts is more likely to be written in a nativized variety of English. If language instructors discriminate between the native and nonnative varieties of English, they may have reservations about using literature by nonnative writers.

The position that literature in nonnative varieties of English is inferior to literature in native varieties of English is invalid. It has been established in the elaborate discussions of Kachru and Kandiah that there is no basis to separate native and nonnative varieties of English in two classes. Therefore, despite the possible perception that literature in English by nonnative writers utilizes a watered down version of the language, there is no theoretical ground to support this claim. In fact, reading literature by nonnative speakers of English could be in the best interests of EFL students. If the writer and the reader share the same cultural background, the reader should find it easier to understand the text as discussed in the following section.

Using Background Knowledge in Reading Comprehension

It is important to begin with a discussion of reading comprehension in order to understand how the reader's background knowledge plays a role in comprehending a given text.

Frank Smith's Theory of Reading Comprehension

Borrowing the terms "transmitter," "receiver," "uncertainty," "information," and "redundancy" from communication theory, Smith (1971) offers a very lucid explanation of reading comprehension. He states that to comprehend a letter or a word, the reader has to choose from a definite or indefinite number of alternatives, referred to as uncertainty. The larger the number of alternatives we have, the greater the uncertainty is. On the other hand, uncertainty is inversely proportional to "information," which is defined as "the reduction of uncertainty" (Smith, 1971, p. 16). Smith (1971) explains that while the number of existing alternatives provides a measure of uncertainty, information seeks to eliminate alternatives. He adds further that one should discuss uncertainty and information in terms of proportion as it is not

easy to determine the exact amount of uncertainty or information an individual might have. For instance, it might not be possible to determine the amount of uncertainty a person may have about the identity of the author who wrote *Heart of Darkness*, but it can be inferred that his/her uncertainty is reduced if it is revealed in another message that the author was a man. The uncertainty is reduced further if we give out more information such as his place of origin and the period in which he lived. With more information, we can eliminate more alternatives and therefore reduce uncertainty. The goal is to reduce the number of alternatives to one which would be considered the correct answer (Smith, 1971).

Even though reading comprehension appears as a simple and straightforward process, it is not an easy task, at least for developing readers. Smith (1971) perceives the writer as a transmitter of information and the reader as the receiver of that information, while both participants are engaged in "an act of communication" (pp. 12-13). He states that comparatively speaking the reader is at a much more disadvantaged position. Writers can limit themselves to their existing knowledge of vocabulary and syntax, freely choose how to organize their thoughts, and can afford to be discursive because the intended message is clear in their minds. Readers, on the other hand, are required to have linguistic competence that matches at least that of the writer, and they might even have to interpret content and structure unfamiliar to them. The reader must assume an active role in the reading process in order to comprehend the text, and Smith (1971) states that skilled readers utilize redundancy to curb their dependence on visual information or the printed words whilst comprehending the written text. Redundancy occurs when two or more sources of information eliminate the same alternatives (Smith, 1971). He lists visual, orthographic, syntactic, and semantic information as four ways in which readers can reduce their uncertainty. In addition to linguistic knowledge, Smith (1971) maintains that knowledge of the world is another source of information that readers can draw on. This type of knowledge, also commonly referred to as background knowledge, is not contained in the text but stored in the reader as evident in the following discussion on cognitive schemas and schema theory.

Cognitive Schemata and Schema Theory

In 1952, the Swiss developmental psychologist Jean Piaget (1896-1890) advanced a theory of cognitive development in which *schemas* (or schemata) referred

to mental representations people developed and used to make sense of the world around them (Nevid, 2009). This is not to say that these mental representations are fixed over long periods of time, seeing that Garro (2000) defines schemas as "generic mental representations that actively incorporate incoming information and are modified by new experiences" (p. 277). Despite this flexibility, schemas are relatively stable structures. Strauss and Quinn (1997) distinguish between schemas and meanings:

> This distinction between relatively stable cognitive networks and the every-changing reactions that are the response of these networks to particular events is an important one … [and] we will use separate terms for each: "cultural models," "schemas," "networks," "understandings, "knowledge" … for the relatively stable cognitive structures; "meanings," or "interpretations," for the thoughts, feelings and less conscious associations evoked when people's schemas meet the world at a given moment (as cited in Garro, 2000, p. 287).

That is, a meaning formulated today can change tomorrow based personal circumstances, but this is not true in the case of schemas. Strauss and Quinn (1997) suggest another aspect of schemas when they refer to them as "networks of strongly connected cognitive elements" (as cited in Garro, 2000, p. 285). Hence, schemas should be seen as interconnected blocks rather than disconnected entities. Having learned about the nature of schemas as dynamic yet stable interconnected mental abstractions, we turn to the service they provide. Referring to the works of Casson (1983) and Neisser (1976), Garro aptly describes the function of schemas: "Schemas provide a simplified or prototypical conceptual framework integral to perceiving, organizing, interpreting, remembering, representing, making inferences about, and acting in the world" (p. 285). Essentially, schemas are cognitive lenses through which we interpret and make sense of the world around us.

The concept of schemas led to the development of schema theory. Pardo (2004) briefly summarizes schema theory, according to which individuals systematically organize their knowledge of the world into schemas. She adds that due to the limited capacity of short-term memory, these schemas are thrust into long-term memory and when the person encounters related concepts in the outside world, the relative schemas are retrieved from long-term memory and placed in short-term memory, wherein incoming information is combined with the schemas to create meaning. What Pardo describes is essentially an act of remembering which according to the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) and the British

psychologist Fredrick Barlett (1886-1969) is a reconstructive process affected by external social forces rather than simple retrieval of information. Garro (2000) mentions that Barlett's key argument according to which remembering is "typically reconstructive rather than simply reproductive" was largely neglected until mid 1960s due to the rise of "behaviorism and verbal learning theory," but it was soon revisited and studied to the extent that it is now "a central plank of contemporary cognitive theory" (p. 278).

Both Halbwachs and Barlett are given credit for exploring "the social nature of remembering" (Garro, 2000, p. 270). Halbwachs wrote two important books in the first half of the twentieth century discussing a theory of memory shaped by social influences: *The Social Framework of Memory* published in 1925 and *The Collective Memory* published posthumously in 1950. Influenced by contemporary anthropologists such as Haddon and Rivers, Barlett is generally acknowledged as the pioneer who utilized the schema concept in theorizing the mental construction of memory (referred to as memory schema) in a social milieu (Rice, 1980). It appears, however, that Halbwachs preceded Bartlett in his theorizing as Ross (1992) points out that he first advanced the notion of 'collective memory' and Bartlett later studied Halbwachs' earlier work, *The Social Framework of Memory*, to imply that the author's ideas indicate that "social organization gives a persistent framework into which all detailed recall must fit" (as cited in Ross, 1991, p. 151). Considering that both scholars were contemporaries, one assumes that they worked together to study the highly complex cognitive activity of remembering. Halbwachs states that the "mind reconstructs its memories under the pressure of society" and in the process "past is not preserved but reconstructed on the basis of the present" (as cited in Garro, 2000, p. 278). Another important element in Halbwachs' elaboration is the strong influence of the society in the act of remembering. He explains that by becoming members of social groups such as families and religious sects, individuals partake in "collective memory" and obtain the "social frameworks" that they draw upon later when they engage in the act of remembering (as cited in Garro, 2000). Consequently, he rejects the notion of purely individual memory, as he stresses that even "our most personal feelings and thoughts originate in definite social milieus and circumstances" (as cited in Garro, 2000, p. 277). These views of Halbwachs' were largely confirmed by Barlett who first ventured to examine remembering as what Garro (2000) calls "an

individual-level cognitive activity" but soon discovered that "in numerous cases, social factors were playing a large part" (as cited in Garro, 2000, p. 277). Rice (1980) therefore states that the cultural component was foregrounded in Barlett's concept of memory schema since its early days of inception.

Cultural Schema Theory

The emphasis on culture in schema theory was taken forward. Since researchers in cognitive anthropology also share the common interest to explore "the organization and use of human knowledge" (Rice, 1980, p. 152), it is not surprising that anthropologists too worked with the concept of schema. The implications of schema theory combined with the influences of culture on human cognition led to new interests in the fields of anthropology and cognitive sciences. In 1980s, Romney and Batchelder proposed The Cultural Consensus Theory (CCT), which grew in popularity and found many applications particularly in the fields of social and cognitive sciences (Batchelder, 2009). CCT works on the assumption that "culture exists in the minds of members of the culture" and that individuals know about different aspects of their culture to varying degrees (Romney, 1994 as cited in Garro, 2000, p. 280). Romney et al (1986) aptly summarize the gist of CCT

> The central idea in our theory is the use of the pattern of agreement or consensus among informants to make inferences about their differential competence in knowledge of the shared information pool constituting culture. We assume that the correspondence between the answers of any two informants is a function of the extent to which each is correlated with the truth (as cited in Garro, 2000, p. 281).

Garro (2000) points out that according to Weller and Romney (1988) "truth" refers to "culturally correct answers" (p. 281). That cultural beliefs are shared is not only theoretically convincing but also empirically proven.

Garro (2000) used insights from CCT to investigate "cultural knowledge about illness" in a village in west-central Mexico. He found that on average research participants "knew" the "culturally shared answers" for 87 percent of the questions and after taking into consideration the likely instances of guessing, the percentage decreased to 64 percent (p. 282). Even after the numerical deduction, it is apparent that the percentage of culturally shared answers is quite significant and hence the researcher concludes, "there is a high level of sharing in cultural knowledge about illness" (p. 282). A concept related to CCT is called cultural models, also referred to

as cultural schemas. Garro (2000) explains that cultural model theorists generally rely on the analysis of qualitative data in the field of anthropology to extract cultural models from the ordinary discourse of the people. While CCT relies on quantitative analysis of research data, cultural models theory (CMT) adopts a more quantitative approach. The important point to note is that the research on memory schema, and the findings of CCT and CMT provide cogent evidence that cultures exist and they strongly influence the individuals' cognitive processes of perception and interpretation.

An overt emphasis on society and culture does not necessarily mean an absolute rejection of the individual. Halbwachs' emphasis on the significance of society or group membership in the construction of memory leads Ross (1991) to conclude that the sociologist maintained a dogmatic position according to which "*all* memory content is socially determined" suggesting that not even a small fraction of memory is individual (p. 152, emphasis in original). Nevertheless, Ross (1991) acknowledges the fact that "personal memory can be influenced by group identifications and currents of social thought" (p. 151). This means that Ross (1991) does not reject the notion that social influences play a noticeable role in the shaping of memory content. Considering the intrinsic relationship shared by the individual and the society, this truism is too palpable to be overlooked. It would be more appropriate to take into consideration both the larger culture and the individual. Rice (1980) points out that Piaget's study concerned the general cognitive development of children and so the development of the schemas that he discussed is considered a universal cognitive ability found in all humans. In addition to these schemata, Rice refers to two other types of schemata: "idiosyncratic schemata" and "culturally derived schemata" that can simply be referred to as cultural schemata (pp. 153-154). Idiosyncratic schemata are very specific as they are based on the erratic experience of the individuals whereas even though cultural schemata are likewise experientially developed, they have "a wider distribution," meaning, shared by more people (Rice, 1980, pp. 153-154). In the field of anthropology, Garro (2000) states that the distinction between individual and cultural schemas is a general point of consensus among all schema theorists despite their different research orientations. Agreeing with Rice (1980), Strauss and Quinn (1997) maintain that the only difference between cultural schema and other schemas is that the former is shared by a group of people,

"Schemas unique to individuals are built up from idiosyncratic experience, while those shared by individuals are built up from various kinds of common experience" (as cited in Garro, 2000, p. 285). Rice mentions that if we were to place the three types of schemata on a continuum, Piaget's universal cognitive schemata and idiosyncratic schemata would appear at two ends of the continuum while cultural schemata would be placed at the center.

   Defining culture. Given the significance of the term in Cultural Schema Theory, it is important to define "culture" before proceeding. The term 'culture' is a modern concept that emerged in 16th-century Europe, and it is derived from the Latin root *cultuvare* which means "to cultivate" (Bennabi, 2003, p. 14). Smith (2001) refers to Kroeber and Kluckhohn's seminal work *Culture: A critical review of concepts and definitions* to trace the subtle historical shifts in the uses of the term culture from early days of the English language until late 19th century. Both Bennabi and Smith state that 'culture' was closely associated with agriculture in the olden days when Europe was essentially "a civilization of agriculture" (Bennabi, 2003, p. 15). In addition to agriculture, Smith (2001) mentions that culture was associated with religion too which explains the present-day use of the term 'cult.' Bennabi continues that later the French used 'culture' as a metaphor to describe the intellectual outburst during the European Renaissance (p. 15). Smith (2001) sees this meaning of the development of the human intellect through learning, which was in use from the 16th up until 19th century, as "a metaphorical extension of the idea of improving land and farming practices" (p. 1). Smith's interpretation becomes apparent if we see the human mind as a fertile land that can be 'cultivated' through learning to attain higher cognitive levels. This use of the term culture is not entirely archaic as Smith (2001) points out that we can still refer to someone as "cultured" or "having no culture." He suggests that the meaning of 'culture' was slightly restricted with the onset of the Industrial Revolution seeing that it was mainly associated with spiritual development as opposed to material change. Smith (2001) ends his discussion of the historical development of the term 'culture' with the comment that the terms "folk culture" and "national culture" are reminiscent of Romantic nationalism in the late 19th century. These different meanings of "culture" developed at different stages in history are fascinating but none of them is intended by the term as used in this research study.

Bennabi (2003) mentions that the definition of culture was developed further from a scientific point of view in the 19th century due to burgeoning insights from fields such as anthropology, ethnography, psychology in addition to the central field of sociology. In 1957, Goodenough defined culture as "whatever it is one must know in order to behave appropriately in any of the roles assumed by any member of a society" (as cited in Garro, 2000, p. 279). Although culture is a complex term and its meaning varies across disciplines, Edgar and Sedggwick (1999) point out that the core meaning of culture in cultural studies corresponds with its conceptual meaning in the field of cultural anthropology. According to Smith (2001), the anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) reviewed the academic definitions of culture and classified them into six categories. Three out of those six categories are relevant to formulate a working definition of culture for the purposes of this research. *Historical definitions* view "culture as a heritage which is passed on over time through the generations;" *Normative definitions* regard culture as a mode of life that drafts "patterns of concrete behavior and action;" and *Genetic definitions* look into the origin of culture supposing that it either emerges from human interaction or continues to survive as "the product of intergenerational transmission" (Smith, 2001, p. 3). It seems as if D'Andrade (1981) synthesized these three views to formulate his definition of culture as a "socially transmitted information pool" which becomes "the source of most of the shared representations and procedures with which we do our thinking" (as cited in Garro, 2000, p. 280). D'Andrade's definition provides most of the elements for the definition of culture adopted in this research.

Another point to address would be the changing nature of culture. Even though culture is a mode of life that drafts patterns of behavior transmitted as heritage from one generation to the next, cultural behaviors may not be consecutive in their transmission and therefore culture cannot be regarded as a monolithic entity above time and space. Subscribing to the dialogic perspective of the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, Bostad, Brandist, Evensen, and Faber (2004) regard culture as a "network of overlapping discussions and tendencies, attitudes and ideas, changing over time" (p. 2). Change in cultural values over time becomes understandable if we perceive individuals as active performers, not passive receivers of cultural beliefs. The history of a certain society reveals that "just as it has a graveyard for its dead people, so too it has another for its dead ideas – the ideas that no longer have a social

role" and such ideas are incapable of "specifying certain behavior and a way of life" (Bennabi, 2003, p. 31). Female infanticide in pre-Islamic Arabia would be a good example of a cultural belief that no longer enjoys social currency. In other words, the culture of a society appears to be in a continual dialogue with its members. Confirming this reciprocal relationship of the society and the individuals, Bennabi (2003) defines culture "as a mutual relationship that determines the social behavior of the individual by the style of life in society, as that style is determined by the behavior of the individual" (p. 28). The author further adds that the individual and the society are united by the process of enculturation. Therefore, sidelining either of the two forces results in "limping theories that 'leap' but cannot 'walk' properly" (Bennabi, 2003, pp. 28-29). Keeping in view all of these ideas related to different aspects of culture, it is befitting to conclude that emerging from a sociohistorical context, culture largely marked by geographical boundaries is a changing social reality that outlines socially acceptable behavior. This meaning of culture is also generally adopted by the cultural schema theory.

Using culture as a source of knowledge. As a cultural product, literature reflects a specific culture. But in order to foreground the universality of literature, there has been an indirect attempt to push its cultural specificity to the periphery. I. A. Richards who taught in the Cambridge English school in the 1920s proposed Practical Criticism, an analytical approach that pressed for close study of the text independent of its sociohistorical context (Barry, 2002). This viewpoint of 'close-reading' was advanced further by another Cambridge pioneer F.R. Leavis in 1930s. Leavis also adopted an overtly moral approach to literature because he maintained that "its purpose is to teach us about life, to transmit humane values" (Barry, 2002, p. 16). These ideas that emerged at the turn of the twentieth century were actually to become the core principles of a literary theory referred to as liberal humanism. Barry (2009) reviews the "ten tenets" of liberal humanism which include the underlying assumption that quality literature addresses the unchanging elements in human nature and therefore transcends time and space. Due to this understanding, liberal humanist critics generally favored isolating the literary text from its history and context.

However, with the advent of subsequent literary theories such as structuralism, modernism, Marxism, postmodernism, feminism and postcolonialism, not only the larger context of the text in terms of its structural features but also its sociocultural

and political frameworks were brought to the forefront. Al-Samman (2005) mentions, for instance, that the postcolonial Syrian writer Hannah Mina firmly believes that "literature should be written for the people and should derive its legitimacy from addressing the problems of the people, and not that of the ivory tower of art for art's sake" (p. 176). Mina's position as a staunch advocate of social realism is evident in his literary works. For this reason, Baym (2008) acknowledges the significance of particular sociocultural backdrops in influencing the authors' literary production and accordingly states that "writers should be understood in relation to their cultural and historical situations" (p. xxx). This is not to say that all authors from a certain sociocultural setting will produce literary works with identical themes because individual authors' idiosyncratic schemas will also play a role in the interpretation of their ideas. At the same time, we learn from Cultural Schema Theory that member of the same society have shared cultural knowledge in common. Therefore, the fact that authors from the same society share the same or similar cultural schemas will lend some kind of homogeneity to their works. Barry (2002) lists three contexts that can guide the interpretation of literature. As the name suggests, *Socio-political* context concerns the social and political backdrop in which the text was written. *Literary-historical* context examines how previous authors and their works have influenced the literary piece under study. Finally, the *Autobiographical* context looks at the details of the author's life. In this research, we are interested in the sociopolitical and cultural context of literature. Having discussed the close relationship of the authors to their works, it is time to turn to the recipients of these works.

So what happens when these culturally charged literary works reach the readers? As illustrated by Cultural Models Theory and Cultural Consensus Theory, people from the same background have shared cultural knowledge. This knowledge according to schema theory is systematically organized into cognitive schemas. An offshoot of schema theory, cultural schema theory holds that these stored cultural schemas play an active role in the interpretation of everyday encounter. In the context of this research, it would be the reader's encounter with literature. As a cultural product, literature becomes the vehicle that carries a particular culture. Therefore, Shanahan (1997) states that "literature carries with it strong undercurrents of the time and place in which it was written" (p. 167). The culture of a given literary text would be that of the author which is in turn defined by his very specific idiosyncratic

schemas and the more general shared cultural schemas. So culture too can be a source of information to the reader and thus positively contribute in the reading comprehension by reducing uncertainty. In fact, Smith (1971) hints in this direction when he mentions world knowledge as a source of information that readers can rely upon in addition to knowledge of the language. But there is a caveat to this: readers should share the same culture with the writers in order to have this advantage. When the readers and the writers share the same cultural schemas, the former should find it easier to comprehend the latter's work.

The opposite is true when readers and writers come from different cultural backgrounds and so their cultural schemas differ. A cursory review of the literature shows that researchers refer to this problem with a variety of names including 'cultural barrier' and 'cultural gap' when referring to EFL students reading British or American literature. Lima (2005) asserts that EFL learners lack the required cultural competence necessary to comprehend American or British literature. Given the dynamic nature of schemas, it is not impossible to accomplish the task of building this competence. However, it is important to remember that schemas are relatively stable cognitive structures and thus developing them to accommodate new cultural knowledge requires more time and concentrated stimuli from the outside world than say watching a movie set in a foreign cultural backdrop. Lima (2005) adds that in the presence of preexisting cultural schemas, the task of building new cultural schemas almost becomes an insurmountable obstacle. In this scenario, the potential advantage of relying on culture as a source of information during the reading process in fact becomes a disadvantage. Since the writer and the reader have different cultural schemas, the reader's cultural knowledge will not serve as a useful source of information and therefore cannot facilitate the reading comprehension process. Rice (1980) shows the significance of the schema concept through an experimental study that measures "the effects of cultural schemata on the comprehension and recall of foreign stories" (p. 152). Despite the college students' attempt to be accurate, the results of the study demonstrate that their recall of narratives from a different cultural context is a "systematic distortion of the original so as to conform with their own cultural expectations about the form and content of stories" and hence the researcher concludes that "comprehension cannot proceed independent of cultural influences" (p. 153). Rice's study provides empirical evidence to support the claim that lack of

cultural competence hinders comprehension of literature based in unfamiliar cultural contexts.

To counter this problem, EFL readers can be presented with literary works of writers who share the same or a similar cultural background with them. This type of literature is usually referred to as "culturally-relevant" literature. In terms of accuracy, this might not be an apt term to use because it suggests that the reader relates to, connects with, or responds favorably to literature that stems from a familiar culture. To make this claim would be an overgeneralization. Acknowledging that every reader has idiosyncratic schemas specific to him or her makes it impossible to determine that every reader in a group shall relate to a selected piece of literature. We can, however, speak of culturally-familiar literature regardless of whether or not individual readers relate to it on personal basis. This means that the embedded culture in the literary piece will be familiar to the reader if s/he shares the same cultural background with the author.

Given the current global status of the English language, providing culturally-familiar literature to EFL learners is not a difficult task. As discussed earlier, the geographical expansion of the English language broadened the horizons of English literature as many nonnative writers adopted the language for practical reasons despite the resentment associated with its colonial past. O'Sullivan (1991) comments on the massive expansion of the English language in the modern world, "[English has been] extended, modified, and elaborated to serve the purposes of revealing local, national individual sensibilities" in literature written by non-native speakers from the former British colonies such as the Indian subcontinent, East and West Africa, and the Carribean (para. 15). Even though these nonnative authors now shared the same language with their British and American counterparts, the embedded culture in their literary works was evidently different. They used a global language to speak about their local cultural experiences. Many Arab literary writers have also adopted English as their mode of expression. Hisham Matar's (2007) novel, *In the Country of Men*, the story of a young boy named Suleiman set in the Libyan context is an example of culturally-familiar literature that can be read by EFL students in the Arab world.

Additionally, EFL students can be presented with culturally-familiar literature in English translation. Venuti (2009) discusses the issue of translation in "world literature" courses in western universities. She mentions that these courses "gather

texts originally written in various foreign languages" and the instructors have to "rely on translations out of sheer necessity" (p. 86). The underlying reason is obvious because individual students cannot be expected to have mastered several languages so that they could read the original texts. Venuti (2009) explains however that "this inevitability need not be lamented as a distortion or dilution of foreign literatures" because using translations can be perceived as a means of "enriching literary study in unexpected ways" (p. 86). In support of using translations, she adds further that "teaching in translation is not the same as raising the issue of translation in the classroom" (p. 87) or perhaps in a translation course where the topic is problematized and dealt with in a systematic way. Even though the purpose would differ, translated literature could also be used in language classrooms. Gray (2005) states that literature translated from the students' first language is an "excellent but frequently overlooked" resource in English language classrooms. He explains further in the light of research in second language acquisition that students will easily understand the themes, plots, and characters of such culturally familiar narratives and therefore find it easier to comprehend the text and retain the linguistic information. An example of CFLET for Arab students would be the Egyptian author Naguib Mahfouz's novel *Harafish* which is widely read in its English translation.

Apart from these two expected sources of CFL for EFL students, a third good source would be literature by native speakers of English. For instance, the American writer Jean Sasson's *Mayada: Daughter of Iraq* can be read by Arab EFL students. In short, EFL students might be provided with CFL from three sources:

1. Culturally-familiar literature by native speakers of English
2. Nonnative Culturally Familiar Literature in English (NCFLE)
3. Culturally-familiar literature in English translation (CFLET)

To review the main ideas of this section, readers can reduce their uncertainty whilst trying to comprehend a given text by drawing on their background knowledge according to Frank Smith's theory of reading comprehension. This background knowledge is stored in cognitive schemas. The discernment of cognitive schemas led to the development of schema theory which maintains that individuals organize their knowledge in mental structures called schemas and draw on relevant schemas to make sense of incoming information from the outside world. In the context of this research, the incoming information would be the written words of literary texts. Cultural

knowledge is a subcategory of background knowledge stored in cultural schemas. The significance of culture in understanding the world around us led to the development of Cultural Schema Theory. As a cultural product, literature is interwoven with culture. Therefore, cultural knowledge plays an important role in comprehension of literary texts.

Furthermore, comprehension of a given text involves remembering the written information. Smith (2004) states that remembering is an important factor in reading comprehension. The theorizing of the act of remembering by Barlett and Halbwachs suggests that it is significantly influenced by the individuals' cultural knowledge stored in their cultural schemas. This means that when EFL students read literature, they draw on their cultural schemas to make sense of the text. In addition, they do not remember the details of the text objectively because their remembering is influenced by their innate cultural knowledge. Consequently, whether the cultural knowledge of the readers can aid or hinder their comprehension depends on whether they share similar or different cultural schemas with the writer of the given text.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter reviews the research instruments used to collect data, elaborates on the process of data collection and briefly explains the methods employed for data analysis.

To answer the first and second research questions (How do EFL instructors at the post-secondary level in the UAE view the use of literature in the language classroom? and What are the perspectives of EFL instructors at the post-secondary level in the UAE on having students read culturally-familiar literature?), a questionnaire (see Appendix A) was developed to gather data.

Educational Institutions

Data was collected from two higher educational institutions. The questionnaire was administered in the American University of Sharjah (AUS) and University of Sharjah (UoS). These two universities in UAE were chosen because they are similar in many respects. Information about the demographics of the two universities was retrieved from their respective websites in the Fall 2012 semester. The multicultural demographic picture of the country is reflected in the student bodies and the composition of faculty members in both universities. The student populations of AUS and UoS consist of Arab nationalities including Emaratis, Jordanians, Syrians, Palestinians, Iraqis and non-Arab nationalities such as Iranians, Indians and Pakistanis. Out of 10,833 students in UoS, 91% of the students are Arabs while out of 5,259 students in AUS, 61% of the students are Arabs. As for their faculties, 53% of the faculty members in AUS are either Americans or Canadians whereas 20% faculty members at UoS are either Americans or Europeans. The rest of the faculty in both universities includes Arabs and other nationalities not specified on their websites.

English is the language of instruction in both universities with the exception of the College of Law in UoS and certain Arabic courses offered by the Department of Arabic in AUS. AUS and UoS offer a wide range of degrees in a variety of disciplines at undergraduate and graduate levels. In terms of admission to undergraduate programs, both universities require a high school diploma. The minimum average in UoS varies according to the college to which the student applies, but the mean percentage is 80% which is also the minimum average required by AUS.

Once their application is approved, student applicants are required to take either the TOEFL or IELTS test (AUS recently approved IELTS in the second half of the Spring 2013 semester). UoS requires a minimum score of 500 on the paper-based TOEFL test and 5.0 on IELTS while AUS requires slightly higher scores, 530 on TOEFL and 6.0 on IELTS. Student applicants who score below the minimum score are advised to join an intensive English program offered by the English Language Center (ELC) in UoS and the Achievement Academy Bridge Program (AABP) in AUS.

Both AUS and UoS have a department for English Studies in their respective College of Arts and Sciences. The Department of English Language and Literature at UoS offers Bachelor's degree program in English Language and Literature and MA in Translation. The Department of English at AUS offers Bachelor's degree program in English Language and Literature and MA in TESOL. Apart from their own content courses, the departments of English in both universities offer several service courses that can be classified either as English for Academic Purposes or as English for Specific Purposes. The related Department of Writing Studies (DWS) at AUS shares the load of these service courses with the English department in addition to offering beginning- and intermediate-level writing courses.

The instructors who participated in this study belong to different departments in AUS and UoS. The questionnaire was distributed to all of the English instructors in five departments: ELC and The Department of English Language and Literature at UoS and AABP, DWS, and The Department of English at AUS. After eliminating three instructors from the English department at AUS since they made up the three members on the research committee, there were 140 potential respondents in total.

To answer the third research question (Does reading culturally-familiar literature positively impact reading comprehension more than reading culturally-unfamiliar literature?), this study involved examining whether reading culturally-familiar literature positively impacted EFL students' comprehension. The selected students were EFL learners from the AABP at AUS. The target population of the student participants was chosen primarily due to convenience. Having worked in the AABP as a graduate student assistant for the past 2 years, I was familiar with the system and had colleagues willing to help me in the research study.

A brief overview of AABP is important to put things into perspective. As mentioned earlier, AUS student applicants who do not obtain the minimum score

of 530 on the TOEFL test or 6.0 on IELTS may enter the AABP. In the AABP, students have 15 hours of language instruction per week in their English Language Preparation (ELP) courses and 3 hours of independent learning in LEC. In addition, AABP allows students to take preparatory Math, Physics, Calculus, and University Preparation courses. Unlike their ELP course, these general courses have only three class hours per week which indicates that language learning is the central focus of the program. Once approved to join the AABP, students are assigned one of the three levels depending on their TOEFL scores: ELP001, ELP100, ELP200. In their ELP classes, students are also assigned their reading levels which will be their guide when they select to read books from LEC. ELP200 students are generally assumed to be upper-intermediate or advanced-level readers, but it is different with ELP100 students. It is believed that the TOEFL score might not be an accurate indication of the student's reading level because TOEFL is a test of general proficiency that includes other language skills too. Therefore, students in ELP100 are required to take a vocabulary test (see Appendix B) in the beginning of the course which determines their reading level. Based on the results of their vocabulary tests, individual students are assigned their reading level using a chart (see Appendix C). Generally, ELP100 students include intermediate-level readers but there could also be upper-intermediate and advanced-level readers. The instructor in-charge of the extensive reading program in the AABP also taught an ELP100 section. She mentioned that she normally has few advanced-level readers in her class. In the current semester, for example, she had 5 students who qualified as advanced-level readers. In fact, she added that in her teaching experience she has had ELP100 students who read unadapted novels for native speakers. This partly explains why every semester a number of ELP100 students get the required TOEFL score, take an exit exam prepared by the AABP faculty, and start their undergraduate programs without having to pass the next level of ELP200. For the purposes of this research, all upper-intermediate to advanced-level readers could participate regardless of whether they were ELP100 or ELP200 students. Part of the research involving the students was designed as an exploratory study whereby students were required to read two short stories and take the corresponding reading comprehension tests in turn. The majority of students in the AABP speak in their native languages, mainly Arabic, and prefer it in most social settings.

Research Participants

All in all, 68 instructors from AUS and UoS and 76 students from the AABP, AUS participated in this study.

English Instructors

Table 1 below shows the diverse educational and cultural backgrounds of the 68 instructors who participated in this study.

Table 1: Background of Instructors

Ethnic background	African	Arab	Asian	European	N. American
	(1.5%)	(26.9%)	(9.0%)	(20.9%)	(32.8%)
Teaching experience	9-11 years	6-8 years	3-5 years	0-2 years	
	(18%)	(12%)	(12%)	(3%)	
English language speaker	NSE*	NNSE**			
	(53.7%)	(46.3%)			
Courses taught (Language and/or Literature)	Language	Both			
	(86%)	(14%)			
Academic qualification in literature	Yes	No			
	(56%)	(44%)			

* Native speaker of English

** Nonnative speaker of English

As Table 1 indicates, native speakers of English outnumbered non-native speakers of English. 53.7% of the instructors were native speakers of English while 46.3% were nonnative speakers of English. As for their ethnic origins, North Americans formed the largest group followed by Arabs. The six respondents (not included in Table 1) who chose 'Other' as their answer choice described their

ethnicities as "Armenian," "Mixed European/Arab," "Bi-cultural," "Australasian," "Hispanic," and "Kurdish." All of the instructors had either a graduate degree or a terminal degree in the field of language and education. The majority of the instructors had considerable number of teaching experience in the ES/FL context. 58% had 12+ years of teaching experience, 18% had 9-11 years of teaching experience, 12% had 6-8 years of teaching experience, 12% had 3-5 years of teaching experience, and only 3% had 0-2 years of teaching experience. The majority of the instructors (86%) taught only language course while some taught both language and literature courses. In terms of the level of students that they taught in their current teaching positions, the instructors formed a very diverse set of respondents who taught from Foundation students registered in Intensive English Programs to Freshman or first-year students to Sophomore or second-year students to Junior or third-year students to Senior or fourth-year students to graduate students. 56% of the instructors acknowledged having an academic qualification in the field of literature whether in the form of an undergraduate degree, a graduate degree, a terminal degree, or any combination of these.

Students

Student participants came from different national backgrounds. Figure 1 below shows the nationalities of the students.
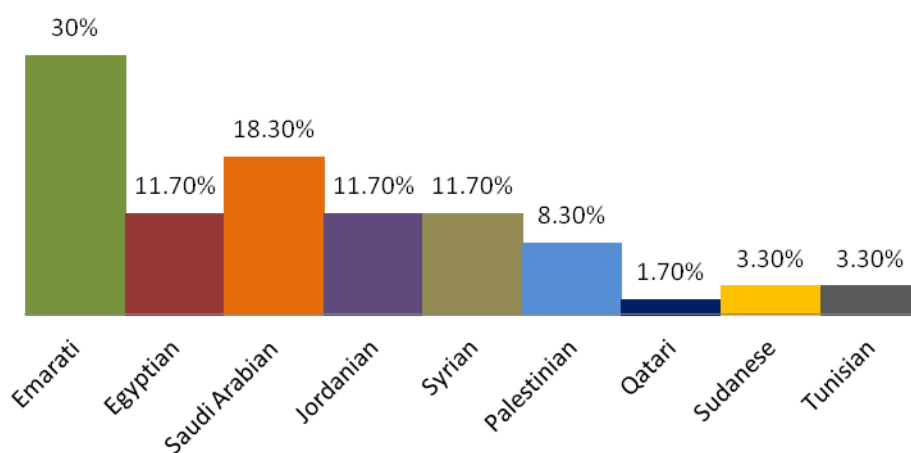

Figure 1: Nationalities of Student Participants

As Figure 1 indicates, the majority of the student participants were Emaratis followed by Saudi Arabians. Equal numbers of Egyptian, Jordanian, and Syrian students participated. Palestinian students were slightly smaller in number than these three nationalities. Smaller number of Sudanese and Tunisian students (3.3% each) participated, and Qataris made the smallest group. The student participants were all Arabs with Arabic as their first language. They included both males and females. They studied in public or private schools and their ages ranged between 17 and 21. The mean age of the student participants was 18-years old. None of the students had ever lived in the USA.   All of the participants were either upper-intermediate or advanced-level readers. They had spent from one to two semesters in the AABP.

<center>**Research Instruments**</center>

There were two instruments: a questionnaire administered to instructors and a reading comprehension test administered to students. The questionnaire was designed to learn about the views of EFL instructors related to the topic of using literature in language teaching and the use of culturally-familiar literature in the EFL classroom. Student participants were required to read a short story based in the Arab context and another short story based in the American context and take a comprehension test after reading each short story.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire (see Appendix A) was designed to learn about the views of as many instructors as possible. Dornyei (2003) mentions that questionnaires can provide three types of information: factual or demographic, behavioral, and attitudinal (as cited in Burns, 2010, p. 81). The questionnaire designed for this study is divided into two parts and asks for all these three types of information. Demographic information (part A) was important because instructors' cultural, educational, and teaching backgrounds could influence their views. In part B, respondents are asked about their practices related to teaching language through literature (behavioral information) and opinions concerning the use of culturally-familiar literature in language teaching (attitudinal information) through both close-ended and open-ended items. A five-point Likert scale is used for close-ended items (B1-B23). Burns (2010) suggests using a four-point or six-point rating scale so that respondents are forced to formulate an opinion rather than resorting to a neutral position. It was

<center>62</center>

concluded, however, that even neutrality was a valid position for this research study. For instance, a respondent could be neutral about having students read culturally-familiar literature rather than agree or disagree with the statement.

It was noted that the respondents should agree first that literature can play an important role in language teaching before they could comment on the use of culturally-familiar literature. Hence, survey items B1-B5 ask the respondents to verify to what extent they believed reading literature could help language learners in different areas of language. Then, they are asked about the advantages of having students read literature or its potential drawbacks (B6-B12). Having dealt with reading literature in general, the remaining items on the numerical scale (B13-B21) address the topic of having EFL students read culturally-familiar literature, its potential advantages over culturally less familiar literature, and the issue of the variety of English used by nonnative speakers of the language. The rest of the items on the questionnaire (B22-B28) are mainly open-ended questions followed by brief explanations when applicable. These open-ended questions aimed to find out about the practices, beliefs, and interests of the respondents related to the topic of literature and more specifically culturally-familiar literature.

Reading Comprehension Test

Student participants were required to read two texts from the genre of short stories: "A Christmas Memory" by the American author Truman Capote and "The Guest" by the French-Algerian author Albert Camus. Capote's text published in 1956 is set in the 1930s American context and tells the story of a young boy called Buddy and his unnamed older cousin. The plotline traces the journey of these two main characters in preparing for and the difficulties that they face in celebrating Christmas as they come from a poor background. Camus' story, on the other hand, was published in 1957 and is set in the 1950s Algerian context. The story revolves around three characters: the French school teacher Daru living in Algeria, the French gendarme Balducci, and an unnamed Arab prisoner. In the first half of the story, Balducci informs Daru that he has to handover the Arab prisoner who has killed his cousin to the police headquarters in Tinguit. The rest of the story shows how a strange bond develops between Daru and the Arab prisoner and how the former deals with his dilemma between following orders and not wanting to make the decision of turning in the latter. Both the stories were taken from an advanced-level anthology in

the teachers' resource room. The two short stories are almost of equal length: "A Christmas Memory" is 14-pages long and "The Guest" is 15-pages long. It would have been easier for practical purposes if stories of shorter length were selected, but then the instructors would hesitate to consider their students' participation in the research as fulfillment of their extensive reading assignments as explained in the following section on data collection. It was assumed that both stories were equally difficult in terms of language because they were taken from the same anthology graded as advanced-level by the publisher. The themes in the short stories were different, but this was not an issue because finding out the readers' interest in each story was not a concern of this research. Given the sociocultural background of each short story (American versus Arab), it was assumed that Camus' story was culturally more familiar to students than that of Capote.

Each short story in the anthology is followed by a reading comprehension test. Since the tests (see Appendix D) were used to assess the readers' comprehension in each story, it was important that students did not have access to the anthology prior to participating in the study. This was taken care of by selecting the material from the teachers' resource room. The questions in the comprehension test focus on ten reading skills: recalling specific facts, organizing facts, knowledge of word meanings, drawing a conclusion, making a judgment, making an inference, understanding characters, understanding main ideas, recognizing tone, and appreciation of literary forms (Harris, 1998). This was an advantage because most of these skills such as inferring word meanings using contextual clues, identifying main ideas and supporting details, recognizing the author's tone, and making conclusions are assessed in the reading section of the TOEFL test too. Because AABP students are all familiar with the TOEFL test, the student participants were already familiar with these types of questions. In total, students had to answer twenty-five multiple choice questions and each question had four answer choices.

Students could face two difficulties in answering the questions: (a) lexical difficulty and (b) literary terminology difficulty. AABP students are not taught about literature or literary elements in their language courses. The last three questions for "The Guest" were on literary forms. After examining the questions, it was concluded that it was fine to include them because they did not test the student's knowledge of literary forms. At most, students needed to know what a metaphor or a simile is to

answer these questions. When asked beforehand, students already knew about these commonly used literary devices. Moreover, examiners were allowed to answer any questions for clarification purposes during the test as long as it did not guide the students to a particular answer choice. However, two questions on literary forms in the comprehension test for "A Christmas Memory" that aimed at assessing the students' knowledge of literary devices needed to be replaced. The original questions were as following:

> 24. "… the stars spinning at the window like a visible caroling that slowly, slowly
>   daybreak silences." That phrase is an example of both
>   a. simile and metaphor
>   b. simile and personification
>   c. onomatopoeia and syncopation
>   d. metaphor and alliteration
> 25. Which of the following expressions is a simile?
>   a. hulling a heaping buggyload of windfall pecans
>   b. it has its winter uses, too: as a truck for hauling firewood
>   c. it is a faithful object
>   d. the wheels wobble like a drunkard's legs

Using the questions on literary forms in "The Guest" as a model, two new questions were devised to replace them as it was assumed that the majority of the students would not know specific literary terms such as onomatopoeia and alliteration. Secondly, terms it was felt might be difficult used in test items such as "exhilarating," "debilitating," "domineering," and "antagonistic" either in the questions or in the answer choices were defined in brackets. Sometimes answer choices included idiomatic expressions such as "at odds with" and "shrugged it off." The literal meanings of these idioms were provided too.

Data Collection

The data for this research was collected over a period of two semesters, Fall 2012 and Spring 2013.

Questionnaires

The research data about the instructors' views was gathered during the Fall 2012 semester over a period of one month. The questionnaire was piloted first by having five colleagues from the MA TESOL program fill it out. After receiving their

feedback, the questionnaire was revised before being distributed to the target population.

A list of the current faculty members was obtained from the administrative assistant of each of the five departments. It would have been convenient to leave a hardcopy of the questionnaire in each instructor's mailbox, but it was suspected that instructors may not collect the questionnaires in time after seeing stacks of uncollected documents in some mailboxes. So I visited each instructor's office and either handed the questionnaire personally or slipped a copy under the door if the instructor was unavailable. Since they were meant to be completely anonymous, questionnaires could not be personally collected from the instructors. An additional note attached to the questionnaires mentioned that the respondents should leave completed questionnaires with the administrative assistants of their respective departments by the end of the specified day. Instructors were given two days to return the questionnaire as it was believed that leaving it for too long would result in forgetfulness. When the questionnaires were collected on the specified date, the response rate was very low, 17%.

To increase the response rate, a second round of questionnaires was planned with some effective changes. After discussing the problem, two issues were identified: the allotted time period for filling out the questionnaire was very short, and I made it inconvenient for the instructors by requesting them to return the completed questionnaires to the administrative assistants. So an electronic version of the questionnaire was developed using *SurveyMonkey* and the questionnaire was readministered a week later. Using *SurveyMonkey* ensured anonymity. The hyperlink to the questionnaire was sent out to all faculty members of each department via email through each department's administrative assistant. A message was included in the email which briefly mentioned the reason for readministering the questionnaire and asking those who had already submitted hardcopies to ignore the email. This time the respondents were given five days to fill out the questionnaire online and the administrative assistants kindly sent out gentle reminders before the closing date. Administering the questionnaires electronically had positive results as the response rate increased by 16%.

Some instructors preferred filling out hardcopies of the questionnaire over their electronic version. A couple of instructors who had lost their hardcopies actually

sent me emails requesting for another hardcopy. The additional hardcopies that were received added another 16% to the response rate. All in all, the response rate was 50% (70 returned questionnaires). Two questionnaires were eliminated from the data, however. When the questionnaire was administered electronically, one of my committee members had filled it out. Even though the instructor had provided insightful information, the questionnaire had to be removed for the purposes of validity. The other questionnaire was evidently filled out in hurry as the instructor had ticked "Agree" to all of the statements on the rating scale. With these two eliminations, 68 returned questionnaires were left for analysis which slightly decreased the response rate to 48.6%.

Comprehension Tests

The test was administered only to students in the AABP at AUS. Most of the AABP instructors made it voluntary for their students to participate in the study except one instructor who required all of his students to participate. In the Fall 2012 semester, students from five sections of ELP 200 and from two sections of ELP 100 participated in the study. In the following semester of Spring 2013 students from four sections of ELP 200 and from one section of ELP 100 participated. The number of participating students from each section varied greatly ranging from 4 to 15. AABP students are required by their ELP instructors to read 12 to 15 graded readers over the course of the semester. The incentive offered to the students was that reading each short story and taking the following comprehension test will count as one graded reader. So instead of reading 12 graded readers, for example, over the course of the semester, the participating students would have to read 10 graded readers. However, the instructors informed their students that they will take their scores on the reading comprehension test into consideration because very low scores would indicate that the students have not read the assigned short story in which case they shall not get the reward of having one graded reader marked off their lists. Over the span of the two semesters, 130 students participated in the study.

The study was planned for two weeks. The students had to read the first story and take the reading comprehension test for it before moving to the next story. Hardcopies of each story were distributed to the participants and their softcopies were uploaded on *ilearn* by their instructors. In the beginning of the class period, each instructor allowed the researcher to brief his/her students about the purpose of the

research, their role in the research, and the two assigned texts. In the brief introduction to the story, students were informed about the origin of the author and the time period in which the story was written. To see how much students knew about each setting, I asked them to share what they knew about the 1930s American context and the 1950s Algerian context either during their LEC hours or during their class periods when the participating instructors required me to brief their students about the research. While there was literally no response about the American context, students mentioned that Algeria was colonized by the French at the time and the natives were revolting against the colonial regime. Asked whether Algeria was an Arab country, all of the students thought so while one Syrian student retorted, "Of course Algerians are Arabs!" explaining further that the country and its educational system is influenced by the French due to their occupation in the past. This, according to the students, did not affect Algeria's fundamental Arab identity. Students also mentioned that Algeria is famously known as "The Country of One Million Martyrs" as huge numbers of natives died in the revolt against the French government. These oral discussions indicated that the student participants knew much more about the 1950s Algerian context than the 1930s American context. So "The Guest" was felt to be culturally more familiar to them than "A Christmas Memory."

Students were given four days to read each story and took the comprehension test on the fifth day. They were given 30 minutes to complete the test. Initially, it was planned to administer the test online as it was copied on *SurveyMonkey* and the instructors could make the hyperlink available to students through ilearn. But in order to take the test online, students would have to have access to computers. Meeting this requirement was difficult because each class had only two periods in the computer lab during the week and different classes had their computer lab periods on different days. So in cases where it worked, students took the test online. Otherwise, they took the paper version of the test in their regular classrooms. In order to ensure that the order of the stories did not affect their reading experience, each story was assigned as the first reading for different sections. X sections read "The Guest" first and Y sections read "A Christmas Memory" first.

Although a large number of students participated in the study, not all test scores were included in the research data for analysis. The purpose of the study was to compare the scores of the two comprehension tests in order to determine whether or

not reading culturally-familiar literature impacted reading comprehension positively. Therefore, it was important that each student should have taken both the tests in order to qualify as a student participant in the research. This was not the case, however, as some students were absent when one of the two tests was administered. The other problem was that after marking the tests, it was evident that some students did not read both the stories before taking the tests. For example, one student scored three out of twenty five on one test and fifteen out of twenty five on the other test. To verify, I personally asked a few of these suspected cases and the students admitted that they had not read the story before taking the test. Including these outliers in the research data would skew the results. After discussing the issue with a couple of instructors in the AABP and an expert in testing and assessment in the MA TESOL faculty, it was decided that the cutoff score should be set at seven. With four possible answer choices, students would have twenty five percent chance of getting the right answer just by guessing. A score of six out of twenty five could be achieved by mere guessing. Hence, students scoring less than seven were excluded. After these cases of elimination, seventy six out of the initial hundred and thirty students qualified as valid research participants.

The questionnaires received from the instructors were analyzed both quantatively and qualitatively. The percentages of the instructors for each answer choice on the numerical scales were calculated. These percentages indicated the majority opinion. Rating averages of items on the numerical scales were also calculated to indicate the general opinion. For instance, in the case of the rating scale that ranges from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree, the weighted values assigned to the columns are Strongly agree = 1, Agree = 2, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 4, Strongly disagree = 5. To calculate the sum of the weights, the software of *Surveymonkey* multiplies the weighted values with the actual number of respondents who picked that rating and then sums up the totals. To obtain the rating average, the sum of the weights is divided by the total number of respondents. A representation of the rating scale on a horizontal axis would help in the interpretation of the rating averages:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
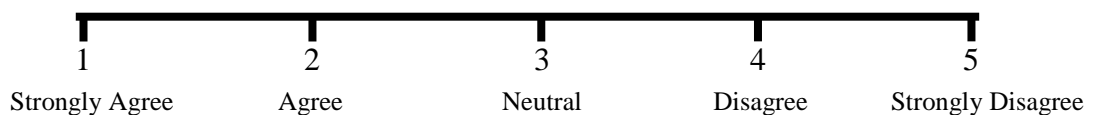
A rating average of less than 2.0 falls in the Agree region of the horizontal axis and a rating average of 4.0 and above falls in the Disagree region of the horizontal axis. A rating average between 2.0 and 4.0 has to be evaluated more closely. For instance, a rating average of 3.58 means that this falls to the right of Neutral and closer to Disagree while a rating average of 2.58 means that this falls to the left of Neutral and closer to Agree. As for the open-ended questions, the responses were read and analyzed closely to highlight any differences, similarities, and different opinions on the topic in hand. This kind of qualitative analysis also allowed me to come up with general themes running through the responses.

The data obtained from the students was analyzed quantatively.   Mean averages of both the tests were calculated, and two-sample t-test was used to make a statistical conclusion.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

This chapter presents the findings and analyzes the research data in view of the literature discussed in Chapter 2. First, the views of instructors concerning the role that literature can play in language development are discussed. Second, the obstacles that the instructors face in integrating a study of literature in language teaching are listed. Third, their views concerning the use of culturally-familiar literature in the EFL classroom are discussed. Finally, the findings of the study involving the AABP students are presented.

Language Resource

The results of the survey item B5 show that 92.1% of the instructors agree that literature is an important language resource, and 5.9% of the instructors are neutral about the statement. None of the instructors disagree. The overall agreement of the instructors is reflected in the low rating average of the survey item, 1.65. This suggests that the significance of literature as an important language resource cannot be overlooked. Even though the majority of the instructors (88%) teach language courses only – the rest (12%) teach either literature or language and literature courses – there seems to be a general consensus almost among all of the instructors that literature is an important language resource. This is true despite the fact that the majority of the instructors (55.2%) have acknowledged in response to survey item A7 that they do not have any kind of academic qualification in the field of literature. Although survey item B5 is a general statement, it tells us something about the faith that language instructors, regardless of their specific educational backgrounds, have in the facilitative power of literature when it comes to language learning/teaching. The belief in the potential of literature is not haphazard as one may assume in a sweeping generalization especially in the case of those language instructors who do not have formal education in literature. More likely than not, these instructors may have benefited from reading literature on a personal basis as was seen in the case of Khatib (2011) who acknowledged that reading Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* resulted in augmenting his lexical inventory. Similarly, it is likely that many among the 46.3% of the non-native English instructors who participated in this study may have personally benefited from reading literature in English. From the 31 non-native

English instructors who have participated in this study, 38.7% do not have any kind of formal education in literature, yet all of these 31 non-native English instructors either strongly agree (45.2%) or agree (54.8%) that literature is an important language resource. As for the 53.7% of the native English instructors, it could be the case that they benefited from reading literature in the learning of a second or foreign language. If instructors have personally benefited from reading literature, it is more likely that they will encourage their students to read literature on regular basis.

Integrative Learning

The results of the survey item B6 show that 85% of the instructors strongly agree or agree that a study of literature in the language classroom can integrate the development of all four essential language skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. 9% of the instructors are neutral about it whereas 4% disagree. It could be that these instructors who are unsure or disagree with the statement see literature primarily as a means of developing literacy skills. Many instructors in the AABP, for instance, require their students to respond to literary texts through writing. Written reports submitted by the students after reading a graded reader or a chapter in a novel include summary, character analysis, and description of a scene. On the other hand, other instructors use literature as a means to develop the oral skills of their students as they require them to give oral presentations of what they have read in the class. In both cases, the focus on developing the students' reading skill is obviously constant. With careful planning, however, an instructor is able to integrate all four language skills through a study of literature in the language classroom. For example, asked to briefly explain how s/he integrates a study of literature in his/her language classroom (B23), an instructor comments that s/he uses "Stories as a springboard for discussions (partners, groups, whole-class) … For writing topics … [and] Cloze activities including listening." It is obvious that this instructor aims to focus on all four language skills when using literature to teach language.

Syntax, Lexicon, Pragmatics, and Idioms

Moving from the more general to the more specific, instructors were asked how encounter with literature affected different areas of language (B1-B4). A summary of the findings is presented in the following table. The numerical values in

the brackets show the total number of instructors who chose a particular response in each item.

Table 2: Effect of Reading Literature on Different Language Areas

	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low
Grammar	22.4%	35.8%	37.3%	4.5%	0.0%
	(15)	(24)	(25)	(3)	(0)
Vocabulary	65.7%	32.8%	1.5% (1)	0.0%	0.0%
	(44)	(22)		(0)	(0)
Knowledge of the way words and sentences are used in daily conversations	31.3%	31.3%	25.4%	11.9%	0.0%
	(21)	(21)	(17)	(8)	(0)
Idiomatic Expressions	35.8%	38.8%	23.9%	1.5%	0.0%
	(24)	(26)	(16)	(1)	(0)

As Table 2 indicates, the majority of the instructors (58.2%) believe that reading literature can significantly help language learners' develop their knowledge of syntax, 37.3% believe that it has moderate impact while only 4.5% of the instructors maintain that it hardly has any noticeable impact. These results suggest that at least few instructors agree with Lima's (2005) argument according to which the 'unconventional' use of language by literary authors cannot teach language learners grammatically correct sentences (see also McKay, 1982; Savvidou, 2004). This is a valid concern as suggested by the results of the survey item B12. 58.9% of the instructors either strongly agree or agree that the creative use of language in literature may confuse language learners. 23.5% are neutral about the statement, while 17.7% of the instructors either disagree or strongly disagree. Comparing the results of survey items B1 and B11 suggests that instructors generally acknowledge the occasional use of "ungrammatical" language in works of literature; however, they do not believe that this necessarily means reading literature does not help in the development of syntax probably because a great deal of literature is written in standard syntax especially when we consider examples of prose. Instructors themselves could also clarify any confusion that students may have in terms of

understanding the language used in literature. In response to the open-ended question in survey item B23, one instructor states that s/he uses literature to teach "Grammar structure: sentence order, word forms, etc." Two other instructors mention teaching grammar as one of the reasons for using literature in their language classrooms. Therefore, it can be inferred that it is possible to teach grammar through literature.

In terms of lexicon, all of the instructors agree that reading literature improves the vocabulary of the language learners. Only 1 out of the 67 respondents maintains that reading literature has moderate impact on vocabulary development while 98.5% of the respondents maintain that it has significant impact. This shows that all of the instructors implicitly disagree with Lima (2005) in her claim that language learners should not be expected to learn useful vocabulary from reading literature because literary authors usually coin new words to serve their purposes. It should be noted, however, that only three instructors have specified using literature to plan vocabulary lessons in their open-ended responses, which suggests that most of the instructors believe in incidental vocabulary learning when students read literature.

As far as pragmatics is concerned, once again the majority of the instructors (62.6%) agree that reading literature has significant impact on developing knowledge of the way words and sentences are used in daily conversations, 25.4% maintain that it has moderate impact, while the remaining 11.9% share the opinion that it does not have any noticeable impact. It might be the case that the relatively small group of instructors who maintained that reading literature has limited impact on developing pragmatic competence had poetry or classical novels in mind. Since language changes with the passing of time, it would be very unrealistic to expect that reading a Shakespearen play written in Early Modern English can teach language learners how to use English in its modern sense. The same applies to poetry where poets usually use hyperbolic language to grab the reader's attention. Otherwise, contemporary plays and novels should be a good indication of language use especially when conversations take place between two or more characters. In response to survey item B23, one instructor who teaches undergraduate and graduate level students explained that s/he uses literature in his/her linguistic classes to discuss dialectal variations. Had literary texts not been true representation of how people from different backgrounds communicate in real world, it would not have been possible for this instructor to use them in studying different dialects. Another related area of concern would be the

correct use of idiomatic expressions. The majority of the instructors (74.6%) believe that reading literature has significant impact in learning idiomatic expressions, 23.9% believe that it has moderate impact, while only one instructor believes that it does not really help language learners learn idioms.

It might be useful to look at the overall rating averages of the responses pertaining to these four areas of language. The rating averages of all items on the numerical scale are presented in the chart below:
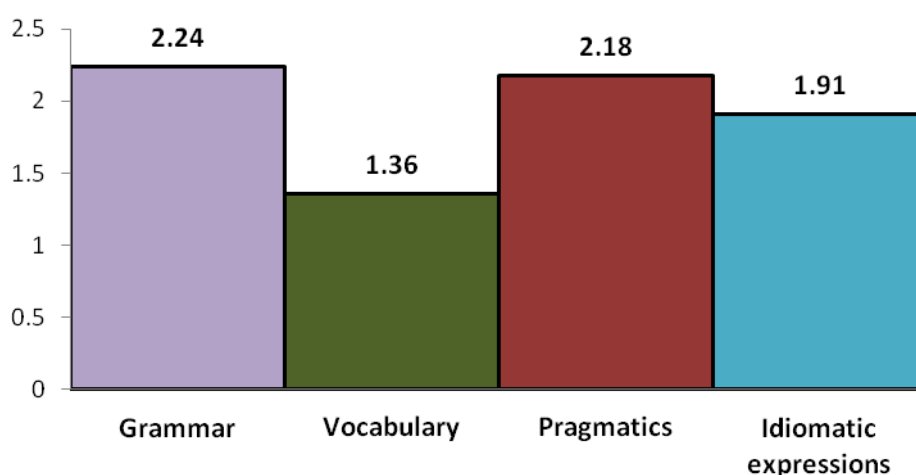
Figure 2: Rating Averages of Four Language Areas

As figure 2 indicates, it appears that overall instructors agree that reading literature helps in vocabulary learning the most as it has the lowest rating average (1.36). The rating average of idiomatic expressions is a bit higher than that of vocabulary (1.91) but it is nevertheless on the "agree" side because it is less than 2.0. Next comes pragmatics with a rating average of 2.18 followed by grammar with a slightly higher rating average of 2.24. The rating averages of pragmatics and grammar fall under the uncertain zone as they are between 2.0 and 3.0, but we could infer they indicate agreement more than disagreement because they are closer to 2.0 than 3.0. In short, instructors generally believe that reading literature can help in developing all these four areas of language to varying degrees.

Developing Cognitive Domain

In response to survey item B8, 26.9% of the instructors strongly agree and 52.2% agree that reading literature develops critical thinking skills. 19.4% are neutral about the statement while only 1.5% disagrees. The rating average for the survey item is 1.96. Since the rating average is below 2.0, it can be inferred that overall instructors agree with the statement. The open-ended question in survey item B23 asked instructors to briefly explain how they may integrate a study of literature in their language classrooms. Ten instructors have mentioned extensive reading whereby students read independently. Some of these instructors have mentioned requiring oral discussions and/or written reports as post-reading activities. Since the content of these discussions and reports is unknown, it cannot be inferred whether or not they are conducive to the development of critical thinking skills. Hence, it can be said that even though instructors generally believe that encounter with literature improves the students' critical thinking skills, it does not appear that the common methods used for integrating literature in language teaching would support the development of critical thinking skills. How instructors view literature is also important. In response to the same survey item, another instructor commented, "LITERATURE IS NOT STUDIED PER SE. IT IS A VEHICLE TO TEACH OTHER THINGS." However, anyone who has studied literature in a formal setting would know that literary texts not only help in language development but also qualify as objects of study in their own right. There are multiple ways of including a study of literature in language teaching such that it complements the development of critical thinking skills. One common activity in favor of improving the students' critical thinking skills listed by two instructors is linguistic analysis of the literary piece. Another instructor mentions "Textual analysis" without providing further explanation. It could be assumed that textual analysis would be similar to linguistic analysis in that the readers should determine how effectively the author has used language to convey a certain meaning. Although this is a good strategy, instructors could go beyond language to help students enhance their critical thinking abilities. One instructor states, for instance, that s/he uses literary texts in a writing course "for critical reading and response activities."

Developing Affective Domain

The results of the survey item B11 show that 54.4% of the instructors strongly agree that literature engages the reader emotionally, 35.3% agree with the statement, and 10.3% are neutral about it. That is, none of the instructors disagrees with the claim that literature can play an important role in catering for the affective side of the learners. The instructors' strong approval is clearly indicated in the low rating average (1.56) of the survey item. This means that all of the instructors implicitly agree with Rosenblatt (1995) who maintains that when engaged with literature, readers are involved in aesthetic reading which invokes the personal and emotional aspects of the reader. One instructor comments on the capability of literary texts to engage the emotional side of the learners in an open-ended response, "The real learning actually comes from pieces that get us by our heart and move us to tears. Only literary pieces have that ability, not a car manual, or a passage about how to cook good Machboos. Our ignorance of literature is taking us farther from learning." This instructor clearly distinguishes between literature and informational texts on the basis that the former gets the reader emotionally involved.

Developing Intercultural Awareness

In response to survey item B10, 41.2% of the instructors strongly agree that reading literature is a good way to learn about different cultures, 52.9% agree with the statement, 19.1% are neutral about it while no instructor disagrees. The low rating average of the survey item (1.65) suggests that instructors generally agree with the statement. In line with this view, one instructor states in his/her open-ended response to survey item B22, "I tend to implement a mix of literature from various cultures if available…." Nevertheless, none of the instructors refer to any classroom activities in their open-ended responses that might be in favor of developing intercultural competence. This suggests that either despite their belief in the potential of literary texts to develop intercultural competence, instructors do not plan classroom tasks to achieve this goal or they believe that students involuntarily develop the competence as they read literature from different cultures.

Using Literature to Teach Language

Keeping in view the instructors' acknowledgement of the various benefits that literature offers to language learners, one would expect that instructors frequently use literature as learning/teaching resource in their language classrooms. However, this is not the case. Despite acknowledging the multidimensional benefit of including literature in language teaching, few instructors often use literature to teach language. In survey item B22, instructors were asked to state how often they integrated a study of literature in their language classrooms. The results are presented in the following column chart:
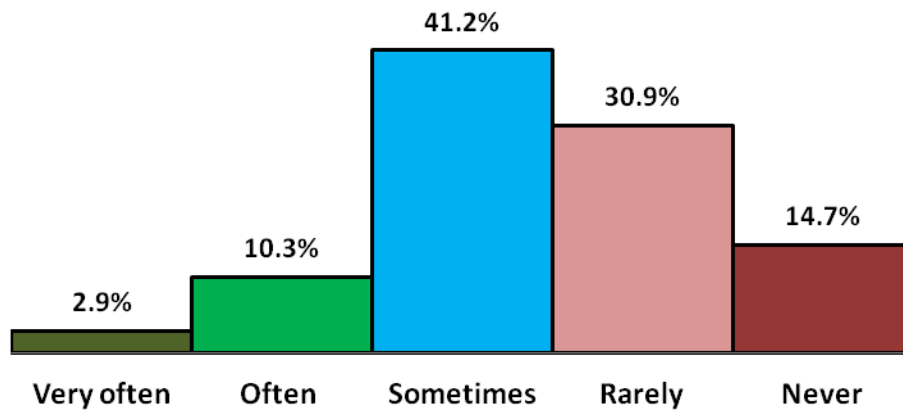
Figure 3: Frequency of Including Literature in Langauge Teaching

As indicated in Figure 3, only 13.2% of the instructors have said that they integrate a study of literature in their language classrooms often or very often. 41.2% have said that they sometimes include literature, 30.9% have said that they rarely include literature while 14.7% have said that they never include literature. In a follow-up question, those instructors who have admitted to integrate literature in language teaching were asked to briefly explain how they achieved this goal. There were 42 responses and most of them are about having students read graded readers or other forms of literature on their own to fulfill the requirements of their extensive reading assignments. Hence, it is possible that those who have acknowledged including

literature in language teaching consider having students read literature outside the classroom independently as integrating literature in language teaching. Instructors have mentioned a number of reasons for restricting their use of literature in language teaching as discussed in the following sections.

Curricular Constraints

In response to the open-ended survey item B26 that asked respondents to cite any reasons that may discourage them from using literature in language teaching, fifteen instructors have mentioned that the objective of the courses they teach do not accommodate literature. One instructor remarks, "NO SPACE TO TEACH IT [literature]." Those who teach in the intensive English programs at AUS and UoS explained that the primary purpose of the courses they offer is to help students pass the IELTS or the TOEFL test, so they do not find any relevance for literature in their classes. For example, one instructor cites "their [the students'] specific needs in terms of passing exam" as a reason for not including literature in language teaching. This view completely contradicts the high level of agreement among instructors that reading literature facilitates the development of all four language skills and the specific language components such as grammar and vocabulary as discussed earlier. Others who may feel that a study of literature is relevant to the specific needs of language learners are challenged by time constraint. Five instructors have stated that the requirement to strictly follow the syllabus or the course book does not allow them to use literature in their language classrooms. For instance, one instructor comments "we have other material [to cover]" while another one states in a similar vein, "Expectation to use COURSE BOOK." Another recurring view that requires specific mention is the perception that literature is confined to specific courses offered by the English departments. An instructor who echoes the view of some other respondents comments, "WE, AS DEPARTMENT (DWS) ARE PRODDED FROM TEACHING LITERATURE AS THIS IS A DOMAIN OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT." While it is true that literary texts receive more attention in literature courses, there is no reason to exclude them from general language courses especially when they are considered a rich source of language by the instructors.

Students' Interest in Reading Literature

In addition to curricular constraints, instructors have cited other student-related reasons that might discourage them from using literature in language teaching. At least five instructors have mentioned lack of students' interest as one of the primary reasons for not including literature in their language classrooms. This view is further supported by the responses to a close-ended survey item (B24) that asked instructors to rate their students' interest in reading literature. Note that this question did not address students' interest in reading English literature in particular but rather their general interest in reading literature. The results are presented in the column chart below:
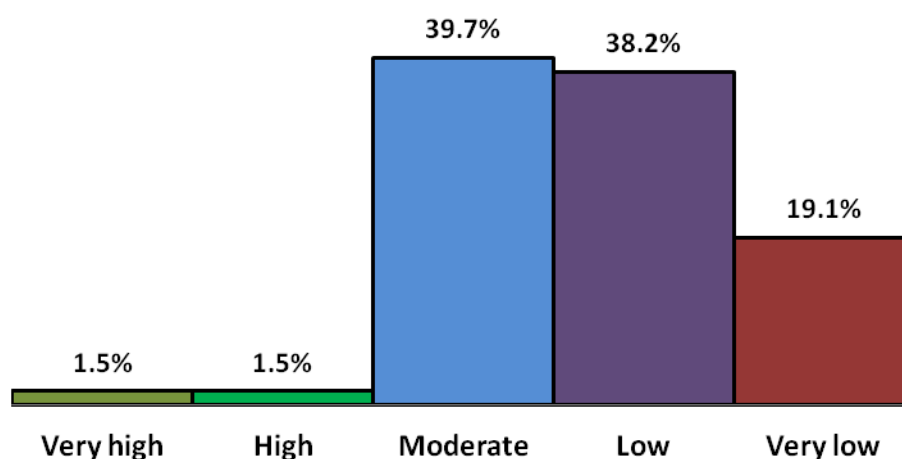
Figure 4: Students' Interest in Reading Literature

As Figure 4 shows, only 3% of the instructors have said that their students are very interested in reading literature. 39.7% of the instructors have said that the students have moderate interest in reading literature while the majority of the instructors (57.3%) have said that the students have low interest in reading literature. In the open-ended survey item B25 that asks instructors to list some of the possible reasons behind students' lack of interest if they believe that their students have low levels of interest in reading literature, instructors provide four reasons: (1) lack of reading culture (2) preoccupation with modern technology (3) stereotypical perceptions and

(4) difficulty in understanding literature. Each of these reasons is discussed in the following sections.

Lack of Reading Culture

The most commonly stated reason in survey item B24 is a social problem: lack of a "reading culture." One instructor explains that most of the students are not "raised or educated in an environment which encourages reading." Others echo the same view in different words such as "lack of modeling [at home]," "Very little reading in L1," students have not "acquired yet how to appreciate reading," and "we are in a culture that doesn't foster reading." Making general statements based on one's personal experience with the students is acceptable, but forming an extreme, generalized opinion is unfavorable. One instructor, for example, states "They [students] were never exposed to literature at an earlier age" and another instructor, likewise, proclaims his/her conclusive opinion, "I think students in Asia and the Middle East do not have a good reading culture."

Preoccupation with Modern Technology

There are other possible reasons for students' lack of motivation to read literature. Five instructors explicitly mentioned the students' preoccupation with modern gadgets as one of the reasons. In fact, one instructor refered to it as the primary problem, "Biggest problem is competing against: social media/texting/internet surfing and play station." Another instructor showed his/her annoyance with this preoccupation of the students, "They are having too much fun playing with their phones." It should be noted, however, that this issue related to the attitude of students' vis-à-vis modern technology is common among youngsters around the globe. Hence, three instructors stress the point that it is a generational problem not specific to a particular region as one of them explains, "21ST [century] CULTURE DOES NOT PROMOTE READING. THIS IS NOT GEOGPRAPHICALLY LIMITED, IT IS A WORLDWIDE PHENOMENON." This alternative position that does not make lack of interest in reading literature a culturally-specific issue but rather sees it as a general trend common to all societies seems to be more realistic.

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Stereotypical Perceptions

Two unique problems pointed out by different instructors are worth mentioning. First, an instructor mentions in response to survey item B24 that his/her students are not interested in reading literature because "many of them [male students] believe it is a female's world even when deep down they would like to try." In response to the same survey item, another instructor states, "Lack of prestige with reading literature (as opposed to viewing film)." Echoing the same view, another instructor responds that today "Literature is of interest ot [to] minority." Movies constitute an essential part of the youth culture today. So it could be that watching movies is not just a favorite pastime but rather has the prestige element attached to it. What is interesting though is that it may take away from reading literature as suggested by the instructor.

Difficulty in Understanding Literature

Moving away from the attitude of the students, seventeen instructors mention difficulty in understanding literature as a factor that negatively affects their students' interest in reading literature in their responses to survey item B25. One of the seventeen instructor mentions "Difficulty in understanding literature" as a reason for students' minimal interest in literature. The difficulty could be on two levels: language and content. Six instructors state students' lack of language proficiency and choosing "level-inappropriate material" as factors that negatively affect their interest in reading literature. Eight instructors, on the other hand, refer to students' lack of familiarity with literary texts as a possible reason that negatively affects their interest. One of these eight instructors explains, "Most of them [students] haven't been exposed to literary analysis or discussions about literature whether in English or Arabic." In response to survey item B26, an instructor who teaches academic writing mentions this deficiency as the reason that discourages him/her from including literature in language teaching, "Understanding literature requires skills and training that our students dont have." Six out of the eight instructors who mention lack of familiarity with literature hold the schools responsible for this shortcoming as one of them explains, "They [students] haven't been exposed to literature in a correct way when they were in school" while another instructor states that the school setting did not help students develop "enquiring minds" necessary for understanding literature.

This concern raised by the instructors suggests that having students read literature independently outside their classrooms does not really solve the problem. Since literature is a specific genre of writing, students should be taught how to deal with literary texts before they can take interest in reading literature.

Apart from student-related issues, instructors also raised concern about the cultural aspect of literary texts as discussed in the following section.

Cultural Content in Literature

The topic of culture, the main interest of this research study, is also brought up by instructors. Three out of fifty seven instructors who have responded to survey item B25 state that the students' non-familiarity with the culture of the literary texts presented to them negatively affects their interest in reading literature. They have explained that students are unfamiliar with the context of English literature, they do not connect to the characters in the story, and the literary texts do not appeal to their interests and culture, which lowers their enthusiasm in reading English literature. The concern regarding students' cultural unfamiliarity reappears in survey item B26 that asks instructors to list specific reasons which may discourage them from using literature in their language classrooms. Nine (or 18.4% of the respondents) out of forty nine instructors who have responded to the open-ended survey item have referred to the issue of cultural unfamiliarity. Although all are related to the cultural content of literary texts, the concerns of these nine instructors are slightly different. Five out of these nine instructors have referred to the students' lack of necessary cultural competence as a setback as one of them explained that "Non-familiarity of most students with cultural referents in literary texts" prevents him/her from using literature in the classroom. Another one stated that s/he "Would need to spend time explaining cultural issues – takes away from language time!"

The remaining four instructors out of the nine instructors share a different concern related to the cultural content of literature. They fear that culturally-inappropriate content may surface in the text as one of the instructors stated that the cultural content of English literature is "often in conflict with local culture and basic beliefs" of the UAE society. If the instructors are referring to erotic content in literature, it can be found in both culturally-familiar and culturally-unfamiliar literature. Other culturally-inappropriate content might include topics considered

taboo according to local cultural values such as homosexuality. Barring students from reading literature based in foreign sociocultural settings for this reason is against the notion of using literature in language classrooms to develop intercultural competence.

Apart from their general views related to using literature, instructors shared their views on the use of culturally-familiar literature especially concerning reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition.

Reading Comprehension

Instructors were asked whether lack of cultural competence hinders reading comprehension and, inversely, whether cultural familiarity positively impacts students' comprehension of literary works. In response to survey item B13, 14.7% of the instructors strongly agreed that unfamiliarity with the culture makes it difficult for EFL students to understand English literature written in western contexts, 54.4% agreed, 20.6% of the instructors were neutral, and 10.3% disagreed. The majority of the instructors (75%) obviously believe that cultural unfamiliarity can prove a hindrance in the case of EFL students reading British or American literature. This means that they implicitly agree with Lima (2005) that lack of cultural competence impedes reading comprehension of EFL students engaged with foreign literature. Given the instructors' concern about cultural unfamiliarity, it is not surprising that in response to survey item B16, 29.4% of the instructors strongly agree that reading literature written in a familiar cultural context impacts reading comprehension positively, 66.2% of the instructors agree, and only 4.4% of the instructors are neutral about the statement. This means that almost all of the instructors believe that reading CFL impacts reading comprehension positively. The overall agreement of the instructors is clearly indicated in the low rating average of the collective responses, 1.75. Since the rating average is below 2.0, it can be safely inferred that the instructors generally agree with the statement.

Vocabulary Acquisition

In addition to reading comprehension, instructors were asked whether students could learn more vocabulary words by reading CFL than reading culturally less-familiar literature. The results of survey item B17 show that 27.9% of the instructors strongly agree that CFL provides more meaningful contexts for learning new words

than does culturally less familiar literature, 51.5% of the instructors agree with the statement, 11.8% are neutral, and 8.8% disagree. The instructors who disagree could believe that readers can use contextual clues to infer word meanings regardless of whether or not the text is culturally familiar. The majority of the instructors (79.4%) are, nevertheless, of the view that cultural familiarity with the text positively impacts vocabulary acquisition. This is a valid assumption because if readers have the benefit of using their cultural knowledge as a source of information, it is more likely that they will be able to guess meanings of unfamiliar words more accurately.

It is interesting to compare the results of survey item B17 with the results of survey item B7. In response to survey item B7, 16.2% of the instructors agree that literature provides richer context for learning new words than do nonliterary texts, 33.8% agree, 17.6% are neutral, 30.9% disagree, and 1.5% strongly disagree. The percentage (79.4%) of instructors who agree that CFL provides more meaningful contexts for learning new words than does culturally less familiar literature is significantly more than the percentage (50%) of instructors who agree that literature provides richer contexts for learning new words than do non-literary texts. The percentage of instructors who agree increases by approximately 30% from survey item B7 to survey item B17. This suggests that the cultural familiarity of the text is more important to a significant number of instructors than the literariness of the text in terms of vocabulary acquisition.

Using Nonnative English Literature

A summary of the responses to the survey item B21 (English primarily belongs to the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, so only these countries represent the cultural bases of the English language) is presented in the following column chart.
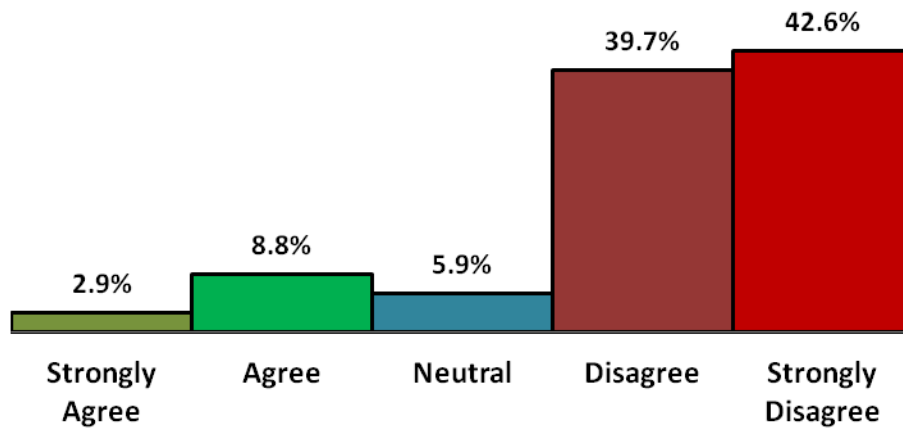
Figure 5: Traditional Bases of English Language

As seen in figure 5, only 3.0% of the instructors strongly agree that English primarily belongs to the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, 9.0% of the instructors agree with the statement, and 6.0% are neutral about the statement. It was expected that those who ethnically belong to the countries of the inner circle (U.K., U.S.A, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand) may claim the ownership of the English language. It is interesting that this is not the case, however. The 12% who agree with the statement make up 6 instructors: 2 Arabs, 1 Asian, 1 European, and 2 North Americans. The diverse ethnicities of these 6 instructors suggest that this perception of English language belonging to the countries of the inner circle has nothing to do with the ethnic backgrounds of the instructors. 42.6% of the instructors strongly disagree and 39.7% instructors disagree with the statement. That is, the majority of the instructors (82.3%) disagree, which is also reflected in the high rating average of the overall responses, 4.10. Since the rating average is above 4.0, it can be safely assumed that the majority of the instructors have shown disagreement. The results of survey item B21 show that instructors generally believe that English is a global language today, and the traditional bases or the countries that appear in Kachru's inner circle can no longer claim the ownership of the language.

Since the majority of the instructors have acknowledged that English is rightfully the language of nonnative English speakers too in our contemporary world, it would be expected that they would see the literary works of nonnative speakers in the same light as that of native speakers of English. This is indeed the case. A

summary of the responses to survey item B22 (American and/or British literature in general is superior to literature that stems from nonnative English speaking contexts) is presented in the column chart below:
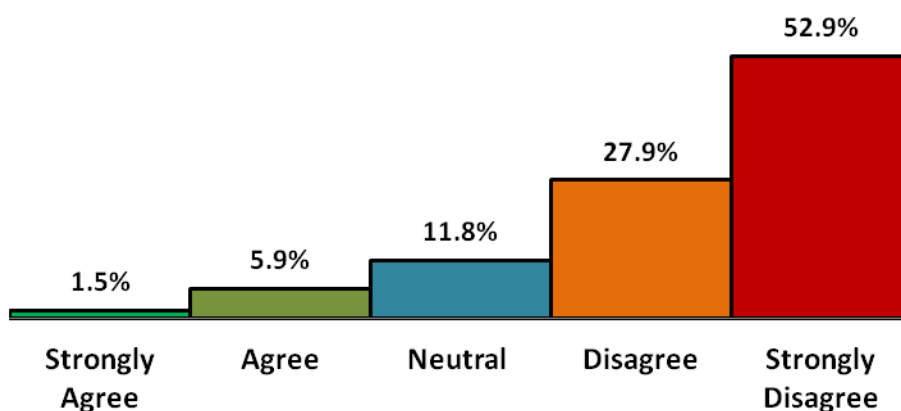
Figure 6: Native English Literature versus Nonnative English Literature

As evident in Figure 6, only 1.5% of the instructors strongly agree that American or British literature is superior to literature coming from nonnative English speaking contexts such as India, 5.9% agree with the statement, and 11.8% are neutral about it. It might be surprising to know that all of the 5 instructors who agree are nonnative English speakers: 1 Asian and 4 Arabs. Nonetheless, the majority of the instructors show disagreement as 27.9% of the instructors disagree and 52.9% strongly disagree with the statement. This palpable disagreement is also reflected in the high rating average of the survey item, 4.25. Since the overall rating average is above 4.0, it can be concluded yet again that the instructors have shown disagreement. Now this finding does not support Talib's (1992) claim that in the field of ELT non-native English literature is perceived to be of "substandard" quality. It also suggests that the instructors' personal reading experience include literature by nonnative English speakers either originally written in English or translated into English. This is indicated by the large disagreement of the instructors to survey item B18 (I am NOT familiar with literature in English written in nonwestern contexts). 5.9% strongly agree with the statement, 11.8% agree, 7.4% are neutral about it, 38.2% disagree, and

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36.8% strongly disagree. The overall rating average is 3.88. Even though the rating average is below 4.0, it is very close to 4.0 which suggests that the general opinion of the instructors is closer to disagreement.

The above finding is conducive to the use of CFL in ELT. Since the majority of the instructors do not believe that nonnative English literature is of inferior quality compared to native English literature, it suggests that they would be open to supplementing their class readings with the former.

Using Culturally-Familiar Literature

In response to survey item B19, the majority of instructors have stated that they would be more inclined to use literature in language teaching if CFL in English were more readily available. The results of the survey item are presented in the column chart below:
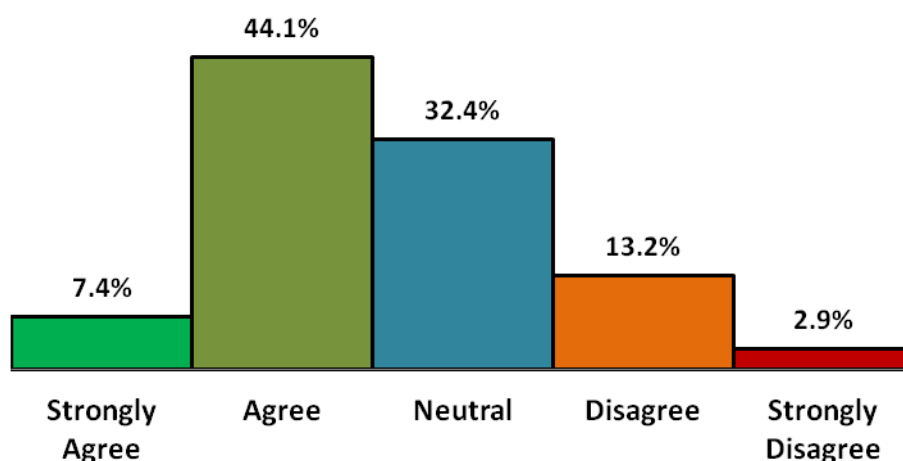
Figure 7: Using Culturally-Familiar Literature

As seen in Figure 7, the majority of the instructors (51.5%) agree that they would be more likely to use literature in ELT if they could have easy access to culturally-familiar literary texts, 32.4% of the instructors adopt a neutral position, and a relatively small percentage (16.1%) disagrees. In response to survey items B28 and B29, instructors have mentioned both nonnative English literature and literature in English translation as two sources of culturally-familiar literature for EFL students.

However, it seems that not many instructors use nonnative English literature in their teaching. In a follow-up question to survey item B28, instructors were asked to list the titles/authors of literature considered culturally-familiar to students that they may have used in an EFL context. Only one instructor has mentioned teaching a nonnative English literary piece, the short story "By Any Other Name" based in the 19th –century British Indian context written by the Indian author Santha Rama Rau. Another instructor has mentioned the African author Chinua Achebe. Apart from these two, there are few instructors who have said that they do not remember the titles/authors while a couple of instructors have made general comments such as "Stories in English based on Asian culture whilst teaching in Asia" and "I always try to use authors from the Middle East." Based on the 24 responses in survey item B28 and the 33 responses in survey item B29, it can be concluded that the use of nonnative English literature is quite limited despite the fact that instructors believe nonnative English literature is as valuable as literature by native speakers of English. This finding might seem to contradict the large disagreement of the instructors with the statement according to which they would not be familiar with literature in English written in nonwestern contexts. If instructors have read literature in English based in nonwestern contexts, it is likely that their reading selection includes works by nonnative English speaking authors. However, this does not necessarily mean that those nonnative English authors would have the same cultural background as the students of these instructors. The instructors could have read literature in English by Japanese, Korean, and Chinese authors, for instance. But these literary pieces would not necessarily be culturally familiar to Arab or South Asian students. The selection of literary texts considered culturally-familiar obviously changes from context to context.

Using English translations of CFL seems to be a more popular choice among instructors compared to nonnative English literature. In response to survey item B15, the majority of the instructors agree that quality English translations of literary texts can be used as learning/teaching material in a language classroom as shown in the following column chart.
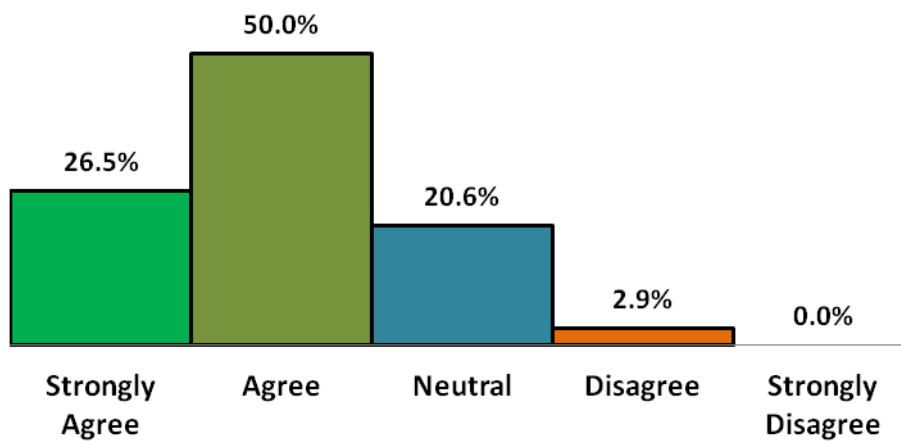
Figure 8: Using Translated Literature

As indicated in Figure 8, the majority of the instructors agree (76.5%) that quality English translations of literary texts can be used as learning/teaching material in a language classroom, 20.6% of the instructors are neutral about the statement, and 2.9% of the instructors disagree. The two instructors who disagree could believe that the aesthetic beauty of literary works is lost when translated into another language. This might be true, but it is no reason to exclude translations from language classrooms because reading English translations would still serve the purpose of helping learners develop their language skills even if they are aesthetically not as beautiful as the original text. For example, Naguib Mahfouz's novel *Harafish* is widely taught in English translation. Instructors should, however, be cautious not to include poor translations in their reading selections since literary texts serve as models of language use for EFL readers.

In response to the follow-up question in survey item B28, some instructors have acknowledged using translated literature in their teaching practices. One instructor has mentioned using the short story "Season of Madness" by the Lebanese author Hanan Al-Shaykh. Another instructor has mentioned using the collection of short stories titled *Heirlooms: Evening Tales from the East* by Mariam Behnam of

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Iranian origin. Behnam could be an interesting author particularly for the UAE context as she was awarded the Emirates Woman of the Year award in 2010 ("Mariam Behnam," 2010). Texts translated into English from languages other than Arabic may also be used. For instance, an instructor mentions using "Deadly Identities" by the Lebanese-French author Amin Maalouf conceding that s/he does not really consider this autobiographical piece translated from French a work of literature. Instructors have referred to individual authors too. The most recurring name is that of the Egyptian author Naguib Mahfouz. Other Arab authors include the Egyptian feminist Nawal El Saadawi, the Syrian social realist Hanna Mina, the Egyptian novelist Salwa Bakr, and the Emirati short-story writer Mohammad Al-Murr.

Interestingly, two instructors have mentioned using folktales. One instructor states using "Joha stories" in his/her current teaching context while the other instructor mentions using traditional folk tales while teaching in Japan in the past. Likewise, referring to his/her past teaching experience, an instructor mentions using translated Korean literature in the EFL context of Korea. By Joha, the first instructor refers to the famous 13th-century figure of Nasreddin believed to have originated from the Turkish town of Aksehir. Many satirical tales are attributed to Nasreddin and they are found in several languages including Arabic, Perisan, Turkish, and Urdu.

Survey item B29 asked respondents to recommend any authors/titles that could be considered CFL keeping the cultural background of their students in view. In response, some instructors suggested many more authors whose works could be used to provide students with CFL in AUS and UoS. The suggested Arab/Middle Eastern authors include Edward Said, Azadeh Moreni, Yusuf Idris, Orhan Pamuk, Marjan Satrapi, Leila Ahmed, Reem Haddad, Mohammad Ali Atassi, Elmaz Abinader, Firoozeh Dumas, Khalil Gibran and Nizai Kabani with the recurring names of Amin Malouf and Naguib Mahfouz. Suggested Indian authors include R. K. Narayan, Ruskin Bond, V. S. Naipul, Pico Iyer, Amitabh Ghosh, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Bharata Mukerjee. Works by the second group of authors could be considered culturally-familiar to the large number of South Asian students studying at AUS and UoS.

Despite the fact that instructors approve the effectiveness of having students read CFL, not many instructors use CFL in their language classrooms. One instructor anticipates in his/her final remarks in survey item C2 that not many language

instructors use CFL in their teaching, "I haven't used much [CFL] myself and I'm sure you will find the same of others." The instructor's prediction was indeed true. In response to survey item B28, 38.2% of the instructors acknowledged using CFL in their teaching careers while the majority of the instructors (61.8%) refused having used CFL in their teaching careers. A North-American instructor stated that s/he has not used CFL in his/her 12+ years of teaching career as the instructor "focused on American and British writers." This is true despite the fact that the instructor disagreed with the notion that American/British literature is superior to literature coming from nonnative English speaking contexts and agrees that CFL positively impacts reading comprehension. The scenario suggests that there could be other reasons for not including CFL in ELT.

The open-ended survey item B27 asked instructors to list any potential obstacles behind introducing CFL to students in their current teaching contexts. While eight out of forty nine instructors who responded to the survey item believe that there are no obstacles as one of them states "We just need to introduce it," others have expressed various concerns. Some of the concerns such as time constraint, curricular constraint, and specific needs of the students listed in survey item B26 are repeated. This is not surprising because survey item B26 required respondents to list any specific reasons that might discourage them from using literature in a language classroom. The reasons that restrain instructors from using literature in ELT would obviously remain constant in the case of using CFL too. Three reasons specific to introducing CFL include availability, cultural familiarity of the instructors with the text, and multicultural classrooms. Eleven out of forty nine instructors state that CFL is not readily available in English. One of these eleven instructors explains that "most of our students are Arabs... Arabic has one of the lowest rates of translation-to-English (Sheikh Sultan is working on this!!)." This instructor seems to assume that English translations of Arabic literature are the only source of CFL for Arab students. However, there are many literary works in English based in Arabic contexts written by native and nonnative authors. For instance, the American author Jean Sasson famously known for her *Princess Trilogy* writes fictional works centered on the lives of women in the Middle East, and the Emarati author Maha Gargash has written *The Sand Fish: A Novel from Dubai* in English. The claim that Arabic literature is not widely translated is also questionable considering that in their responses to survey

item B29 many instructors have mentioned several Arab authors whose works are widely translated in English. Related to availability, two out of the above mentioned eleven instructors have specifically mentioned the lack of graded readers for beginning and intermediate-level students.

Furthermore, four instructors share the concern that their unfamiliarity with the culture of the text may hinder their understanding of the literary piece as one of them explains, "Perhaps my unfamiliarity with the culture, since I am North American, would prohibit me from understanding the text fully" while another one states, "I might need to do additional research on the culture of culturally-familiar literature." That is, should the reading selection include literary texts culturally familiar to the instructor or literary texts culturally familiar to the students when the instructors and the students belong to different cultural backgrounds? This appears to be a more widespread concern as indicated in the results of the survey item B20. 26.4% of the instructors agree that they would find it easier to teach literature in English written in western contexts than literature in English written in nonwestern contexts, 30.9% adopt a neutral position, and 42.6% of the instructors disagree. Even though the majority of the instructors disagree, a significant number of eighteen instructors agree with the statement. Instructors who disagree may share the same cultural background with their students or they may be confident that they are well-familiar with their students' culture. The more time instructors spend in their teaching contexts, the more likely they are to be familiar with the surrounding culture(s).

In addition to the above mentioned two challenges, three instructors have raised the issue of multicultural classrooms in their responses to survey item B27. They explained that since their classes are comprised of students from different cultural backgrounds, a single literary text cannot be considered culturally-familiar to all of the students. This is true, but instructors can create a reading selection with multiple texts to cover all of the cultures represented in a classroom especially if we think in terms of ethnic backgrounds rather than national identities. For instance, we can group together Palestinians, Syrians, Emiratis, Egyptians and Saudi Arabians as Arabs and any literary text from the Arab world can be considered culturally-familiar to these students.

In addition to the instructors' personal views, it was important to find out whether reading CFL has practical benefits for EFL students. This goal was achieved

by designing an experimental study the results of which are discussed in the following section.

Reading Comprehension Test Results

Table 3 below shows the descriptive statistics of the reading comprehension test results.

Table 3: Mean Scores of Students

Short Story	N	M	SD
The Guest	76	11.57 (M_1)	2.68
A Christmas Memory	76	10.47 (M_2)	2.54

As Table 3 indicates, 76 (N = 76) students took both the tests. The average score of students in the comprehension test of "The Guest" (M_1) was 11.57 while their average score in the comprehension test of "A Christmas Memory" was 10.47 (M_2). Even though the mean scores of the students on the two tests differ, the difference between the two means is not great. Therefore, we had run a formal hypothesis testing, the two-sample t-test in our case, to make a conclusion. The hypothesis of the test is as follows:

Ho: $M_1 \leq M_2$

Ha: $M_1 > M_2$ (claim)

The null hypothesis (Ho) was that M_1 is less than or equal to M_2 and the alternative hypothesis (Ha) was that M_1 is greater than M_2. For greater accuracy, we decided to change the significance level from 5% to 1%. The results of the two-sample t-test show that the P-value equals to 0.005. Since the P-value is less than the alpha (1%), we reject the null hypothesis which indicates that there is enough evidence to support the claim that M_1 is greater than M_2 even at 1% level of significance. We can now make the inference based on this statistical conclusion that the average success rate of students was higher on the comprehension test of "The Guest" compared to that of "A Christmas Memory."

The results of this study also support the view that culture is transmitted. Van Peer (2008) explains that an author may be separated from the reader in time and in space. In this study, the French-Algerian author Albert Camus was closer to the Arab readers in terms of space compared to the American author Truman Capote. However, considering that both the short stories were published in the 1950s, the two authors were equally distant from the readers in terms of time. Since the students were generally able to comprehend Camus' text despite the time-difference of more than six decades better than Capote's text, it could be inferred that culturally-familiar literature has an edge over culturally less-familiar literature even if it is written in the near past.

The findings of this study support having EFL students read culturally-familiar literature. However, this is not to say that literature from different cultural contexts should not be included in the reading selection. Literature can serve the purpose of enhancing intercultural communication only if students read literature based in foreign cultures. An Emarati student, for example, acknowledged that he was fascinated by the American culture and loved to find out more about their lifestyle. Reading American literature would be one way of achieving this goal as confirmed by the instructors who participated in this study. While only four instructors were unsure, the remaining 64 instructors agreed that reading literature is a good way to learn about different cultures.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications

Summary

In general, instructors at post-secondary level in the UAE generally believe that literature is a rich source of language. According to most instructors in AUS and UoS, a study of literature can help students develop all four language skills and different areas of language. In addition to linguistic knowledge, instructors believe that encounter with literature enhances the cognitive and affective domains of the learners. Moreover, instructors believe that a study of literature in the language classroom supports integrative learning and promotes intercultural communication. Instructors also believe that culturally-familiar literature (CFL) has an advantage over culturally less-familiar literature in that it improves the reading comprehension of language students and facilitates vocabulary acquisition. In favor of using CFL, instructors do not discriminate between nonnative English literature and literature written by native speakers of English in terms of their literary and linguistic qualities. However, instructors cannot usually incorporate literature in their language teaching. The primary obstacles include curricular constraints, relevance of literary texts to the specific goals of language courses, and time constraint. Even though instructors believe that CFL has more potential for language learners than culturally less-familiar literature, they are restrained from including CFL in their classroom reading selections. In addition to the general obstacles stated above that prevent language instructors from using literature in language teaching, they face the issue of unavailability of materials in the case of CFL. Some of the instructors who do not share the same cultural background with their students believe that they may have difficulty in understanding literature from a foreign culture. As for their students, instructors believe that they are generally not interested in reading literature. Instructors view their students' disinterest in reading literature as a cultural attitude or a consequence of the common twenty-first century culture in which youngsters are more interested in gadgets than books.

The instructors' prediction that reading CFL positively impacts the reading comprehension of EFL students compared to reading culturally less-familiar literature was supported by empirical evidence resulting from the study that involved 76 EFL students. The results of the study showed that overall students performed better in the

comprehension test of the culturally-familiar short story based in the Arab context compared to culturally less-familiar short story based in the American context.

Implications of the Study

To relieve their teaching anxieties when it comes to dealing with literary texts, language instructors should be trained in using literature to teach language. One instructor mentions his/her own "lack of knowledge in teaching literature" as a reason for not including literature in language teaching. This issue raised by the concerned instructor could be a more widespread problem. Sidhu, Fook, and Kaur (2010) found out through classroom observations that the instructional practices of EFL teachers in Malaysia focused on individual comprehension rather than integrating a study of literature to help students develop their critical thinking skills and assist them in understanding literary elements of the text. The researchers therefore conclude that "teachers lacked creativity as far as organizing learning tasks were concerned" (p. 54). A possible reason for the EFL teachers' reported incompetence in terms of integrating literature in language teaching could be lack of preparation in their respective teacher training programs. Hismonglu (2005) maintains that many EFL instructors wish to include literature in their language classrooms but they "lack the background and training in the field" because TEFL and TESL programs do not prepare potential language teachers to teach language through literature. This problem applies to the UAE context as well. None of the three universities in the UAE, the American University of Sharjah, the British University in Dubai, and Zayed University that offer an MA degree in TESOL include a course on teaching language through literature in their study programs.

Educators and curriculum designers in the field of ELT should dissolve the perceived separation between language and literature. Instructors should consider how they can relate the study of literature to course objectives. Some instructors who teach writing courses stated that having students read published articles rather than literature is more in line with the course outcomes. Quite interestingly, another instructor who also teaches writing courses stated that s/he requires students to read literature for critical reading and response activities. This difference of opinion among instructors who teach the same language course indicates that relating literature to the general course outcome is a matter of personal opinion. In a similar

vein, some of the instructors who teach in intensive English programs mentioned that reading literature is not very relevant to the immediate student goal of passing the IELTS or TOEFL exam. These standardized tests assess language proficiency rather than some specific content, so EFL students should aim to raise their general proficiency and reading literature can significantly help in achieving this goal. It is also important that language programs allow teachers the freedom to use outside material rather than limiting them to course textbooks which may not include literature at all.

Extensive reading outside the classroom seems to be a popular choice among instructors. However, to help students develop their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills through their encounter with literature, literary texts should be integrated in language teaching. Instead of limiting literature to independent reading, teachers should use literary texts as teaching material to plan their lessons.

A lot of instructors seem to believe in the myth that Arab and Asian students come from a non-reading culture. This is a disturbing finding because it could mean that these instructors have formulated a negative opinion about the cultural attitude of their students. The perception that Arabs do not read is widely spread in the media. Swan and Ahmed (2011) state that a "2008 UN survey found that the average Arab in the Middle East reads about four pages of literature a year. Americans read an average of 11 books a year and Britons an average of eight." Caldwell (2012) found similar statistics according to which Arabs read on average 6 minutes per year on social media, satellite channels, and newspapers such as the UAE-based English daily newspapers *Gulfnews* and *Khaleej Times*. She probed the original sources of these statistics and found out that the oft-cited sources were either vague or forged. Subsequently, she concludes that "This pithy catchphrase [Arabs read six minutes a year] has endured for years and the motives for propagating it are varied, but they mostly adhere to the same logic that portrays Arabs as 'underdeveloped' or 'backwards,' hence the constant pairing of the statistic with a glowing statement on Euro-Israeil-American literacy." On the other hand, this false statistic could be highlighted to encourage the Arab youth to take more interest in reading. However, the important point is that it is not based on credible research. It is important to spread this awareness among language instructors, so that they can avoid judging their students with a preconceived assumption.

Language instructors should find ways to help their students develop an interest for reading literature. Rather than criticizing EFL students for their disinterest in literature, they should be encouraged to read literature. It is true that the youth of this generation is more occupied with technology than books, but this should not be seen as an insurmountable obstacle. According to Driscoll (2005), Robert Gagne defines attitudes as "acquired internal states that influence the choice of personal action, toward some class of things, persons, or events" (p. 355). Since they are acquired, attitudes are subject to change and improvement. Seeing their aversion to reading literature as an inherent and unchanging attribute of students is a misconceived notion. To facilitate their journey of developing a habit for reading literature, it is important to introduce students to the art of reading literature as Rosenblatt (1995) points out that reading literature is different from reading informational texts.

Considering that reading CFL positively impacts the comprehension of EFL students, language instructors should familiarize themselves with CFL in English so that they can supplement the reading selections of their students with CFL. Many of the instructors who come from a different cultural background than that of their students have mentioned lack of availability as a problem that may prevent them from having their students read CFL. Other instructors who come from the same cultural background as that of their students have listed several culturally-familiar literary texts whether originally written in English or in their English translation that could be used in EFL classrooms. Most of the texts listed are works by Arab authors followed by South-Asian authors. This suggests that it is not lack of availability but rather lack of familiarity on the instructors' part with CFL. To look for literature in line with the cultural background of their students, teachers can look for CFL by nonnative speakers of English, CFL in English translation, and CFL by native speakers of English. In fact, those instructors who are familiar with CFL for their teaching contexts can organize presentations/workshops to introduce them to their colleagues as suggested by one of the respondents in his/her final comments, "This is an interesting topic b/c we often don't use C.F.L. in our classes. I haven't used much myself and I'm sure you will find the same of others. A workshop and more awareness of this material + where we can find it would be beneficial."

Material developers should also assist language teachers in making available CFL to EFL learners. When instructors mention the unavailability of CFL as an obstacle in including this type of literature in language teaching, they could refer to materials specifically developed for pedagogic purposes in ELT such as graded readers. One instructor for instance states the absence of culturally-familiar graded readers as a problem that prevents the inclusion of CFL in EFL classrooms, "Finding good quality graded language texts." Another instructor with a similar concern states, "perhaps finding texts that are appropriate to their level." This issue was also confirmed by a cursory review of graded readers available in LEC. The only graded readers that could qualify as CFL for Arab, South Asian, and African students in the AABP were *The Drive to Dubai* by Julie Till, *A Passage to India* by E. M. Forster, *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe and *Weep Not Child* by Ngugi Wa Thiong'O. So renowned publishers like Oxford and McMillan should take this into consideration and develop materials to facilitate the reading comprehension of EFL learners.

Some of the instructors who come from different cultural backgrounds than that of their students share the concern that their unfamiliarity with the culture might make it difficult for them to understand literary texts considered culturally-familiar to their students. This would be an issue mainly for instructors who have just entered a new sociocultural context. In addition to self-study, instructors can learn from their students about the cultural referents in the text. Lending authority to students in such instances can boost their confidence. When instructors teach literary texts culturally-familiar to their students but less culturally-familiar to themselves, they can become co-learners in the classroom.

Limitations of the Study

Time-constraint prevented me from having a larger target population and obtaining more insight from the instructors who participated in the study. The response rate of the questionnaire distributed to instructors at AUS and UoS was quite impressive. However, I could have enlarged the target population by including instructors from other public and private English-medium universities in the UAE. This would allow me to obtain a broader perspective and more feedback from my research participants. Also, the large number of open-ended items in the questionnaire allowed instructors to provide me with more information on the topic in

hand. The last open-ended item that asked for any general comments allowed the instructors to bring up any issues not raised by the researcher. Contrary to the perception that respondents usually hesitate to respond to open-ended questions, the instructors who participated in this study provided a great deal of information even in the open-ended items. Nevertheless, the findings of the questionnaires could be augmented by interviews as Burns (2010) mentions that even though more time consuming compared to surveys, conducting an interview is "a classic way" of exploring one's area of focus. I could have conducted semi-structured interviews with interested instructors to discuss the findings of the questionnaire and obtain more in-depth, rich and even unexpected information from the highly experienced EFL instructors.

Most of the student participants were probably not familiar with reading literature. Rosenblatt (1995) explains that reading literature is different from reading expository texts. AABP students read, discuss, and analyze plenty of published articles in their course books but their extensive reading which includes literary texts is supposed to be independent and outside the classroom. Most instructors allow at least an hour of extensive reading during the week in the English language classes. But the activity is limited to silent reading. So it is not that students engage in discussions of character analysis, various themes found in the literary work, or the language used by the author. In other words, students do not have practice in reading literature. Moreover, even though they can read unadapted novels, Bridge students mostly read graded readers which are considered "simplified literary texts" and according Carroli (2008) using them is detrimental "even at the early stage of language learning" because "they devalue the literary nature of the text and position it only as a vehicle for language acquisition" (p. 11). Their inexperience with authentic literature could have made it difficult for Bridge students to read the short stories in their original, unsimplified forms.

It could not be ensured that students read both the short stories with equal concentration or even finished reading each short story before taking the test. Studies that test the reading comprehension of students usually require participants to read the assigned text on the spot and then immediately take the comprehension test after finishing the reading. This was not possible in this study because the short stories were 14 to 15 pages long. Depending on their reading fluency, it would take students

several hours to finish reading each short story. It would require even more time if students had to look up words in the dictionary. Therefore, the readings were assigned as homework. Even though they were given four days to read each short story, it turned out that some students were less prepared for one of the two tests. For instance, a Saudi female student scored 11 out of 25 on the comprehension test of "The Guest" while she scored17 out of 25 on the comprehension test of "A Christmas Memory." Compared to the rest of the students, this was an odd score. Since the student was in my TOEFL class, I had the opportunity to ask her why she performed better on Capote's short story. She explained that she only scanned through Camus' short story before taking the comprehension test. When their class teacher found out that some students had very low scores on the first comprehension test, she lectured the class that they need to take the research study seriously as they promised to volunteer. Hence, the Saudi female student read Capote's "A Christmas Memory" with more concentration to prepare for the second comprehension test which was reflected in her higher score on the test. In few other cases, students reported that they were busy either in preparing for an upcoming TOEFL exam or with exams and submissions in their courses so they were unable to finish the assigned reading before taking the test. Therefore, if this study were to be replicated, it is better to choose shorter literary texts that students can finish reading in one sitting and then take the comprehension test.

Suggestions for Further Research

A considerable number of instructors have raised the issue that studying literature is not relevant to the objectives of language courses especially in the case of EAP (English for Academic Purposes) courses such as academic writing. Bagherkazemi and Alemi (2010) contend that since studying literature improves overall literacy skills, it can help students meet their "academic and occupational needs" (p. 2). To prove this point, an empirical study can be conducted involving EFL students to report on the transfer of skills to other classroom tasks or even content courses after a period of engagement with literature.

There is uncontested agreement among the instructors that literature engages the readers emotionally and thus contribute to affective learning. Khatib and Nourzadeh (2011), however, strongly recommend language instructors to choose

literary texts that are "relevant to the learners' lives and expectations and that appeal to their interests;" otherwise, the language learners are unlikely to be interested in reading literature (p. 259). This suggests that EFL students would be emotionally more engaged with culturally-familiar literature than culturally less familiar literature. It would be interesting to find out whether this is the case through a carefully designed research study because evaluating the affective domain of language learners is not an easy task.

It is important to research the perception of students on reading culturally familiar and culturally less-familiar literature, the difficulties that they face while reading literature, and their attitudes towards reading literature. Absullah and Abu Bakar (2011) found out in a study involving 92 Malaysian university-level English language learners that the primary concerns of the students required to read short stories included uninteresting themes, language difficulty, and short periods of time given to read the assigned literary texts. It is interesting that cultural familiarity was not a factor for the research participants of Absullah and Abu Bakar's study. To find out whether EFL students in the UAE share similar or different concerns, the study has to be replicated in this context.

The research involving EFL students can be replicated with different literary texts. The two short stories were selected for this study primarily due to convenience. The anthology that contained both the stories was graded as advanced-level by the publisher so the researcher did not have to worry about the difficulty level of the language in the two stories. The two stories were written in the same time period and both the stories were supplemented with a comprehension test ready to be used to assess the students' comprehension. So even though in terms of space the Algerian story was closer to the Arab students than the American story, it was as distant as the American story in terms of time since both texts were published in the 1950s. Since we know that cultural schemas are dynamic, it is likely that these students would have performed even better on the comprehension test of a short story that is culturally-familiar to them spatiotemporally.

Concluding Remark

An instructor has given a very elaborate and well-written response in the final item of the questionnaire under "Additional Comments" which sums up the primary

arguments that might be raised to question the validity of this research study, and I would like to conclude by responding to his/her contentions. The instructor writes:

> This questionnaire appears a bit political in its implications, and some conclusions seem preconceived. English literature is broad and rich, relating to or emanating from people and cultures from around the world. It's not an issue of western vs. non-western, it's an issue of well-written vs not, or interesting vs not. In the case of EFL students, it's not an issue of political or cultural association but just one of cognitive maturity in being able to relate to themes universal to all literature. Cultural contexts play a small role in connecting the reader and in some cases may turn readers off who may prefer to read about something different from what they already know. We cant and shouldn't generalize beyond this.

No conclusions were drawn at the stage of data collection because it would defeat the very purpose of conducting research. If the instructor is referring to the declarative statements in the rating scale, each and every one of those statements is either stated or implied in the literature that supports this research from the advantages of reading literature to the arguments against the use of literature in language teaching, from the hesitation of nonnative speakers to express themselves in English to the complete embracement of the language by the nonnative speakers, from the issue of cultural unfamiliarity to the positive impact of culturally-familiar texts on reading comprehension. What is not supported by literature however is the "cognitive immaturity of EFL students."

Moreover, the component of culture is not at all a marginal concern in reading literature. Johnson (1982) found out in an experimental study that ESL students' cultural knowledge significantly impacted their reading comprehension while exposing them to key vocabulary words in a pre-reading activity did not have any significant impact on their reading comprehension. This study shows that the required cultural background can be more important than the second or foreign language reader's linguistic knowledge. How then can we push culture to the periphery? It is interesting that the instructor has neither used CFL in 12+ years of his/her teaching career nor suggests any CFL that could be used in his/her current teaching context. Yet, the instructor states with conviction that cultural familiarity has minimal effect on reading comprehension. Now that to me would be a "preconceived conclusion" or an opinion formed too early without sufficient thought and knowledge about the subject matter.

Booth (1995) mentions that "Genuine responses to literature *always* entail a meeting of the 'cultural environment' of the reader with that of the text" (p. xi, emphasis mine). As a student of literature who has studied American and British literature for four years in advanced undergraduate courses and seminars, I can attest to the validity of Booth's statement. This is not to say that I am denying the universality of literature. However, the fact that literature has universal themes does not undo its cultural specificity. Since we learn from cultural schema theory that cultural familiarity positively impacts reading comprehension, and this claim is proven in several empirical studies including this one, it would be considerate if we can reduce the cognitive load of EFL learners to an extent by supplementing their reading selection with culturally-familiar literature in English.

Nevertheless, I agree with the concerned instructor that readers should be able to relate to the universal themes of literary works. Natasha Tretheway, the current United States Poet Laureate, mentioned in a poetry workshop at the American University of Sharjah that she is irked when her students in literature and creative writing classes back in the U.S. complain that they do not relate to a certain literary piece in the class readings (personal communication, 2013). The poet explained that she encourages her students to empathize with the author rather than pondering over how the literary piece relates to their personal experiences. It may also be true that EFL students might be more interested in reading literary texts from distant cultures. However, this research was neither about whether or not students can relate to universal themes of literature nor about their interest in reading culturally-familiar or culturally unfamiliar literature.

Finally, I am not at all arguing for replacing American and British literature with nonnative English literature as this would be against the notion of developing intercultural awareness through one's encounter with literature. Instead, I propose supplementing the reading selections in EFL contexts with CFL whether they are written by native or nonnative writers. Students should be encouraged to read more literature in a nurturing and supportive learning environment.

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Appendix A: Instructors' Questionnaire

English Instructors' Perspectives in UAE on the Role of Literature in Language Classroom

This questionnaire is part of a research being carried in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MA in TESOL. It examines English language instructors' perspectives about their students' interest in reading literature and its impact on improving their language skills at post-secondary level in UAE. The survey is entirely anonymous and will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Below are my glosses for some of the key terms used in this questionnaire

1. 'Literature' or 'literary texts' include novels, plays, and poems.
2. 'Non-literary texts' refer to book reviews, newspaper articles, academic textbooks, journal articles, etc.
3. 'Culture' means the behaviors and beliefs associated with a particular social group that may be transmitted from one generation to the next.
4. 'Culturally-familiar' literature is determined by the degree of similarity between the author and the reader's sociocultural background. The more similar their sociocultural background is, the more culturally familiar the text will be to the reader.
5. 'Language' courses include both general English language proficiency courses and academic writing courses.
6. 'EFL context' refers to a sociocultural context where English is not the dominant language.

Thank you for your participation. Your feedback is greatly appreciated.

Part A: Background Information
Please check the appropriate response:
A1. Specify your background as an English instructor:

Native speaker of English ☐   Non-native speaker of English ☐

A2. Which ethnicity do you identify with the most from the following?

African ☐	Arab ☐
Asian ☐	European ☐
North American ☐	Other ethnic origin ☐

Please specify: ──────────

A4. How many years have you been teaching English language and/or literature in an EFL context?

0-2 ☐   3-5 ☐   6-8 ☐   9-11 ☐   12+ ☐

A5. Select the type of course(s) that you teach:

Language ☐   Literature ☐   Both Language and Literature ☐

A6. What level of students do you teach? [Check all that apply]

IEP/Foundation ☐   Freshman ☐   Sophomore ☐   Junior/Senior ☐
(Pre- major)   (1st year)   (2nd year)   (3rd-4th year)

A7. In terms of your educational background, do you have any academic qualification in literature?

     Yes ☐   No ☐

     If so, please specify the title of your degree(s)/diploma(s)/certificate(s):

     _____

     _____

     _____

Part B: Teaching Language through Literature

Please circle the appropriate response in each of the following (B1-B23):

To what degree do you think reading literature in English helps language learners improve their performance in each of the following areas?

	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low
B1. Grammar	1	2	3	4	5
B2. Vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5
B3. Knowledge of the way words and sentences are used in daily conversations	1	2	3	4	5
B4. Idiomatic expressions	1	2	3	4	5

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
B5. Literature is an important language resource	1	2	3	4	5
B6. A study of literature in language classroom can integrate the development of reading, writing, speaking, and listening	1	2	3	4	5
B7. Literature provides richer context for learning new words than do non-literary texts	1	2	3	4	5
B8. Reading literature develops critical thinking skills	1	2	3	4	5
B9. Reading literature helps students improve their performance in other academic courses	1	2	3	4	5

B10. Reading literature is a good way to learn about different cultures	1	2	3	4	5
B11. Literature engages the reader emotionally	1	2	3	4	5
B12. The creative use of language in literature may confuse language learners	1	2	3	4	5
B13. Unfamiliarity with the culture makes it difficult for EFL students to understand English literature written in western contexts	1	2	3	4	5
B14. Quality English translations of literary texts can be used as learning/teaching material in a language classroom	1	2	3	4	5
B15. Reading literature written in a familiar cultural context impacts reading comprehension positively	1	2	3	4	5
B16. Culturally-familiar literature provides a more meaningful context for learning new words than does culturally less familiar literature	1	2	3	4	5
B17. I am NOT familiar with literature in English written in nonwestern contexts	1	2	3	4	5
B18. I would be more inclined to use literature in a language course if culturally-familiar literary texts in English were more readily available	1	2	3	4	5
B19. I would find it easier to teach literature in English written in western contexts than literature in English written in nonwestern contexts	1	2	3	4	5
B20. English primarily belongs to the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, so only these countries represent the cultural bases of the English language	1	2	3	4	5
B21. American and/or British literature in general is superior to literature that stems from nonnative English speaking contexts	1	2	3	4	5

Please answer the following questions accordingly

B22. If you teach language course(s), how often do you integrate a study of literature in your language classroom?

Very often ☐   Often ☐   Sometimes ☐   Rarely ☐   Never ☐

If you include literature in your language classroom, please briefly explain how you integrate a study of literature:

_____

_____

_____

B23. In your current teaching context, how would you rate student interest in reading literature (in any language)?

Very high ☐   High ☐   Moderate ☐   Low ☐   Very low ☐

B24. If you believe that students in your teaching context generally have a low level of interest in reading English literature, what might be some of the reasons behind this lack of interest?

_____

_____

_____

B25. Are there any specific reasons that might discourage you from using literature in a language classroom? If so, please list them here:

_____

_____

_____

B26. What might be some of the obstacles (if any) behind introducing culturally-familiar literature to students in your present teaching context?

_____

_____

_____

B27. In your teaching experience, have you taught literature that was culturally familiar to students in an EFL context?

Yes ☐   No ☐

If so, please list some of the titles/authors and the respective institutional contexts in which you taught them:

_____

_____

_____

B28. Keeping the cultural background of students in the courses that you teach in view, can you recommend any titles/authors that could be included in the reading selection to provide students with culturally-familiar literature? If so, please list them here:

_____

_____

_____

Part C: Additional Comments

C1. Were you familiar with this concept of having EFL students read culturally-familiar literature prior to filling out this questionnaire?

Yes ☐ No ☐

C2. Do you have any other comments that might be related to the topic of including culturally-familiar literature in English language courses in the UAE? If so, please write them here:

_____

_____

_____

Part D: Additional Information

If I would like more information from you, would you agree to be interviewed?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If so, please provide your:

Name: _____

Email: _____

Tel. #: _____

Thank you for your assistance

If you have any questions about the completion of this questionnaire, please contact Sadaf Ahmad, the researcher, by phone [050 899 30 77] or email [g00025786@aus.edu]

Version 2   The 2,000 word level

1 copy
2 event   _____ end or highest point
3 motor   _____ this moves a car
4 pity   _____ thing made to be like another
5 profit
6 tip

1 accident
2 debt   _____ loud deep sound
3 fortune   _____ something you must pay
4 pride   _____ having a high opinion of
5 roar   yourself
6 thread

1 coffee
2 disease   _____ money for work
3 justice   _____ a piece of clothing
4 skirt   _____ using the law in the right
5 stage   way
6 wage

1 clerk
2 frame   _____ a drink
3 noise   _____ office worker
4 respect   _____ unwanted sound
5 theater
6 wine

1 dozen
2 empire   _____ chance
3 gift   _____ twelve
4 opportunity   _____ money paid to the
5 relief   government
6 tax

1 admire
2 complain   _____ make wider or longer
3 fix   _____ bring in for the first time
4 hire   _____ have a high opinion of
5 introduce   someone
6 stretch

1 arrange
2 develop   _____ grow
3 lean   _____ put in order
4 owe   _____ like more than something else
5 prefer
6 seize

1 blame
2 elect   _____ make
3 jump   _____ choose by voting
4 manufacture   _____ become like water
5 melt
6 threaten

1 ancient
2 curious   _____ not easy
3 difficult   _____ very old
4 entire   _____ related to God
5 holy
6 social

1 bitter
2 independent   _____ beautiful
3 lovely   _____ small
4 merry   _____ liked by many people
5 popular
6 slight

Version 2   The 3,000 word level

1 bull
2 champion   _____ formal and serious manner
3 dignity   _____ winner of a sporting event
4 hell   _____ building where valuable
5 museum   objects are shown
6 solution

1 blanket
2 contest   _____ holiday
3 generation   _____ good quality
4 merit   _____ wool covering used on
5 plot   beds
6 vacation

1 comment
2 gown   _____ long formal dress
3 import   _____ goods from a foreign country
4 nerve   _____ part of the body which carries feeling
5 pasture
6 tradition

1 administration
2 angel   _____ group of animals
3 frost   _____ spirit who serves God
4 herd   _____ managing business and
5 fort   affairs
6 pond

1 atmosphere
2 counsel   _____ advice
3 factor   _____ a place covered with grass
4 hen   _____ female chicken
5 lawn
6 muscle

1 abandon
2 dwell   _____ live in a place
3 oblige   _____ follow in order to catch
4 pursue   _____ leave something permanently
5 quote
6 resolve

1 assemble
2 attach   _____ look closely
3 peer   _____ stop doing something
4 quit   _____ cry out loudly in fear
5 scream
6 toss

1 drift
2 endure   _____ suffer patiently
3 grasp   _____ join wool threads together
4 knit   _____ hold firmly with your hands
5 register
6 tumble

1 brilliant
2 distinct   _____ thin
3 magic   _____ steady
4 naked   _____ without clothes
5 slender
6 stable

1 aware
2 blank   _____ usual
3 desperate   _____ best or most important
4 normal   _____ knowing what is happening
5 striking
6 supreme

Adapted from Schmitts and Clapham, 2001:http://www.lextutor.ca/tests/

Appendix C: Chart Used to Determine the Reading-Level of AABP Students

Reading Lab Level	Publisher Designation	Number of Headwords	Number of Pages	OR Number of Words
Level 1 – Basic				
Cambridge English Readers	none			
Macmillan Readers	none			
Oxford Bookworms	Starter	250		Comic Strip Starters: 950 Narrative Starters: 1,540 Interactive Starters: 1,635
Penguin Readers	Easystarts	200	20	
Level 1				
Cambridge English Readers	Level 1 Starter	400		4,000
Macmillan Readers	Starter	300	16	
Oxford Bookworms	Stage 1	400		5,200
Penguin Readers	Level 1 Beginner	300	16 - 32	
Level 2				
Cambridge English Readers	Level 2 Elementary	800		10,000
Macmillan Readers	Beginner	600	32 – 64	
Oxford Bookworms	Stage 2	700		6,500
Penguin Readers	Level 2 Elementary	600	28 - 56	

Reading Lab Level	Publisher Designation	Number of Headwords	Number of Pages	OR Number of Words
Level 3				
Cambridge English Readers	Level 3 Lower-intermediate	1300		15,000
Macmillan Readers	Elementary	1100	64 - 80	
Oxford Bookworms	Stage 3	1000		10,000
Penguin Readers	Level 3 Pre-Intermediate	1200	48 - 112	
Level 4				
Cambridge English Readers	none			
Macmillan Readers	Pre-Intermediate	1400	80 – 96	
	Intermediate	1600	64 – 112	
Oxford Bookworms	Stage 4	1400		16,000
Penguin Readers	Level 4 Intermediate	1700	72 - 168	
Level 5				
Cambridge English Readers	Level 4 Intermediate	1900		20,000
Macmillan Readers	Upper-Intermediate	2200	80 – 144	
Oxford Bookworms	Stage 5	1800		23,000
Penguin Readers	Level 5 Upper Intermediate	2300	88 - 168	
Level 6				
Cambridge English Readers	Level 5 Upper-Intermediate	2800		25,000
	Level 6 Advanced	3800		30,000
Macmillan Readers	none			
Oxford Bookworms	Stage 6	2500		30,000
Penguin Readers	Level 6 Advanced	3000	112 - 120	

Appendix D: Reading Comprehension Tests

A Christmas Memory

ID: _____

Section No. _____

Please circle the correct answer.

1. **Recalling Specific Facts**
   The narrator's friend calls him "Buddy" after

   A. her father.
   B. an old lover.
   C. a relative.
   D. a child who had died.

2. **Recalling Specific Facts**
   The main attraction in the Fun and Freak Museum was a

   A. tap dancer.
   B. slide viewer
   C. three-legged chicken.
   D. two-headed turtle.

3. **Recalling Specific Facts**
   The fruitcakes are for

   A. members of the family.
   B. strangers or near strangers.
   C. a church bake sale.
   D. close friends.

4. **Organizing Facts**
   What is the first job for the old buggy in fruitcake weather?

   A. going to the store
   B. going to Haha's
   C. gathering pecans
   D. hauling a tree

5. **Organizing Facts**
   The relatives made Buddy's friend cry. What activity did Buddy then suggest that restored her good spirits?

   A. baking fruitcakes
   B. going to Haha's place

C. going to cut a tree
D. finding windfall pecans

6. **Organizing Facts**
   What is Buddy doing as the story ends?

   A. walking on a school campus
   B. flying kites
   C. reading a letter from his friend
   D. returning for his friend's funeral

7. **Knowledge of Word Meanings**
   Which of the following best defines 'decease' in "... the museum shut down due to the decease of the main attraction"?

   A. disappearance
   B. death
   C. illness
   D. theft

8. **Knowledge of Word Meanings**
   "... my friend is sly and noncommittal when passers-by praise the treasure perched in our buggy: what a fine tree and where did it come from? 'Yonderways,' she murmurs vaguely." In that sentence 'noncommittal' means

   A. rude.
   B. suspicious (feeling doubt or no trust in someone or something).
   C. hostile (having or showing unfriendly meanings).
   D. evasive (answering question indirectly or unclearly because you do not want to be honest).

9. **Knowledge of Word Meanings**
   "... the Christmas time of year exhilarates her imagination and fuels the blaze of her heart..." What does 'exhilarates' mean?

   A. overshadows (to cause something seem less important)
   B. stimulates (to make someone excited about something)
   C. dulls (to make less intense)
   D. portends (to stretch forth or extend)

10. **Drawing a Conclusion**
    Buddy's friend spends the thirteenth day of each month in bed. She throws out a penny so they won't have an even $13 to spend. Those facts lead you to conclude that she is

    A. cautious (careful).
    B. feebleminded (unable to think carefully).

C. scatteredbrained (forgetting things easily).
D. superstitious (believing in things not based on scientific knowledge but
connected to old ideas about magic).

11. Drawing a Conclusion
After the scene with Haha Jones, you must conclude that he is

A. not as fierce (strong and powerful) as he seems.
B. completely without morals.
C. unfeeling (not worried about others' problems) and humorless.
D. a bit foolish.

12. Drawing a Conclusion
For Buddy, the years spent in military schools and campus were

A. acceptable.
B. total misery (great unhappiness).
C. a good lesson in self-dicipline.
D. revealing and instructive (giving useful information).

13. Making a Judgment
The scolding that Buddy's friend received for drinking some of the fruitcake whiskey was probably

A. more harsh than was necessary.
B. well deserved.
C. totally undeserved.
D. not really important for the relatives.

14. Making a Judgment
The decision to send Buddy to a military school was probably

A. unfortunate.
B. wise.
C. necessary
D. generous

15. Making an Inference
The author refers to "the relatives" and "other people in the house." That leads you to infer that

A. the family is close-knit.
B. these people are fond of Buddy and his friend.
C. the people are always unkind and abusive (using rude and offensive words).
D. Buddy doesn't consider them very important.

16. Making an Inference
As you read about Buddy and his friend, you are likely to infer that they

A. live in a private world.
B. are involved in their community.
C. have little in common with each other.
D. suffer from a "generation gap."

17. Understanding Characters
Buddy's friend might best be described as

A. crotchety (often in a bad mood and easily annoyed).
B. shrewd (having good judgment).
C. childlike.
D. domineering (trying to control other people without thinking about their feelings).

18. Understanding Characters
In the years after Buddy goes away, his friend

A. becomes bitter and resentful (full of anger).
B. remains lively and spirited.
C. lapses into contentment (satisfaction).
D. becomes frail (weak or unhealthy) and confused.

19. Understanding Main Ideas
For Buddy and his friend making fruitcakes, finding a Christmas tree, making decorations, and putting Queenie's bone in the tree are all

A. games.
B. traditions.
C. imaginary adventures.
D. required by relatives.

20. Understanding Main Ideas
Buddy's friend speaks twice about seeing the Lord. She comes to believe that people see the Lord in

A. things as they are.
B. revelations at Christmas time.
C. the window of the Baptist church.
D. wishes of the heart.

21. Understanding Main Ideas
One reason that Buddy and his friend were so close is that they

A. were shy and lonely people who turned to each other for companionship.
B. were forced to look after one another by other members of the family.

C. were both a bit peculiar (unusual and strange) and recognized this trait in one another.
D. had a mutual interest in Christmas and in kite flying that served to bring them together.

22. Recognizing Tone
"Oh my," she exclaims ... "it's fruitcake weather!" The story opens with an air or

A. wistful (sad and thinking about something that is impossible) sadness.
B. foreboding (a feeling that something bad is going to happen soon).
C. excitement and anticipation.
D. comic expectation.

23. Recognizing Tone
The author's tone as he tells story might best be described as

A. comic.
B. antagonistic (showing unfriendliness towards someone) .
C. wistful.
D. sarcastic (using comments which means the opposite to criticize something or hurt someone's feelings).

24. Appreciation of Literary Forms
Capote uses this simile in referring to the elderly woman: "She is small and sprightly, like a bantam hen..." What does the author mean?

A. The woman is feeble (without energy) and weak.
B. The woman is energetic and vivacious (energetic and lively).
C. The woman is happy and satisfied.
D. The woman loves to play and run around.

25. Appreciation of Literary Forms
After the supper, Buddy and his elderly cousin went to her room "wallowing in the pleasures of conspiracy." This meant that they were

A. planning secretly against their family members.
B. excited to prepare for the ingredients of their fruitcakes.
C. pleased to count the money in their hidden bead purse.
D. happy celebrating Christmas.

The Guest

ID: _____   Section No. _____

Please circle the correct answer.

1. **Recalling Specific Facts**
    Why did Daru have so much wheat?

    A. It was a custom in the country to use schoolhouses for storages.
    B. Since he received no salary, Daru supported himself this way.
    C. This was an emergency food supply for the region because of a drought [a period of dryness].
    D. It was a supply he was supposed to use in case of a siege [a military blockade of a city].

2. **Recalling Specific Facts**
    What did Balducci give to Daru before leaving?

    A. his revolver [a handgun]
    B. nothing but advice
    C. handcuffs [a metal fastening locked around the wrists]
    D. a message for Tinguit

3. **Organizing Facts**
    How far had Balducci traveled from El Ameur with the prisoner walking behind?

    A. two days travel
    B. twenty kilometers or about 15 miles
    C. the story doesn't say
    D. three kilometers or less than two miles

4. **Organizing Facts**
    Daru asked the Arab, "Why did you kill him?" What was the Arab's reason?

    A. It was self-defense.
    B. It was a matter of honor [respect and pride].
    C. He ran away.
    D. He stole from me.

5. **Knowledge of Word Meanings**
    The Arab was wearing a chèche. This is a French word, but you don't need a French dictionary to understand its meaning. You should be able to tell what the word means from the way it is used in the story (p. 203, Line 4). What is it?

    A. a necklace
    B. a kind of headdress
    C. a loose robe [a lose piece of clothing]

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D. sandals

6. **Knowledge of Word Meanings**
   Balducci was an old gendarme. What is a gendarme?

   A. an army sergeant
   B. a policeman
   C. the local administrator
   D. a colonial rancher [a person who owns a very large farm]

7. **Drawing a Conclusion**
   The part of the country where the story takes place can be best described as

   A. a desert
   B. a rocky wasteland [an empty area of land which is not used to grow crops]
   C. tropical [the hottest place on earth]
   D. snowbound mountains

8. **Drawing a Conclusion**
   Balducci was a man who

   A. didn't believe in things according to rules.
   B. was opposed to Daru's feelings.
   C. hated Arabs.
   D. believed in rules and orders.

9. **Making a Judgment**
   How did Daru feel about his life in the schoolhouses?

   A. He was always lonely.
   B. He was content [satisfied].
   C. He would leave one day.
   D. He felt more Arab than French.

10. **Making a Judgment**
    How did the Arab seem to feel when he first met Daru?

    A. He seemed fearful and suspicious [feeling doubt or no trust in someone].
    B. He trusted Daru at once.
    C. He was numb [not able to feel anything] with fright.
    D. He felt a strange bond with Daru.

11. **Making a Judgment**
    How did Balducci feel about Daru's attitude toward delivering the prisoner?

    A. He shrugged it off [meaning, he ignored it].
    B. He was offended.
    C. He became angry

D. He found it funny.

12. Making inference
You are not told either Balducci's age or Daru's age. But can you guess from the clues in the story what their relative ages are?

A. Balducci is younger.
B. Balducci is a bit older.
C. They are about the same age.
D. Balducci is much older.

13. Making an inference
You can infer from the story that Daru

A. lived as much in fear of the French as of the Arabs.
B. was uneasy [slightly worried and uncomfortable] being alone among Arabs.
C. would feel uncomfortable living anywhere else.
D. had never thought of living anywhere else.

14. Making an inference
From the way Daru guarded his prisoner you may infer that he

A. hoped the prisoner would escape.
B. had decided not to disappoint Balducci after all.
C. wasn't at all nervous about his "guest."
D. knew that there was no doubt that the prisoner would escape.

15. Understanding Character
Daru felt

A. he could not trust either the Arabs or the French.
B. that Balducci represented a dying empire.
C. at odds [disagree] with the French and the Arab murderer.
D. a lack of caring for what would become of the French or the Arab.

16. Understanding Character
As time spent together, Daru and the Arab

A. became more and more aware of their differences.
B. totally understood one another.
C. began to look inward rather than outward.
D. began to feel a kind of attachment.

17. Understanding Characters
From what you have read about him, is it fair to say that Daru

A. hated to be the cause of harm to anyone, unless it was a matter of self defense.

B. had a deep seated fear of reality and would have escaped himself if it were possible.

C. felt that sooner or later he would come under siege [military blockade of a city] at the hands of his Arab neighbors.

D. was a deeply religious and patriotic [someone who loves his or her country and supports its authority and interests] person.

18. Understanding Main Ideas
The author suggests in the story that

A. colonialism [control by a foreign power over an area or people] is wrong no matter how benevolent [kind and helpful] it may seem

B. no matter how you try to control the outcome of a situation, it is impossible to know what will happen.

C. no matter what the circumstances, the police should stay within their own sphere.

D. people living in harsh environments under near-starvation [having no food for a long period of time] conditions are not responsible for their actions.

19. Understanding Main Ideas
Another point that the author makes in this story is that

A. everyone always has the best intentions.

B. reasoning [thinking about something to make a decision] is sometimes not a good substitute [a thing used instead of another thing] for anger.

C. good intentions and actions do not always produce the best results.

D. good is better than evil because it is nicer.

20. Recognizing Tone
In this vast landscape he had loved so much, he was alone." How does this make you feel?

A. somewhat uncomfortable

B. a bit sad

C. angry

D. offended [upset and unhappy]

21. Recognizing Tone
"Listen" he [the Arab] said. Daru shook his head: "No, be quiet. Now I'm leaving you" At this point in the story, both Daru and the Arab seem

A. agitated [disturbed].

B. disappointed.

C. angry.

D. frightened.

22. Recognizing Tone
"… the plateau… vibrated like the air itself… the ground rang under their

feet. From time to time a bird rent the space in front of them with a joyful cry." The feeling in this passage is

A. understated [make something seem less important than it really is].
B. exhilarating [cheerful and excited].
C. overstated [make something seem more important that it really is].
D. debilitating [weakening].

23. Appreciation of Literary Forms
Near the beginning of the story the author refers to "that army of ragged ghosts wandering in the sunlight." Who are the "ghosts" in the metaphor?

A. the drought-stricken people
B. the French colonials
C. Algerians in general
D. early settlers

24. Appreciation of Literary Forms
Camus uses this simile in referring to Daru: "… he who lived almost like a monk [a religious person who does not marry and usually lives in a place of worship]…" What does the author mean?

A. It was as if Daru lived alone in a cave.
B. Daru had no contacts with other people.
C. Daru lived a very plain and simple life.
D. He felt it was a lonely existence.

25. Appreciation of Literary Forms
When the Arab first arrived, he watched Daru "with feverish eyes." This meant that the Arab

A. was ill from travelling at the end of a rope [to have no more patience or strength].
B. had a frightened or frenzied [showing great emotional disturbance] look on his face.
C. had very black eyes as someone does who has a fever.
D. was looking at Daru with great hatred.

Appendix E: Questionnaire Results

No.	Survey Item	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low	Rating Average
B1	Grammar	22.1%	36.8%	36.8%	4.4%	0.0%	2.24
B2	Vocabulary	64.7%	33.8%	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%	1.37
B3	Knowledge of the way words and sentences are used in daily conversations	30.9%	32.4%	25.0%	11.8%	0.0%	2.18
B4	Idiomatic expressions	35.3%	38.2%	25.0%	1.5%	0.0%	1.93

No.	Survey Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Rating Average
B5	Literature is an important language resource	45.6%	47.1%	5.9%	0.0%	1.5%	1.65
B6	A study of literature in language classroom can integrate the development of reading, writing, speaking, and listening	30.9%	54.4%	8.8%	5.9%	0.0%	1.90
B7	Literature provides richer context for learning new words than do non-literary texts	16.2%	33.8%	17.6%	30.9%	1.5%	2.68
B8	Reading literature develops critical thinking skills	26.5%	52.9%	19.1%	1.5%	0.0%	1.96
B9	Reading literature helps students improve their performance in other academic courses	17.6%	36.8%	39.7%	4.4%	1.5%	2.35
B10	Reading literature is a good way to learn about different cultures	41.2%	52.9%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	1.65

B11	Literature engages the reader emotionally	54.4%	35.3%	10.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.56
B12	The creative use of language in literature may confuse language learners	11.8%	47.1%	23.5%	16.2%	1.5%	2.49
B13	Unfamiliarity with the culture makes it difficult for EFL students to understand English literature written in western contexts	14.7%	54.4%	20.6%	10.3%	0.0%	2.26
B14	Quality English translations of literary texts can be used as learning/teaching material in a language classroom	26.5%	50.0%	20.6%	2.9%	0.0%	2.00
B15	Reading literature written in a familiar cultural context impacts reading comprehension positively	29.4%	66.2%	4.4%	0.0%	0.0%	1.75
B16	Culturally-familiar literature provides a more meaningful context for learning new words than does culturally less familiar literature	27.9%	51.5%	11.8%	8.8%	0.0%	2.01
B17	I am NOT familiar with literature in English written in nonwestern contexts	5.9%	11.8%	7.4%	38.2%	36.8%	3.88
B18	I would be more inclined to use	7.4%	44.1%	32.4%	13.2%	2.9%	2.60

	literature in a language course if culturally-familiar literary texts in English were more readily available						
B19	I would find it easier to teach literature in English written in western contexts than literature in English written in nonwestern contexts	2.9%	23.5%	30.9%	33.8%	8.8%	3.22
B20	English primarily belongs to the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, so only these countries represent the cultural bases of the English language	2.9%	8.8%	5.9%	39.7%	42.6%	4.10
B21	American and/or British literature in general is superior to literature that stems from nonnative English speaking contexts	1.5%	5.9%	11.8%	27.9%	52.9%	4.25

Vita

Sadaf Khalil Ahmad graduated from the American University of Sharjah (AUS) with Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature – Literature concentration – in 2011. She worked as a Writing Center tutor for three and a half years during her undergraduate and graduate studies. She also worked as an instructor in the Achievement Academy Bridge Program at AUS for two years during her graduate studies.