

**The Impact of Differentiated Instruction on the  
Acquisition of Short Stories by High School ESL  
Learners in an American School in the UAE**

تأثير التعليم المتميز على اكتساب القصص القصيرة من قبل متعلمي اللغة  
الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية في مدرسة أمريكية في الإمارات العربية المتحدة

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study was conducted to examine the impact of Differentiated Instruction on the acquisition of short stories by high ESL learners in an American school in the UAE. To achieve the objective of this study, a quasi-experimental design was used, in which pre- and post-tests were administered to two groups of participants, a control group and an experimental group. A traditional instructional approach was used in the control group, whereas differentiated instruction was used in the experimental group. Using the t-test, a statistical analysis was carried out on the results of the study. In light of the higher scores achieved by the experimental group as compared to the control group, it can be concluded that differentiated instruction is a worthwhile approach. Through the use of Differentiated Instruction, this study will contribute to the existing body of literature concerning the teaching of short stories and will thereby enhance the literary skills of students. As a final point, additional research should be conducted to examine the impact of differentiated instruction on the acquisition of different literary genres.

## الخلاصة

أجريت هذه الدراسة لفحص تأثير التعليم المتمايز على اكتساب القصص القصيرة من قبل متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية في مدرسة أمريكية في الإمارات العربية المتحدة. ولتحقيق هدف هذه الدراسة ، تم استخدام تصميم شبه تجريبي ، حيث تم إجراء الاختبارات المسبقة واللاحقة لمجموعتين من المشاركين ، مجموعة ضابطة ومجموعة تجريبية. تم استخدام منهج تعليمي تقليدي في المجموعة الضابطة ، بينما تم استخدام التعليم المتمايز في المجموعة التجريبية. باستخدام اختبار(تي) ، تم إجراء تحليل إحصائي على نتائج الدراسة. في ضوء الدرجات الأعلى التي حققتها المجموعة التجريبية مقارنة بالمجموعة الضابطة ، يمكن استنتاج أن التعليم المتمايز هو نهج جدير بالاهتمام. من خلال استخدام التعليم المتمايز ، ستساهم هذه الدراسة في مجموعة الأدبيات الحالية المتعلقة بتدريس القصص القصيرة ، وبالتالي ستعزز المهارات الأدبية للطلاب. كنقطة أخيرة ، يجب إجراء ابحاث إضافية لفحص تأثير التعليم المتمايز على اكتساب الأنواع الأدبية المختلفة.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>TESOL</b>	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
<b>ESL</b>	English as a Second Language
<b>CCSS</b>	Common Core State Standards
<b>ZPD</b>	Vygotsky's zone of proximal development theory
<b>T TEST</b>	A t test is a statistical test that is used to compare the means of two groups.

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Overview

In the context of second language learning, reading is viewed as one of the hardest skills to master. Developing students' reading skills is essential to improving their language learning level. It was demonstrated that reading is the most important method of learning (Khatib 2012). In addition to improving students' literacy skills, reading comprehension can also improve their language proficiency. The students will then be able to use the language more effectively. For this reason, students who are learning English as a second language may benefit greatly from engaging and stimulating instruction.

The importance of reading lies in its ability to provide access to all the facts and information necessary for our daily lives and development. In this regard, Kent (2005) recommends that students need to develop their reading comprehension abilities. As reported by Sari (2017), reading is extremely valuable in many subjects, including English class, as well as other subjects, including mathematics. It is possible for us to access a large amount of information through reading. As a result of poor reading skills, a variety of problems arise, which can cause difficulties in learning (Callahan & Clark, 1988; Bender et al., 2008). In recent years, research has demonstrated that the reading skill has a great deal of impact on both comprehension and performance. Experts assert that both learning processes use similar cognitive functions, such as making predictions and putting events in chronological order (Kumar & Bristor, 1999). Moreover, Belen et al. (2003) point out that reading comprehension must be the fundamental concern of all readers. A reader's comprehension involves identifying what they are reading, analyzing ideas, and understanding written text.

Hall and Piazza (2008) demonstrated that students' achievement at all levels of proficiency is positively affected by the ability to improve reading skills. Educators who adhere to traditional methods face challenges when trying to reach a diverse group of students and address their individual differences (Tomlinson, 2002). In light of this, Gregory and Chapman (2002) concluded that teaching reading must be differentiated to accommodate the individual needs of all learners in the classroom.

The study of literature is a motivating factor in ESL classrooms. Literature in the classroom provides students with the opportunity to experience deeper meanings as well as innovative and unexpected uses of language. It is important to note that good novels or short stories contain a great deal of suspense in terms of involving students in the mystery of the plot. Engaging learners in these activities may be more meaningful to them than the narratives normally found in textbooks (Lazar 1993, p.14-15). According to Lazar (1993), it has been shown that teaching literature in the classroom has many benefits, such as motivating learners to learn, having general educational value on learners, helping students understand another culture, expanding their language awareness, and encouraging the learners to convey their viewpoints.

The teaching of literature, especially short stories, is a major challenge in today's classrooms. As Carter (2007) points out, the use of literature in language teaching does not meet the needs of students. However, students in the ESL program are required to read a variety of short stories, such as action stories, adventure stories, comedy stories, fables, fantasy stories, horror stories, mysteries, romances, and science fiction stories. In classroom settings, this content is usually taught in a typical way. The content of short stories can be delivered to students in several ways and its significance can be imparted to them in a number of ways. Short stories are difficult to teach, so teachers have a limited number of teaching methods and techniques at their disposal. In my opinion, many teachers are unfamiliar with the techniques used to teach short stories in their classrooms. ESL teachers typically apply their basic skills of teaching to the context of introducing literature to their students. Despite their efforts, they are still relying on some primitive questioning techniques, which are not considered workable instructional strategies. The same is true for some teachers who still adhere to the outdated methods, ignoring their students' academic capabilities.

In light of these obstacles, alternative methods for improving and enhancing the teaching of literature in the classroom are needed (Ellis 1994). It may, however, be beneficial to examine the role that differentiation can play in literature learning. There is also evidence that teachers are using differentiating lesson instructions to make sure that all learners are involved in the learning process (Gregory & Chapman, 2002; Tomlinson, 1999, 2001). It is Benjamin's (2002) view that differentiation occurs in the classroom when strategies are used to accommodate the needs of students with different learning styles, interests,

backgrounds, and motivations. Also, Tomlinson (2003) describes differentiation as the process of designing materials so that they meet the needs of different learners.

Various aspects of learning can be differentiated, such as the content taught, the process of learning, the product, and the environment in which the student learns (Levy, 2008, Tomlinson, 2014). The first area in which differentiation should be made is in the content. There are several components related to the content, such as what teachers will teach and how students will learn. According to Tomlinson (2010), differentiating content will offer students a wide range of ways to approach knowledge and skills. In his paper, Sebihi (2016) suggests that the content should be taught to all learners, but the teachers should make adjustments based on their experiences. In this approach, the same concepts should be taught in different ways to all of the students. In some cases, the teachers can create levelled activities if it is not possible to modify the content materials.

Secondly, there is a need to differentiate the way the process is carried out. To illustrate this, Tomlinson (2017) explained that the process must be anchored to the content to ensure alignment with it. By anchoring the process to the content, it becomes easier to identify the key areas that need to be assessed, and to ensure that the evaluation is relevant and meaningful. This alignment also helps to increase the accuracy of the evaluation, as it is more closely tied to the specific goals and objectives of the content being evaluated.

Additionally, differentiation of the product is crucial. The products of the students reflect the knowledge they have gained. In order to ensure that the best results are produced by each student, it is necessary to consider their readiness, interests, and learning profiles (levy, 2008). However, students' interests can impact the products they produce. When students are given a task that aligns with their interests, they are more likely to be motivated and engaged in the process. This can lead to more creative and high-quality products. Overall, recognizing and accommodating students' diverse readiness, interests, and learning profiles is crucial to promoting a personalised and inclusive learning environment where all students can succeed and reach their full potential.

Lastly, Differentiation of the learning environment is essential to a successful learning process. As a matter of fact, to differentiate the learning environment, you need to create an environment that is supportive of learning for all students (Tomlinson, 2017). Among the factors that need to be considered are the seating arrangements, the classroom

decorations, the lighting, the temperature, and the level of noise. Different students may respond differently to these environmental factors, so teachers need to be aware of their students' preferences and make adjustments accordingly.

## **1.2 Rationale**

The rationale behind this study can be attributed to several factors. As part of the researcher's experience as an English teacher working in an American school in the UAE and teaching language and literature to high school students and knowing that English is a second language in this country, it is evident that short story lessons require support for learners. Short stories present a challenge to them in terms of comprehension and analysis. To be more precise, some students find it difficult to understand some vocabulary words used in short stories, in addition to failing to identify story elements, such as the plot stages, and failing to comprehend the cultural background of the story. In addition, some students fail to comprehend the figurative language used in the story, including similes, metaphors and personifications. Therefore, coming up with new techniques is likely to assist learners in progressing during short story sessions, which will lead to improved results.

There are, however, a variety of methodologies, strategies, and techniques that should be examined to enhance the learning process of short stories in ESL classrooms. Several research papers emphasize the importance of using differentiated instruction in teaching short stories to ESL learners as they can improve their learning and help them use the language at a higher level. According to Fisher et al. (2003), after four years of differentiated instruction, the average student in the high school had moved from reading at a 5.9 grade level to 8.2. As part of their differentiated reading approach, Baumgartner et al. (2003) used multilevel groups, individualized tasks, a wider choice of reading materials, and greater autonomy in choosing what to read. Throughout the evaluation period, they observed improvements in teaching reading levels, number of comprehension strategies used, language skills, as well as a positive attitude toward reading.

With regard to the previous point, literature education must be improved in the classroom in a successful manner. In general, second language learners find literature and specifically

short stories challenging. Compared to other genres, short stories have some advantages for teaching. According to Collie & Slater (1988, p. 196), short stories are an excellent tool for introducing students to literature. According to Crumbley & Smith (2010, p. 292), the purpose of short stories is to make learning easier and more enjoyable. Also, the short story stimulates the emotions of learners. As a result, learners gain a better understanding of how people behave and how they think. Through the reading of stories, learners are able to identify and understand themselves and others (Bohner & Grant, 2006, p. 4). Therefore, we need to consider different teaching techniques that enable learners to understand, interact with, and ultimately apply the knowledge acquired in short stories to their real-life contexts. In other words, it is through literature that readers develop their language skills and literary awareness. Besides motivating them, this exposure allows students to become familiar with the cultures of different nations, which will increase their awareness of the language in general

It is very important to address each learner's needs at all levels in a classroom if that classroom is characterized by learners of different levels. However, it is crucial to note that many ESL students sometimes have a problem understanding literature, especially short stories, and this can make learning it difficult for them. As a result, the researcher decided to examine the impact of differentiated instruction in the teaching of short stories to determine whether that approach is appropriate and effective.

### **1.3 Statement of Problem**

For students to improve their academic level, reading and comprehension abilities are essential due to the fact that knowledge can be gained through texts. In this respect, studies have shown that reading contributes to a person's mental development (Yahsee, 2013). Also, it has been noted by Cimmiyotti (2013) that reading plays an integral role in the academic process since reading is essential to all subjects, resulting in better academic performance. However, a strong literary text that includes lots of expressions, vocabulary words, and cultural facts is essential to enhancing English as second language learning. For this purpose, short stories can be used as a medium. It has been also suggested by Murdoch (2002, p. 9) that including short stories in classrooms can help learners improve their academic level when it comes to learning a new language. As a final point, a short

story can also be an effective tool to facilitate conversation as well as facilitating writing activities.

On the other hand, it has been noted by Tso (2014) that some educators are hesitant about using literature with their students. In this way, a better understanding of how to teach literature to ESL students in general and short stories in particular will arise. He also added that educators at the high school level should differentiate their lessons by utilizing a variety of materials and teaching methods. As Wagner (2014) points out, the problem lies in the students' weaknesses in dealing with some literary works. He explained that educators working in English as a second language are responsible for designing and preparing activities that engage all learners in learning. As a result, A lack of engagement in classroom activities and materials will not lead to an effective learning experience.

The research on differentiated instruction shows that it is a powerful tool for improving ESL student success and ability (Fairbain & Jones-Vo 2010; Tomlinson & Imbeau 2010). Currently, all American schools in the UAE ask their teachers to conduct interactive lessons through differentiated and levelled activities to make sure that the quality of learning that their students is receiving is up to the expected standards. Additionally, teachers are provided with numerous professional development sessions to ensure that they are able to implement differentiation strategies effectively in their classrooms. It is noted, however, that there are insufficient studies related to teaching short stories using differentiated instruction approaches within the UAE context. Therefore, a lot of research is needed to shed light on the importance of this approach for UAE students to acquire short stories.

The results of this study will hopefully provide us with new perspectives on the possibility of teaching short stories using differentiating instruction. This study will also draw conclusions on the benefits students can gain from learning short stories in terms of motivation, and the improvement of their academic performance. Moreover, the study aims to provide recommendations for teachers to successfully teach short stories in their classrooms.

#### **1.4 Research Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of differentiating instruction on the acquisition of short stories in an American school in the UAE. It is intended to evaluate the effectiveness of differentiated instruction as a method for teaching short stories, specifically the extent to which learners can acquire short stories with greater proficiency. In addition, this study aims to provide recommendations for teachers on how to better differentiate short story lessons and activities in their classrooms.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

The following research questions will be addressed in this study:

1. How effective is differentiated instruction implemented in English Short Story classes in an American school in the UAE?
2. Can the implementation of differentiated instruction improve learners' acquisition of short stories in an American school in the UAE?

#### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The primary goal of language learning is to help our students communicate easily in the target language, and to be able to read, comprehend, and write correctly. It is through literature that we can gain a better understanding of native life. Wolcott (2021) argued that Native American literature provides a unique perspective on native life and culture. Additionally, he suggested that students must engage with this literature to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of Native American culture. This is the reason why students should study some literary works in the target language. In this way, they will gain exposure to different vocabulary words used in the language culture, expressions, and idioms. By exposing learners to all these contexts, they will be able to comprehend and analyze them more effectively. If students lack a basic understanding of the concept vocabulary needed to develop knowledge in language studies, they will have difficulty understanding both informational and literary texts (Alharbi, 2015). Since each student in

the classroom has different learning abilities, considering new methods and techniques in teaching can play an important role in the learning process.

In general, studies that have been done on differentiated instruction address all skill sets as a whole. However, there is an apparent absence of studies on the implementation of differentiated instruction when it comes to the acquisition of short stories in the ESL classroom. However, it has been shown by Liu, Y., & He, J. (2020) that the teaching of short stories enhances students' ability to comprehend reading texts. Based on their study, they suggested that short stories can improve students' critical thinking skills, as well as their ability to understand the context of a story and to make connections between the different elements. In addition, Students can learn foreign languages more effectively when they are involved in pre-reading tasks, post-reading discussions, and creative writing assignments (Eslami-Rasekh & Roshan 2021). Considering the growing significance of short stories as a language learning tool, teachers are seeking effective strategies to teach literature in general and short stories in particular.

It is hoped that the findings of this study will serve as a guideline for teachers who work in the field of language teaching to modify activities and prepare materials that will be useful to them when teaching literature in the future. As a result of this study, new teachers, including those in TESOL programs, will find the results to be particularly useful. Consequently, their preparation for teaching in the real world will be enhanced by this study. Therefore, this study is likely to contribute significantly to teaching short stories in ESL classrooms.

In my position as a teacher of English as a Second Language in a high school, I deal with students who have reading levels which range from below grade level up to above grade level. Students who are reading below grade level present the greatest challenge (Hernandez, 2011). There are varying levels of reading abilities in my class: eleven graders, who are reading at the elementary level, are unable to identify story elements, and they are specifically incapable of identifying plot stages and themes. Additionally, these individuals are unable to read and comprehend short stories at a level below their own. In this study, I examined the impact of differentiating instruction strategies on teaching short stories. In this way, there is a possibility to determine whether differentiating instruction can be effective when presenting short stories to adult learners.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2. Literature Review**

#### **2.1 Conceptual Framework**

The following section defines the terms and glossary used in this study as well as a brief description of each term. The purpose of these explanations is to provide readers with a better understanding of some of the most commonly used terms and concepts in this study. Additionally, general words and phrases that are used in the context of this study are defined in light of the context in which they are used.

As a matter of fact, the word "literature" was derived from the Latin word "litteratura," which can be translated as "literate" in English. 'Literature' is a term that was originally used in French and was later adapted to English. Literature can be the result of the artistic ability of the human mind. In other words, it is a way to express feelings, ideas, and experiences in an artistic manner. In general, literature refers to all forms of writing. Literature, however, incorporates feelings, ideas, attitudes, experiences, and emotions implicitly and in a more comprehensive way (Upreti, K. 2012).

Literature has been defined in a variety of ways throughout history. Literature has served as a powerful tool throughout history for expressing the ideas, feelings, and opinions of humans in written texts. There is also substantial evidence that literature is an effective means of teaching and learning languages when used appropriately. There are many benefits and advantages to using this tool when teaching foreign languages to students (Floris 2004). Lazar (1993, p.1) defines literature as a means of meeting a variety of individuals, understanding various points of view, ideas, thoughts, and minds, and getting to know oneself better. In addition, he added, literature provides an effective means of expressing human sentiments, thoughts, and opinions in written forms.

In accordance with Wolff (2019), a short story is a literary work in the form of narration that is usually read all at once, and mostly revolves around one incident. Moreover, Wolff suggests that a successful short story should be emotionally engaging to the readers. In literature, short stories have several characteristics that make them unique. According to Ghasemi (2011), short stories are engaging and captivating to language learners because of their style, briefness, and diversity. Consequently, short stories are more commonly used

as literary devices to tell the story, which makes them easier to comprehend. In addition, unlike other literary works, short stories have their own structure which makes them stand out from any other form of literary works. In a short story, the main character is usually either narrating the story himself or is being narrated by someone else. In most cases, short stories have a single theme that they cover throughout the story (Upreti, 2012). Furthermore, the short stories are available in a variety of formats to suit the preferences and interests of different readers.

However, reading is a vital tool for learning a second language, as it provides a wealth of information and opportunities for language development (Wright, 2010). Whether learners are reading for pleasure or for educational purposes, they are sure to benefit from this powerful learning strategy. It is also possible for learners to develop their reading comprehension easily by reading short stories. According to Ceylana (2016), short stories are short texts and are intended to make only a small impact. This might encourage the students to read. In other words, students will be concerned with a limited number of story elements, as opposed to a broad range of story elements found in other literary works such as plays and novels.

According to Hismanoglu (2005), the teaching of basic language skills can be greatly enhanced through the use of literature. Moreover, one of the most enjoyable and attractive ways for EFL learners to learn English is through the use of short stories. In short stories, the writer expresses new perspectives and feelings in a way that is relevant to their readers. (Dersi, 2013). Teaching reading comprehension can be made more effective by using literature as a tool. According to Irene (2015), the teaching of short stories as a part of the curriculum in ESL classrooms has a great deal of benefits. In addition, by using short stories, learners are able to develop different reading comprehension skills that can be considered as an important addition to language learning (Parvareshbar & Ghoorchaei, 2016). Moreover, it is important to point out that one positive point related to short stories learning is that they are convenient in terms of length, allowing students to complete a reading assignment in a single reading session. Students may complete the assigned activities during one or two classes, depending on the amount of time available.

Teaching can only be successful if you take into account the methods that should be used to deliver the lessons. A very important consideration is the way in which the activities are designed. Taking this into consideration will allow us to consider the differentiation

approach (Gregory & Chapman, 2002). According to Benjamin (2002, p. 1), differentiation refers to "a variety of teaching strategies designed to address different learning styles, interests, backgrounds, abilities, and preferences". According to Tomlinson (2003, p. 3), differentiation is also a structured approach to planning instruction and communication for a variety of learners.

Differentiation can be implemented in four areas: content, process, product, and learning environment (Tomlinson, 1999). Content is what teachers are expected to convey. When teachers differentiate content, they alter the processes and techniques of planning and executing lessons (Benjamin, 2006; Tomlinson, 1999). Differentiating the process involves providing students with more options for expressing their ideas. Consequently, teachers can provide learners with a variety of homework assignments and classroom activities.

Thirdly, differentiation should be considered in terms of product. Through this method, students demonstrate their understanding of what they have learned (Levy, 2008; Tomlinson, 1999). The goal of differentiated products is to provide students with a variety of means and techniques by which they can demonstrate their knowledge. Posters, assignments, and albums are all examples of ways to do so. The learning environment can also be differentiated by providing a comfortable environment in the classroom that contributes to students' cooperation, as well as places that provide students with the opportunity for movement within and outside the classroom, as well as within groups (Tomlinson, 1999).

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

This research is underpinned by Vygotsky's zone of proximal development theory (1978) as the theoretical framework for my research. Based on his theory, Vygotsky sought to examine how a child develops more advanced forms of cognitive function from childhood to maturity (Vygotsky, 1978). As stated in this theory, children primarily gain knowledge from their parents via contact and social exchanges, and then they incorporate their newly gained knowledge into something relevant and familiar to them (Vygotsky, 1978). By engaging in social behavior, students reach a certain level of development. ZPD theory

describes the gap between actual and potential growth of students. Essentially, the ZPD relates what is evident to what is obscure.

In accordance with Vygotsky's theory, children are capable of learning when the learning is conducted within their zone of proximal development (Lindqvist, 2003). As a consequence of learning within the zone of proximal, the learner will require guidance in order to accomplish what has been given to them. Teamwork and group work were important elements of Vygotsky's theory of learning. In the classroom, this theory can be incorporated into exercises that facilitate group interaction and cooperation between learners. (Long, et al., 2011)

Vygotsky's zone of proximal development describes how learners advance from one level of understanding to another as they acquire knowledge. Differentiated instruction prepares learners to solve problems beyond their zone of proximal development by building developmental scaffolding (Konstantinou-Katzi et al, 2013). In order for students to understand the concepts taught, they must see how they relate to their own lives. In order to achieve meaningful learning, students must not only seek guidance from their instructors, but also utilize their communication skills in their learning communities (Konstantinou-Katzi et al., 2013).

Educators are responsible for imparting knowledge to students and orienting them towards graduation and the practical world as employees in all sectors (O'Brien, 2012). Educators are responsible for teaching students the fundamental concepts and skills needed for their chosen field of study. This involves creating lesson plans, developing educational materials, and delivering lectures or interactive sessions that help students learn and understand the subject matter.

In conjunction with Vygotsky's theory, we find The Learning Styles Theory, which suggests that students have different approaches to learning, thus instructional approaches should be designed to accommodate diverse learning styles to improve performance (Dunn, 2000). Each student has a unique cognitive style and way of thinking, which makes them different from one another and enables them to study in a different manner. As a result of the diverse learning characteristics of students, an approach to teaching may be successful for some students but unsuccessful for others. Providing students with appropriate settings and instruction may lead to more positive outcomes (Dunn, 2000;

Tomlinson, 2001). This raises the issue of the need for responsive and adaptable instruction that benefit all learners in the classroom.

According to Clark (2008) and Tomlinson (1999), learners can be divided into three categories, visual, auditory, and kinesthetic (VAK). For visual learners, texts, pictures, charts, diagrams, videos, and other visuals are the most effective methods of learning. Their visual abilities are excellent. The learners in this group have an excellent memory, and they pay close attention to the body language of others. Instruction and information delivered verbally are more likely to be understood by auditory learners. Participating in oral discussions and communicating via oral means is enjoyable to them. Unlike the other two groups, kinesthetic learners thrive on hands-on activities and are most productive when participating in role plays, scenario acts, laboratory experiments, or other activities involving movement. Medical doctors, athletes, actors, designers, and actors are all good candidates for kinesthetic learning.

Adapting content, process, product, and the learning environment is the essence of differentiated instruction according to Tomlinson (1999). Students will be less motivated if the content is not stimulating and attainable. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) that defines the gap between a learner's real mental age and the level at which they can achieve in a field is in line with this theory (igge Shermis, 2004). A student's developmental progress should be considered when the curriculum is modified. To ensure effective learning outcomes, content modification should also emphasize key aspects of instruction. Generally, learners forget more information than they remember; therefore, selecting what kind of information to present helps minimize the amount of time and effort required to achieve the same results.

However, Learning is influenced by the ability of differentiated activities and exercises to produce the expected changes in student performance. A teacher's ability to identify a student's background knowledge is critical to determining the type of intervention that is required and the level of support that should be provided to the student. Furthermore, adjusting content, process, and product can help learners comprehend the essence of instruction effectively, and the ways learners are progressing accurately. Additionally, the use of learning partnerships can help develop students' communication and engagement skills as well as provide them with practice in independent learning. As a result of these

factors, differentiated instruction can provide an efficient framework for maximizing student learning by enhancing student understanding, skills, and motivation.

## **2.3 Related Studies**

This section provides an in-depth review of previous studies concerning the use of differentiated instruction in ESL classrooms. My research examines whether differentiated instruction has an impact on the acquisition of short stories by students enrolled in ESL classes over the duration of the study period. Also, this section will discuss the studies that examined the use of differentiated instruction in ESL literature classes and its impact on student achievement.

According to my study, students in American schools are having difficulty learning the skills necessary to analyze and respond to the events in short stories. Many students fail to accomplish the objectives based on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). In American schools, these standards are designed to measure the learners' knowledge of the English language. According to my research, I propose to examine the impact of differentiated instruction, as a teaching method, on the acquisition of short stories in an American curriculum-based school in the United Arab Emirates.

### **2.3.1 Studies on Reading Comprehension**

I believe that the concept of struggling readers should be recognized as those who do not possess the necessary skills to understand different types of reading texts. Tomlinson, (2014) stated that reading comprehension is assessed by assessing students' ability to comprehend literary or informational texts, to interpret their literal meaning, and to connect them to previous experiences. Through the reading and analysis of literary works, students aim to meet expectations regarding their ability to comprehend literature. Students must demonstrate their ability to respond to a variety of literature genres, as well as other subjects, in order to be successful. As long as students demonstrate that they are capable of doing so, they meet the expectations (Spencer, Quinn, & Wagner, 2014).

In the past few years, there have been a considerable number of researches carried out on behalf of various reading strategies that have been widely adopted and used. Due to the knowledge shared, teachers have more options to choose from a wide range of skills, competencies, and preferences (Jefferson et al. 2017). Learners may find some techniques very helpful to meet the expectations required in assisting them to master the necessary reading skills in general and those related to short stories skills in particular.

Studies have shown that teaching reading comprehension to ESL learners is important. Al Hariri, & Alghazo (2021) conducted a recent study to investigate the effectiveness of teaching reading comprehension strategies to ESL learners and to assess the impact of these strategies on their reading comprehension abilities. For this purpose, the researchers used a quasi-experimental design. Based on the results of the study, the teaching of reading comprehension strategies had a significant impact on the learners' ability to comprehend reading. Additionally, the study found that learners' reading comprehension skills improved when a variety of reading comprehension strategies were used. Among the recommendations made by the researchers is for ESL teachers to incorporate a variety of reading comprehension strategies into their teaching in order to assist their learners to acquire the necessary skills in reading comprehension. At the end of the study, emphasis is placed on the development of strategies for teaching ESL learners to comprehend reading and the positive impact these strategies can have on their ability to comprehend reading material.

According to Yigiter et al. (2005), language teachers should improve students' reading comprehension. Various methods may be used to improve reading comprehension, including the differentiation of curriculum and instruction. Several studies have demonstrated that specific instructional and curricular strategies are effective for a variety of levels of readers. With gifted readers, instructional level grouping with differentiated content has demonstrated success in increasing comprehension and passion for literature (Gentry, 1999; Levande, 1999). A variety of studies have found that instructional grouping with differentiated content increases students' achievement across a range of reading abilities (Tieso, 2002). In order to teach reading effectively, information should not be based solely on the use of a single method (Lerner, 2000; Goodman, 1990). Various teaching methods are available to teachers. Nevertheless, teachers remain concerned about which method is most effective.

In different schools, Baumgartner et al. (2003) employed differentiated instruction to improve reading achievement among middle school students. They employed differentiated instructional strategies to address the deficiencies in phonics and comprehension skills of their students. In this study, differentiated strategies were implemented through flexible grouping, student choice, and access to a variety of reading materials. According to the researchers, differentiated instruction has been effective in increasing reading achievement and attitudes toward reading. After undergoing the treatment, students were able to become more proficient in literacy, reading and comprehension skills.

### **2.3.2 Studies on Short stories**

According to Barzani et al. (2021), short stories are among the most important educational considerations in language teaching and learning. In their opinion, literature has a powerful capacity to stimulate and motivate English language learners through its structure and content. They conducted the study on a group of 40 students as part of their research. Based on the findings, it appeared that literature should be taught in ESL classes for teachers to perform better and ensure that ESL learners are competent in the language.

For ESL students to be successful in all aspects of language proficiency, proficiency in reading is essential. Puri et al. (2014) stated that proficiency in reading is essential for success in all areas of language proficiency. Their research was aimed at finding ways to increase Indonesian students' interest in reading because Indonesia has a reading interest index of 0.001. It is clear that only one individual out of a thousand was interested in reading (Puri et al., 2014). Consequently, they chose short stories since they believed they would improve the students' reading skills and achieve a higher reading ability. It has been found that short stories have a positive effect on students' reading comprehension achievement as well as their interest in reading. Additionally, some recommendations were made as part of the process. It is recommended that the English teachers provide students with short stories that include illustrations. Thereby, learners will be attracted to read the short story. It is also essential to motivate students to participate more actively in the classroom when teaching short stories.

In their book, Collie & Slater (1988, p. 196) asserted that students can gain an understanding of literature through short stories. In a short story, a teacher has the

opportunity to review a number of literary elements during a single period. In my opinion, if teachers choose the right short story to be taught in terms of length, learners will easily comprehend and enjoy the story events and will be able to make easy connections between the events and the story elements.

In comparison, Crumbley & Smith (2010, p. 292) argue that short stories enable students to engage in both academics and entertainment at the same time. Our emotional reactions to short stories are stimulated by their emotional content. In addition to informing us about how people can interact, they also contribute to our understanding of how the human mind works. In reading a story, we can recognize and understand ourselves and others. Through the analysis of short stories, learners become more critical thinkers due to the process of critically analyzing them.

There are many obstacles ESL learners face when it comes to reading comprehension. Consequently, Students are required to develop different skills when it comes to interacting with reading selections as part of their education. Using different types of reading comprehension resources, Pourkalthor and Kohan (2013) examined the impact of those resources on students. According to the results they obtained, the researchers found that reading comprehension can be improved by reading a short story.

However, it is important to note that, while studies shed light on the possible impact of differentiated instruction on the achievement of students with different abilities, they do not address the lack of research on the acquisition of short stories. The teachers will have to explore various ways in which differentiated lessons can be implemented through research in the future. A wide variety of differentiated lessons are available for teachers to use right now over the Internet, and they are easily accessible. However, more evidence-based examples are required to be able to determine whether this instructional method is effective when applied to students of different backgrounds.

### **2.3.3 Studies on the Use of Differentiated Instruction**

In a quasi-experimental study conducted by Magableh and Abdullah (2019), the effectiveness of differentiated instruction strategies on the reading abilities of grade 7 male students in two schools in Jordan was assessed. Two classes of grade students were

selected from two schools. The students were divided into two groups: the experimental group, consisting of 28 students who received instruction using differentiated instruction strategies, and the control group, consisting of 27 students who were typically taught the selection. To evaluate the reading levels of the two groups, both a reading comprehension test and a questionnaire were administered. The results of the study indicated that differentiated instruction was successful in improving the reading levels of grade 7 male students. The performance of the experimental group was significantly better than that of the control group, demonstrating the effectiveness of differentiated instruction in enhancing student performance.

Similarly, using differentiated instruction strategies, Mavido and Kakana (2019) examined the reading ability of learners. In their study to examine the effect of differentiated instruction strategies in three experiments involving syllabus modifications, differentiated content, and differentiated product. For the experimental group, 154 kindergarten students were divided into 80 students according to their readiness, interest, and learning profile. A control group of 74 students, however, was selected to receive traditional instruction. The results of the study showed that there were notable differences in the performance of the two groups, which demonstrated that differentiated instruction contributed to students' success.

On the other hand, Snel et al. (2012) compared different teaching approaches in the classroom to evaluate the impact of differentiated activities on the reading ability of fresh learners. Based on the research findings, it appears that the differentiated activities used in delivering the lesson to young learners did not have a significant impact on their reading abilities. This suggests that simply varying the activities used to teach a concept may not be enough to improve a student's performance.

A possible explanation for this could be that differentiated instruction is not like typical teaching approaches. It is a flexible teaching method that requires teachers take into consideration the unique abilities of all learners. Therefore, activities must be tailored for each learner to receive a customized learning experience. Otherwise, it may not be effective in improving their performance. However, the study suggests that other teaching strategies used in the classroom may have had similar effects on the learners in general. This could indicate that a more holistic approach to teaching may be necessary to foster real improvements in student performance.

In her study, Zólyomi (2022) explored English teachers' perspectives on differentiation in Hungarian secondary schools. Twenty-eight English teachers were interviewed over the course of two years. According to the findings, teachers primarily differentiate based on the level of readiness of their students and do not take into account their preferences. In addition, teachers primarily differentiate based on the level of readiness of their students and do not take into account their choices. It was also reported by the teachers in this study that preparing differentiated activities takes more planning and time. The study recommended that English teachers should become more aware of how differentiation occurs and what needs to be done to address it.

### **2.3.4 Research on the Benefits and Drawbacks of Differentiated Instruction**

There are advantages and disadvantages associated with differentiated instruction, however, both supporters and critics of this approach point out their respective arguments. According to those who support differentiated instruction, studies carried out by Valiandes (2014), Roskos and Neumann (2014), and Gregory and Chapman (2013) indicate that when students are exposed to differentiated instruction using flexible grouping arrangements, they perform significantly better. On the other hand, Delisis (2015) contends that heterogeneous grouping obstructs rather than promotes learning for students who are performing below level, on level, and above level. As a result of eliminating methods to accommodate all learners with different academic or behavior issues, it has become harder to teach and learn.

Depending on their academic level, learners have different needs (Tomlinson, 2017). Classrooms are filled with students from a wide variety of backgrounds, cultures, interests, readiness levels, and learning styles. It is essential that teachers address all of these types of learners in order to ensure their success. Using differentiated instruction in the classroom can be an important part of improving learning for students and raising their achievement (Watts-Taffe et. al., 2012). It has been demonstrated that differentiated instruction can benefit students who are identified as having special needs (Tomlinson, 2001 & 2003). The use of differentiated instruction ensures that students opt for the path they prefer and evaluate their performance. According to Firwana (2017), students can achieve their academic goals through differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction recognizes students' interests and motivates them accordingly. As Magableh and Abdullah

(2019) concluded, differentiated instruction can lessen diversity in classrooms with different levels of ability by facilitating a more homogenous learning environment.

Numerous studies have confirmed that differentiated instruction is effective in teaching English as a foreign language in EFL classes (Subban, 2006). Research has shown that this approach can increase learners' interest in the class, their understanding of the critical ideas, and encourage them to accomplish their goals (Andini, 2016). It was also found that differentiated instruction led to students' improved interest and willingness to learn. There is scientific evidence that the use of differentiating instructions in the context of teaching English in ESL classrooms results in positive improvements in the participants' levels of reading comprehension, speaking abilities, and listening abilities because of the use of differentiated instructions (Karadag and Yasar 2010),

As Thornton (2011) has demonstrated, differentiated instruction has been shown to improve the readability of struggling students when compared to standard instruction. To carry out this research, four 10th grade students were compared to those who did not receive differentiated instruction in reading comprehension as well. Following the implementation of differentiated instruction, the results showed that students' test scores improved significantly in comparison to before the implementation of differentiated instruction. To check whether differentiation was working, students were asked how they prepare for assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of differentiation. Thornton (2011) recommends grouping students based on ability, peer support, activities at various levels, scaffolding, and demonstration to differentiate instruction for students who need extra help.

In contrast, in his study, Eastman (2010) examined the impact of designing levelled activities to accommodate diversity in reading ability among learners, by structuring them into groups based on how they prefer to interact and then providing them with a variety of activities to accommodate their needs. The results of the study stated that dividing students into small groups based on their level may be an effective method. On the contrary, the results of the study conducted by Cummings (2011) showed that levelled instruction was not significantly superior to traditional instruction in terms of improving performance. Based on comparisons using differentiation, the researchers found the academic achievement of males and females was almost identical.

A study by Alavinia and Farhady (2012), however, tested the effectiveness of differentiated instruction when it came to increasing vocabulary achievement among ESL learners by implementing a quasi-experimental study. After conducting the experiment on two groups of learners, it was observed that the learners in experimental group which was taught using differentiated activities performed better than the other group. Moreover, the researchers found that at the post-test, spatial learners performed best, while intrapersonal learners showed the worst performance.

Several challenges and obstructions hindering differentiated instruction were highlighted by Holloway (2000), such as a lack of planning time, the lack of necessary materials, and a lack of guidance from the administration. Among the other barriers Tomlinson (2005) identified is the excessive reliance on one standard curriculum. Thus, teachers are placed under excessive obligations to complete all of it instead of teaching according to students' needs (Mctighe & Brown, 2005). Tomlinson & Doubet (2005) argue that teachers are expected to prepare students for tests and accommodate their individual needs. In his study, Sebihi (2016) found that preparing differentiated instruction to meet each individual's interests, readiness, and learning profile is a significant barrier to its implementation. According to Magableh and Abdullah (2019), planning for differentiated instruction and the absence of discipline during implementation are two of the most significant obstacles to implementing differentiated instruction.

As part of an evaluation of differentiated instruction approach, Khales Haghghi (2012) conducted a study to assess the viability of differentiated instruction as an effective teaching strategy in an ESL context. The study evaluated eight classes from a language institute who were divided into groups. A variety of differentiation procedures were employed to the experimental group, including groupings, assignments, and ongoing assessment. When it came to determining the content, process, and product of the course, the instructors took into consideration their students' academic strengths and weaknesses. As a result of the pre-test and post-test reading comprehension scores of the students in grades four, five, and seven, there were significant positive differences between their pre-test and post-test scores; however, there were no notable discrepancies between the results of the students in grade 11.

The effectiveness of differentiated instruction must be assessed in conjunction with all elements of the learning process, including the perspectives of school students, university

students, and instructors. According to Dunn and De Bello (1999), a differentiated approach can improve students' attitudes towards learning when the implementation is adapted to their preferred learning style. The purpose of Chen (2007) was to get a perspective of college students on differentiated assessment in the context of EFL in Taiwan. A variety of data collection methods were used, including observations, interviews, and filming. As a result of the levelled assessment strategy, the participants showed a positive attitude toward it. They also reported that the tiered assessment had enhanced their motivation, increased their effort, helped them to improve their English skills, and helped them to increase their confidence.

The aim of Waller (2011) was to examine how educated placement teachers view differentiated instruction. Using qualitative research methods, the researcher sought to understand how the teachers use differentiated instruction, what aspects of differentiated instruction they found most useful, and how differentiated instruction may address students' differences. It was found to be beneficial to differentiate in the process, as well as in the product, based on the students' interests, abilities, and readiness, based on their interests, abilities, and preparation. Implementation of differentiation was however hampered by the need to prepare for it.

### **2.3.5 Studies on the implementation of Differentiated Instruction**

In a study by Alghamdi & Meo (2021), 21 peer-reviewed research articles were analyzed on differentiated instruction in K-12 classrooms. According to the findings, differentiation is one of the factors that contribute to a student's success in the classroom, including increased academic achievement and improved attitudes towards learning. However, the effectiveness of differentiation was found to be dependent on several factors, such as the teacher's skill in implementing the approach, the quality of the instructional materials, and the level of student engagement in the learning process. Overall, the study suggests that differentiation can be an effective approach in delivering successful lessons, but it requires careful planning and implementation. Additionally, teachers must be skilled in adapting their teaching methods to ensure complete engagement of their students and must be supported with high-quality instructional materials and resources

A study conducted by Ismajli and Imami-Morina (2018) examined how differentiated instruction can contribute to the success of all students. This study involved 200 students

from four primary schools from both governmental and private ones in Kosovo. In addition, the study involved a number of teachers and parents. A questionnaire was administered to students and teachers and an interview with parents was conducted. As a result of the findings, differentiated instruction was not presented well in the classrooms, and all schools had almost the same percentage of implementation of differentiated instruction. Based on this finding, it can be determined that students were not given enough opportunities to engage with and explore content in meaningful ways, as the emphasis was primarily on the outcome. In the interviews with parents, it was evident that parents are willing to engage in differentiated instruction and work together with the school to achieve this goal.

Contrary to the previous study, Hickerson (2012) conducted a study to investigate what factors relate to learners' interest in doing their homework and also their interest in completing it. According to the researcher, he was unable to detect a difference between a traditional homework group and a differentiated homework group in terms of motivation, interest, and attitude toward homework. However, there are a number of factors that may influence a student's interest in reading, including their personal preferences, their experiences, their home environment, and their exposure to a variety of literature types. Similarly, various factors can influence students' motivation to read, including their perception of their ability to read and comprehend texts, their level of confidence, the importance of the material, and the incentives and rewards that are associated with reading. In my opinion, it is important to take these factors into consideration and to support and encourage students who may be experiencing difficulty in maintaining an interest in or motivation to read. To achieve this, it may be necessary to provide students with engaging and relevant reading materials, employ different teaching strategies to help them develop their reading skills, and provide constructive criticism and reinforcement to enhance their self-esteem.

In the process of differentiating instruction, it is important to remember that it is not an easy or straight-forward process to achieve. Students in a school classroom can possess a wide range of educational abilities as well as varying degrees of flexibility. In order to ensure that academic institutions are able to support every type of student, differentiating lessons is essential, as it allows every student to gain a better understanding and become more productive (Westman, 2018).

Creating a curriculum that differentiates and is connected to educational activities, while not creating a gap between the ability of individuals to adapt, is the real challenge. Learning will continue to fall behind if materials are provided and instruction is provided in the same manner. There is a real challenge in providing differentiated levelled learning activities that will engage and captivate all learners. (Graham et al., 2015)

In order to improve student reading performance, schools can use differentiated instruction by changing the way in which instruction is delivered in order to maximise student success. In contrast to conventional classroom practices, differentiated instruction involves a large number of interaction-based collaborations. To complete an activity designed to introduce a new skill, students need to be paired up with peers (Gibson, 2009).

The concept of differentiated instruction applies to all levels and areas of knowledge, and it is an important component of teaching students to read and comprehend. Teachers and students both benefit from creating ideal classrooms that facilitate group instruction without many distractions. The number of resources that provide practical instructions on how to make the change in the classroom is limited (Benjamin, 2002). In most studies conducted so far, the focus has been on teaching skills and strategies that improve the performance of students in reading and comprehension, particularly those who are at risk or those who are facing difficulty reading. Nevertheless, differentiating instruction in small teams is advantageous to all students, regardless of their area of study. A teacher must ensure that students are able to read and comprehend the material they are being exposed to. (Denton et al, 2007).

To maximize the abilities and potentials of each student, differentiating instruction is best carried out by changing the learning instructions in order to tailor them to the needs of each student (Tomlinson, 2000). According to Imami-Morina and Ismajli (2018), one way to facilitate learners' differences in their learning styles is to take advantage of the learners' diversity as strength, rather than as an obstacle that needs to be overcome. As a result of this, they may be able to receive the most effective learning process based on the learning needs they have.

To evaluate the effectiveness of differentiated instruction as a method to improve learners' proficiency levels, Valiandes and Neophytou (2018) examined how differentiated instruction in classrooms affects students' academic performance. A total of 14 elementary

school teachers from the fourth grade were involved in the study. A survey was conducted to gather information about teachers' perceptions and opinions following professional development. According to the results, teachers were able to transform their instruction into differentiated instructions that met students' needs.

A further study examined the impact of differentiated instruction on literacy skills among elementary school students. A total of four hundred and seventy-nine fourth graders and 24 teachers participated in this study. Prior to the implementation and following the implementation of the program, comprehension assessments were conducted in order to monitor progress. Through the use of effective differentiated instruction, students demonstrated improved literacy skills (Valiandes, 2015).

### **2.3.6 Studies on Barriers of Differentiated Instruction**

Several barriers to differentiated instruction have been identified by Holloway (2000), including a lack of planning time, a lack of resources and inadequate support from school officials. In his study, Tomlinson (2005) identified that one of the major barriers to completing the course was its extensiveness. Due to this, teachers are faced with the dilemma of having to finish all of it on time rather than teaching based on the needs of the students.

Comparatively, Sebihi (2016) pointed out that the time teachers need to devote to designing their activities to accommodate the learners' needs is a significant barrier to implementing differentiated instruction. A similar conclusion was reached by Magableh and Abdullah (2019) who noted that the implementation of differentiated instruction is hindered by two main barriers: proper planning for differentiated activities and classroom management, which includes maintaining discipline within the classroom.

The research conducted by Scardino (2011) is devoted to the use of differentiated instruction in the classroom. Based on the findings of his research, it appears that differentiated instruction in the classroom does not work well for students as it was revealed in his study. For the design and implementation of differentiated instruction to be successful, it is essential to allocate sufficient time to designing levelled activities appropriate to the needs of all students in a classroom. The findings of the study also stated

that differentiated instruction did not have a favorable impact on student learning of the skill being taught over the course of the whole project.

It has been demonstrated in the article entitled, *Differentiated Instruction: Easier in Theory than in Practice* (2011), that differentiated instruction does not result in an increase in the level of student performance in the classroom. Additionally, it is an inefficient method that teachers often find difficult to implement. As a comparison, Faber (2016) examined the use of differentiated instruction. Based on the results of her study, there were no significant positive effects associated with this approach. Additionally, her research demonstrated that low achievers were less likely to benefit from differentiated instruction than students who were on level with their peers or high achievers.

In light of the findings and issues discussed in the literature, the outcomes of this study are anticipated to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing information on whether or not differentiated instruction impacts the acquisition of short stories in ESL classrooms in American schools in the UAE. There is a hope that this will assist both teachers and curriculum designers in considering the study recommendations when developing new curriculums in an effort to enhance the learning process.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design and instruments

The research questions were addressed by randomly selecting two grades 11 classes from an American school in the UAE and dividing them into two groups, a control group and an experimental group. This study was conducted using a quasi-experimental design in which pre- and post-tests were administered. Through the use of experimental designs, researchers are able to identify and compare the performance of learners. (Creswell: 2012). Furthermore, he stated that experimental designs can be used to assess the relationship between independent and dependent variables as well as to determine whether certain factors might contribute to the relationship. Research results can help teachers to become more effective educators when they are able to access the results of research. As a result, the quasi-experimental design was adopted in this study as a means of addressing the impact of differentiated instruction on the acquisition of short stories in an American school in the UAE.

The participants were divided into two groups. For both groups, a pre-test was conducted at the beginning of the study in order to establish a baseline. Then, the two groups were separated into the control group and the experimental group. The control group was taught the assigned short story using the traditional method of teaching and the experimental group was taught using a differentiated approach of teaching. After the two groups had been taught, a post-test was conducted to assess how well they had learned. To determine whether there is a difference between the two groups, a t test was conducted to determine if there are differences between the two groups in terms of their results. Table (3.1) shows the research instruments used to conduct this study.

*Table 3.1: Research Instruments*

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Approach</b>	<b>Instrument</b>	<b>participants</b>	<b>Data analysis</b>
<b>RQ1:</b> How effective is differentiated instruction implemented in English Short Story classes in an American school in the UAE?	Traditional method of teaching  Differentiated instruction approach	<b>Pre-test</b> (Appendix 1)  <b>Post-test</b> (Appendix 2)	21	Using the paired samples t-test in SPSS version 29.0.0.0 (241).
<b>RQ2:</b> Can the implementation of differentiated instruction improve learners' acquisition of short stories in an American school in the UAE?	Traditional method of teaching  Differentiated instruction approach	<b>Pre-test</b> (Appendix 1)  <b>Post-test</b> (Appendix 2)	21	Using the paired samples t-test in SPSS version 29.0.0.0 (241)..

The results of this study were analysed quantitatively using SPSS, Version 29.0.0.0 (24), in order to uncover the impact of differentiated instruction on the overall achievement of students (Creswell, 2012). In addition to its ability to measure performance between two groups or more, this adapted method is also strong because it allows for the progression from the point when the group receives treatment to the point when they show improvement. The treatment can be given to both groups by the end of the study, allowing them to benefit from it.

In terms of quantitative research, positivism can be described as a philosophical paradigm. According to this paradigm, one objective of doing research is to interact with variables in a controlled and manipulated setting so that the research can be accomplished. The concept of positivism infers that the search for truth will be carried out by employing empirical methods (Henning et al., 2004). As a result of this, an experimental approach has been chosen for the purpose of conducting this study.

### **3.2 Participants**

The study sample was limited to groups of students from Umm Al Quwain, United Arab Emirates. According to Oribhabor, C. B., & Anyanwu, C. A. (2019) sampling is the process of selecting participants from a population for the purpose of conducting a study. Participants in the study include two classes of students in grade 11 who are learning English as a second language at an American school located in the U.A.E. Their first language is Arabic and English is only used as a language of study. Both classes are composed of male students who have different academic levels and have varying levels of skills. Their ages range from 16 to 17 years old. In total, there are 34 students in the two groups. As the students are studying in an American school offering an American based curriculum, there is a wide range of literary works that students study, including short stories, novels, plays, poems, and historical documents.

In the experiment, the students were divided into two groups, the control group and the experimental group, and they were tested before and after the experiment. A total of 21 students are assigned to each group. In the control group, traditional instruction was used in order to teach the students, while in the experimental group, differentiated instruction was used in order to teach the students. However, students were notified that participation in this study is entirely up to them and that consent letters will need to be signed by them in order to participate.

### **3.3 Procedure**

As part of the study, the researcher obtained permission from the high school administration to conduct the study. To comply with ethical standards, respondents were required to provide prior and informed consent to participate in the study. Following that, a short story was presented to both groups over the course of two sessions, and then a pre-test was administered to each of the groups. The purpose of this pre-test was to determine the exact level of students' ability to understand short stories at the beginning of the course. In the experimental group, the story was taught using differentiated instruction to reach the desired outcome. As for the control group,

they continued to study using the traditional methods. Then, both groups were subjected to a post-test at the end of the study. The results of these tests were compared and evaluated to come up with some conclusions based on their results. Data was analysed using a t test to identify the differences between the two groups. In both the pre-test and the post-test, Microsoft Forms was used as a tool to conduct both tests.

This lesson was conducted in the experimental group using a variety of differentiated activities that were developed by the researcher. As a first step, the original short story copies were distributed to students, *The Gift of the Magi*, as well as a simplified version. The students were then instructed to move into their homogeneous groups and begin the activity. Each of the groups received tiered assignments as part of the exercises that were aligned with the different interests, readiness levels, and preferences of the participants. The next step was for students to read the story and complete the assignment that was given to them. In addition to providing guidance and facilitation, the teacher was also an advisor. As a result of the discussions between the teacher and students, the teacher was able to provide constructive comments to the students.

On the other hand, in the control group, the teacher provided the students with an original copy of the story. The teacher explained each part of the story as he went through it. There were a few questions that the students were asking, and the teacher was answering them. During the class, the students were asked some questions regarding the events that were depicted in the story, plot, theme, and conflict. All the questions in the group were not levelled so that they could be answered by everyone in the group. There were only a few students who responded to the questions about the story.

### **3.4 Validity and reliability of the research instrument**

A research study's validity can be judged by how much the data collected is representative of the research topic under investigation (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2005). As a part of the validation process, a pilot study was conducted by the researcher to ensure that both the pre-test and the post-test are valid. Pilot studies are informal

exercises that involve trying out a new instrument for the first time to see how it works and how well it responds in order to enhance its effectiveness. The reason for this is that different people will interpret it differently based on their own experiences. This study was conducted on a group of ten students from the same community, who had a similar level of proficiency as the respondents but were not members of the research group. Upon completion of the two tests, there had been a discussion of their performance and suggestions for modifications utilizing a checklist as a guide through this process. The purpose of pilot study was to:

- i. Validate and evaluate the reliability and validity of the questions based on the fact that the researcher created them.
- ii. Ensure that the questions asked are clearly worded, so that the students will be able to easily understand them and interpret them accurately.
- iii. Ensure the validity of the results by adjusting the questions.
- iv. Estimate how long it will take to answer the questions.

It was then decided to collect the piloted instruments after the pilot study had been completed. It was found that both the pre-test and the post-test could be improved. As a further result, some adaptations were made to facilitate the study's completion.

### **3.5 Ethical Consideration**

As part of the ethical consideration of research, a great deal of emphasis was placed on maintaining the confidentiality of research participants and keeping them anonymous throughout the research process. As soon as the information is gathered, it is safely recorded and saved, and only the researcher is allowed access to that information. To conduct this study, the school administration as well as all participants gave their consent. It has been made clear to all the participants that they have the right to refuse to participate in the study, as well as the right to withdraw from the experiment at any time during the experiment. Moreover, they were made aware of the importance of protecting their confidentiality.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **4. Findings and Discussions**

This study specifically examined the impact of differentiated instruction on the acquisition of short stories by ESL high school students. A quasi-experimental approach was used in the study. There were two groups of participants, a control group and an experimental group. A pre-test was administered to both groups at the start of the experiment, followed by a post-test after applying the traditional method of instruction to the control group and differentiated instruction to the experimental group. The pre-test and post-test were compared to obtain quantitative data. There was a total of 10 points for each test. Each correct answer was worth 1 point, and each incorrect answer was worth 0. We computed and analysed the grades of the students in both groups using the paired samples t-test in SPSS version 29.0.0.0 (241).

#### **4.1 Analysis of the Pre-Tests Results**

As part of the pre-experiment procedure, the mean scores, and standard deviations of all the students were calculated for both groups. The mean pre-test scores of the experimental and control groups were compared using the paired sample t-test. The purpose of comparing both pre-tests is to determine whether both the control and experimental groups were approaching the same level before instruction began.

However, comparing pre-tests is a critical step in experimental research. The purpose of comparing pre-tests is to ensure that both the control and experimental groups are starting from a similar level of knowledge or ability before the intervention or instruction is implemented. This allows the researcher to accurately assess the impact of the intervention or instruction on learning outcomes. If the pre-test scores of the control and experimental groups are significantly different, it may indicate that the groups were not equivalent before the intervention, and any observed differences in learning outcomes may be due to pre-existing differences between the groups rather than the intervention itself. In such a case, it would be challenging to conclude that the intervention or instruction caused any differences in learning outcomes. Presented in Table 4.1 are the mean scores of the two groups for the pre-test.

2 Table 4.1: Pre-test Mean Scores of the Experimental and the Control Group

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Control Group Pre-test	5.4762	21	2.40040	.52381
	Experimental Group Pre-test	5.6190	21	1.82281	.39777

According to Table 4.1, the pre-test mean score for the control group is 5.47 and the standard deviation is 2.40. In the experimental group, the mean pre-test score is 5.61 and the standard deviation is 397. As a result of the mean values, these results indicate that the English proficiency level in short story acquisition of the two groups is approximately identical.

In this comparison, we are checking whether the two groups are comparable at the beginning of the treatment. Pre-test results for both groups indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups of grades 11 at the beginning of the study, and the two groups were comparable. This can be interpreted due to the fact that all participants in both groups are from the same community, they have been taught English from KG to grade 11 in American schools in the same city, Umm Al Qwain, as well as being from the same gender. Based on this, the mean scores of both groups are almost identical at the beginning of the study, so the differences in the mean scores of the post-tests would be a result of the treatment.

#### 4.2 Analysis of the Post Tests Results

After conducting the pre-tests for the experimental group and the control group, the control group learned the short story using the traditional method of instruction, which was designed to address the needs of all students regardless of their academic level. In contrast, the experimental group was taught the short story using differentiated instruction. Using this approach, learners in the experimental group received levelled activities and instructions that met the needs of all levels.

Upon completion of the treatment, both groups were administered post-tests on the same day. The post-test scores were compared. The results of the post-tests for both experimental and control groups are shown in Table 4.2. Using the paired sample t-test, the mean scores of both post-tests were compared between the two groups. Comparing the post-tests was a method used to try to determine if the treatment had had any effect on the performance of the participants following the treatment.

According to table 4.2, the control group's mean post-test score was 6.09 whereas the experimental group was 8.14. To determine whether the difference between the mean scores in the two groups was statistically significant, a t-test was conducted. Looking at table 3, it can be seen that the 't' value is 3.15, while the 'p' value is 0.005. In light of the 'p' value, it is evident that there is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups' post-tests ( $t=3.15$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). As shown by the t test, the experimental group that was taught using differentiated instruction techniques had a statistically significant advantage over the control group. Therefore, differentiated instruction strategies have an impact on students' achievement. As a result, the statistics indicate that learners acquired short stories more effectively with differentiated instruction.

3 Table 4.2: Post-test Mean Scores of the Experimental and the Control Group

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Control Group Post-test	6.0952	21	1.70014	.37100
	Experimental Group Post-test	8.1429	21	1.99464	.43527

As shown in table 4.3, the 't' value is 3.15 and the 'p' value is 0.005. It is clear from the 'p' value that there is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups' post-tests ( $t=3.15$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

4 Table 4.3: Paired Differences and Significances of the Experimental and the Control Group Post-tests

Pair	Control Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	Paired Differences			t	df	Significance	
				Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
					Lower	Upper				
1	Post-test - Experimental Group Post-test	2.04762	2.97449	.64909	-3.40159	-.69365	-	20	.002	.005

### 4.3 Analysis of the Pre-test and Post -test Results of the Control Group

In table 4.4, as shown in the comparison of the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test of the control group, the control group's mean score on the pre-test was 5.47 and the mean score on the post-test was 6.09. Based on this comparison, it is statistically clear that the mean score of both the pre-test and the post-test of the control group almost remained unchanged, and that students' learning of the given short story did not improve with the use of the typical teaching approach. This leads us to reconsider new methods to teach short stories in ESL classrooms in a way that ensures that they will be engaging to students and that they will create positive learning experiences for them.

5 Table 4.4: Analysis of the Pre-test and Post-test Results of the Control Group

Pair		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
1	Control Group Pre-test	5.4762	21	2.40040	.52381
	Control Group Post-test	6.0952	21	1.70014	.37100

In Table 4.5, it can be seen that the 't' value is 1.6 and the 'p' value is 0.105. As shown by the 'p' value, there is no significant difference between the control groups' pre-test and post-test ( $t=1.6$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). It would mean that the treatment provided after the pre-test did not have the desired effect on the learners in the control group.

6 Table 4.5: Paired Differences and Significances of the Control Group's Pre-test and Post-test

Pair	Control Group	Paired Differences					t	df	Significance	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
					Lower	Upper				
1	Pre-test - Control Group Post-test	-.61905	1.67261	.36499	-1.38041	.14231	-1.696	20	.053	.105

The statistical effect sizes were calculated to demonstrate how independent variables affect the control group. Cohen's d formula was used to determine the effects of traditional instruction on the group. The results show that the effect size on the pre-test and post-test on the control group is 0.007. Table 4.6 shows Effect- size Results for the control group on the Pre and Post-test.

7 Table 4.6: Effect Size of the Control Group's Pre-test and Post-test

Pair	Control Group	Standardizer <sup>a</sup>	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
1	Control Group Pre-test - Control Group Post-test	Cohen's d	1.67261	-.370	.077
		Hedges' correction	1.73878	-.356	.074

Statistical effect sizes were calculated to be able to compare the effect of the two independent variables on the control group. To demonstrate the effect that the typical method of teaching had on the control group, Cohen's d formula was applied. In their study, Sullivan and Fienn (2012) explained that Cohen's d value is 0.2 when a small effect size is indicated, 0.5 when a medium effect size is identified, and 0.8 and above when a large effect size is evident. Effectiveness of a method increases with the magnitude of the

effect size. Based on the results in table 6, the traditional method used in the control group had a very limited effect size on the student's learning with 0.077, indicating that its effect was even lower than 0.2.

#### 4.4 Analysis of the Pre-test and Post -test Results of the Experimental Group

On the post-test, as shown in table 4.7, the experimental group's mean score rose to 8.14 from 5.61 on the pre-test. According to the difference between the mean score of the pre-test and the post-test of the experimental group, significant changes were evident in the post-test. As a matter of fact, it would be reasonable to say that the change was caused by the experiment which was conducted on the students in the experimental group.

8 Table 4.7: Analysis of the Pre-test and Post-test Results of the Experimental Group

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Experimental Group Pre-test	5.6190	21	1.82281	.39777
	Experimental Group Post-test	8.1429	21	1.99464	.43527

Based on Table 4.8, we can see that the 't' value is 8.0, while the 'p' value is 0.105. As illustrated by the 'p' value, there is a significant difference between pre-test and post-test data of the experimental groups ( $t=8.0$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In this case, it would indicate that the treatment provided after the pre-test resulted in the desired effect on the experimental group of learners.

9 Table 4.8: Paired Differences and Significances of the Experimental Group's Pre-test and Post-test

Pair	Experimental	Paired Differences					Significance			
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
					Lower	Upper				
1	Group Pre-test - Experimental Group Post-test	-2.52381	1.44461	.31524	-3.18139	-1.86623	-8.006	20	<.001	<.001

As a means of demonstrating the effect of independent variables on the experimental group, statistical effect sizes were calculated. To determine the effects of differentiated instruction on the group, Cohen's d formula was used. The results show that the effect size on the pre-test and post-test on the experimental group is 1.05. Table 4.9 shows Effect-size Results for the experimental group on the Pre and Post-test.

Statistical effect sizes were also calculated to be able to compare the effect of the two independent variables on the experimental group. To demonstrate the effect that each method had on each group, Cohen's d formula was applied. Based on the results in table 9, the differentiated instruction approach used to address learners in the experimental group had a significant effect size on the student's learning with 1.05, indicating that this method had a highly significant effect on students' performance. Since each student in the classroom was taught according to his proficiency level, differentiated instruction enhanced students' overall achievement in the experimental group.

Based on the results of the statistical effect sizes of this study, the results are in agreement with Magableh & Abdullah (2020). According to their findings on investigating the impact of differentiated instruction on students' English proficiency levels; differentiated instruction had a large effect size on improving students' academic levels.

10 Table 4.9: Effect Size of the Experimental Group's Pre-test and Post-test

			Standardizer <sup>a</sup>	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
Pair 1	Experimental Group Pre-test - Experimental Group Post-test	Cohen's d	1.44461	-1.747	-2.425	-1.051
		Hedges' correction	1.50176	-1.681	-2.333	-1.011

For the experimental group, the activities were designed in a manner that would accommodate the needs of learners of diverse levels. In this manner, the learners were given the motivation they needed to fully engage in the lesson and achieve better results. It should be noted, however, that the traditional method did not affect the learning of the students since all students received the same instruction as if they were on a similar academic level. It appears that differentiated instruction not only helped students achieve but also reduced classroom diversity, which is consistent with Hassan's (2016) and Magableh and Abdullah's (2020). In their study, Magableh & Abdullah (2020) found that students' proficiency in English can be improved through differentiated instruction. A total of 60 grade 8 students from two randomly selected schools participated in the study. In comparison to the control group, the experimental group showed a statistically significant difference. The results of the study indicated that differentiated instruction had a significant impact on eliminating variance in the classroom.

#### 4.5 Analysis of the differences between the Experimental Group and Control Group

According to Table 4.10, the mean score of the differences between the pre-test and post-test in the control group is 0.61 and the standard deviation is 1.67 whereas the mean score of the differences between the pre-test and post-test in the experimental group is 2.57 and the standard deviation of the pre-test is 1.45.

An important finding of the study was the difference between the mean scores of pre- and post-tests for both the control and experimental groups. As shown in Table 4.10, the

average difference between pre-test and post-test for the control group is 0.61, while the average difference is 2.57 for the experimental group. In the mean score comparisons between the two groups, the difference between the two groups is 1.96 points. In light of the fact that their scores in the pre-tests were almost identical, the difference of 1.96 indicates that differentiated instruction was impacting students' learning of short stories.

11 Table 4.10: Analysis of the differences between Pre-test and Post-test Results of the Control Group and Experimental Group

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Control Group Difference	.6190	21	1.67261	.36499
	Experimental Group Difference	2.5714	21	1.45160	.31677

Considering Table 4.11 which demonstrates the differences between the pre-test and post-test in both groups, we can see that the 't' value is 5.04, and the 'p' value is 0.001. As illustrated by the 'p' value, significant differences were observed between the pre-test and post-test of the control group and pre-test and post-test of the experimental groups ( $t=5.04$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In this case, it would indicate that the differences between the pre-test and post-test results of the experimental group are significant than those in the control group.

12 Table 4.11: Paired Differences and Significances between Pre-test and Post-test Results of the Control Group and Experimental Group

		Paired Differences					Significance			
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
					Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Control Group Difference - Experimental Group Difference	-1.95238	1.77415	.38715	-2.75997	1.14480	5.043	20	<.001	<.001

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **5. Conclusion**

#### **5.1 Conclusion of the Study**

In this study, the aim was to investigate how differentiated instruction affects the acquisition of short stories at an American school in Umm Al Qwain, the United Arab Emirates. In order to conduct this study, an experimental design was employed. As part of the experiment, there were two groups, a control group and an experimental group. For the purpose of collecting data, a pre-test and a post-test were used as part of the research design. The study was conducted based on differentiated instruction strategies as the procedure for conducting the research.

According to the findings, differentiated instruction can be adapted as a practical approach to improving the acquisition of short stories for a variety of reasons. In the first place, it offers instruction to students at all levels of the classroom. It also provides students with a level of challenge that is tailored to their abilities, interests, and preferences, therefore encouraging them to reach their full potential. It is also important to mention that a differentiated instruction approach ensures that all learners are engaged in the learning process. As a result of this, the learning environment will be improved, and students will thus be able to learn better.

Differentiated instruction, however, requires the teacher to prepare levelled activities that meet the needs of all students regardless of their academic level. It is necessary for teachers to identify all learners' preferences and learning styles. In addition, professional development sessions conducted by the school administration are also important to train teachers on how to implement differentiated instruction strategies, and to provide them with the necessary resources.

To ensure that all learners receive a good quality education, teachers need to modify their teaching strategies. The Zone of Proximal Development suggests that teachers should provide additional support to struggling learners and provide more challenges to high-

achieving students. According to the findings of this study, teaching short stories will benefit from differentiated instruction.

In the experimental group, students of varying levels were motivated by differentiated strategies that modified the content of the short story, its delivery, and its assessment. To implement the differentiated instruction strategy, the teacher simplified the content for students with lower proficiency levels by providing them with a simplified version of the story, making it easier for them to understand. In contrast, when the content was modified for the high achievers in the experimental group, they found it challenging and found the activities to be extremely engaging. On the other hand, the content of the short story in the control group was not altered. The results of the study indicated that providing the same content to all students at the same time and following the same teaching methods did not adversely affect their learning.

In the American school in the UAE, differentiated instruction contributed to the success of grade 11 ESL students improving their level in short stories by differentiating the content of the short story, the delivery strategies, and the assessment strategies. As can be seen from the results of the study, differentiated instruction has a large effect size on the experimental group in comparison with a relatively small effect size for the control group. The differentiation of instruction has also contributed to the reduction of classroom diversity by improving the level of low-achieving students.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

The study results have led to the following recommendations for the implementation of effective differentiated instruction in American high schools in the United Arab Emirates. Schools that follow American curriculums require students to learn different literary genres, including short stories. It should be noted, however, that this study provides valuable contribution to effective differentiation strategies, including:

- There should be a limit on how many students can be in the classroom at the same time to prevent overcrowding. The presence of a large number of students in a class

can hinder learning in a variety of ways. There might be a scenario in which teachers do not have the chance to follow up with all learners. Additionally, disruptive students may cause the learning process to be slowed down. Furthermore, there will be a great deal of difficulty in grouping up the students in the classroom because of the large number of students in the classroom at one time. In the experimental group, 21 students participated in the differentiated instruction session. This allowed the teacher to easily divide the students into groups. It was possible for the teacher to observe all learners and provide feedback to most of them. Moreover, this small number of participants was manageable and did not result in any disruptive behaviour.

- Instruction should be differentiated based on the data collected from students' performance. In addition to providing teachers with accurate statistics, skill-based data analysis can help them identify areas of weakness and devise strategies to improve the performance of their students. In this regard, the teacher examined the scores of students in term one of the academic year 2022-2023. By doing so, the teacher created activities that are appropriate to all students, ensuring that every student is addressed.
- To meet the learning objectives, differentiated activities should provide students with a variety of options. The more options learners have, the more engaged they will be and the better their performance will be. Tomlinson (1999, 2003) suggests that students' reading comprehension skills improve when they are offered options to select readings according to their interests and capabilities. In this way, students can engage in meaningful interactions with others and the texts as they read. In the experimental group, the teacher offered students more options to complete their work, including surfing the web, reading the simplified version of the story, and consulting their peers. This study demonstrates that students benefited from this strategy, as their performance in the post-test was significantly higher than that in the pre-test.
- It is important for schools to provide students with a variety of resources that enable them to read short stories, novels, and plays to enhance their literary

knowledge. By providing a variety of literary genres in the school library and promoting library visits, students can gain a greater understanding of literature. Following a visit to the school library and a conversation with the librarian, it was evident that the number of short stories in the library is insufficient and does not cover subjects of interest to all students.

- To differentiate the same content for all learners, teachers should be provided with additional resources that provide simplified versions of short stories. For the experimental group, the teacher provided a simplified version of the short story that was available on the curriculum website. It is also important to have a variety of activities available that relate to the contents that the instructors can select and adjust according to the level of the students they are teaching.
- An important aspect of teaching short stories is selecting the appropriate story. Teachers are advised to select short stories that appeal to students of different academic levels, cultural backgrounds, and ages, and also align with the standard being addressed. By doing so, learners will be motivated to read and respond effectively to activities. The chosen story in this study was chosen carefully. This helped the teacher to engage as many learners as possible in the learning.

### **5.3 Limitations**

It would be beneficial if future researchers applied the study over a longer period and used a larger sample size as well as a variety of literary genres such as novels, plays, and poetry. There are limitations to the findings of the study due to the small sample size of the study and the selection of just one school in the emirate to investigate the impact of the study. There is a possibility of achieving better results if more schools in the emirate as well as other parts of the country are targeted. It should be noted that the study was limited in the sense that only one teacher took part in it. In my opinion, there should be a greater number of teachers. Furthermore, only two grade levels in the high school are included in the study. To improve the reliability of the results, more grade levels should be targeted. The other thing that needs to be pointed out is that the study was only conducted among male

students. Research findings can also be strengthened by involving both male and female students. Additionally, it would be better to investigate the effect on specific literary skills such as the use of figurative language, story elements, themes, conflicts, and the writing style of the writer. As a final note, a limited amount of research has examined how differentiated instruction impacts the acquisition of literature in general and short stories in particular. Accordingly, more research should be conducted on the topic to ascertain the impact of differentiated instruction on short story acquisition.

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## APPENDIX

### 1. Pre-test

#### Pre-Test

#### The Gift of the Magi by O. Henry

**Directions:** Read the short story and answer the questions that follow. Refer to the text to check your answers when appropriate.

It is Christmas Eve. Jim and Della are a married couple living in a modest furnished flat in New York. They have little money. The story opens with Della upset because she has just one dollar and eighty-seven cents to spend on a Christmas present for her husband.

The narrator tells us the married couple each have a possession in which they take great pride. For Jim, it's a gold watch that had been his father's and, before that, his grandfather's. Della's prized possession is her beautiful hair.

Della goes to a woman who deals in hair goods. This woman agrees to buy Della's hair for twenty dollars. With the newly acquired money, Della goes to buy a platinum fob chain for Jim's gold watch. This costs her twenty-one dollars, leaving her just eighty-seven cents in the whole world. When she gets home, she sets about curling what's left of her hair so it looks presentable.

When Jim gets home, he is surprised by his wife's actions, but when she explains why she had her hair cut off, he embraces her and gives her the present he has bought her: two jewelled tortoiseshell combs she has long admired in a shop window. The combs are useless to her until her hair grows out again, but at least she can give Jim his present ...

But in a last twist, Jim tells Della that he sold his gold watch to pay for the expensive combs he bought for her. So now, she has two combs but no hair to use them on, and he has a platinum fob chain for a gold watch he no longer owns.

Hi, Saleh. When you submit this form, the owner will see your name and email address.

#### Required

1. From where does Della get the \$1.87 according to the text? (1 Point)

- a. By haggling with merchants
- b. By shoveling sidewalks in front of stores
- c. By stealing the money from stores
- d. By working for the grocer, butcher, & vegetable man

2. Why is Della upset at the beginning of the story? (1 Point)

- a. She lost her job shoveling in front of the stores on her block.
- b. She has been fighting with Jim.
- c. She does not have enough money to buy a nice present for Jim.
- d. She was recently arrested by the mendicancy squad.

3. What are Jim and Della's most valued possessions? (1 Point)

- a. Jim's watch and Della's hat
- b. Jim's brief case and Della's jacket
- c. Jim's shoes and Della's cooking pot
- d. Jim's watch and Della's hair

4. Why does Della go to Madame Sofronie's? (1 Point)

- a. To look for work
- b. To sell her hair
- c. To beg for money
- d. To shovel Madame Sofronie's sidewalk

5. Which figurative language technique is used in the following sentence?

*"I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present"* (1 Point)

- a. Metaphor
- b. Personification
- c. Hyperbole
- d. Understatement

6. Which best explains why Jim is so stunned when he first sees Della? (1 Point)

- a. He doesn't like how his wife looks with short hair.
- b. He is shocked that she bought him such a nice gift.
- c. He doesn't recognize his wife.
- d. He bought her a gift that she can't use.

7. With which statement would the narrator most likely agree? (1 Point)

- a. Jim and Della's gifts were bad because they did not consider one another's needs.
- b. Jim and Della's gifts were good because they will each get a lot of use out of their nice gifts.
- c. Jim and Della's gifts were bad because they wasted their money on things that they can't use.
- d. Jim and Della's gifts were good because they sacrificed so much for one another.

8. Which statement best expresses the theme of this story? (1 Point)

- a. Make sure that you give people gifts that they can actually use.
- b. Spending time with the people you love is more important than getting them gifts.

- c. The best gifts involve sacrifice.
- d. Don't waste your money on expensive gifts.

**9. Long Response:** Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. At the end of the story, the narrator, in reference to Jim and Della, says, "Of all who give gifts these two were the wisest." Why does the narrator think that Jim and Della are wise? Support your answer with text. (1 Points)

2. Summarize the text. List five to seven key events from the story in the order in which they happen. Your summary should include main points from the beginning, middle, and end of the story.  
(1 Points)

## 2. Post-test

### Post-Test

#### The Gift of the Magi by O. Henry

**Directions:** Read the short story and answer the questions that follow. Refer to the text to check your answers when appropriate.

It is Christmas Eve. Jim and Della are a married couple living in a modest furnished flat in New York. They have little money. The story opens with Della upset because she has just one dollar and eighty-seven cents to spend on a Christmas present for her husband.

The narrator tells us the married couple each have a possession in which they take great pride. For Jim, it's a gold watch that had been his father's and, before that, his grandfather's. Della's prized possession is her beautiful hair.

Della goes to a woman who deals in hair goods. This woman agrees to buy Della's hair for twenty dollars. With the newly acquired money, Della goes to buy a platinum fob chain for Jim's gold watch. This costs her twenty-one dollars, leaving her just eighty-seven cents in the whole world. When she gets home, she sets about curling what's left of her hair so it looks presentable. When Jim gets home, he is surprised by his wife's actions, but when she explains why she had her hair cut off, he embraces her and gives her the present he has bought her: two jewelled tortoiseshell combs she has long admired in a shop window. The combs are useless to her until her hair grows out again, but at least she can give Jim his present ...

But in a last twist, Jim tells Della that he sold his gold watch to pay for the expensive combs he bought for her. So now, she has two combs but no hair to use them on, and he has a platinum fob chain for a gold watch he no longer owns.

Hi, Saleh, When you submit this form, the owner will see your name and email address.

#### Required

1. What is the source of the \$1.87 Della gets? (1 Point)

- a. By haggling with merchants
- b. By shoveling sidewalks in front of stores
- c. By stealing the money from stores
- d. By working for the grocer, butcher, & vegetable man

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2. What made Della angry at the beginning of the story? (1 Point)

- a. She lost her job shoveling in front of the stores on her block.
- b. She has been fighting with Jim.
- c. She does not have enough money to buy a nice present for Jim.
- d. She was recently arrested by the mendicancy squad.

3. What are the things that Jim and Della's value more? (1 Point)

- a. Jim's watch and Della's hat
- b. Jim's brief case and Della's jacket
- c. Jim's shoes and Della's cooking pot
- d. Jim's watch and Della's hair

4. Why does Della go to Madame Sofronie's? (1 Point)

- a. To look for work
- b. To sell her hair
- c. To beg for money
- d. To shovel Madame Sofronie's sidewalk

5. Which figurative language technique is used in the following sentence?  
*"I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present."* (1 Point)

- a. Metaphor
- b. Personification
- c. Hyperbole
- d. Understatement

6. Which best explains why Jim is so stunned when he first sees Della? (1 Point)

- a. He doesn't like how his wife looks with short hair.
- b. He is shocked that she bought him such a nice gift.
- c. He doesn't recognize his wife.
- d. He bought her a gift that she can't use.

7. Which sentence agrees with the narrator's viewpoint? (1 Point)

- a. Jim and Della's gifts were bad because they did not consider one another's needs.
- b. Jim and Della's gifts were good because they will each get a lot of use out of their nice gifts.
- c. Jim and Della's gifts were bad because they wasted their money on things that they can't use.
- d. Jim and Della's gifts were good because they sacrificed so much for one another.

8. What is the main theme of the story? (1 Point)

- a. Make sure that you give people gifts that they can actually use.
- b. Spending time with the people you love is more important than getting them gifts.
- c. The best gifts involve sacrifice.
- d. Don't waste your money on expensive gifts.

9. **Long Response:** Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. At the end of the story, the narrator, in reference to Jim and Della, says, "Of all who give gifts these two were the wisest." Why does the narrator think that Jim and Della are wise? Support your answer with text.

(4 Points)

2. Summarize the text. List five to seven key events from the story in the order in which they happen. Your summary should include main points from the beginning, middle, and end of the story.

(3 Points)

### 3. Letters of Consent

#### Letter of Consent

Dear Principal,

I am a postgraduate student undertaking MEd in TESOL at The British University in Dubai, and I am conducting research for my Master's dissertation. Here is a brief introduction to my research:

I am conducting a study on the impact of using differentiated instruction on the acquisition of short stories. There is no doubt that today's classrooms are facing an issue in teaching literature and especially short stories. As part of the ESL curriculum, students are required to study different kinds of short stories such as action, adventure, comedy, fable, fantasy, horror, mystery, romance, science fiction, and tragedy. This content is taught formally in classroom settings. Several methods can be employed to deliver the content of short stories to students and ensure that they comprehend its significance. Due to the difficulty of teaching short stories, I will be examining the impact of using differentiated instruction on the acquisition of short stories. I believe that this will benefit both teachers and students.

I would like to get your permission to conduct my research study in your respected school. After administering a pre-test to every student, two sections of grade 11 will be taught a short story and then a post-test will be administered (which may take approximately 40 minutes). The study will collect data from the pre-test and post-test results. All data will remain confidential. The names of participants will not be used in the study. Only the researcher will have access to data. Once all data is collected, it will be saved securely. Your contribution is essential to the success of the study. The results of this study may have implications for improving literature learning.

Thank you,  
Saleh Alrwais  
Master of Education (TESOL Department)  
The British University in Dubai

## Letter of Consent

Dear Participants,

I am a postgraduate student undertaking MEd in TESOL at The British University in Dubai, and I am conducting research for my Master's dissertation. Here is a brief introduction to my research:

I am conducting a study on the impact of using differentiated instruction on the acquisition of short stories. There is no doubt that today's classrooms are facing an issue in teaching literature and especially short stories. As part of the ESL curriculum, students are required to study different kinds of short stories such as action, adventure, comedy, fable, fantasy, horror, mystery, romance, science fiction, and tragedy. This content is taught formally in classroom settings. Several methods can be employed to deliver the content of short stories to students and ensure that they comprehend its significance. Due to the difficulty of teaching short stories, I will be examining the impact of using differentiated instruction on the acquisition of short stories. I believe that this will benefit both teachers and students.

I would like to invite you to participate in my research study. The study will collect data from pre-test and post-test results. All data will remain confidential. The name of participants will not be used in the study. Only the researcher will have access to data. Once all data is collected, it will be saved securely. Your contribution is essential to the success of the study. The results of this study may have implications for improving your literature learning.

Therefore, your input is very important. If you decide to take part in this experiment, your participation will consist of attending a short story lesson, and sitting for both a pre and posttests (which may take approximately 40 minutes).

Your involvement is completely voluntary and all answers are confidential and anonymous. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, even if you have already started. |

The participation in the experiment will be considered as a confirmation of your willingness to participate in this study. If you would like to receive more information about the study, please contact me at [21002095@student.buid.ac.ae](mailto:21002095@student.buid.ac.ae)

Thank you,  
Saleh Alrwaia  
Master of Education (TESOL Department)  
[The British University in Dubai](http://www.buid.ac.ae)

Participant Name:

Age:

Signature:

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## 4. Lesson Plans

### 4.1 Traditional Method Lesson Plan

**Description: Reading Skill**

**The Gift of the Magi**

<b>Day: Monday 17/10/2022</b>	<b>Period: 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Objective(s)</b>	Students will be able: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To identify the story elements</li><li>• To analyze the relationship between characters, and events in the story</li></ul>

**Explanation and Ideas:**

<b>Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introducing the story, and asking students to read the first paragraph, and answer different questions about it.</li></ul>
<b>Main Content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Instructing students to read silently and find the main events in the story.</li><li>• Instructing students to discuss the main events in the story.</li><li>• Asking students to answer the questions about the story.</li></ul>
<b>Worksheets/ handouts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>The Gift of the Magi</b></li></ul>
<b>Supplies/ Materials:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PowerPoint-smart board</li></ul>

<b>Connections to real-life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Facts and stories about our communities.</li></ul>
<b>Formative Assessments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Critical questions.</li><li>• Doing the related exercise in the worksheet.</li><li>• Students' answers and participation.</li></ul>

## 4.2 Differentiated Instruction Lesson Plan

**Description: Reading Skill**

**The Gift of the Magi**

<b>Day: Monday 17/10/2022</b>	<b>Period: 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Objective(s)</b>	Students will be able: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify the story elements</li> <li>• To analyze the relationship between characters, and events in the story</li> </ul>

**Explanation and Ideas:**

<b>Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introducing the story by asking students this question: <i>Why do some people sacrifice?</i></li> </ul>
<b>Main Content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructing students to move into groups (homogenous groups)</li> <li>• Instructing students to discuss the main events in the story.</li> <li>• Instructing students to do the activities designed for their group. Groups are assigned different activities based on their readiness, interest, and preferences</li> <li>• Asking students to share their answers</li> </ul>
<b>Worksheets/ handouts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Gift of the Magi</b></li> </ul>
<b>Supplies/ Materials:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PowerPoint-smart board</li> </ul>

<b>Connections to real-life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facts and stories about our communities.</li> </ul>
<b>Formative Assessments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical thinking questions.</li> <li>• Doing the related exercise in the worksheet.</li> <li>• Students' answers and participation.</li> </ul>