# Investigating the Importance of Using a Lesson Plan in Presenting Literary Texts to Develop and Improve the Reading and Comprehension Skills of German Language Learners

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**ABSTRACT**

The reading and comprehension skills of language learners are fundamental components of effective language instruction. This study evaluates the comprehension abilities of Persian-speaking undergraduate students learning German by utilizing categorized literary texts within a lesson plan framework at the "A2" language level. The objective is to enhance learners' comprehension of German literary texts. To achieve this, German stories were selected, and a specialized lesson plan was implemented to improve reading comprehension skills. Employing a quasi-experimental research method with a pretest-posttest design, this research examined the effects of the lesson plan on the reading comprehension skills of German learners among a sample of 40 undergraduate students majoring in German translation at the Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Iran. The experimental and control groups' performance in comprehending German literary texts was compared. The findings revealed that teaching literary texts with the aid of a lesson plan significantly enhanced comprehension (P<0.01). A comparison of pre-test and post-test performance based on comprehension levels over the teaching period demonstrated a direct and significant relationship between the use of lesson plans based on literary texts and improved comprehension levels. Therefore, incorporating a lesson plan for teaching literary texts can be highly beneficial for German language instructors.

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## 1. Introduction

With the rapid pace of scientific and technological advancements, mastering foreign languages has become more critical than ever. In today's globalized world, proficiency in multiple languages has transformed from an optional skill to an essential requirement. To meet this growing demand, educators are continuously exploring innovative and engaging methods to facilitate language learning. One proven and effective approach is the integration of literary texts into language classrooms. Since the 1980s, numerous studies have shown that incorporating literature into language instruction not only boosts learners' motivation but also accelerates their learning process and contributes to their social, emotional, and cognitive development (Arkılılıç Songören, 2013). Thus, the thoughtful selection of literary texts for language learners, especially adolescents, is of paramount importance. This careful selection not only aids their linguistic development but also nurtures their emotional growth. By enriching language courses with children and young adult literature, a more engaging and rewarding learning experience can be created for language learners.

Exposure to literary texts opens up a vast world of emotions and ideas for students, igniting their passion for reading. However, it is essential to strike a balance because overloading students with literary texts may reduce their interest in language learning. Given the decline in reading habits in recent years, the role of teachers in fostering students' love of reading has become increasingly significant. By carefully selecting appropriate literature for instructional programs, teachers can create an engaging learning environment that instills a lifelong love of reading in their language learners (Vërçani & Bezati, 2019). According to Bredella (Bredella,1985), literary texts, unlike non-fiction, evoke a deep emotional connection to the language in readers—an experience language learners cannot easily attain on their own. These texts appeal not only to emotions but also to the senses, offering a pleasurable and instructive experience. In other words, literary texts positively influence learners' emotions, values, and attitudes, providing both joy and enrichment.

The importance of literary texts is eloquently captured in the words of Vargas Llosa: "However, literature has been and will continue to be a shared chapter of human experiences since its inception, allowing humans to recognize themselves and converse with one another, regardless of differences in occupation, lifestyle, geographical and cultural backgrounds, and personal circumstances" (Vargas Llosa, 2019). Considering the significance of literary texts in fostering interest, as well as the social, emotional, and cognitive development of language learners, this research focuses on improving students' comprehension abilities through categorized literary texts within a lesson plan framework. Narrative literature creates situations that pursue socio-cultural objectives. This approach establishes a relationship between the reader and the text in the language learning process, facilitated by appropriate literary texts and the role of the instructor. This interaction enhances comprehensive reading, writing, and speaking skills, ultimately leading to the acquisition of "communication skills". This form of language instruction enables practical skill acquisition and helps achieve socio-cultural objectives (Letafati, 2008). The success of storytelling in second-language classrooms can also be attributed to the experiences of teachers who, after exhausting

traditional methods, turn to storytelling to introduce new language structures within a cultural context (Alley & Overfield, 2008). A lesson plan is a logical and structured measure designed by teachers to deliver lessons effectively (Safavi, 2019). A well-designed lesson plan in the language learning process accelerates information recall and activates prior knowledge in the learner's mind because the lesson has a clear framework and objectives and prevents learners from being overwhelmed with irrelevant information. Since the same objectives are pursued in assessments, students engage with instructional content purposefully.

The statistical population of this study comprises students from the Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch. The sample includes 40 undergraduate students, aged 18 to 24, both male and female, who are in the third semester of their undergraduate studies and possess an "A2" level of language proficiency. The primary objectives of this research are to address the following questions:

1. How do literary texts assist students in enhancing "comprehension" in foreign language learning?

2. What is the role of a well-structured and effective lesson plan based on literary texts in improving "comprehension" skills?

## 2. Literature Review

Existing research highlights the significant role that literary texts play in fostering a deeper understanding of foreign languages, including German and English. The following studies provide insights into this field:

(Bernhardt & Berkemeyer, 1988): In their study "Authentic Texts and the High School German Learner" one of the first studies to emphasize the importance of authentic literary

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texts in language learning, the authors argue that reading authentic literary texts aids language learners in comprehending the language within its natural and practical context (Bernhardt, Berkemeyer,1988). Landwehr (1994): In the research titled "Reading Strategies for The Deciphering of Persuasive Texts: A Sample of Story 'Duel' by Heinrich Von Kleist" the significance of the reader's active role in understanding and interpreting literary texts is underscored. The author suggests that by engaging their prior knowledge and experiences, readers can provide a personal and coherent interpretation of the text. The results demonstrate that incorporating literary texts into foreign language curricula can significantly enhance reading comprehension skills in learners (Landwehr, 1994 ). Vërçani and Bezati (2019): In the research titled "Literary Texts in Teaching German as a Foreign Language", the researchers assert the importance of literary texts in teaching German as a foreign language and emphasize that the role of literary texts in language learning extends beyond teaching everyday communication skills. Therefore, even though the primary focus of foreign language instruction has long been on developing communication skills in real-life situations, when it comes to the German language, learning solely based on communicative skills is insufficient. A deep understanding of the country's culture and history is also essential. One of the most effective ways to achieve this goal is to incorporate literary texts into the lesson plans for foreign language learning (Vërçani, Bezati, 2019). Arkılılıç Songören (2013): In the study "The Place of Children's Literature Texts in Teaching German as a Foreign/Second Foreign Language", specific strategies are provided to improve German

language teaching through children's and young adult literature according to current development. The findings reveal that learners exposed to literary-based instruction perform better in listening and speaking skills than those who did not receive such instruction. As a result, the use of literature in language education for children and adolescents is beneficial for developing reading skills, increasing motivation, and contributing to emotional and social growth and should be appropriately utilized in suitable lesson plans (Arkılılıç Songören, 2013). Lencova (2009): The study "Cross-Cultural Storytelling" indicates that engagement with literary texts in the classroom increases students' curiosity, excitement, and involvement and leads to greater joy and increased engagement among students. Literary texts motivate language learners to speak and engage with the cultural aspects of the destination country. The researcher believes that literature serves as a cross-cultural lesson. Through the examination of literary texts, intercultural learning is considered as a foundation for the lesson. The article also states that stories play a significant role in foreign language learning. The exercises provided, on one hand, enhance the concept of communication and freedom of speech, while on the other hand, they contribute to the development of reading and comprehension skills. Furthermore, it is mentioned that stories help inform students about foreign cultures and, sometimes, allow them to gain a better understanding of their own culture (Lencova, 2009). Letafati and Moalemi (2010): The study "Language Teaching Through Storytelling" reviews the practical application of French and Iranian oral literature in French language teaching. The article emphasizes that, aside from familiarizing language learners with

the culture of the target country, it also increases their motivation beyond mere foreign language instruction. This motivational force and the new cultural aspects deepen the learning process and shorten the path. By presenting images, writing tasks, and the recreation of a story, they have contributed to the learners' language acquisition process. Pahlavannejad and Hosseini (2014): The study "Homonym and Homologous Vocabulary Teaching through Stories" suggests that stories can be an effective teaching tool in second language education. The findings indicate that students who received story-based instruction achieved significantly higher grades compared to those who did not. The findings of their research indicate that stories can be used as an effective method for teaching homonym and homologous vocabulary, facilitating and making the learning process more engaging. In the story-based group, students spent less time on unfamiliar words and focused more on following the plot. In contrast, the other group referred to their stored knowledge in memory, where similar words created interference. Furthermore, the story-based group asked fewer questions from their teacher, indicating that, through the appropriate linguistic context, learners grasped the educational objectives more independently, requiring less guidance and making greater efforts for better understanding. Motavalli and Yaghoubi (2013): A study titled "The Necessity of Developing and Using Lesson Plans in the Educational Process" suggests that there are three types of lesson plans: general, detailed, and session-based. Teachers who utilized all three types of lesson plans experienced higher teaching quality, student satisfaction, and significantly greater teaching effectiveness. These results contrast with those of teachers who either lacked

lesson plans or only used one or two types. The main goal of the researcher was to highlight the importance of these three types of lesson plans in advancing educational goals and achieving optimal educational outcomes. Pasandi et al. (2023): In a study titled "Micro-technique Analysis in Foreign Language Teaching Environments", they confirmed the positive impact of instructor and peer-supportive teaching methods on reading and comprehension skills. In the qualitative section, the application of supportive behavior by the teacher, learners' reciprocal responses, and learning indicators at various levels were demonstrated. Bagheri Masoudzadeh et al. (2020): in their study "The Effectiveness of Task-Based Teaching on Improving the Reading Skills of Iranian Learners: Teachers' Perspectives", show that task-based methods and collaborative activities have the potential to enhance reading skills. Additionally, interviews with instructors revealed that they had a positive outlook on implementing task-based methods and were inclined to use certain activities from this approach in upcoming lessons. Nemati et al. (2020) in their article "The Impact of Metaphoric Awareness on Metaphoric Competence and Reading Skills in English Language Students" concluded that raising awareness of the existence of conceptual metaphors (underlying) that lead to linguistic metaphors (surface-level) positively influences reading skills in newspapers and metaphoric competence among English language students in Iran.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

### 3.1. Literary Texts

Numerous studies have demonstrated the crucial role of literary texts in foreign language learning. These texts not only contribute to

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vocabulary expansion and the enhancement of language skills but also support cognitive development in language learners (Krsteva & Kukubajska, 2014; Guranda & Cabac, 2023). Engaging with literary texts extends beyond just reading; it encompasses a broad range of activities that involve all language skills, offering enjoyment for learners (Guranda & Cabac, 2023). Particularly for children and adolescents, selecting appropriate texts is vital as it supports their overall development (Arkılılıç Songören, 2013).

Nowadays, research shows that the use of literary texts, especially children's literature, plays a significant role in developing language skills and promoting personal growth. These texts notably contribute to improving reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Incorporating narratives into foreign language teaching is believed to make the learning process more engaging and effective for students (Pulimeno et al., 2020). Tsou et al. (2006) also argue that storytelling is a powerful educational tool, especially for language learners. Stories are easily understood and remembered due to their appeal, and vocabulary and sentence structures are retained by recalling the story. Learners are motivated to use and reproduce what they have read and heard, leading to an easier acquisition of complex sentences and language skills (Tsou et al, 2006).

While literary texts in German language teaching offer numerous advantages, challenges exist. One such challenge is the lack of interest in reading among certain learners. Additionally, the complexity of the language in literary texts can make them difficult to understand (Koppensteiner, 2001). To overcome these obstacles and achieve the best results, the careful

selection of literary texts is crucial. Literature encompasses a variety of genres, each of which can be effective in German language learning. However, the choice of the most suitable genre depends on several factors (Bischof et al., 1999), including the learners' age, gender, language proficiency, prior knowledge, and potential interests (Koppensteiner, 2001).

**The Role of Stories in Language Teaching**

The topic of language education has always been tied to the issue of teaching methods, which have evolved significantly with advancements in technology.

Language teaching is consistently intertwined with the four essential skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Strengthening each of these skills requires an informed teacher with the appropriate teaching methods. Additionally, the teaching materials must align with clearly defined goals and support the educational objectives of the instructor. As a result, language education must make the most of effective and innovative teaching methods (Pahlevannejad & Hosseini, 2014).

The use of literary stories in teaching German as a foreign language to adults has become a popular topic in educational research. These texts are not only tools for language acquisition but also help enhance cultural understanding, motivation, and the development of critical thinking and creative writing skills. Key findings from these studies are summarized below:

**- Cultural Understanding and Motivation: Research shows that literary texts help learners understand the culture, history, and spirit of the German-speaking community, which is essential for comprehensive language learning. Furthermore, these texts stimulate curiosity**

and interest, thus boosting learners' motivation (Vërçani, Bezati, 2019 & Songören, 2013).

**- Development of Creative Writing Skills: Detective stories, in particular, play a significant role in enhancing creative writing skills. These types of stories stimulate logical thinking, self-learning, and problem-solving abilities in learners—all of which are essential for mastering the German language** (Kamaleldin Amer, 2023).

**- Social, Emotional, and Cognitive Growth: The use of literary texts in language learning classes greatly contributes to the social, emotional, and cognitive development of learners. This holistic approach not only strengthens language skills but also supports the overall growth of the learner's personality** (Songören, 2013).

**- Effective Teaching Methods: The effectiveness of literary texts in language teaching depends on various factors, including the choice of the text, educational goals, and teaching methods. Carefully selecting texts and designing appropriate activities before, during, and after reading play a crucial role in maximizing the benefits of literary texts in the language learning process** (Vërçani, Bezati, 2019).

Therefore, based on the conducted research, it can be concluded that literary stories play a vital role in teaching German to adults. These stories help enhance cultural understanding, increase motivation, and develop critical thinking and creative writing skills. In addition, they contribute to the overall growth of learners and have become an essential tool in language education. For maximum benefit from literary

texts, it is crucial to carefully select and structure their use in the classroom.

### 3.2. Lesson Plan

A daily lesson plan is a well-structured program created by the teacher before starting a lesson. It provides the opportunity for the teacher to present essential educational activities in a specific sequence and time frame, using the results of previous stages to inform subsequent lessons.

The structure and content of curricula play a vital role in developing learners' comprehension and production skills. An effective curriculum facilitates a deeper understanding of the material and enhances the language learning process through the use of various teaching strategies. Studies have shown that curricula which differentiate between comprehension and production skills, while focusing on linguistic aspects such as grammar and vocabulary, are more effective. Thus, teaching methods like Test-Teach-Test (TTT) and Task-Based Learning (TBL) are valuable tools for language instruction, helping learners understand different aspects of language, including meaning, form, and pronunciation (Galstyan et al., 2023). Additionally, curricula that emphasize text-based language teaching promote the simultaneous development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Creating real-life conversational situations and incorporating songs can further enhance learner engagement with the target language (Shrum, Glisan,1993). Another important aspect of curriculum design is attention to cultural and contextual connections. Systematically teaching cultural terms and expressions can foster a deeper understanding of the target culture and improve intercultural communication. This process involves several

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stages, including identifying expressions, understanding their meanings within context, and practicing their use in different situations (Križaj,2014).

Each lesson plan includes the following components:

1. **Lesson Plan:** The teacher must extract new content based on the learning objectives and then teach it.

2. **Determining Entering Behavior:** This refers to the learner's prior knowledge, which the teacher uses to present new content. Without assessing prior knowledge, learners may struggle to understand the new material. The teacher can use a diagnostic test to assess entering behavior.

3. **Preparing the Entering Behavior Test:** This test evaluates the learner's awareness of the lesson objectives and consists of questions based on their abilities and prior knowledge. This test can be a type of evaluative assessment.

4. **Determining Teaching Methods and Techniques:** This section specifies the methods and content used at each teaching stage.

5. **Selecting Instructional Content and Tools:** The teacher must select the most suitable instructional content and tools based on lesson objectives. This content should facilitate communication between the sender (the teacher) and the receivers (the learners). Moreover, selecting appropriate instructional content creates favorable conditions for learning. The content should meet five key characteristics: it should effectively convey the target message, be transportable, accessible, affordable, and referable.

6. **Determining Learning Activities:** The teacher must identify which instructional activities are necessary for the learners and assign appropriate tasks accordingly.

**7. Assessment:** The teacher should have a curriculum for evaluating teaching outcomes based on the lesson plan. This allows the teacher to assess their own performance as well as the learners' individual and collective progress, providing an opportunity to address any shortcomings (Safavi, 2019).

In this regard, studies show that a well-structured lesson plan that incorporates literary texts plays a key role in improving reading comprehension in foreign languages such as German or English (Guranda & Cabac, 2023; Arkılılıç Songören, 2012). Careful planning, including setting clear objectives, selecting suitable strategies, and designing varied activities, is essential for delivering engaging and effective lessons. Incorporating activities beyond simple reading can maximize the benefits of literary texts in language learning (Ibrahim Mohammed & Mengqin, 2016). Therefore, it can be concluded that the structure and quality of a lesson plan have a direct impact on improving reading comprehension and overall language learning. Effective lesson plans, by enhancing comprehension and facilitating the language learning process, play a significant role in the success of learners.

### 3.3. Reading and Comprehension Skills

Reading and comprehension are among the cognitive activities. One of the main goals of educational organizations is to develop comprehension skills or related skills. Since this skill has various levels, each educational stage focuses on enhancing a specific level. Glover and Bruning believed that reading and comprehension consist of two stages: decoding and understanding (Glover, Bruning, 1996). In the first stage, the individual must decode the text, meaning they should understand each word

individually without having a general understanding of the entire text. In the second stage, the individual comprehends the content of the text. This second stage is referred to as comprehension or understanding, which is at a higher level and serves higher goals than the first stage (Kareshki, 2002, 68).

According to Bloom and Benjamin, comprehension is divided into six levels within educational objectives, arranged from the least important to the most advanced level of learning: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The concept of comprehension falls within the second level of educational objectives. At this level, the individual incorporates the learned information by making changes in cognitive structures (Benjamin, Bloom, 1956). As mentioned, this level is more important than the initial one because learning takes place without changes and internalization, according to Piaget. (Piaget, 1993)

To enhance reading comprehension, educators and those working in the field of education are always seeking new methods and programs. Extensive research has been conducted on the reading comprehension skills of German language learners. These studies examine various aspects, including the impact of specific educational programs, the effects of bilingualism, effective strategies for improving reading comprehension, and the challenges faced in this field. The results of these studies offer valuable insights into the factors that influence the improvement of reading skills. Below, we present some of the most important findings from this research, categorized under different topics:

**-    Effectiveness of Reading Programs: The Language and Reading Skills (LARS)**

program is a specialized educational program designed to enhance reading comprehension skills in students. This program can significantly improve both reading fluency and comprehension in students, regardless of whether German is their first or second language. The program tailors instruction to the individual needs of each student, meaning that each student engages in exercises and activities appropriate to their reading level. Therefore, the primary goal of this program is to increase reading speed and accuracy, as well as to improve students' ability to understand the content of texts (Schwab et al., 2014). Cross-linguistic transfer effects also show that skills acquired in a second language (L2) can enhance reading fluency and comprehension in the first language (L1), particularly in immersion programs. Language immersion is an instructional method in which students are fully or partially immersed in an environment where the target language (L2) is used as the primary language. This method is based on the principle of language acquisition through the consistent and active use of the target language (Gebauer et al., 2013).

- **Impact of Bilingualism:** Studies show that bilingual children, including those who speak Turkish and German, develop basic reading skills as well as monolingual children. However, their comprehension depends more on their vocabulary skills (Limbird et al., 2014). In other words, poor fluency in German, rather than bilingualism itself, is more strongly associated with weaknesses in English language skills among elementary school children (Maurer et al., 2021).

- **Reading Comprehension Strategies:** German language learners use a wide range of

reading strategies—before, during, and after reading—to improve their comprehension. These strategies help them connect new information with prior knowledge, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the text. Interestingly, pre-reading strategies are the most commonly used among these (Celikkaya & Balkaya, 2020).

- **Assessment and Development of Reading Skills:** Generation Z language learners need new assessment tools that take their unique characteristics into account. These tools should be able to accurately measure German reading skills in this generation (Dirga, Wijayati, 2021) . Studies also indicate that word decoding speed at the beginning of German language learning is a good predictor of future reading abilities. Children learning German as a second language have slower word decoding speeds compared to native speakers (Duzy et al., 2014).

- **Challenges and Special Considerations:** Many young adult learners of German face difficulties in text comprehension. These individuals often have poor listening skills, which further impact their overall understanding of the text (Bar-Kochva et al., 2023). To improve reading skills in German, methods such as understanding main ideas, activating prior knowledge, and integrating in-class and out-of-class activities have been suggested (Yu-ling, 2005).

Studies indicate that using literary texts in reading instruction is a highly effective and unique approach. This method not only helps language learners strengthen their reading skills but also provides them with a deeper understanding of concepts and ideas. In other

words, literary texts can serve as a powerful and effective tool for developing reading skills and deepening learners' comprehension (Ibrahim Mohammed & Mengqin, 2016).

## 4. Research Methodology

### 4.1. Research Participants

Participants were selected from undergraduate classes with an academic concentration in translation at the Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch. They were randomly divided into two groups: experimental and control. A total of 40 German language learners participated in this research.

### 4.2. Research Instruments

The research instruments were divided into three sections: the pre-test, lesson plans based on German literary texts, and the post-test, as discussed below.

#### 4.2.1. Pre-test

The language learners were randomly assigned to each group. To ensure homogeneity among participants, we divided the comprehension section of a language test at the "beginner-intermediate" level, which consisted of 5 questions, into two parts. The first two questions were provided as a pre-test to the participants.

#### 4.2.2. Post-test

After conducting 14 sessions based on the lesson plans developed for the experimental group, a post-test was administered, consisting of the remaining three questions from the "beginner-intermediate" level language test. This test, which is the official "beginner-intermediate" proficiency test associated with the "Conference of Ministers of Culture", was given to both the experimental and control groups.

### 4.3. Literary Texts in the Research

This study selected 12 stories and 2 poems from authors such as Aesop (originally Greek), Erich Fried (Austrian-British), and Lermontov (Russian), whose works have been translated into German. These texts, characterized by a childlike atmosphere, encompass moral and social themes. The words in these texts were listed, and their order was rearranged according to the students' performance, as compared to the initial lesson plan. Each lesson begins with grammar that is both present in the text and familiar to the students at a beginner level, increasing their engagement with the material and facilitating better comprehension. Although the presence of a teacher could be helpful, students are already familiar with the grammar and can work through this section independently. The second section consists of the original text, introduced with an image. The visual representation of the story helps to visualize it in the students' minds, enhancing immersion. The third section contains five questions regarding the text and grammar. One question focuses on grammar, two on vocabulary—one being image-related and the other providing vocabulary explanations—and the final two questions address comprehension. In the first question, students must choose the correct answer from several options. In the second, they must reorder a text, presented in a different arrangement, back to its original order.

### 4.4. Research Implementation Method

Two relatively easier questions from the "beginner-intermediate" proficiency test were posed to all language learners in both the experimental and control groups as a pre-test to assess their reading comprehension skills in literary texts. After evaluating the scores, no significant difference was found between the two groups' mean scores.

Students in the experimental group participated in 14 sessions, each lasting 30 minutes. In the first session, they were introduced to the structure of the lesson plan and how to approach it through the teacher's explanations. From that point on, the teacher played a minor role. Since the lessons are arranged from easier to more difficult topics and the structure is clear, with only the texts varying each session, the students experience gradual, smooth progression. Thus, the selected literary texts are presented over several sessions, together forming our "Unterrichtsplan". Based on this structured lesson plan, the 14 instructional sessions are presented in a gradual progression from simple to complex. This demonstrates a successful "Unterrichtsplan", where each session is both independent and integrated within the overall plan. The primary goal is to create a cohesive, progressive learning program that enables students to gradually improve their reading comprehension skills through extensive practice and exposure to various literary texts.

At this stage, the control group was not informed of the lesson plan and only participated in the pre-test and post-test. The mean scores of the control group were then compared to those of the experimental group.

## 5. Data Presentation and Analysis

Data analysis is presented in two parts: descriptive statistics, including the mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis, and inferential statistics, including the univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA).

### 5.1. Descriptive Analysis of Research Variables

Tables 1 to 3 present the descriptive indices related to the main research groups, including the mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis.

**Table 1. Mean Scores by Pre-test and Post-test, Separately for Control and Experimental Groups**

| Group | | Pre-test | Post-test |
|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental group | Mean | 13.450 | 15.700 |
| | No. | 20 | 20 |
| Control group | Mean | 13.150 | 12.900 |
| | No. | 20 | 20 |
| Total | Mean | 13.300 | 14.300 |
| | No. | 40 | 40 |

**Figure 1. Histogram of the Mean Difference Between Data from ANCOVA (Experimental Plan for Both Groups in Pre-test and Post-test)**
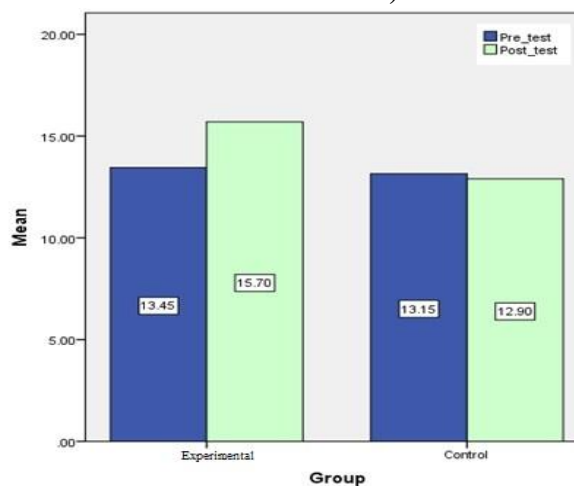


Based on the table and histogram above, the mean scores for the experimental group were 13.45 in the pre-test and 15.7 in the post-test. For the control group, the mean scores were 13.15 in the pre-test and 12.9 in the post-test.

To investigate whether there was a statistically significant difference in the scores of

the three groups, we first need to examine the normality of the score distributions in both the pre-test and post-test conditions. This will guide the choice of an appropriate statistical test (parametric or non-parametric). The results of the normality tests for the scores in the groups are presented in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

**Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness, and Kurtosis of Pre-test and Post-test Scores for All Participants**

| All participants | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variable | No. | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Standard Deviation (sd) | Skewness | Kurtosis |
| Pre-test | 40 | 3 | 17.5 | 13.300 | 4.593 | 1.209 | 0.545 |
| Post-test | 40 | 6 | 18 | 14.300 | 3.937 | 0.538 | 0.374 |

Based on the results of the above table, a descriptive comparison between the mean and standard deviation of the control group's scores in the pre-test and post-test phases has been presented. Since the skewness and kurtosis values fall within the range of (-2 and +2), the statistical distribution of the variables is approximately normal, making the use of parametric tests permissible.

**Table 3. Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness, and Kurtosis of Pre-test and Post-test Scores for the Experimental Group**

| Experimental Group | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variable | No. | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Standard Deviation (sd) | Skewness | Kurtosis |
| Pre-test | 20 | 3 | 17.5 | 13.450 | 4.356 | -1.181 | 0.775 |
| Post-test | 20 | 6 | 18 | 15.700 | 4.118 | -1.706 | 1.530 |

Based on the results of the above table, a descriptive comparison between the mean and standard deviation of the control group's scores in the pre-test and post-test phases has been presented. Since the skewness and kurtosis values fall within the range of (-2 and +2), the statistical distribution of the variables is approximately normal, making the use of parametric tests permissible.

**Table 4. Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness, and Kurtosis of Pre-test and Post-test Scores for the Control Group**

| Control Group | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variable | No. | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Standard Deviation (sd) | Skewness | Kurtosis |
| Pre-test | 20 | 3 | 17.5 | 13.150 | 4.929 | 1.283 | 0.653 |
| Post-test | 20 | 10 | 18 | 12.900 | 3.275 | 0.538 | 1.333 |

Based on the results of the above table, a descriptive comparison between the mean and standard deviation of the control group's scores in the pre-test and post-test phases has been presented. Since the skewness and kurtosis values fall within the range of (-2 and +2), the statistical distribution of the variables is approximately normal, making the use of parametric tests permissible.

### 5.2. Inferential Analysis

Given the results of the previous analysis, which indicated the appropriateness of parametric tests, a one-way parametric analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) will be conducted to examine the effectiveness of the intervention. The research hypotheses are analyzed as follows.

### 5.2.1. First Hypothesis Test

**First Hypothesis**: Teaching-based intervention significantly and positively affects language scores. First, the assumptions of single-group covariance (ANCOVA) analysis, specifically the normality of the distribution of variables, are examined. Although the values of skewness and kurtosis of the scores can determine their normality, it will be very useful to perform appropriate statistical tests such as the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test, which can be used to check this assumption. The null hypothesis of the K-S test indicates the normal distribution of the variables. Therefore, if the K-S statistic is not significant, the variable follows a normal distribution.

**Table 5. The Results of the K-S Test Regarding the Assumption of Normal Distribution of Scores**

|  | Pre-test | Post-test |
|---|---|---|
| Number | 40 | 40 |
| Mean | 13.30 | 14.30 |
| Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) statistic | 1.258 | 1.590 |
| Significance level | 0.084 | 0.013 |

Based on the results in the table above, the K-S statistic is within the range (-1.64, +1.64), and the significance level for both pre-test and post-test is greater than 0.01. Therefore, the assumption of normal distribution of variables is confirmed. Next, we can examine the homogeneity of the regression lines for the pre-test and post-test variables separately by the grouping variable and investigate the difference in means between the groups, while controlling for the effect of the independent variable (pre-test variable). Therefore, a regression slope homogeneity test was conducted, and the following graph examines the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes.

**Figure 2. Scatter Plot of the Relationship Between Pre-test and Post-test Variables, Separated by Group Classification Variable (First Hypothesis)**
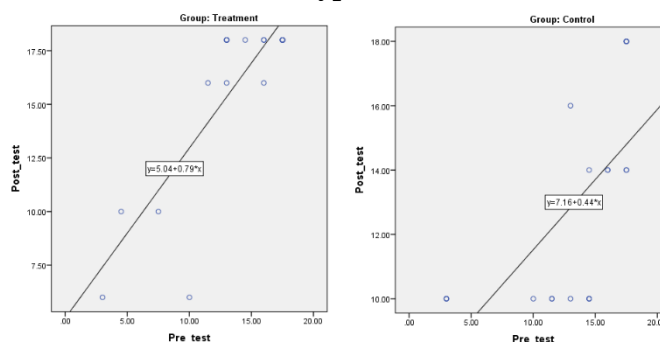


According to the figure above, the regression lines are nearly parallel (non-intersecting), indicating that non-homogeneity of regression slopes cannot be confirmed. Therefore, the homogeneity of regression slopes (lack of group

variable effect on the relationship between pre-test and post-test variables) is confirmed.

To examine the assumption of a linear relationship between the dependent variable and the independent quantitative variable, based on the significance of the F-statistic for the pre-test variable in Table 7 ($F_{(1,37)}$=44.954), a linear relationship between the quantitative variables of the pre-test and post-test is confirmed (p<0.01).

Levene's test is used to test the assumption of equality of variances (in the post-test). The null hypothesis of this test indicates the equality of variances. Therefore, if Levene's test statistic is not statistically significant, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, confirming the equality of variances of the data.

**Table 6. Levene's Test for Equality of Variances of Post-test Data**

| F-statistic | df1 | df2 | Significance level |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2.459 | 1 | 38 | 0.125 |

The results in Table 6 indicate that the significance level of Levene's test is greater than 0.05, suggesting that the assumption of equality of variances (stability of post-test data variances) is confirmed. The assumptions for univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) are met, considering the normality of research variables, homogeneity of regression slopes, linearity of the relationship between pre-test and post-test, and equality of variances. This allows for the use of ANCOVA for data analysis. These prerequisites are necessary to run the ANCOVA test. The following table summarizes the results of the univariate analysis of covariance.

**Table 7. Results of the Univariate Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA)**

| Source of changes | Sum of square | df | Mean square | F | Significance level | Eta-Squared | Statistical power |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Constant | 171.613 | 1 | 171.613 | 26.73 | 0.001 | 0.42 | 0.999 |
| Pre-test | 288.527 | 1 | 288.527 | 44.954 | 0.001 | 0.549 | 1.000 |
| Group membership | 68.687 | 1 | 68.687 | 10.702 | 0.002 | 0.224 | 0.890 |
| Error | 237.473 | 37 | 6.418 | - | - | - | - |
| Sum | 8784 | 40 | - | - | - | - | - |

According to Table 7, there was a significant difference in the mean scores of the post-test variable based on group membership (experimental and control groups) ($F_{(1,37)}$=10.702, p<0.01). Therefore, the intervention (curriculum instruction) was effective. The magnitude of this effect was 22.4% at the post-test stage.

### 5.2.2. Second Hypothesis Test

**Second Hypothesis**: There is a significant difference in the mean scores of the experimental group between the pre-test and post-test stages.

The paired t-test (two dependent groups) is used to investigate this hypothesis. The results are presented in the following table.

**Table 8. Results of the Paired t-test for the Experimental Group**

| Mean difference | T statistic | df | Significance level |
|---|---|---|---|
| -2.25 | -4.158 | 19 | 0.001 |

Based on the table above, the t-statistic was greater than the critical value of 1.96, and the

significance level was less than 0.01, indicating a significant difference in the mean scores of the experimental group between the pre-test and post-test (p<0.01). Furthermore, the mean score of the experimental group increased by 4.16 times at the post-test stage.

### 5.2.3. Third Hypothesis Test

**Third Hypothesis**: There is a significant difference in the mean scores of the control group between the pre-test and post-test. The paired t-test (two dependent groups) is used to investigate this hypothesis. The results are presented in the following table.

**Table 9. Results of the Paired t-test for the Control Group**

| Mean difference | T statistic | df | Significance level |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0.25 | 0.301 | 19 | 0.767 |

Based on the table above, the t-statistic was not greater than the critical value of 1.96, and the significance level was greater than 0.05, indicating that there was no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the control group.

### Discussion

The results of this research align with the findings of Pahlavannejad and Hosseini (2014), who concluded that embedding new vocabulary in compelling and engaging contexts, such as stories, and teaching it to learners is more effective than direct vocabulary instruction through repetition. Furthermore, Rezaei's research demonstrated that the learning of any instructional process requires the use of specific and useful processes and strategies (Rezaei, 2017). It is through these abilities that instructional content is deposited into memory, 575

regardless of the maximum or minimum level of learning, and can be retrieved at the necessary time for educational or practical purposes. The third study examined the effect of implementing a reading comprehension strategy program on Iranian learners' comprehension and reading anxiety. The results of the research by Fathi and Shirazizadeh showed that, by the end of the course, the comprehension abilities of the experimental group learners were significantly better than those of the control group (Fathi and Shirazizadeh, 2020). This research supports previous studies, such as those by Landwehr (1994) and Arkılılıç Songören (2013), which suggested that integrating literary texts into language teaching can effectively improve various language skills. Our findings highlight the benefits of using literary texts to enhance reading and comprehension abilities. Therefore, using suitable lesson plans based on literary texts has a direct and positive effect on language learners' comprehension levels and can enhance their understanding. Thus, utilizing a lesson plan that focuses on literary texts can be an effective approach for German language instructors.

### 6. Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the impact of using literary texts in instructional design to enhance reading comprehension skills. The findings indicate that using literary texts as the primary focus of a lesson plan significantly improves students' ability to deeply understand the concepts presented in texts.

Using literary texts in language learning is an effective method for developing reading skills. This approach helps language learners connect with various components of a text, including characters, events, and implicit meanings. Moreover, integrating the reading of literature

with grammar and vocabulary instruction allows learners to gain a deeper understanding of the target language and transfer information more effectively to long-term memory.

Stories and literary texts play a crucial role in language learning by fostering motivation and creating an engaging environment. These texts help learners develop a deeper understanding of grammar rules through the analysis of sentence structure and expand their vocabulary by inferring the meanings of new words from the context of the story. Additionally, literature serves as a bridge between language and culture, enabling learners to become familiar with the cultural and social nuances of the target language. In summary, literary texts are not only effective tools for strengthening language skills but also help learners fully immerse themselves in a new culture.

Foreign language instructors can capture learners' attention and focus on how to approach and analyze foreign texts by using and introducing a lesson plan suitable for the intended educational goal. This way, learners can comprehend the main information and the connections between the main sections. Images also assist learners in linking their visual and language knowledge, connecting new knowledge with prior learning, making them more active readers in the target language, and helping them achieve the educational goal.

A successful instructional design, like an exciting journey, requires a strong beginning and a satisfying conclusion. To effectively guide learners along the path of language acquisition, we must first activate their prior knowledge, creating a solid connection between what they already know and what they are about to learn. Then, by creating a motivating and engaging environment, we can direct this activated knowledge toward the primary goal of instruction. Finally, upon reaching the defined objective, we must ensure that learners have fully acquired the new knowledge and skills.

This instructional design offers a structured and purposeful framework to guide learners through the language learning process. By focusing on effective communication and utilizing authentic materials, this approach extends beyond teaching grammar rules and empowers learners to use the language in various real-life situations. Furthermore, the inclusion of literary texts promotes a deeper understanding of the target language and culture. This instructional framework provides both teachers and learners with a clear and defined path, facilitating the achievement of learning objectives. In conclusion, by combining various aspects of language learning, this instructional design offers a comprehensive and effective learning experience for students.

According to statistical results, there is a significant difference in the experimental group's outcomes. Over a semester (the first half of 2022-2023), the German language comprehension skills of learners gradually improved, which was confirmed by a post-test at the end of the semester. It was found that learners in the experimental group had significantly better scores than those in the control group, although their scores were very similar at the beginning of the semester and the pre-test. The practice routine in all lessons was the same, and there were no distractions that could break the students' concentration; hence, the challenge for learners was solely in comprehension. All questions were directly or indirectly related to comprehension, with no distractions that might challenge the

student beyond comprehension. The variety of questions allows learners with different linguistic abilities to engage with the text in different ways, enabling them to read and understand it using various methods. The combination of the lesson plan and literary texts enables learners to logically and deeply increase their speed in targeted and thematic language learning. They can familiarize themselves with real conversations in a context close to the target country, and at the same time, the diverse, informative, and structured lesson plan provides ample opportunities. In every lesson plan, having a good start and a suitable ending is of special importance. Lessons begin by activating students' prior knowledge and guiding them in the right direction, leading to a suitable endpoint. An instructor who enters the teaching process with a complete understanding of the objectives can better determine the start and end of their teaching activities. Suggestions for future research may include creating lesson plans for three other language skills. The distinguishing feature of this lesson plan from others is that it belongs to a specific group, namely Iranian or Persian-speaking students. It is designed to be close to the concept and text of stories and is suitable for educated individuals rather than the general public because of the high level of texts (not necessarily difficult language level).

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