

Deanship of Graduate Studies

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The Effects of Culturally-loaded Texts on EFL  
Learners' Reading Comprehension

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The Effects of Culturally-loaded Texts on EFL  
Learners' Reading Comprehension

By

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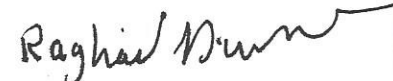
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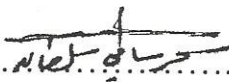
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2003

## Declaration

I certify that this thesis submitted for the degree of Master is the result of my own research, except where otherwise acknowledged, and this thesis (or any part of the same) has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

Signed:..........

Sahar Sami Sultan

Date: Nov. 18<sup>th</sup>. 2003

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## ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to investigate the effect of target language culture i.e. (the American culture) on the students' outcome in reading. More specifically, this study addressed the following questions:

1. Is there a statistically significant effect for gender on the learners' General Ability in English (GAE)?
2. Is there a statistically significant relationship between learners' GAE and their achievement when reading the two types of texts (loaded with target language culture and not loaded with target language culture ?).
3. Is there a statistically significant relationship between students' achievement in the reading passages that are loaded with target language culture and their achievement in the reading passages that are not loaded with target language culture?
4. Is there a statistically significant difference in the students' achievement in the reading passages that are loaded with target language culture and their achievement in the passages that are not loaded with target language culture?
5. Is there a statistically significant difference in the students' achievement in the reading passages that are loaded with target language

culture and their achievement in the reading passages that are not loaded with target language culture due to gender?

6. Is there a statistically significant difference between the students whose GAE is good and those whose GAE is poor in their achievement in the reading passages that are loaded with target language culture and the passages that are not loaded with target language culture?

Fifty-eight first-year students from Palestine Polytechnic University have participated in the study. Four authentic texts were used to test the subjects' reading comprehension in English as a foreign language. Each text was followed by nine multiple-choice questions.

After the data were collected, the following statistical tests were performed on the data: frequencies, percentages, standard deviation, t-tests, and Pearson correlation.

The following is a summary of the findings:

1. There was statistically significant difference between students' GAE attributable to gender in favor of females.
2. The results showed that there was a significant relationship between the subjects' GAE and their performance on all texts except one text that is not loaded with target language culture (Text D).



3. A significant relationship was found between the learners' comprehension scores of the texts that are loaded with target language culture and those that are not loaded with target language culture.
4. There were significant differences between students' performance on the texts that are loaded with target language culture and those that are not loaded with target language culture.
5. There was a significant difference between males and females in their performance on text B that is loaded with target language culture. Meanwhile, the findings indicated that no significant differences were found between males and females in their performance on Text A, Text C nor Text D. One can argue that the difference between males and females' performance on Text B is attributed to the fact that females were more interested in the subject of Text B than males.
6. There was a significant difference between students whose GAE is good and those whose GAE is poor in their performance on the passages that are culturally loaded (A&B) and Text C in favor of good students.

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## **Chapter One**

### **1-1 Introduction**

#### **1-1-1 The Importance of Reading**

Reading is an essential process in learning languages, the native language (L1) and the second language (L2). A considerable number of researchers (Alderson, 1984; Williamson, 1988; Brush, 1991; Badrawi, 1994 and Yousef, 1998) agree that reading is the main route to the command of language. Bright and MacGregor (1970) note that where there is little reading there will be little language learning. Nuttall (1996) adds that reading is a highly effective means of extending the command of language. Gibson and Levin (1975) in Destefano (1978) also state that reading has received more attention than other aspects of education, so there is small wonder that instruction in the early grades is organized around learning to read because almost everyone expresses concern about students learning to read.

be able to comprehend texts with some degree of proficiency. The third reason for this interest is cognitive. The learning of two encoding systems is interesting to the educational research community. Analysis of second language literacy acquisition may lend insight into the "universals hypothesis " which discusses the similarities and differences between languages (Kilani,2001) .

### **1-1-2 Language and culture**

Relationship between language and culture has been debated. However, several researchers argue that language and culture are closely related and interactive (Rivers, 1981; Gaston, 1984; Damen, 1987; Omaggio, 1993; Badrawi, 1994). According to Rivers (1981), culture in contemporary teaching of languages includes everyday lifestyle of ordinary citizens and the values, beliefs, and prejudices they share with their fellows within their linguistic and social groups. Seelye (1984) defines culture as a broad concept that embraces all aspects of human life. This means that culture encompasses everything that people learn to do. Culture is also viewed as the totality of the ways of life of a language community, and language carries within it what can be called "cultural meaning" (Badrawi, 1994). Rivers believes that language teachers cannot deny the impression of another culture because in her point of view