

**Hebron University  
Faculty of Graduate Studies**

**The Effect of Schema and Cultural  
Content on EFL Reading Comprehension among Hebron  
College Students**

**MA Thesis  
Prepared By  
Sameeha Abd Al-Majeed Ibrahim Eideh**

**This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics and the Teaching of English, College of Studies and Scientific Research, Hebron University.**

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2010

## **Dedication**

**To my beloved husband Mohannad**

**To my beloved son Hatem**

**To my beloved family**

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## **Abstract**

This experimental study aims at investigating whether the readers' culture- related schema and the text cultural content influence EFL reading comprehension among Palestinian College students. One hundred and forty six university students participated in this study. Forty three of the participants were males, and one hundred and three of them were females . Also, eighty nine of them were from Hebron University while fifty seven of them were from Palestine Polytechnic University. To measure the influence of cultural content on their reading, the participants' comprehension of texts loaded with American culture was compared with their comprehension of texts loaded with Palestinian culture on the same topic. Prior to the reading task, the participants answered a fifteen item questionnaire. Upon answering the questionnaire and the test questions, the resulting data were statistically analyzed and compared. Results of the statistical analysis showed the possible influence of the readers' schema and text cultural content on the participants' reading comprehension performance. The results of the study showed that the participants' performance in reading comprehension is affected by a number of variables including gender, place of residence, specialization, and hobby, especially watching TV. The researcher believes that all of the previous variables must have influenced the participants' access to target culture knowledge and hence must have shaped their target language schema.

## Chapter one

### 1.1 Introduction

#### 1.1.1 The Importance of Reading

Reading is a very important process in learning both the native language (L1) and the second language (L2). Many researchers agreed that reading is necessary in order to learn a language. According to Sultan (2003), “reading is the main route to the command of language”. Also, Razi (2006) states that “reading is the most important academic language skill”. In his study, Razi (2006) investigated the influence of reading activities and cultural schema on reading comprehension. He illustrated that schema, which is defined as background knowledge that gives the reader the chance to make predictions for more successful interactions, plays a vital role in that comprehension.

Furthermore, research on reading attempted to look for components that affect reading performance as well as reading behaviors that distinguish proficient from less-proficient readers. According to Al- Shumaimeri (2006), Erten and Razi (2009) state that “after decades of study, reading researchers generally have come to an agreement that reading is an interactive process, involving lexical, semantic, syntactic and world language”.

Since schema theory requires having the support of background knowledge before starting reading, reading activities are very important. Reading activities started to receive a lot of attention from syllabus designers and practitioners.

Examples of the reading activities that have become increasingly popular are the ones commonly found in current textbooks, i.e., prereading, while reading and post-reading activities.

### **1.1.2 Schema Theory**

Schema theory can be defined as “the theory that deals with pre-existing knowledge structures stored in the mind”, Erten and Razi (2009). This theory also deals with how readers combine their previous knowledge with the text, (Widdowson, 2008). He also defines schema as a “construct of familiar knowledge. Another definition of schema is provided by Kang (2002) who argues that may be best seen as a “significant notion in understanding the knowledge of our brains”. He adds that “what we know exists as schemata hierarchies and this prior knowledge is activated when we encounter new information” (p.1).

Moreover, Nunnan (1999), states that “schema theory is based on the notion that past experiences lead to the creation of mental frameworks that help us make sense of new experiences” (p.201).

Cultural schema is a type of schema that is relevant to this study. It involves cultural familiarity and helps readers to “reconstruct the story line through referring to more personally and culturally relevant scripts”, (Erten and Razi, 2009).

## **1.2 Theoretical Background**

In a study conducted by Savignon (1997), the results showed that the first step in the development of a teaching programme should be based on the communicative needs and goals of the learner and on involving learners as active participants in the interpretation, negotiation and expression of meaning. Also, she believes that success in a communicative task depends on the learners' linguistic as well as on their sociolinguistic competence. In another study, Tseng (2002) showed that Communication involves the sociolinguistic knowledge. Further, language becomes an important element of the language classroom, because culture knowledge lies behind sociolinguistic competence.

Moreover, in a cross-cultural study done by Pritchard (1987), he has shed light on the relationship among cultural schemata, reading strategies, and reading comprehension. The obtained results indicated that cultural schemata have great influence on the processing strategies the readers employ and on the level of comprehension they achieve. Results also showed that the categories of strategies identified in that study represent a potentially comprehensive framework for classifying the cognitive operations readers undertake when processing a text.

Another study in the same field was conducted by Pickens (1982). The findings of the study showed that there were no differences in the reading speed among the culture-specific and non-culture-specific passages by the Chicano and Navaho students. Another finding revealed by this study is that cultural background is the underlying framework which interacts with the text to produce comprehension.

Also, the effect of cross-cultural content schemata on reading comprehension of ESL beginners has been investigated by Zhang (1993). The obtained results indicated that cultural content schemata play a significant role in reading comprehension and recall of ESL beginning students.

A study by Byrnes (1991) emphasized the importance of helping students recognize the cultural schemata associated with the phenomena they encounter. She observed that simulating the appropriate second-culture framework in a classroom where students are surrounded by their native culture is not easy. Another study done by Galloway (1992). Galloway provides many teaching suggestions related to this approach in cultural reading.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

In teaching foreign language reading comprehension, teachers tend to adopt traditional approaches by focusing on bottom up processing which involves purely linguistic aspects such as vocabulary and structure at the expense of top down processing which invokes the reader's background knowledge including culturally familiar frameworks or schema. Since the advent of the communicative approach, great change has taken place in the area of language teaching, particularly in the teaching of reading. Emphasis in the communicative syllabus has shifted from reliance on contrived or simplified texts to real life or authentic texts. The importance of authentic texts stems from the fact that these texts simulate real life reading and hence they could be more interesting for the students. One problem of authentic texts, however, is that they are generally loaded with cultural information that may not be familiar to the students in the foreign language setting.

The problem is aggravated by the fact that teachers of foreign languages tend to avoid teaching the cultural aspects embedded in these texts. Several reasons lie behind teachers' avoidance of teaching such cultural elements (Omaggio, 1993). First, teachers feel that they do not have enough time for teaching cultural materials, and they think students will be exposed to them later. Second, teacher's fear that their knowledge about culture is limited which makes them afraid of teaching it. Despite the crucial importance of cultural knowledge for text comprehension, most teachers and learners think that comprehension is merely a linguistic matter related to grammar and vocabulary and they overlook the cultural issues which, as previous research has shown, influence not only comprehension, but also the strategies that learners use while reading.

#### **1.4 Significance of the study**

Most research studies have emphasized the influence of cultural schemata on reading comprehension in ESL multicultural settings (Pritchard, 1987; Pickens, 1982; Zhang, 1993; Byrnes, 1991; Galloway, 1992). However, there is still need for new research studies that deal with the influence of schema and text cultural content on the reading comprehension of students in EFL settings. Cultural issues are of particular relevance in EFL settings since most teachers are nonnative speakers who may themselves be unfamiliar with the target culture information. Moreover, students and teachers in an EFL setting may have a negative attitude towards the target culture due to social or political variables. Hence, this study attempts to bring to the foreground cultural issues and their influence on basic language skills such as reading because such issues tend to be ignored in the EFL classroom due to several variables.

### 1.5 Limitations of the study

1. The study was conducted in two universities, Hebron University and Palestine Polytechnic University. Hence, results may be only generalized to similar students in similar settings.
2. Only two questions type was used in this study to measure the subjects' performance in reading comprehension, i.e. multiple –choice and a true false question. Using additional test techniques may have neutralized the effect of question type.

### 1.6 Definition of terms

1. **Place of residence:** The geographical place of residence, i.e., whether the candidate lives in a city, old city, or a rural area.
2. **Hobbies:** Favorite pastime activities. In this study, hobbies include watching TV and using the internet which the researcher believes influence background culture knowledge.
3. **Schema:** A construct of familiar knowledge (Widdowson, 2007). It plays an important role in the communicative teaching/learning process. Cultural knowledge is viewed as one type of schematic knowledge. TV, internet, and students' specialization are believed to influence the type of culture related schema a student brings to the reading text.

4. **Cultural load:** Cultural information contained in the passage. In the context of this study, the students are exposed to two sets of texts: One containing Palestinian cultural elements and the other containing American cultural elements.
5. **Culturally loaded texts:** texts that reflect the target language culture or the native culture, e.g. ("The American Elections" and "The Palestinian Elections").
6. **GPA (Grade Point Average):** it is a calculation of the average of all the students' grades for all semesters and courses completed up to a given academic term.
7. **L2 Proficiency:** the scores of the participants in two reading scores they have taken.

### 1.7 Research questions

#### The main research question:

What is the influence of the readers' schema and the text cultural content on EFL reading comprehension?

#### The sub-questions:

1. What is the mean of the students' performance in the reading test according to their place of residence?
2. What is the influence of students' hobbies on students' performance in reading culturally loaded texts?
3. What is the influence of students' GPA and L2 proficiency on students' performance in reading culturally loaded texts?

4. What is the influence of students' specialization on performance in reading culturally loaded texts?
5. How does the cultural content of each text influence the reading comprehension of participants?
6. What is the influence of the text cultural content on the reading comprehension of the American and the Palestinian sets of texts in the reading test?
7. What is the influence of the text cultural content (American or Palestinian) on the participants' performance in reading comprehension especially among non-English major students ?
8. What is the influence of the participants' gender on their performance in reading culturally loaded texts?
9. Part A: What is the influence of the participants' gender on their performance in reading the Palestinian texts?
10. Part B: What is the influence of the participants' gender on their performance in reading the American texts?

### **1.8 Hypotheses**

1. There are no significant differences in the students' performance in reading comprehension due to gender.
2. There are no significant differences at  $\alpha=0.05$  due to gender in the students' performance in reading Palestinian texts.
3. There are no significant differences at  $\alpha=0.05$  due to gender in the students' performance in reading the American texts.

## **1.9 Summary**

The first chapter presented the theoretical framework pertaining to the relationship between reading comprehension, cultural load, and schema. It also presented the research problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, the limitations, definition of terms, research questions, and the hypotheses.

## **Chapter two**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This section reviews the theoretical background underlying concepts and views that are related to communicative language teaching, reading comprehension, culturally loaded texts, and schema. It also highlights research findings related to the influence of the reader's cultural schema on the comprehension of texts as well as the influence of the cultural load of these texts on the readers' achievement in reading. The literature review chapter covers studies that were conducted in foreign and second language contexts around the world as well as local studies conducted in the Palestinian context.

The chapter ends with a summary that presents the main highlights of the various studies and synthesizes the main trends in all relevant research.

#### **2.2 Views and Concepts Concerning Cultural Knowledge and its Role in Reading**

Savignon (1997) states that "Within the last quarter century, communicative language teaching (CLT) has been put forth around the world as the "new", or "innovative", way to teach English as a second or foreign language" (p.13). She also

believes that the development of the communicative competence should be the goal of language education.

Hence, Savignon believes that the first step in the development of a teaching program is the exploration of the communicative needs and goals of the learner and the involvement of learners as active participants in the interpretation, negotiation and expression of meaning.

This cannot take place unless the learner is capable of using the language accurately and appropriately. In other words, success in a communicative task depends on the learners' linguistic as well as on their sociolinguistic competence. This is especially important in the foreign language context where students rarely get the chance to experience the target culture except through the textbooks and other materials they are exposed to in the classroom.

Language educators argue that cultural knowledge constitutes the backbone of the learner's sociolinguistic competence.

In the words of Tseng, (2002):

Communication involves not only linguistic knowledge but also sociolinguistic knowledge. Further, language becomes an important element of the

language classroom, because culture knowledge lies behind sociolinguistic competence.

The learners' cultural knowledge or background is often referred to as schema. Widdowson (2008) defines schema as "a construct of familiar knowledge". He argues that in discussing this concept, there is a need to refer to the work of Bartlett (1932) who introduced this concept over 70 years ago in his book Remembering. Widdowson also points out that this psychologist had carried out a number of experiments for the sake of investigating the influence of cultural knowledge or background. In one of these experiments, a number of British students were asked to read a story about a culture different from their own. According to Widdowson, these students had derived from the foreign text what suited their "preconceived schematic expectations"(p.28)

The issue of cultural knowledge and its influence on reading has received a great deal of attention from both teachers and researchers. Many studies have been conducted in this field. First of all, Pritchard (1987) conducted a cross-cultural study that integrated cultural schemata and reading processing strategies in Palau in the United States. Pritchard's work has shed light on the relationship among cultural schemata, reading strategies, and reading comprehension.

The results obtained by Pritchard indicated that cultural schemata have a great influence on the processing strategies that readers employ and on the level of comprehension they achieve.

Results also showed that the categories of strategies identified in that study represent a potentially comprehensive framework for classifying the cognitive operations readers undertake when processing a text.

### **2.3 The Relationship between Cultural Schemata and EFL/ESL Reading Comprehension**

An important study in the field of schema was conducted by Pickens (1982). This cross-cultural study investigated the relationship between cultural schemata and reading comprehension. The findings of the study showed that there were no differences in the reading speed among the culture-specific and non-culture-specific passages by the Chicano and Navaho students. Another finding revealed by this study is that cultural background is the underlying framework which interacts with the text to produce comprehension.

Another study by Zhang (1993) investigated the effect of cross-cultural content schemata on reading comprehension of ESL beginners. It examined whether ESL

beginners' comprehension of a culturally familiar text is better than comprehending a culturally unfamiliar text.

The obtained results indicated that cultural content schemata play a significant role in reading comprehension and recall of ESL beginning students.

Byrnes (1991) emphasized the importance of helping students recognize the cultural schemata associated with the phenomena they encounter. She observed that simulating the appropriate second-culture framework in a classroom where students are surrounded by their native culture is not easy. Moreover, she points out that we have to use texts as a "vehicle" for gaining cross-cultural understanding.

Byrnes suggests two ways for solving the problem of the students' excessive reliance on native culture schemata when interpreting target culture texts. First, teachers should begin with L2 texts containing target culture elements that are not far from the learners' own cultural experiences. Second, learners themselves may be encouraged to start by studying foreign texts that are similar in some aspects with their own native culture.

Galloway (1992) suggests a four stage approach to the cultural reading of authentic materials that may lead the students through a process of guided exploration. Galloway points out that this approach is beneficial for the students since it engages them in writing tasks and encourages them to react to materials in a per-

sonal way. Also, she provides many other teaching suggestions related to this approach in cultural reading.

The effects of culturally specific prior knowledge on Taiwanese EFL students' English reading comprehension were investigated by Lufang Lin (2004). He utilized a retelling technique to examine the effects of culturally familiar and culturally unfamiliar topics on the reading comprehension of Taiwanese EFL high school students.

The data of this study reveal that most of the participants have some experience with, have read an article about, or have seen a TV program on each of the six Chinese topics. The participants demonstrated that they have had less knowledge about non-Chinese topics. Lin suggests that the retelling of the Chinese topic passages was significantly different from those with non-Chinese topics.

Another study conducted by Salim Razi (2006) investigated the influence of cultural schema and reading activities on reading comprehension. This study implied that the cultural schema could have a significant effect on the comprehension of short stories.

The findings of the study further showed that familiarizing students with the cultural content of a text has a significant effect on reading comprehension.

Ismail Hakki Erten and Salim Razi further (2009) investigated whether cultural familiarity influences comprehension of short stories and whether nativizing the story or using reading activities can compensate for the lack of such familiarity. This study indicates a powerful impact of cultural schema on comprehension. The obtained results indicated that cultural familiarity facilitates comprehension and that the influence of cultural familiarity remains intact although reading activities do activate schematic knowledge and promote strategic reading behaviors.

A study by Chang (2007) addressed the issue of cross-cultural background knowledge and its impacts upon reading comprehension. The participants in this study were divided into two groups and were separately taught with two different lesson plans.

The results revealed that there is a significant relationship between background knowledge and EFL reading comprehension and that background knowledge was instrumental in connecting the contextual meanings with EFL readers' comprehension.

In another significant study, Al-Shumaimeri (2006) investigated the effects of content familiarity and language ability on the comprehension performance of low- and high-ability Saudi students of English as a foreign language. One hundred and thirty-two male and female university students participated in this study,

performing two reading comprehension tests on two different types of text (familiar and unfamiliar).

The results showed that content familiarity and language ability had significant effects on the students' comprehension performance.

They also indicated that the familiarity of the content facilitated reading comprehension, and that language ability had a significant effect on the comprehension performance of students at different levels.

An important research study by Jalilifar and Assi (2008) explored the role of cultural nativization in the comprehension of short stories among Iranian EFL learners. Two groups of advanced EFL learners participated in the study.

The results illustrated that cultural nativization had a facilitative effect on comprehension of the stories.

This study, however, disregarded variables such as gender, age and English language proficiency level, hence, the authors suggested taking these variable into account in the future.

Fuhong (2004) conducted a study which focused on the examination of the role of cultural schema in ESL/EFL reading comprehension, in particular, how the cultural schema helped ESL/EFL reading comprehension in China.

The researcher used a quiz for the purpose of investigating the significance of cultural background knowledge in reading comprehension. This quiz contained two passages which were given to thirty-three Chinese teachers to read.

The aim of it was to see whether cultural schema played an important role in reading comprehension.

Both passages were about celebrations of festivals. Results of the study showed that these teachers could give correct answers to questions about their native culture, however, their answers to questions about the unfamiliar culture were wrong.

Likewise, a Palestinian study conducted by Qawasmi (2001) aimed at developing the English language cultural understanding among students of English at Hebron University in Palestine. In her study, Qawasmi attempted to investigate the influence of using a researcher- built cultural syllabus to boost college students' cultural knowledge and awareness.

Qawasmi also investigated the influence of this syllabus on their knowledge of and their attitude towards the other. The results of the study revealed that some change occurred with respect to the students' understanding of some cultural aspects related to the Anglo American culture.

Similarly, another important local study was conducted by Sultan (2003) who examined the effects of culturally loaded texts on EFL learners' reading comprehension. This study was conducted to investigate the effect of target language culture on outcomes in reading comprehension. Participants were first- year students from Palestine Polytechnic University who participated in a reading test composed of four authentic texts followed by nine multiple choice questions.

An important result of this study is that there was a significant relationship between the learners' general ability in English and their performance on all texts except the one that is not loaded with target language culture.

Another significant difference was found between the learners' comprehension scores of the culturally loaded texts and those that are not loaded with the target culture.

Furthermore, significant differences were found between students' performance on the texts that are loaded with target culture and those that are not loaded with them. Finally, there was a significant difference between males and females in their performance on one of the texts that is culturally loaded with target culture.

Along similar lines, Zhang (2008) attempted to explore the effect of formal schemata on reading comprehension through a case study of 45 non-English ma-

jors from X University in China. The participants were chosen from three classes of comparable English level.

Two types of analyses were used: qualitative and quantitative. The analysis of the study showed that subjects displayed better recall of the text with highly structured schema than the other one which was with loosely controlled schema. In other words, the results indicated that formal schemata has significant influence on written communication.

Another related study was conducted by Warsnak (2006), who examined the effect of activating prior knowledge on reading fluency and reading comprehension. The researcher used two reading passages at the fourth grade level. Firstly, the students read one passage without prior knowledge activation. Then, they read another one with prior knowledge activation. The results of the study indicated that all the participants read more quickly when prior knowledge was activated.

Stott (2001) points out the importance both of developing the learner's vocabulary and of encouraging extensive reading in a paper summarized some of the research into schema theory and its applications to ESL reading.

The author also highlighted and emphasized some of the use of the schema-theoretic approach. The results of the study showed that schema-theoretic applications do not always result in improvements in comprehension.

Bensoussan (2002) conducted a study that examined the effects of faulty schemata on reading comprehension. The researcher used a reading test, and 125 students participated in the study.

Students were allowed to use dictionaries to translate expressions and sentences in order to answer short-answer comprehension questions in English.

The Results showed that “23% of the wrong answers to the comprehension questions were driven by schemata which differed substantially from the actual content of the text”.

Another study conducted by Pedro and Teresa (2009) investigated the effect of schema activation on professional translators who had to read and translate a selection of texts. There were three experiments in this study.

In the first experiment, the understanding of the texts was improved by presenting a summary before the reading. In the second experiment, there was a semi-consecutive translation.

In the third experiment, the nature of the effect of the prior summary was explored by “manipulating the working memory”, Pedro and Teresa (2009).

The results showed that when the “working memory” increased, the benefit associated with the presentation of the summary in reading disappeared.

Al-Issa (2006) explored in his study how familiarity with the content schema as an important aspect of schema theory affects L2 reading comprehension. The results of this study showed that knowledge of schema theory is very important to teachers who are responsible for choosing the materials for reading instruction.

An important study conducted by Alptekin (2008) explored the role of culturally familiar background knowledge in inferential and literal comprehension in L2 reading. In this study, the participants read either the original of an American short story or a ‘nativized’ version in order to reflect the learner’s own culture.

The participants were later asked to respond to a number of multiple-choice comprehension questions. These questions aimed at checking inferential and literal comprehension independently across the two versions of the story. The results showed that the nativization of a short story from the target language culture facilitates L2 readers’ inferential comprehension significantly.

Also, they show that the previous result does not affect their literal understanding.

Moreover, the results indicated that there is no interface between inferential comprehension and literal understanding.

## **2.4 Summary:**

**Results of the previous studies may be synthesized in the following points:**

1. Cultural schemata have a great influence on the processing strategies the readers employ and on the level of comprehension they achieve.
2. Cultural background is the underlying framework which interacts with the text to produce comprehension.
3. Cultural content schemata play a significant role in reading comprehension and recall of ESL beginning students.
4. Familiarizing students with the cultural content of a text has a significant effect on reading comprehension.
5. Cultural familiarity facilitates reading comprehension; and the influence of cultural familiarity remains intact although reading activities do activate schematic knowledge and promote strategic reading behaviors.

6. A Palestinian study revealed that some change occurred with respect to the students' understanding of some cultural aspects related to the Anglo American culture.
  
7. In another local study, it was found that there was a significant relationship between the learners' general ability in English and their performance in all texts of the reading test. Another significant difference was found between the learners' comprehension of the culturally loaded texts and those that are not loaded with the target culture.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology and Procedures**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the methodology of the study, its population, tools of data collection, methods of verifying validity and reliability, as well as the study procedures and statistical analysis.

This study was conducted to investigate whether the readers' culture- related schema and the text cultural content influence EFL reading comprehension among Palestinian students.

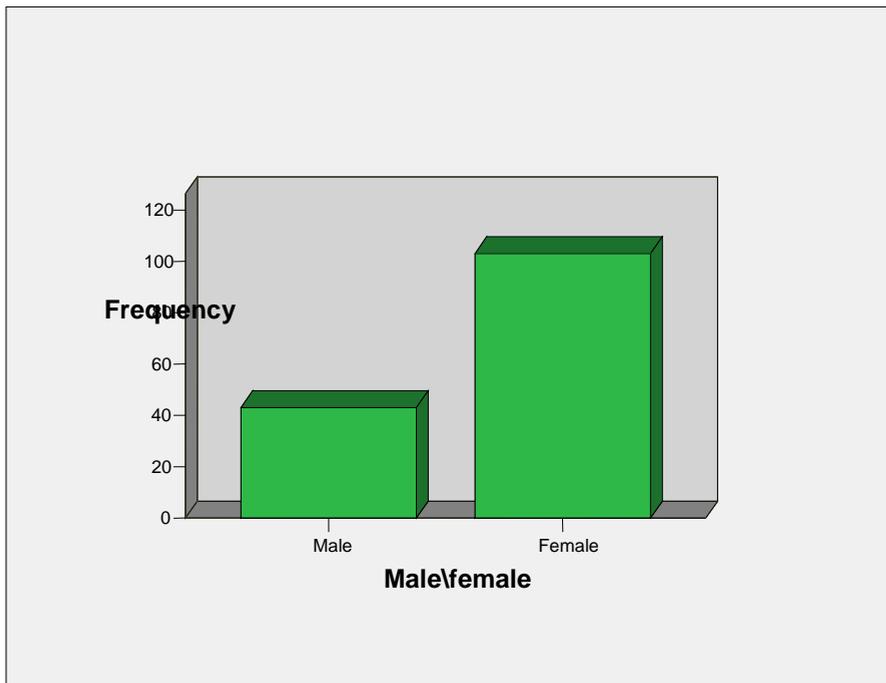
#### **3.2 Population and sample**

The researcher utilized an experimental design in this study. The subjects who participated in the experiment were one hundred and forty six students at both Hebron University and Palestine Polytechnic University. The subjects' specializations included English, English-French, English and Methods of Teaching, Engineering, Applied Mathematics, and Computer Science. In terms of gender, forty three of the participants were males, and one hundred and three of them were females . The sample distribution in terms of gender is shown in table (1) below and it is followed by a diagram.

**Table (1): Sample Distribution according to Gender**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>29.5</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>70.5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure 1: Male\female**



### **3.3 Research Design**

The researcher has conducted an experimental study in order to investigate the effects of schema and reading texts that are loaded with target culture on the comprehension of EFL learners. The study included one dependent variable, namely, performance in reading comprehension. This dependent variable is influenced by a number of independent ones, namely, factors influencing access to cultural knowledge and hence, learners' schema such as TV programs, internet use, place of residence, students' grades, L2 proficiency, and specialization.

These variables have been chosen because the researcher believes they may affect the students' interest in and access to foreign culture issues. In other words, such variables will have an either direct or indirect influence on student' performance in the culturally loaded texts. As for gender, the researcher decided to include this variable because previous research has shown that females may be more interested in knowing about other cultures than males (Michael, 2000). Also, students' cultural knowledge may be influenced by their specialization and whether this specialization provides adequate access to technology and to the wealth of cultural materials on the world wide web.

Due to the fact that the present study contains a number of independent variables that vary in nature, the researcher decided to present details of the sample distribution according to these independent variables in the following tables. It is worth mentioning that this information was collected from the students by means of a structured interview.

The following table (table 2) shows the sample distribution according to specialization. The researcher believes that the specialization may have an indirect influence on the participants' access to culture related information.

**Table (2): Sample Distribution According to specialization**

<b>Major</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
<b>Arts</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>61.0</b>
<b>Science</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>39.0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>100</b>

Table two shows the sample distribution according to field of specialization. It shows that the majority of the participants and their percent is 61.0% are specialized in the Arts field, and they are those students who study at Hebron University . Their specializations are English, English-French, and methods of teaching English. It also shows that 39.0% of the participants are majored in the scientific field. These students are from the Polytechnic University and they are specialized in such different majors as Applied Mathematics, Applied Physics, Engineering, and Computer.

Table three below shows the sample distribution according to their university. The sample as one may notice was drawn from two universities, namely, Hebron University and Palestine Polytechnic University. The following table clarifies that 61.0% of the par-

Participants are from Hebron university, and this is the highest percent of the sample. It also shows that 39.0% of the participants are from Polytechnic University.

**Table No. (3). Distribution of the sample by university**

<b>University</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
<b>Hebron</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>61.0</b>
<b>PPU</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>39.0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>100</b>

Table four below shows the sample distribution according to their grades in university. This table shows that the percent of the students whose grades are lower than 70 is 17.1%. It also shows that those students who got GPA between 70 and 79 are 53.4% of the whole percent which is the highest. Finally. It shows that 29.5% of the students got GPA between 80 and 89.

**Table No. (4). Distribution of the sample by students' grades (GPA)**

<b>Students' grades</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
<b>70-</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>17.1</b>
<b>70-79</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>53.4</b>
<b>80-89</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>29.5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>100</b>

Table five below which is followed by a diagram shows the sample distribution according to their L2 proficiency. This table shows that the percent of the students whose L2 proficiency is less than 70 is 33.6%. Moreover, it shows that 44.5% of the participants got between 70 and 79 which is the highest percent. It also shows that 16.4% of the students got between 80 and 89. Finally, it clarifies that 5.5% of the participants got more than 90 and this is the lowest percent among all the participants.

**Table No. (5). Distribution of the sample according to their L2 proficiency**

<b>L2 proficiency</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
<b>70-</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>33.6</b>
<b>70-79</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>44.5</b>
<b>80-89</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>16.4</b>
<b>90+</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5.5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure 2:L2 proficiency**

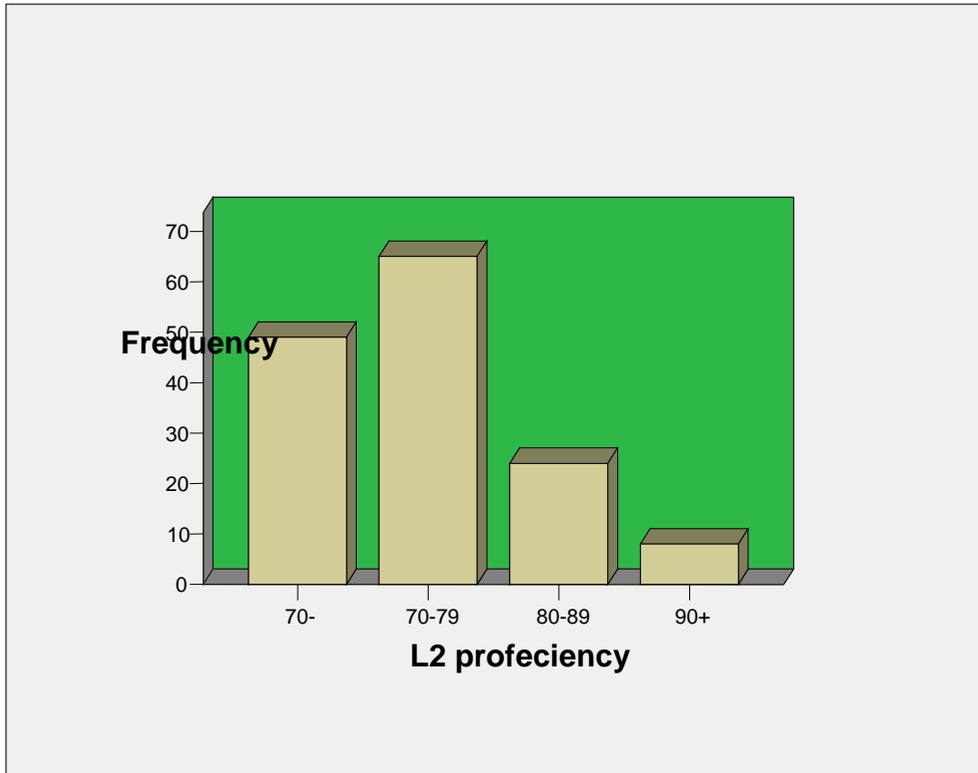


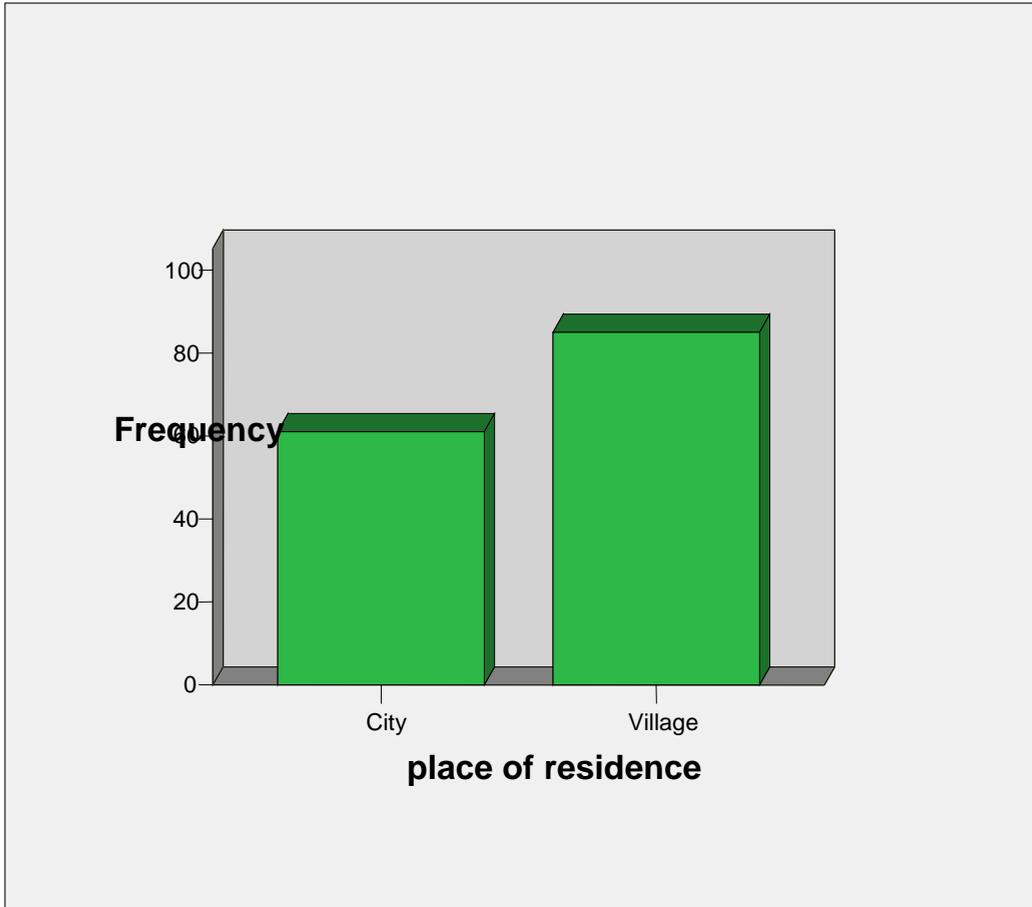
Table six below which is followed by a diagram shows the sample distribution according to place of residence. Due to the limited mobility among Palestinian areas, the researcher believes that the place of residence may have an indirect influence on the participants' access to culture related information. The table shows that 41.8% of the participants live in the city. The highest percentage which is 58.2% is that of the learners who live in rural areas.

**Table No. (6). Distribution of the sample by place of residence**

<b>Place of residence</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
<b>City</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>41.8</b>
<b>Village</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>58.2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>100</b>

The following independent variables, i.e., , TV watching and internet use were also probed by means of the semi-structured interview. Collecting information about these variables by means of a semi-structured interview was inspired by the previous researchers' conviction that information about culture in the foreign language setting could come from a variety of sources including TV, internet, and many other informal sources that may be available to them in their place of residence.

**Figure 3:place of residence**



The following table (table 7) which is followed by a diagram shows the students' distribution according to frequency of watching TV daily.

**Table (7): Sample Distribution According to Frequency of Watching TV Daily**

<b>Hours watching TV daily</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
<b>Less than 3</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>68.5</b>
<b>3-6</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>28.1</b>
<b>More than 6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3.4</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure 4: hours of watching TV daily**

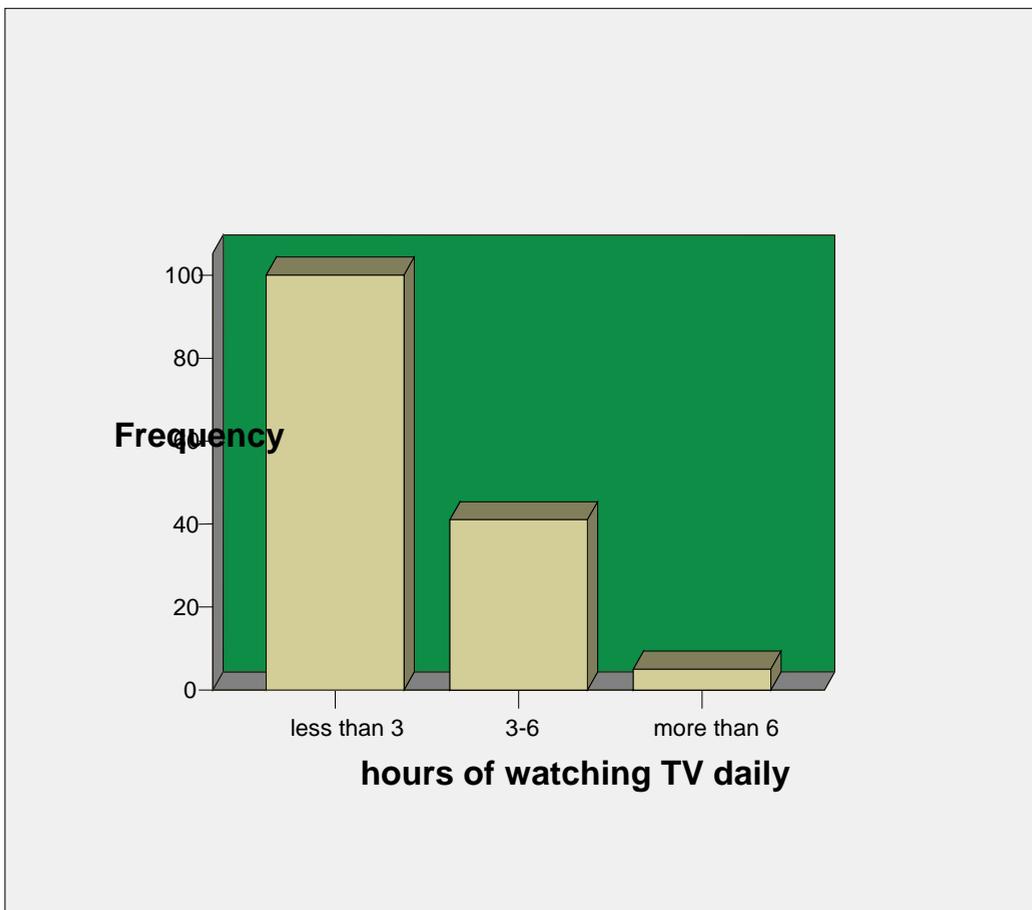


Table 7 shows that 68.5% of the participants watch TV less than three hours daily which is the highest percentage. It also shows that 28.1 % of the students watch TV from three to six hours daily. Finally, it clarifies that 3.4 of the participants watch TV more than six hours daily which is the lowest percentage.

While the previous table and diagram presented detailed information about watching TV as an independent variable, the following one is hoped to give the reader a detailed visualization of the nature of internet use by participants.

The following table(table 8) and it is followed by a diagram shows the students' distribution according to hours of using net daily.

**Table No. (8). Distribution of the sample according to hours of using the net daily**

<b>Hours of using the net daily</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
<b>Less than 3</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6.2</b>
<b>3-6</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>85.6</b>
<b>More than 6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8.2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure 5:hours of using net daily**

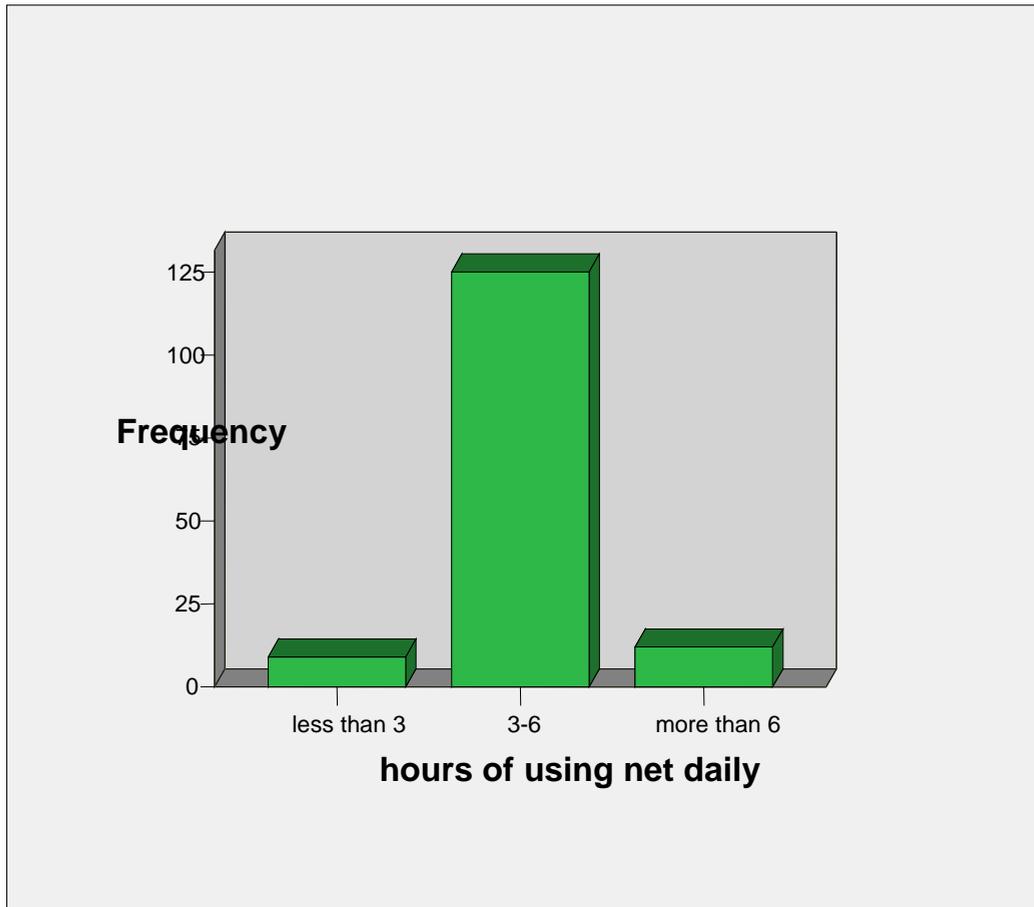


Table eight shows that 6.2% of the participants use internet less than three hours daily which is the lowest percentage. It also shows that 85.6% of the participants use internet from three to six hours daily which is the highest percentage. Finally, this table shows that 8.2% of the students use internet more than six hours daily.

Upon investigating the information in the table above, one may easily notice that all of the participants use internet.

Findings in tables no. (7-8) indicate that they all combined measured the effect of schema and cultural content on EFL reading comprehension among Hebron college students in light of the theoretical framework which the tool of study is based upon.

### **3-4 Instrumentation**

In order to answer the research questions, two instruments were used: a structured interview (see appendix 6) and a reading test (check appendix 1). The interview consisted of fifteen items, which aimed at probing the students' gender, field of specialization, place of residence, hobbies, as well as patterns of internet and TV use. The researcher used a structured interview that was filled out in the summer fall 2010 by all students in her presence. The researcher avoided conducting a questionnaire because she wanted to collect in-depth qualitative data about the participants. Furthermore, she did not want to limit herself to a traditional interview because it is time-consuming and she may not be able to include all participants. Information gathered by means of the interview was used to reflect a clearer picture about the independent variables pertaining to the sample. This information was also used to provide a qualitative explanation of some of the research findings.

As for the reading test, it consisted of four reading passages followed by multiple choice questions. The test passages contained two types of cultural load; Palestinian and American. Both the American and the Palestinian texts revolved around two topics in

order to neutralize the possible influence of topic on students' results and to incorporate a kind of variety that would suit different students. Topics included in the American and Palestinian texts included election systems and popular arts.

The test was designed to measure the influence of text cultural load on reading comprehension. Results of reading comprehension were also connected to results of the structured interview and the possible indirect influence of the independent variables on reading comprehension was also investigated.

### **3-4-1 Reading Texts**

The researcher chose four English language texts for this study. The four texts fall under two major types: political and art related. Furthermore, the test was designed in a way to include two texts that are loaded with American culture, and two other texts that include information about the native Palestinian culture. All the texts were taken from Haaretz newspaper and each pair revolved around a similar topic, hence ensuring the highest level of equivalence among the reading texts. Text 1 was about the Palestinian elections in 2006 (check appendix 2), while text 2 was about the American elections in 2008 (check appendix 3). Text 3 was about Britney Spears' tour to 27 cities in America (check appendix 4), while text 4 was about a Palestinian art festival that was held in Ramallah from the 21<sup>st</sup> April to the 10<sup>th</sup> May 2009 (check appendix 5). The researcher chose two different types of texts in order to make sure that the participants' prior knowledge about any of the topics would not influence results.

In selecting the four texts, many factors were taken into consideration:

1. Authenticity was taken into account in the choice of passages. The texts were taken from a newspaper published in three languages, but mainly in English so that learners would have the chance to get real interaction with the target language and target language culture in the selected passages.
2. The passages are real ones and related to authentic issues, and they reflect real language.
3. The passages are suitable to university students in terms of their length and level.

### **3-4-2 Validation of the Test**

The researcher submitted the passages to eight EFL teachers and specialists in the field in order to ensure the validity of the reading comprehension test. Two of the judges were instructors at Hebron University; one was an EFL specialist at Palestine Polytechnic University. The four other judges were EFL teachers at Rady Al-Natsheh School. They were asked to evaluate the texts for different aspects such as appropriateness of the level and length of the texts to university students, suitability of their semantic and syntactic structures, and the clarity of the texts. Also, they were asked to suggest any needed modifications. The teachers agreed that the texts are suitable for the research purpose and for the study sample.

### **3-4-3 Test Questions**

The questions of the test are multiple choice questions (MCQ). The researcher chose to use multiple choice questions for different reasons. First, the MCQ method is valid in testing reading comprehension. Also, "it is used in major international second language tests such as the TOFEL Examination and Cambridge First Certificate (Urquhart and Weir, 1998, as cited in Sultan, 2003). Second, this test technique

is beneficial in testing a wide range of skills. The first reading text (The Palestinian Elections) was followed by ten multiple choice questions. While the second one was followed by 19 multiple choice questions. Also, the third text (Pritney Spears) was followed by eighteen multiple choice questions. Finally, the fourth reading text (The Palestinian Art festival) was followed by ten multiple choice questions. So each subject was expected to answer 57 questions in total.

#### **3-4-4 Validation of Test Questions**

To judge the suitability of the questions to the students, the test was given to a number of EFL school teachers and college instructors. Moreover, these teachers judged the appropriateness of questions in terms of variety, number and degree of matching the research objectives. The researcher used the evaluation of the judges in order to make some changes. The researcher, for example, changed a question in text one because it was judged as too simple. As to text four, one question was omitted because it was judged as unclear, and another question was modified in terms of structure. The final set of questions consisted of fifty-seven items.

#### **3-4-5 Reliability of the Test**

In regards to the test reliability, it was tested by calculating the internal consistency of the test total degree using the Cronbach Alpha Formula. The reliability coefficient was calculated to be 0.80 which is considered a high percentage of reliability. So, findings indicate that the test with its different dimensions is highly reliable.

### **3-5 Pilot Study**

A pilot study was administered a month before conducting the main study. The students who participated in the study were enrolled in a reading course at Hebron University English Department and there were one hundred and twelve students.

The pilot study aimed at achieving the following goals:

1. Determine the clarity of both the texts and questions.
2. Give the researcher an idea about the real time needed for answering the questions.
3. Identify any problem.
4. Indicate any modification or change needed.

In the pilot study, the students first answered a fifteen item interview, and then they read the four passages and answered the questions that followed them. The test papers were then corrected. Students' responses revealed a number of points for the researcher. First, it was noticed that the instructions were not clear, so the researcher decided to write clearer instructions. Second, the participants indicated that they needed more time for answering both the interview questions and the reading test. Therefore, the researcher decided to allow more time for both components in the real experiment.

### **3-6 Procedures**

The tests were held in three different sessions. On the first day, two sessions were held in January 2010 at Hebron University and the subjects were asked to answer the structured interview first and then the reading comprehension test. On the next day, the same test was conducted at Palestine Polytechnic University, and

the participants also answered the structured interview questions then the reading comprehension test.

The subjects received the following instructions regarding the structured interview:

1. Make sure you have a two-page interview.
2. You should answer the fifteen questions of the interview carefully and fully.
3. You can give more than one answer for each item.

The students were then given the following instructions before answering the reading test:

1. You should be certain you have got nine sheets.
2. You should write the answers on the same test paper.
3. You are going to read four passages which are followed by 10 questions each.
4. You have four choices A, B, C or D below each item. Choose one only.
5. You should avoid giving two answers.
6. You should avoid cheating from other participants.

Each student was first given an interview of two sheets. Second, each student received the test which consisted of four English passages, and each passage was followed by ten multiple choice questions. Two of the texts, as already mentioned, were loaded with target culture elements, while the other two contained information pertaining to the native Palestinian culture.

### **3-7 Scoring of the Test**

The first reading text (The Palestinian Elections) was followed by ten multiple choice questions. While the second one was followed by 19 multiple choice questions. Also, the third text (Pritney Spears) was followed by eighteen multiple choice questions. Finally, the fourth reading text (The Palestinian Art festival) was followed by ten multiple choice questions. So each subject was expected to answer 57 questions in total. Each correct answer was awarded one point. So, the total points for the whole test were 57.

### **3-8 Statistical Analysis**

After collecting the data, the researcher collected, summarized and synthesized the information provided by all students in the structured interview. Summary of this information was presented at the beginning of this chapter because the researcher assumes that this information contributes to a deeper understanding of the nature and quality of the independent variables. Some of the information provided by the participants in the interviews was also used to explain and discuss results in chapters four and five. The researcher also assigned marks to the reading test for each student. Later on, results of the test and the structured interview were analyzed by means of special statistical programs.

The statistician employed several types of analyses. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were first utilized to probe the possible influence of the independent variables, i.e. gender, specialization, place of residence, internet and TV on reading comprehension performance in general. Such influence could be described as indirect. T-tests were later conducted to check correctness of the hypotheses with regard to the direct influence of gender, specialization and some other variables on reading both Palestinian

and American texts. Also, the statistician used Pearson Correlation, Factor Analysis, One way analysis of variance, Tukey test and Cronbach Alpha, using SPSS.

### **3.9 Summary**

In this chapter, the researcher presented dependent and independent variables of the study. She also presented all the needed information about the population, sample, instrumentation, validity and reliability procedures. Moreover, steps of statistical analysis were discussed.

The researcher believes that results of the structured interview could be presented independently in chapter four since they contain valuable information that could contribute to the overall study findings. However, she chose to present them in chapter three and to consider them part of the independent variable information because the real purpose of the study is to investigate the influence of such variables on performance in reading comprehension (schema influence) as well as the influence of the text cultural load (cultural content). Results pertaining to the influence of these two sets of variables which are connected to the reader schema and the text cultural content are the real focus of chapter four.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Results**

#### **4-1 Introduction**

The current study aimed at identifying the effect of schema and cultural content on EFL reading comprehension among Hebron college students.

This chapter provides a comprehensive presentation and discussion of the present study results and data analyses. The data included information derived from the students' semi-structured interview and scores from the reading comprehension test. Many types of statistical analyses were conducted in this study, namely, descriptive statistics, T-test, Pearson correlation, Factor Analysis, One way analysis of variance, Tukey test and Cronbach Alpha. All these analyses were conducted by means of an SPSS package.

#### **4-2 Descriptive Statistics**

The following tables show the descriptive statistics for the participants' performance on the reading comprehension test as it relates to the independent variables, i.e., place of residence, specialization, and culture- related hobbies such as exposure to TV programs and use of the internet.

Descriptive statistics (Frequencies, means, and standard deviations) for the participants' performance on the reading test are presented in tables 9,10,11,12, 13, 14, 15, 16 ,17, 18, 19, 20 and 21. These results are presented according to the order of the research questions in chapter one.

**Question (1):**

**What is the influence of the students' place of residence on their performance in reading culturally loaded texts?**

Numbers, means and standard deviations were used to answer the above question. Table 9 shows the means and standard deviations of the students' performance in the reading test according to their place of residence.

**Table 9 : T-test, means and standard deviations of the students' performance in the reading test according to their place of residence**

Sub-scale	Place of residence	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	DF	T-value	Sig.
Palestinian texts	City	61	66.14	16.21	144	0.637	0.525
	Village	85	64.41	16.26			
American texts	City	61	70.29	14.32	144	-0.717	0.475
	Village	85	71.87	11.46			
Total	City	61	68.21	14.22	144	0.033	0.974
	Village	85	68.14	12.67			

The results of the structured interview and the test scores provide insights which answer the first question of the study concerning the students' place of residence and their reading ability. Table 9 indicates that there are statistically significant differences in the students' performance in the reading comprehension test according to their place of residence. It can be noted from the previous table that the city residents performed better in the American texts than the Palestinian texts ( $M=70.29$ ). One may also notice from the

previous table that the mean of the village residents reading performance is higher in the American texts than in the Palestinian ones ( $M= 71.87$ ).

While the first research question explored the influence of the place of residence on reading ability in general, the second research question explores the influence of the students' hobbies especially watching TV and using net on their results in reading texts that are loaded with various types of cultural information.

**Question (2):**

**What is the influence of the students' hobbies (watching TV and using internet) on their performance in reading culturally loaded texts?**

Numbers, means and standard deviations were used to answer the above question. Tables 10 and 11 show the means and standard deviations of the students' performance in the reading test according to their hobbies.

**Table 10: Means and standard deviations for the students' performance in the reading test according to hours of watching TV**

<b>Sub-scale</b>	<b>Hours of watching TV</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Palestinian Text	Less than 3	100	63.85	16.40
	3-6	41	69.14	15.76
	More than 6	5	58.00	10.36
American Text	Less than 3	100	69.48	12.66
	3-6	41	75.13	11.52
	More than 6	5	73.65	17.99
Total Degree	Less than 3	100	66.66	13.40
	3-6	41	72.13	12.45
	More than 6	5	65.82	13.70

**Table 11: Means and standard deviations for the students' performance in the reading test according to hours of using the internet**

Sub-scale	Hours of using net	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Palestinian Text	Less than 3	9	59.44	15.50
	3-6	125	66.92	15.92
	More than 6	12	50.83	12.02
American Text	Less than 3	9	67.34	13.80
	3-6	125	72.31	12.48
	More than 6	12	62.64	11.28
Total Degree	Less than 3	9	63.39	13.97
	3-6	125	69.61	13.02
	More than 6	12	56.73	9.58

It can be noted from the previous two tables (11 and 12) that the mean of the students who watch TV for three to six hours is the highest across all other groups. It can also be noticed that their mean is higher when reading the American texts (M= 75.13). Surprisingly, this mean is higher than the mean of their performance when reading the Palestinian texts (M= (69.14). It can be also noted from table 12 that the mean of the students who use the internet for 3-6 hours is higher when reading the American texts (M= 72.31), than it is when reading the Palestinian ones (M=66.92). Generally speaking, the participants performed better on American texts especially the two groups who used the internet and watched TV for 3-6 hours.

**Question three:**

**What is the influence of the students' GPA and L2 proficiency on their performance in reading culturally loaded texts?**

Numbers, means and standard deviations were used to address the above question. Tables 12 and 13 and 14 show the means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlation between students' GPA and L2 proficiency and their performance in the reading test.

**Table 12: Means and standard deviations of the students' performance in the reading test according to their GPA and L2 proficiency**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
GPA	146	75.06	5.46
L2 Proficiency	146	72.38	9.03

The results of the structured interview and the test scores provide insights which answer the second question of the study concerning the students' GPA and L2 proficiency. It can be noted from the previous table that there's a slight difference between the students' GPA and their L2 proficiency. The average GPA is 75.06, while the mean of L2 proficiency is 72.38. This could mean that the students' ability in English is high compared to their general ability and this could have affected their reading and comprehension of the four texts in the reading test.

Moreover, Pearson correlation was used to identify the relationship between the students' GPA and L2 proficiency and their performance on reading the American and the Palestinian texts . The following two tables present the results.

**Table 13: Pearson correlation between students GPA and their performance in the reading test**

<b>Sub-scale</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>R-Value</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Palestinian texts	146	0.176*	0.034
American texts	146	0.173*	0.037
Total degree	146	0.190*	0.022

Table no 13 indicates that there is a positive statistical significant correlation between students' GPA and their performance in the Palestinian and American texts. High levels of GPA increased the level of their achievement in reading the Palestinian and American texts and vice versa.

**Table 14: Pearson correlation between the students' L2 proficiency and their performance in the reading test**

<b>Sub-scale</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>R-Value</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Palestinian texts	146	0.194*	0.019
American texts	146	0.183*	0.027
Total degree	146	0.205*	0.013

Table 14 indicates that there is a significant positive correlation between L2 proficiency and the students' performance in the Palestinian and American texts, in other words, high levels of L2 proficiency increased the level of the students' achievement in the Palestinian and American texts and vice versa. One may also notice that although L2 proficiency or general ability in English is positively correlated with the students' per-

formance in both types of texts, the correlation is not very strong (.205). This is a further indicator that variables other than language proficiency must have led to scoring better results in the American texts.

**Question (4):**

**What is the influence of the students' major on their performance in reading culturally loaded texts?**

The following table (15) shows the means and standard deviations of the students' performance in the reading test according to their specialization.

**Table 15: T-test, means and standard deviations of the students' performance in the test according to their specialization**

Sub-scale	Major	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	DF	T-value	Sig.
Palestinian texts	Arts	89	74.04	11.35	144	11.410	0.000
	Science	57	51.22	12.43			
American texts	Arts	89	76.95	10.29	144	8.244	0.000
	Science	57	62.25	10.84			
Total Degree	Arts	89	75.50	9.40	144	11.455	0.000
	Science	57	56.74	10.03			

Table 15 indicates that there are statistically significant differences in the students' performance in the reading test according to their major. The differences were in favor of the students majoring in English in all the sub-scales of the test as it is clear from the

means in the above table. One may also notice that the students' performance in the American texts supersedes their performance in Palestinian ones (M= 62.25-76.95).

The results of the structured interview and the test scores answered the third question of the study concerning the students' specialization and their performance in the reading test. It can be noted from the previous table that the score of the students who are majoring in English is 75.5 which is higher than the mean of other students majoring in science related fields (m=56.74). Also, it can be noted that the performance of the students who are majoring in Arts is higher in the American texts than the Palestinian texts (M= 76.95). Moreover, the previous table shows that the performance of other students majoring in science related fields is higher in the American texts than the Palestinian texts (M=62.25).

The previous research questions have probed the influence of sources of culture related schema (specialization, TV and internet) on reading comprehension. In the following section, the researcher tries to find out the influence of the cultural load embedded in the texts themselves on the students' performance in reading comprehension.

#### **Question (5):**

**How does the cultural content of each text influence reading comprehension performance among the participants?**

The following table no (16) shows the means and standard deviations of the students' performance in comprehending each of the texts contained in the reading test.

Table no (16) clarifies the students' achievement in the sub-scales of the study test as follows: the highest is in the American texts with an average of 71.21, compared to 65.13 in the Palestinian texts, as it is shows from the mean scores in the table below.

**Table 16: The means of the students' performance on each reading text**

<b>Texts</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Text A (Palestinian elections)	146	65.54	16.48
Text B(American elections)	146	67.05	13.82
Text C (Pritney Spears)	146	75.38	15.27
Text D (Palestinian Art)	146	64.72	22.44
Total Degree	146	69.46	13.02

The participants did best in the passages pertaining to the American culture with a mean of (67.05) in reading the text pertaining to American elections, and a mean of (75.38) in reading the text related to American pop music. The participants' mean in reading the text about Palestinian art was (64.72), and they scored least in the text pertaining to Palestinian elections (M=65.54).

**Question (6):**

**What is the influence of the cultural content on the reading comprehension of the American and the Palestinian sets of texts in the reading test?**

The following table shows the means and standard deviations of the students' performance on the reading of the American and the Palestinian texts in the reading test.

**Table 17: The means and standard deviations of the Palestinian reading passages and the American Reading passages**

<b>Sub-scales</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Palestinian texts	146	65.13	16.20
American texts	146	71.21	12.71
Total Degree	146	68.17	13.30

Table 17 shows that the mean of the participants' performance on the Palestinian texts is 65.13, while the mean of their performance on the American texts is 71.21. Hence, the subjects' overall performance on the American texts is much better than their performance on the Palestinian texts.

**Question (7):**

**What is the influence of the text cultural content (American or Palestinian) on the participants' performance in reading comprehension especially among non-English major students?**

The following table shows the means and standard deviations of the students' performance on the reading of the American and the Palestinian texts in the reading comprehension test according to the university.

**Table 18: The results of Palestinian American Reading passages according to the university (PPU or HU)**

Sub-scale	University	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	DF	T-value	Sig.
Palestinian texts	Hebron	89	74.04	11.35	144	11.410	0.000
	PPU	57	51.22	12.43			
American texts	Hebron	89	76.95	10.29	144	8.244	0.000
	PPU	57	62.25	10.84			
Total Degree	Hebron	89	75.50	9.40	144	11.455	0.000
	PPU	57	56.74	10.03			

Table 18 shows that the mean of the PPU students on the Palestinian texts is 51.22, while the mean of their performance on the American texts is 62.25. It is clear again that the performance of those students is higher on the American texts than it is on the Palestinian texts. Also, the previous table shows that that the mean of HU students on the Palestinian texts is 74.04, while the mean of their performance on the American texts is 76.95 which is the highest. It is also clear that the mean of HU students' performance is better than the PPU students' performance in both types of the reading texts; the American and the Palestinian.

In the following section, the researcher will present T-test results pertaining to the effect of gender, TV watching, and internet use on the comprehension of culturally loaded texts. Such results will also show if there are significant differences that warrant rejecting the null hypotheses related to these variables.

## 4-3 Results and discussion of the T-test

### 4.3.1 Introduction

This section will report the results of the T-test. T-test analyses were conducted with the purpose of measuring the influence of gender, TV watching and internet use on the students' reading comprehension.

**Question eight:** What is the influence of the participants' gender on their performance in the reading test?

**Hypothesis One:** There will be no significant differences in the students' performance in reading comprehension due to gender.

Table 19 shows the results of the t-test which was used to evaluate the students' performance on the reading test according to gender.

**Table (19): Results of the t-test which was used for students' performance in reading according to gender**

Sub-scale	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	DF	T-value	Sig.
Palestinian texts	Male	43	58.83	17.14	144	-3.125	0.002
	Female	103	67.76	15.12			
American texts	Male	43	68.12	12.87	144	-1.913	0.058
	Female	103	72.50	12.47			
Total Degree	Male	43	63.48	14.08	144	-2.820	0.005
	Female	103	70.13	12.51			

Table 19 shows that there is a significant difference at  $\alpha=0.05$  between males and females in their overall performance in the reading comprehension test. The mean score of the male students is 63.48 which is significantly lower than the mean score of the female students ( $M=70.13$ ). This indicates that the level of female students in reading culturally loaded texts is higher than that of male students. This means that the first hypothesis above must be rejected.

**Question (9\A): What is the influence of the participants' gender on their performance in reading the Palestinian texts?**

**Hypothesis Two: There are no significant differences at  $\alpha=0.05$  due to gender in the students' performance in reading Palestinian texts**

The following table shows results of the t-test which was used for evaluating the students' performance in reading the Palestinian texts in the reading test.

**Table (20): T-test results of the students' performance in reading the Palestinian texts due to gender**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>N.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>	<b>Degrees of freedom</b>	<b>T value</b>	<b>Significance</b>
<b>Male</b>	43	58.83	17.14	144	-3.125	0.002
<b>Female</b>	103	67.76	15.12			

It can be noted from the previous table that there are significant differences at  $\alpha=0.05$  in the overall performance of the students in the Palestinian texts of the reading

test. Also, the males' mean score (M=58.83) was lower than that of the females (M=67.76). This means that the second hypothesis above must also be rejected.

**Question (9\B):**

**What is the influence of the participants' gender on their performance in reading the American texts?**

**Hypothesis Three: There are no significant differences at  $\alpha=0.05$  due to gender in the students' performance in reading American Texts**

The following table shows results of the T-test which was used for evaluating the students' performance in reading the American texts.

**Table (21): T- test results of the students' performance in reading the American texts due to gender**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>N.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>	<b>Degrees of freedom</b>	<b>T value</b>	<b>Significance</b>
<b>Male</b>	43	68.12	12.87	144	-1.913	0.058
<b>Female</b>	103	72.50	12.47			

It can be noted from the previous table that there are no significant differences at  $\alpha=0.05$  in the overall performance of the students in reading the American texts. However,

the mean of the male performance (M=68.12) was lower than that of the females (M=72.50)

#### **4-4 Conclusion**

It may be concluded from the above analysis that the participants' performance in reading comprehension is influenced by a number of variables including place of residence, hobby, gender, L2 proficiency and specialization. The researcher believes that all of the previous variables must have influenced the participants' access to target culture knowledge and hence must have shaped their target language schema which was used when handling the four reading texts.

## Chapter Five

### Discussion, conclusions and recommendations

#### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher attempts to discuss and highlight the results of her own research and to synthesize them with previous research in the area of reading comprehension and culture. Discussion will proceed in the same order of the research questions. At the end of the chapter, recommendations derived from the results will be presented and suggestions for further research will be provided.

#### 5.2 Discussion and Synthesis

**Question one: What is the influence of the students' place of residence on their performance in reading culturally loaded texts?**

Results of the first question in this study show that the participants' place of residence has influenced their reading comprehension scores across all text types. In other words, subjects' place of residence influenced their reading of passages containing both American and Palestinian Culture. In concrete terms, subjects living in the city did better in the American texts than in the Palestinian texts. The mean score of students who live in the old city pertaining to the American texts is (M=70.29) and it is higher than their performance in the Palestinian texts (M=66.14). Also, village residents did better in the American texts than the Palestinian (M=71.87) while their score in the Palestinian is (M=64.41).

The researcher believes that this phenomenon may be related to the amount of free time and type of activities students get involved in as a result of residing in a certain area. Furthermore, the researcher believes that the place of residence has special importance in

the Palestinian context because it influences a person's mobility and access to sources of cultural information. It may also influence the type of activities a person gets involved in as in the case of the multiple workshops city residents get involved in.

This finding which indicates that the performance of students living in the city and in the village is better in the American texts than the Palestinian ones is indirectly supported by a study conducted by Carrell and Wise (1998). The researchers found that the cultural backgrounds of students who came from 18 countries were too varied due to the fact that they did not have the same opportunities for accessing target culture information as a result of the variation in the type of TV programs and internet access available to them in their various geographical settings. In the present study, however, all types of residents (city and village) did better in the American texts. Their results may be due to the fact that with the availability of satellite TV and the World Wide Web, most of them have access to similar TV programs and internet materials.

While the first research question explored the indirect influence of the place of residence on reading ability in general, the second research question explores the influence of each of the students' hobbies including TV watching and internet use on their results in reading texts loaded with various types of cultural information.

**Question two: What is the influence of the students' hobbies (watching TV and using internet) on their performance in reading culturally loaded texts?**

The findings of the second question show that the mean of the students who watch TV between 3-6 hours is the highest (M=79.16). This could mean that TV watching pro-

vides them with the opportunity to access a wide variety of information and knowledge. This result may be linked to the information collected via the structured interview in relation to the types of programs viewed by students who favor TV watching to other hobbies and free time activities. It was indicated by 65% of these students that they preferred foreign programs (English) to Arabic ones or to those dubbed in their L1. The English programs they watched include News, Soap Operas, Talk shows, movies and TV series.

The researcher also believes that another significant source of cultural information is the students' field of specialization since they get exposed to plenty of information and experiences through the materials they study and read. This observation leads us to the exploration of the third research question.

**Question three: What is the influence of the students' GPA and L2 proficiency on their performance in reading culturally loaded texts?**

The findings of the third question show that the students' ability in English is very high and this affects their reading and comprehending the four texts in the reading test. Also, there's a slight difference between the students' GPA and their L2 proficiency. The mean of GPA is 75.06, while the mean of L2 proficiency is 72.38. Also, L2 proficiency has affected the students' performance in the reading test especially in the Palestinian texts. In other words, there is a positive statistical significant correlation between students' L2 proficiency and their performance in the Palestinian and American texts.

The researcher believes that this result could be attributed to many reasons such as the students' field of specialization which is a significant source of cultural information. In other words, their exposure to plenty of information and experiences through the mate-

rials they study and read makes their L2 proficiency and GPA higher. This observation leads us to the exploration of the fourth research question.

**Question four: What is the influence of the students' major on their performance in reading culturally loaded texts?**

The findings of the fourth question in this study show that there is a clear relationship between the subjects' specialization and the reading comprehension scores across all texts. The participants who are majored in the English language field got the highest scores in the reading test ( $M=75.50$ ). Therefore, the students' specialization affects their reading comprehension. This group of students is usually selected on competitive basis and they could be the best in terms of academic skills and abilities. Moreover, the nature of their specialization provides them with plenty of opportunities to interact with sources of target culture information. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Chang, 2007; Al-Shumaimeri, 2006). Researchers showed that there is a significant relationship between background knowledge and EFL reading comprehension and that background knowledge was instrumental in connecting the contextual meanings with EFL readers' comprehension. They also indicated that content familiarity and language ability had significant effects on the students' performance in reading the American texts. Moreover, they showed that language ability had a significant effect on the comprehension performance pertaining to the American texts of students from various specializations and at different levels.

**Question five: How does the cultural content of each text influence reading comprehension performance among the participants?**

Regarding this question, the researcher was surprised to find that the participants did best in the passages pertaining to the American culture with a mean of ( 67.05) in reading the text pertaining to American elections, and a mean of (75.38) in reading the text related to American pop music. The participants' mean in reading the text about Palestinian art was (64.72), and they scored least in the text pertaining to Palestinian elections (M=65.54).

Explaining such results may be difficult unless one remembers that when the students read in English whether they read books, newspaper articles, or internet articles, they often read about other cultures and not about their own. The same observation was noticed about TV programs. Students prefer to watch programs in L2 and such programs would naturally be loaded with target culture elements. One may further argue that when students watch TV programs and surf internet sites about things related to their own culture, they do that in Arabic, and hence they may lack the lexical and idiomatic expressions that equip them to read about such issues in English. One may also argue that despite the fact that there are some internet sites that use the Arabic language, most internet sites are biased towards the English language. English sites are more attractive to students because they contain more information and a wider variety of topics.

Satellite TV is another rich source of cultural information. The researcher, for instance, has found that most of the students who participated in the study watch many types of TV programmes related to the American culture such as Dr. Phill, Oprah and The Biggest Loser. A final reason explaining this result is that the participants' specialization affects their reading in the test. This is especially relevant in the case of students enrolled in the English-French and English literature programs. Both groups of students

are used to reading texts that contain cultural elements related to the American culture and to other World cultures.

Another aspect that may have influenced the students' performance in reading these texts is the topic of each text. Students may have scored worst in the Palestinian elections text because it was a comparatively old one compared to the American text about elections. Palestinian elections took place in 2005 while the American ones took place in 2008. This means that the students were exposed to outdated information in the Palestinian passage and this may have influenced their overall comprehension.

After exploring the influence of each text's cultural content on the students' reading comprehension, the researcher investigated the general influence of the American cultural content on the students' reading comprehension and compared that to the influence of the Palestinian cultural content on reading comprehension.

**Question six: What is the influence of the cultural content on the reading comprehension of the American and the Palestinian sets of texts in the reading test?**

The findings of the sixth question in this study show that there is a significant relationship between the cultural content of the reading passages and performance of the participants in reading. Students' results in American texts were better than their results in Palestinian texts.

Indicating that cultural content has an influence on EFL learners' reading comprehension is congruent with the results of a number of researchers: (Razi, 2006; Erten and Razi, 2009; Fuhong, 2004) and (Lee, 1986; Carrel, 1983; Horriba, 1990 cited in Sultan 2003). Researchers showed that familiarity with cultural content has a significant effect on reading comprehension. They also indicated that students would never be able to an-

swer comprehension questions about a reading text unless they are familiar with the cultural information contained in it. One may then conclude that participants in this study could not have performed well in the American texts purely on linguistic bases, rather, they must have comprehended the cultural content as well.

**Question eight: What is the influence of the participants' gender on their performance in the reading test?**

The findings of question eight show that there is a significant relationship between the subjects' gender and reading comprehension in general. Moreover, there is a significant relationship between the subjects' gender and their performance on the reading passages that are loaded with the local and the target cultures. The mean score of female students was significantly higher than that of male students across all text types. The mean score of females in reading the Palestinian texts is 67.76 which is higher than males' mean score which is 58.83. Also, the mean score of females in reading the American texts is 72.50 whereas that of male students is 68.12.

According to the researcher, this finding could be attributed to the following reasons:

1. Political factors: males are greatly affected by the political situation in the World and especially in Palestine. In other words, their minds are preoccupied with the daily political issues and events which sometimes affect their education.
2. Social factors: males in the Palestinian society participate in outdoor social activities and they tend to join political parties and social committees more than females. Therefore, they spend less time studying and reading than females. Simi-

larly, one may argue that due to their social obligations, males can afford less time for TV watching and internet use.

3. Economic factors: male students are usually responsible for supporting their families financially because of hard life conditions. Therefore, many of them spend much time working to make a living.

Based on the previous explanations, one may argue that male responsibilities cause this difference in performance on the reading test between them and their female colleagues.

This finding which indicates that females' performance on the reading test was better than males' performance on the reading test is supported by a number of previous studies (Ziddan, 1994; Hamadneh, 1995 in Kilani, 2001 cited in Sultan, 2003). According to Sultan (2003), Ziddan (1994) directs attention to the influence of the personal, moral and social considerations of both males and females on reading comprehension. On the other hand, Hamadneh found significant differences between 10<sup>th</sup> grade males and females in favor of females in their overall ability in the Waston -Glazor test.

Moreover, this finding is supported by another important study which was conducted by Sultan, 2003. In her study, Sultan has come up with the result that there was a significant difference between students' general ability in English "GAE" attributable to gender in favor of females. She has also noted that there was a significant difference between males and females in their performance on a text that is culturally loaded with American culture.

### 5.3 Summary

The findings of this study show that there is a clear relationship between the subjects' use of the internet, watching TV, specialization, place of residence, gender and L2 proficiency and their performance in the reading comprehension of culturally loaded texts. In other words, all the previous factors influence the participants' reading of passages that are loaded with target culture in a positive way. One may therefore, conclude that dealing with different kinds of media or technology which is determined and affected by such factors as place of residence helps students read much better than other students who deal less with technological devices.

As discussed earlier, a number of studies have been conducted to show the importance of prior knowledge of the world on ESL/EFL learners' reading comprehension. All of these studies emphasized the fact that the ability to understand a text is based not only on the reader's linguistic knowledge, but also on general knowledge of the world and on the extent to which that knowledge is activated during text processing.

These studies also showed that content familiarity and background knowledge both have a significant influence on reading comprehension. If the content of a text is unfamiliar to the readers, whether cultural or topic-related, this will have a negative effect on reading comprehension. This observation must be seen as a criterion in the selection of reading materials and also in the evaluation of reading comprehension.

One may further argue that knowledge of schema theory is of great importance to teachers. According to schema theory, our background knowledge (schemata) and its relevance to the text that is being read, determine the ease or difficulty in understanding

that particular text. In other words, no matter how well a reader may know a language, he or she cannot read in that language with good comprehension if the subject matter or the content of the text is one which he or she knows absolutely nothing about. So it may be the role of the teacher to help the students by activating their related schemata through classroom activities and teaching techniques.

## 5.4 Conclusions

### **Conclusions from this study may be summarized as follows:**

1. The results showed that there was a significant relationship between the subjects' place of residence and their performance in reading the American texts.
2. An indirect relationship was also found between the comprehension scores of the students and the participants' hobbies especially watching TV.
3. There was a statistically significant relationship between the students' specialization and their performance in the reading culturally loaded texts.
4. There was a statistically significant relationship between the subjects' performance on reading culturally loaded texts and all of the previously mentioned factors.
5. The findings indicated that there was a significant relationship between the text cultural content and reading comprehension score.
6. There were significant differences between the reading comprehension scores of the Palestinian texts and the reading comprehension scores of the American texts by the students of the Palestine Polytechnic University. The performance of these students was better in the reading of the American texts because of the influence of all of the previous factors.
7. There was a significant relationship between the students' gender and their performance in reading both the Palestinian and the American texts. So there were significant differences between males and females in their performance in the reading culturally loaded texts.

## 5.5 Recommendations

The researcher would like to suggest the following recommendations for syllabus designers, EFL teachers and future researchers:

First, the researcher recommends that syllabus designers should take the following points into consideration when selecting and sequencing English reading texts and tasks:

1. In the selection of reading materials, syllabus designers should choose texts which will activate and access relevant schemata when reading the texts.
2. Textbooks must include clear instructions and guidelines regarding the materials which enhance the students' target culture awareness.
3. Materials that are relevant to the students' English proficiency levels are needed.
4. Syllabus designers should consider the learners' background knowledge before the selection of reading materials.
5. Materials should reflect popular culture to make lessons more effective and interesting. Movies, tales and songs should be emphasized more by syllabus designers.

Second, the researcher points out that EFL teachers should take into account the following points when teaching reading comprehension passages:

1. Teachers should help students become more aware of the fact that reading is a highly interactive process.
2. Teachers should activate learners' schemata when dealing with materials that are culturally unfamiliar.

3. A very important issue to be taken into consideration by teachers is helping students to become more independent and self-directed readers.
4. Teachers should also change their students' attitudes about reading.
5. Teachers should expose University students to both target and local culture texts using different techniques and strategies.
6. Research has shown that the participants use different types of media. Therefore, it is the role of the teacher to direct students towards acquiring cultural information from TV, internet and magazines.
7. Teachers should view themselves as facilitators of learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom. In other words, when learners become more active, the teacher will no longer be the sole source of information.

Finally, the researcher thinks that it would be of great value if future research aimed at exploring the effect of background knowledge and many other factors such as watching TV and using the internet on the reading comprehension of EFL learners at various levels. Also, the researcher suggests that future research should investigate many important issues regarding teaching culture and reading cultural texts such as materials' content, the best means to learn and read cultural texts, and the best ways of motivating students to expose themselves more to the target culture.

Appendix 1

English Reading Test

**English Reading Test**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Gender:** Male /Female

**Place of residence:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**GPA:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Grades in two reading courses:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Dear student:**

This test consists of four reading passages. Each passage is followed by ten multiple choice questions. Read the texts (passages), and then circle the correct answer.

**Question One:**

**Read the following text carefully, and then answer the questions below:**

On January 25, 2006, elections were held for the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), the legislature of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Notwithstanding the 2005 municipal elections and the January 9, 2005 presidential election, this was the first election to the PLC since 1996; subsequent elections had been repeatedly postponed due to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Palestinian voters in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank including East Jerusalem were eligible to participate in the election.

Final results show that Hamas won the election, with 74 seats to the ruling-Fatah's 45-  
, providing Hamas with the majority of the 132 available seats and the ability to form a majority government on their own.

Of the Electoral Lists, Hamas received 44.45% and Fatah 41.43% and of the Electoral Districts, Hamas party candidates received 41.73% and Fatah party candidates received 36.96%.

The Prime Minister, Ahmed Qurei, resigned, but at the request of President Mahmoud Abbas, remained as interim Prime Minister until February 19, when Hamas leader Ismail Haniya formed the new government. The Quartet threatened to cut funds to the Palestinian Authority following the elections.

**1. The above text is mainly about?**

- a. President Mahmoud Abbas
- b. The Palestinian elections
- c. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict
- d. The political situation in Palestine

**2. What does the author mean by the statement :( Palestinian voters in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank including East Jerusalem were eligible to participate in the election.)?**

- a. Palestinian voters in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank including East Jerusalem were not able to vote.
- b. Palestinians everywhere were allowed to vote
- c. Palestinian voters in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem were allowed to take part in the elections
- d. Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank only were qualified to participate in the elections.

**3. On January, 25, 2006, Palestinian elections were held to choose:**

- a. A new Legislative council
- b. A new National Authority
- c. A new Municipality
- d. A new President

**4. The elections had been repeatedly put off due to:**

- a. Internal Palestinian conflict
- b. Conflict with the occupation
- c. The social situation in Palestine
- d. The economic situation in Palestine

**5. Which of the following may occur as a result of the Palestinian elections :**

- a. Aid to the Palestinian authority will be stopped
- b. Fatah will be totally excluded from the new government
- c. The Palestinian president will resign.
- d. A + B

**6. The winner of the PLC elections was**

- a. Fatah
- b. Hamas
- c. both of them
- d. Ismael Haniyyeh

**7. Who would run the government until February 19<sup>th</sup>?**

- a. Ahmed Qurei
- b. Ismail Haniya

c. President Mahmoud Abbas

d. All of the above.

**8. The word interim in line 16 refers to:**

a. permanent

b. temporary

c. election

d. Palestinian authority

**9. At the electoral districts, Fatah party nominees received:**

a. 44.45%

b. 36.96%

c. 41.73%

d. 41.43%

**10. All of the following statements are true Except:**

a. Hamas's district candidates received more votes than Fatah's list

b. Hamas's district candidates received more votes than its electoral list

c. Hamas's district candidates received more votes than Fatah district candidates

d. Fatah's List received more votes than its district candidates.

**Question Two:**

**Read the following text, and then answer the questions below.**

The United States presidential election of 2008 was held on Tuesday, November 4, 2008.

It was the 56th consecutive quadrennial United States presidential election. Outgoing incumbent Republican President George W. Bush's policies and actions and the American public's desire for change were key issues throughout the campaign, and during the gen-

eral election campaign, both major party candidates ran on a platform of change and reform in Washington. Domestic policy and the economy eventually emerged as the main themes in the last few months of the election campaign, particularly after the onset of the 2008 economic crisis.

Democrat Barack Obama, then-junior United States Senator from Illinois, defeated Republican John McCain, the senior United States Senator from Arizona. Nine states changed allegiance from the 2004 election. Each had voted for the Republican nominee in 2004 and contributed to Obama's sizable Electoral College victory. The selected electors from each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia voted for President and Vice President of the United States on December 15, 2008. Those votes were tallied before a joint session of Congress on January 8, 2009. Obama received 365 electoral votes, and McCain 173.

There were several unique aspects of the 2008 election. The election was the first in which an African American was elected President, and the first time a Roman Catholic was elected Vice President. It was also the first time two sitting senators ran against each other.

**Part A (eight questions):**

**1. American presidential elections are held:**

- a. every three years
- b. every four years
- c. every five years
- d. every year

**2. The American elections of 2008 were:**

- a. The 56<sup>th</sup> quadrennial congress elections
- b. The 173<sup>rd</sup> quadrennial elections
- c. The first presidential elections in 56 years
- d. The 56<sup>th</sup> presidential elections

**3. The word themes in line 8 refers to:**

- a. The economy
- b. Domestic policy
- c. Reform
- d. A and B.

**4. All of the following about Obama and McCain are incorrect Except:**

- a. They are both seniors
- b. They are both members of the House of Senates
- c. They belong to the same political party
- d. They are from the same state.

**5. All of the following statements are correct except :**

- a. The election was the first time an African American ran for president
- b. The first time a Roman Catholic was elected Vice President
- c. It was the first time two sitting senators ran against each other.
- d. It was the first time a Black person was elected president.

**6. The "Changed Allegiance" in line 10 :**

- a. Helped Obama win the elections
- b. Contributed to the Republican popularity
- c. Helped McCain win in 2004

d. None of the above

**7. When did the United States last elect a Republican President?**

a. 2008

b. 2006

c. 2004

d. none of the above

**8. What was the name of the last American President?**

a. President John McCain

b. President George W. Bush

c. President Hillary Clinton

d. President Barack Obama

**part B(eleven cultural questions):**

**1. The word "incumbent" in line 2 means:**

a. Acting

b. Outgoing

c. Elected

d. Republican

**2. Obama was the first president elected as a:**

a. Christian

b. Muslim

c. Roman Catholic

d. None of the above

**3. The word “senate” can be defined as:**

- a. An assembly possessing high legislative powers
- b. A government
- c. A ministry
- d. None of the above

**4. The last American election was distinctive because:**

- a. It is the first time a black person ran for president
- b. It is the first time a Roman Catholic was elected president
- c. It is the first time in the history of America two sitting members of the house of senates are candidates in the Elections
- d. A and c

**5. “nigger” is a pejorative term which refers to:**

- a. White person
- b. Jewish person
- c. African American person
- d. None of the above

**6. The author implies that some groups have historically faced discrimination in America. This discrimination was due to :**

- a. Ethnic origin
- b. Religion
- c. Political party
- d. a and b

**7. A definition for the word "congress" is:**

- a. Convention
- b. The legislative council of the United States government
- c. The White House
- d. None of the above

**8. Domestic policy and the economy eventually emerged as the main concerns in the last few months of the election campaign, particularly after**

- a. The Gulf War
- b. The deteriorating economic situation
- c. Social crises and problems
- d. Barack Obama's policies and actions.

**9. How many times can an American president run for an office?**

- a. Only one time
- b. Twice
- c. Three times
- d. As many times as he/she likes

**10. Who was George Bush's vice president?**

- a. Dick Cheney
- b. Ronald Reagan
- c. Bill Clinton
- d. None of the above

**11. How many congress persons represent one state in the USA ?**

- a. One

- b. Two
- c. Four
- d. Depends on the State size

**Question Three:**

**Read the following text, and then answer the questions below.**

Britney Spears was caught indulging in trademark texting and playing with her sons at a hotel pool.

During her stay in Miami, Spears also met with 40 sick children at Miami Children's Hospital, where she took photos with the kids and gave them autographed pictures.

The 27-year-old pop superstar's "Circus" tour kicked off in her home state of Louisiana, a comeback after a shaky year of custody battles and mental breakdowns.

Spears' "Circus" CD, released in December, has already sold more than 1.3 million copies, and she's had two hits off the CD, the No. 1 "Womanizer" and the top five "Circus".

The "Circus" tour, which takes Spears to 27 cities in the United States before heading to Europe in June, is the pop star's biggest opportunity to connect with her still formidable fan base.

**Part A (ten questions):**

**1. The above text is mainly about?**

- a. A pop superstar's tour
- b. Miami Children's Hospital
- c. Britney Spears custody battles
- d. None of the above

**2. Britney Spears newly released collection is:**

- a. Circus
- b. Pop
- c. Womanizer
- d. Free

**3. Britney Spears lives in:**

- a. Miami
- b. Louisiana
- c. California
- d. Texas

**4. Spears' released her CD:**

- A. Prior to her battles over the kids
- b. After battles over the kids
- c. In June
- d. None of the above

**5. Britney Spears was seen with her children in:**

- A. A hotel facility
- b. Miami Children's Hospital
- c. Europe
- d. All of the above

**6. Britney Spears has already made a profit of:**

- a. than 1.3 million
- b. Less than 1.3 million

- c. 1 million
- d. None of the above

**7. The top five hits of Spears are from the CD:**

- a. Womanizer
- b. Circus
- c. Unbreak my heart
- d. None of the above

**8. Britney Spears tour was to**

- a. 27 cities in America
- b. 27 cities in Europe
- c. 30 cities in the USA
- d. 17 cities in Europe

**9. Britney Spears will best connect with her admirers during:**

- a. Her tour to Europe
- b. Her tour to USA
- c. Meeting the children
- d. Her stay at her home state, Louisiana

**10. The 27-year-old Britney Spears is a**

- a. Movie star
- b. TV Star
- c. star
- d. All of the above

**Part B (eight cultural questions):**

**1. Spears is :**

- a. A pop star
- b. a Hip hop star
- c. a star of classic music
- d. a and b

**2. “Womanizer” is an English word that refers to:**

- a. A habitual seducer of women
- b. An Evil woman
- c. A man who doesn't like women
- d. B and c

**3. Indicate whether the following statements are true or false:**

- 1. The word *indulging* implies that the pop star disliked what she was doing. ( )
- 2. Spears is famous for classic music. ( )
- 3. Spears is a charitable woman. ( )
- 4. Spears prefers spending time with her fans than with her kids.( )
- 5. Spears has faced difficulties with her husband. ( )
- 6. Spears has few admirers because of her psychological state. ( )

**Question Four:**

**Read the following text, and then answer the questions below.**

After one year full of artistic activities represented in the production of the dance performance “Qisset Sahet IL-Ward” – which has received a number of invitations to participate in various festivals in Jordan, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States – the First Ramallah Group will organize a festival under the motto “Al-

Quds Capital of Arab Culture 2009,” to be held from 21 April to 10 May 2009. First Ramallah Group was the recipient of the 2008 Qattan Distinction Award for establishing the Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival. According to the award citation issued by the A.M. Qattan Foundation, the Festival is “a new and ambitious initiative in the performing arts in general and contemporary dance in particular. After only three years since its launch, it has asserted itself as a highly sophisticated event on the cultural calendar, working to the highest artistic and technical standards, and it has attracted international participation of the highest order.” The Festival will take place within the framework of Masahat, Contemporary Dance Network in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Palestine.

**1. The main idea of the Text is :**

- a. Palestinian contemporary culture
- b. Palestinian contemporary education
- c. Palestinian Art Festival
- d. Jerusalem, Capital of Arab Culture

**2. Qisset Sahet II-Ward is:**

The first artistic activity to be performed this year

The first festival to be held in Jerusalem

A distinguished dance performance

A contemporary dance network

**3. The first Ramallah group received an award for**

The dance performance

Launching the Ramallah Dance Festival

Their artistic achievements

All of the above

**4. The underlined word motto in line 9 means**

- a. slogan
- b. city
- c. picture
- d. architecture

**5. Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival has been established:**

- a. A year ago
- b. Three years ago
- c. A few months ago
- d. After one year full of artistic activities and dance performance

**6. The Festival has asserted itself on:**

- a. The international level
- b. The Arab level
- c. The Palestinian level
- d. All of the above

**7. The underlined word Festival in line 10 means**

- a. Party
- b. Celebration
- c. Association
- d. Forum

**8. The slogan used by the Fourth Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival signifies:**

- a. The importance of Jerusalem in the Palestinian conscience

- b. The importance of Dancing in Palestinian art.
- c. The importance of art in Palestine
- d. The importance of Arab capitals

**9. The Festival will be held within a contemporary dance network in:**

- a. Jordan and Lebanon
- b. The United Arab Emirates and South Korea
- c. Syria and Palestine
- d. A and C.

**10. Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival is seen as an important initiative:**

- a. For Art performance in general
- b. For contemporary dance
- c. For art in general and dancing in particular
- d. none of the above

## Appendix 2

### Text A

#### Question One:

**Read the following text carefully, and then answer the questions below:**

On January 25, 2006, elections were held for the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), the legislature of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Notwithstanding the 2005 municipal elections and the January 9, 2005 presidential election, this was the first election to the PLC since 1996; subsequent elections had been repeatedly postponed due to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Palestinian voters in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank including East Jerusalem were eligible to participate in the election.

Final results show that Hamas won the election, with 74 seats to the ruling-Fatah's 45- , providing Hamas with the majority of the 132 available seats and the ability to form a majority government on their own.

Of the Electoral Lists, Hamas received 44.45% and Fatah 41.43% and of the Electoral Districts, Hamas party candidates received 41.73% and Fatah party candidates received 36.96%.

The Prime Minister, Ahmed Qurei, resigned, but at the request of President Mahmoud Abbas, remained as interim Prime Minister until February 19, when Hamas leader Ismail Haniya formed the new government. The Quartet threatened to cut funds to the Palestinian Authority following the elections.

**The above text is mainly about?**

- a. President Mahmoud Abbas

- b. The Palestinian elections
- c. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict
- d. The political situation in Palestine

**2. What does the author mean by the statement :( Palestinian voters in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank including East Jerusalem were eligible to participate in the election.)?**

- a. Palestinian voters in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank including East Jerusalem were not able to vote.
- b. Palestinians everywhere were allowed to vote
- c. Palestinian voters in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem were allowed to take part in the elections
- d. Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank only were qualified to participate in the elections.

**3. On January, 25, 2006, Palestinian elections were held to choose:**

- a. A new Legislative council
- b. A new National Authority
- c. A new Municipality
- d. A new President

**4. The elections had been repeatedly put off due to:**

- a. Internal Palestinian conflict
- b. Conflict with the occupation
- c. The social situation in Palestine
- d. The economic situation in Palestine

**5. Which of the following may occur as a result of the Palestinian elections :**

- a. Aid to the Palestinian authority will be stopped
- b. Fatah will be totally excluded from the new government
- c. The Palestinian president will resign.
- d. A + B

**6. The winner of the PLC elections was**

- a. Fatah
- b. Hamas
- c. both of them
- d. Ismael Haniyyeh

**7. Who would run the government until February 19<sup>th</sup>?**

- a. Ahmed Qurei
- b. Ismail Haniya
- c. President Mahmoud Abbas
- d. All of the above.

**8. The word interim in line 16 refers to:**

- a. permanent
- b. temporary
- c. election
- d. Palestinian authority

**9. At the electoral districts, Fatah party nominees received:**

- a. 44.45%
- b. 36.96%

c. 41.73%

d. 41.43%

**10. All of the following statements are true Except:**

a. Hamas's district candidates received more votes than Fatah's list

b. Hamas's district candidates received more votes than its electoral list

c. Hamas's district candidates received more votes than Fatah district candidates

d. Fatah's List received more votes than its district candidates.

## Appendix 3

### Text B

#### Question Two:

**Read the following text, and then answer the questions below.**

The United States presidential election of 2008 was held on Tuesday, November 4, 2008. It was the 56th consecutive quadrennial United States presidential election. Outgoing incumbent Republican President George W. Bush's policies and actions and the American public's desire for change were key issues throughout the campaign, and during the general election campaign, both major party candidates ran on a platform of change and reform in Washington. Domestic policy and the economy eventually emerged as the main themes in the last few months of the election campaign, particularly after the onset of the 2008 economic crisis.

Democrat Barack Obama, then-junior United States Senator from Illinois, defeated Republican John McCain, the senior United States Senator from Arizona. Nine states changed allegiance from the 2004 election. Each had voted for the Republican nominee in 2004 and contributed to Obama's sizable Electoral College victory. The selected electors from each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia voted for President and Vice President of the United States on December 15, 2008. Those votes were tallied before a joint session of Congress on January 8, 2009. Obama received 365 electoral votes, and McCain 173.

There were several unique aspects of the 2008 election. The election was the first in which an African American was elected President, and the first time a Roman Catholic

was elected Vice President. It was also the first time two sitting senators ran against each other.

**Part A (eight questions):**

**1. American presidential elections are held:**

- a. every three years
- b. every four years
- c. every five years
- d. every year

**2. The American elections of 2008 were:**

- a. The 56<sup>th</sup> quadrennial congress elections
- b. The 173<sup>rd</sup> quadrennial elections
- c. The first presidential elections in 56 years
- d. The 56<sup>th</sup> presidential elections

**3. The word themes in line 8 refers to:**

- a. The economy
- b. Domestic policy
- c. Reform
- d. A and B.

**4. All of the following about Obama and McCain are incorrect Except:**

- a. They are both seniors

b. They are both members of the House of Senates

c. They belong to the same political party

d. They are from the same state.

**5. All of the following statements are correct except :**

a. The election was the first time an African American ran for president

b. The first time a Roman Catholic was elected Vice President

c. It was the first time two sitting senators ran against each other.

d. It was the first time a Black person was elected president.

**6. The "Changed Allegiance" in line 10 :**

a. Helped Obama win the elections

b. Contributed to the Republican popularity

c. Helped McCain win in 2004

d. None of the above

**7. When did the United States last elect a Republican President?**

a. 2008

b. 2006

c. 2004

d. none of the above

**8. What was the name of the last American President?**

a. President John McCain

b. President George W. Bush

c. President Hillary Clinton

d. President Barack Obama

**part B(eleven cultural questions):**

**1. The word "incumbent" in line 2 means:**

a. Acting

b. Outgoing

c. Elected

d. Republican

**2. Obama was the first president elected as a:**

a. Christian

b. Muslim

c. Roman Catholic

d. None of the above

**3. The word “senate” can be defined as:**

- a. An assembly possessing high legislative powers
- b. A government
- c. A ministry
- d. None of the above

**4. The last American election was distinctive because:**

- a. It is the first time a black person ran for president
- b. It is the first time a Roman Catholic was elected president
- c. It is the first time in the history of America two sitting members of the house of senates are candidates in the Elections
- d. A and c

**5. “nigger” is a pejorative term which refers to:**

- a. White person
- b. Jewish person
- c. African American person
- d. None of the above

**6. The author implies that some groups have historically faced discrimination in America. This discrimination was due to :**

- a. Ethnic origin
- b. Religion
- c. Political party
- d. a and b

**7. A definition for the word "congress" is:**

- b. Convention
- c. The legislative council of the United States government
- d. The White House
- e. None of the above

**8. Domestic policy and the economy eventually emerged as the main concerns in the last few months of the election campaign, particularly after**

- a. The Gulf War
- b. The deteriorating economic situation
- c. Social crises and problems
- d. Barack Obama's policies and actions.

**9. How many times can an American president run for an office?**

- a. Only one time
- b. Twice
- c. Three times
- d. As many times as he/she likes

**10. Who was George Bush's vice president?**

- a. Dick Cheney
- b. Ronald Reagan
- c. Bill Clinton

d. None of the above

**11. How many congress persons represent one state in the USA ?**

a. One

b. Two

c. Four

d. Depends on the State size

## Appendix 4

### Text C

#### Question Three:

**Read the following text, and then answer the questions below.**

Britney Spears was caught indulging in trademark texting and playing with her sons at a hotel pool.

During her stay in Miami, Spears also met with 40 sick children at Miami Children's Hospital, where she took photos with the kids and gave them autographed pictures.

The 27-year-old pop superstar's "Circus" tour kicked off in her home state of Louisiana, a comeback after a shaky year of custody battles and mental breakdowns.

Spears' "Circus" CD, released in December, has already sold more than 1.3 million copies, and she's had two hits off the CD, the No. 1 "Womanizer" and the top five "Circus". The "Circus" tour, which takes Spears to 27 cities in the United States before heading to Europe in June, is the pop star's biggest opportunity to connect with her still formidable fan base.

#### **Part A (ten questions):**

**1. The above text is mainly about?**

- a. A pop superstar's tour

- b. Miami Children's Hospital
- c. Britney Spears custody battles
- d. None of the above

**2. Britney Spears newly released collection is:**

- a. Circus
- b. Pop
- c. Womanizer
- d. Free

**3. Britney Spears lives in:**

- a. Miami
- b. Louisiana
- c. California
- d. Texas

**4. Spears' released her CD:**

- e. Prior to her battles over the kids
- f. After battles over the kids
- g. In June
- d. None of the above

**5. Britney Spears was seen with her children in:**

- a. A hotel facility
- b. Miami Children's Hospital
- c. Europe
- d. All of the above

**6. Britney Spears has already made a profit of:**

- a. More than 1.3 million
- b. Less than 1.3 million
- c. 1 million
- d. None of the above

**7. The top five hits of Spears are from the CD:**

- a. Womanizer
- b. Circus
- c. Unbreak my heart
- d. None of the above

**8. Britney Spears tour was to**

- a. 27 cities in America
- b. 27 cities in Europe
- c. 30 cities in the USA
- d. 17 cities in Europe

**9. Britney Spears will best connect with her admirers during:**

- a. Her tour to Europe

- b. Her tour to USA
- c. Meeting the children
- d. Her stay at her home state, Louisiana

**10. The 27-year-old Britney Spears is a**

- a. Movie star
- b. TV Star
- c. Music star
- d. All of the above

**e. Part B (eight cultural questions):**

**1. Spears is :**

- a. A pop star
- b. a Hip hop star
- c. a star of classic music
- d. a and b

**2. “Womanizer” is an English word that refers to:**

- a. A habitual seducer of women
- b. An Evil woman
- c. A man who doesn't like women
- d. B and c

**3. Indicate whether the following statements are true or false:**

- 1. The word *indulging* implies that the pop star disliked what she was doing. ( )
- 2. Spears is famous for classic music. ( )
- 3. Spears is a charitable woman. ( )

4. Spears prefers spending time with her fans than with her kids.( )
5. Spears has faced difficulties with her husband. ( )
6. Spears has few admirers because of her psychological state. ( )

## Appendix 5

### Text D

#### Question Four:

**Read the following text, and then answer the questions below.**

After one year full of artistic activities represented in the production of the dance performance “Qisset Sahet IL-Ward” – which has received a number of invitations to participate in various festivals in Jordan, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States – the First Ramallah Group will organize a festival under the motto “Al-Quds Capital of Arab Culture 2009,” to be held from 21 April to 10 May 2009. First Ramallah Group was the recipient of the 2008 Qattan Distinction Award for establishing the Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival. According to the award citation issued by the A.M. Qattan Foundation, the Festival is “a new and ambitious initiative in the performing arts in general and contemporary dance in particular. After only three years since its launch, it has asserted itself as a highly sophisticated event on the cultural calendar, working to the highest artistic and technical standards, and it has attracted international participation of the highest order.” The Festival will take place within the framework of Masahat, Contemporary Dance Network in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Palestine.

**1. The main idea of the Text is :**

- a. Palestinian contemporary culture
- b. Palestinian contemporary education
- c. Palestinian Art Festival
- d. Jerusalem, Capital of Arab Culture

**2. Qisset Sahet Il-Ward is:**

- a. The first artistic activity to be performed this year
- b. The first festival to be held in Jerusalem
- c. A distinguished dance performance
- d. A contemporary dance network

**3. The first Ramallah group received an award for**

- a. The dance performance
- b. Launching the Ramallah Dance Festival
- c. Their artistic achievements
- d. All of the above

**4. The underlined word motto in line 9 means**

- a. slogan
- b. city
- c. picture
- d. architecture

**5. Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival has been established:**

- a. A year ago
- b. Three years ago
- c. A few months ago
- d. After one year full of artistic activities and dance performance

**6. The Festival has asserted itself on:**

- a. The international level
- b. The Arab level

- c. The Palestinian level
- d. All of the above

**7. The underlined word Festival in line 10 means**

- a. Party
- b. Celebration
- c. Association
- d. Forum

**8. The slogan used by the Fourth Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival signifies:**

- a. The importance of Jerusalem in the Palestinian conscience
- b. The importance of Dancing in Palestinian art.
- c. The importance of art in Palestine
- d. The importance of Arab capitals

**9. The Festival will be held within a contemporary dance network in:**

- a. Jordan and Lebanon
- b. The United Arab Emirates and South Korea
- c. Syria and Palestine
- d. A and C.

**10. Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival is seen as an important initiative:**

- a. For Art performance in general
- b. For contemporary dance
- c. For art in general and dancing in particular
- d. none of the above

## Appendix 6

### Structured Interview Questions

عزيزي الطالب/عزيزتي الطالبة: شكرا على الوقت الذي سوف تستثمره في تعبئة الاستبانة التالية؛ حيث نود أن نؤكد لك أن المعلومات التي تزودنا بها سوف تستخدم لأغراض البحث العلمي فقط.

#### معلومات شخصية:

:

.  
غير ذلك .

.  
:  
.

:

.

. قرية .

. ب. البلدة القديمة

. المدينة .

-----:-----

-----:-----

#### مصادر المعلومات الثقافية:

. ما هي هوايتك المفضلة من بين الآتي

. ب. مشاهدة

. الرياضة .

. هوايات أخرى .

. ما هو معدل مشاهدتك للتلفاز؟

. ب. أسبوعيا

. يوميا .

. د. لا أشاهد

. شهريا .

حدد ساعات المشاهدة الأسبوعية أو الشهرية:

. إذا كنت تشاهد التلفاز يوميا فما هو عدد ساعات المشاهدة

.....

. ما هي برامج التلفاز المفضلة لديك

. برامج ثقافية

-----غير ذلك، حدد:

. برامج التلفاز العربية

. برامج التلفاز الأجنبية

. إذا كنت تهتم بثقافات الدول الأخرى أي البرامج التالية تعتقد انه يزودك بمعلومات عن تلك

. البرامج التعليمية

د. بالقضايا الاجتماعية

. من فضلك أذكر على الأقل اثنين من برامج التلفاز المفضلة لك:

ضع دائرة على البرامج التي تعرفها مما يلي:

The Biggest Loser .

Oprah .

Grey's Anatomy .

Dr. Phill .

أضف برامج أخرى تعرفها:

. هل تستخدم الانترنت؟

. إذا كنت تستخدم الانترنت، فكم ساعة تقضي يوميا

. من الموقع التي تزورها عادة:

. هل تعتقد انه يمكن أن يستبدل التلفاز بالانترنت

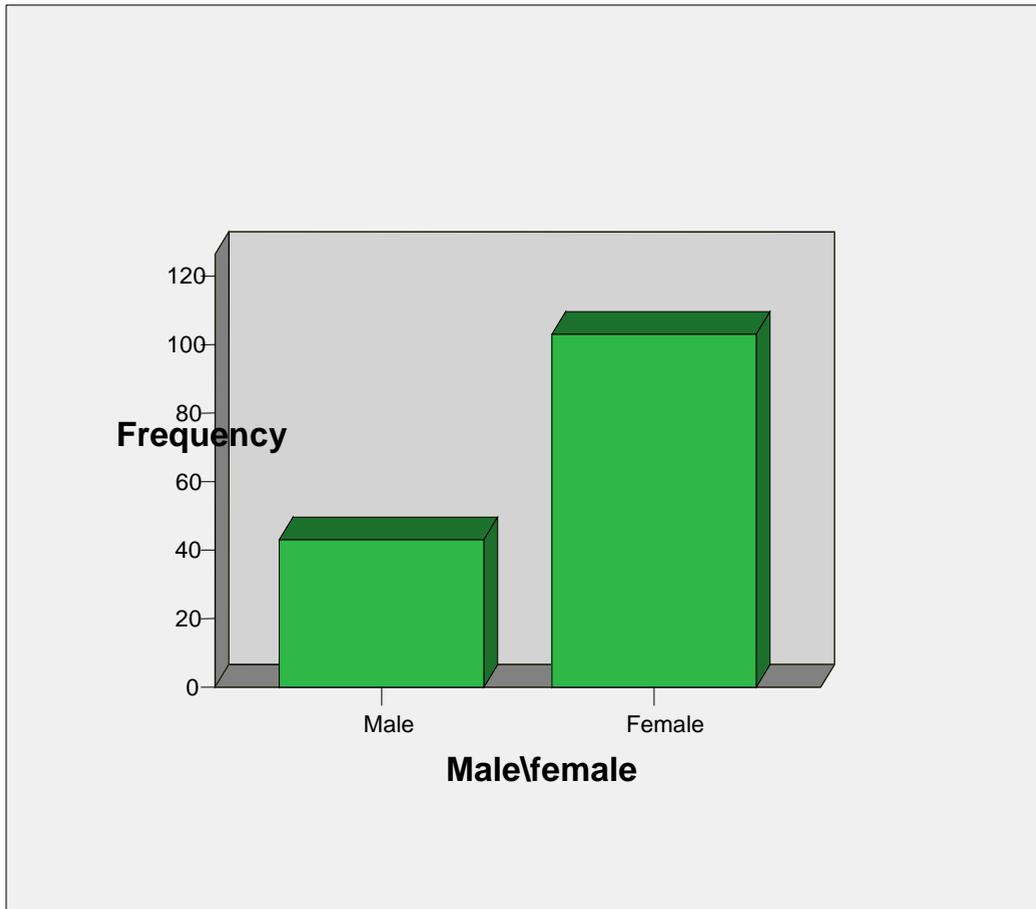
. هل تستخدم او تستعير Cds

" " ، أذكر عناوين منها:

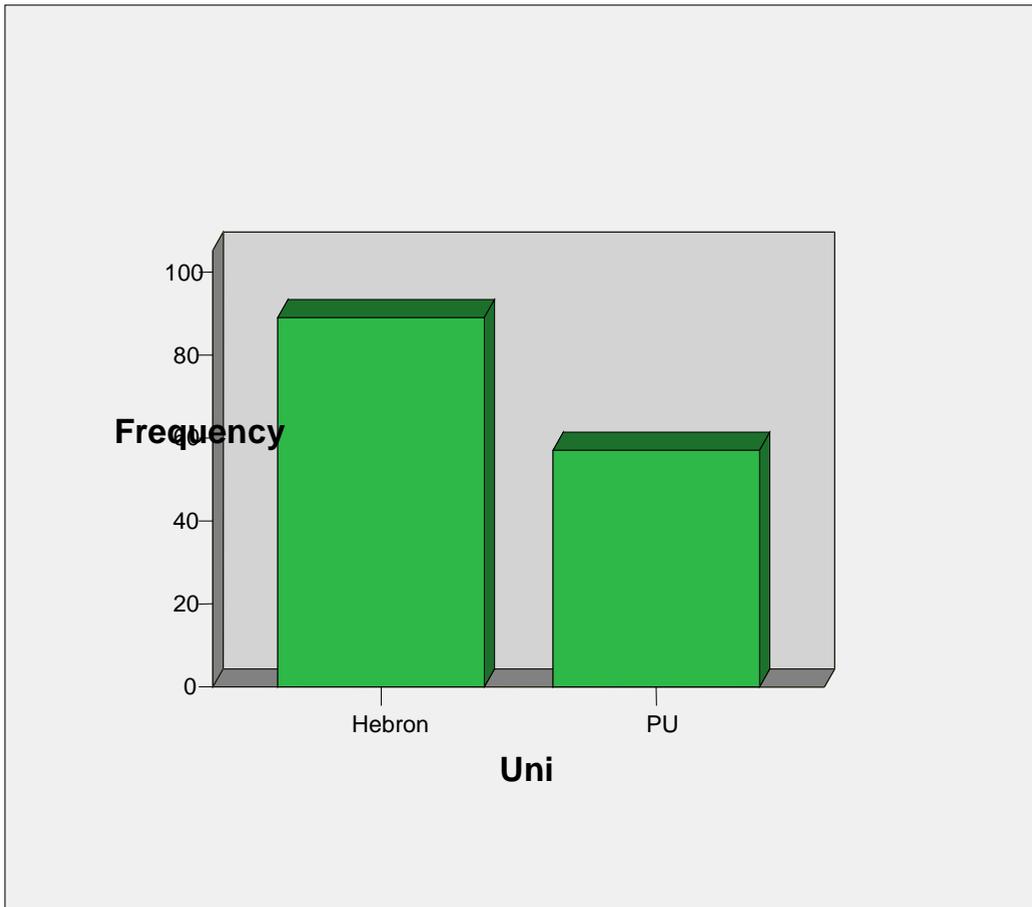
## Appendix 7

### Diagrams and Histograms

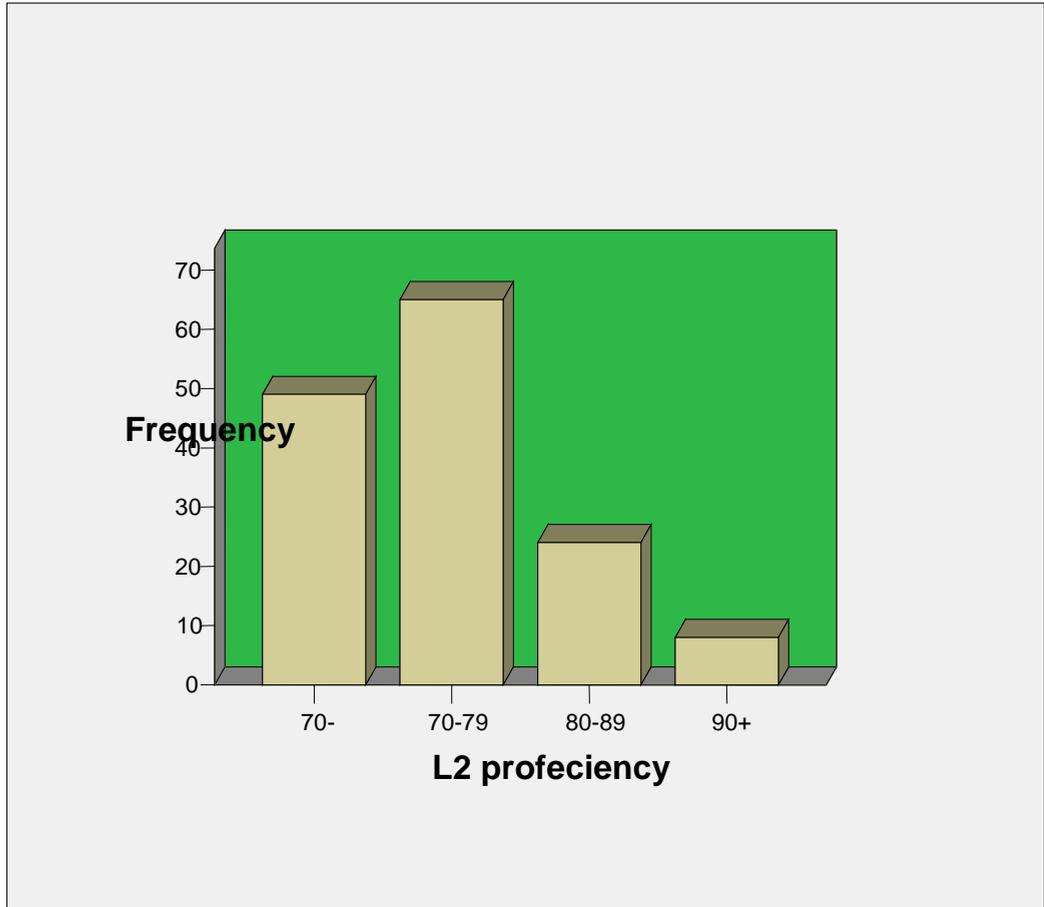
**Figure 1:Male\female**



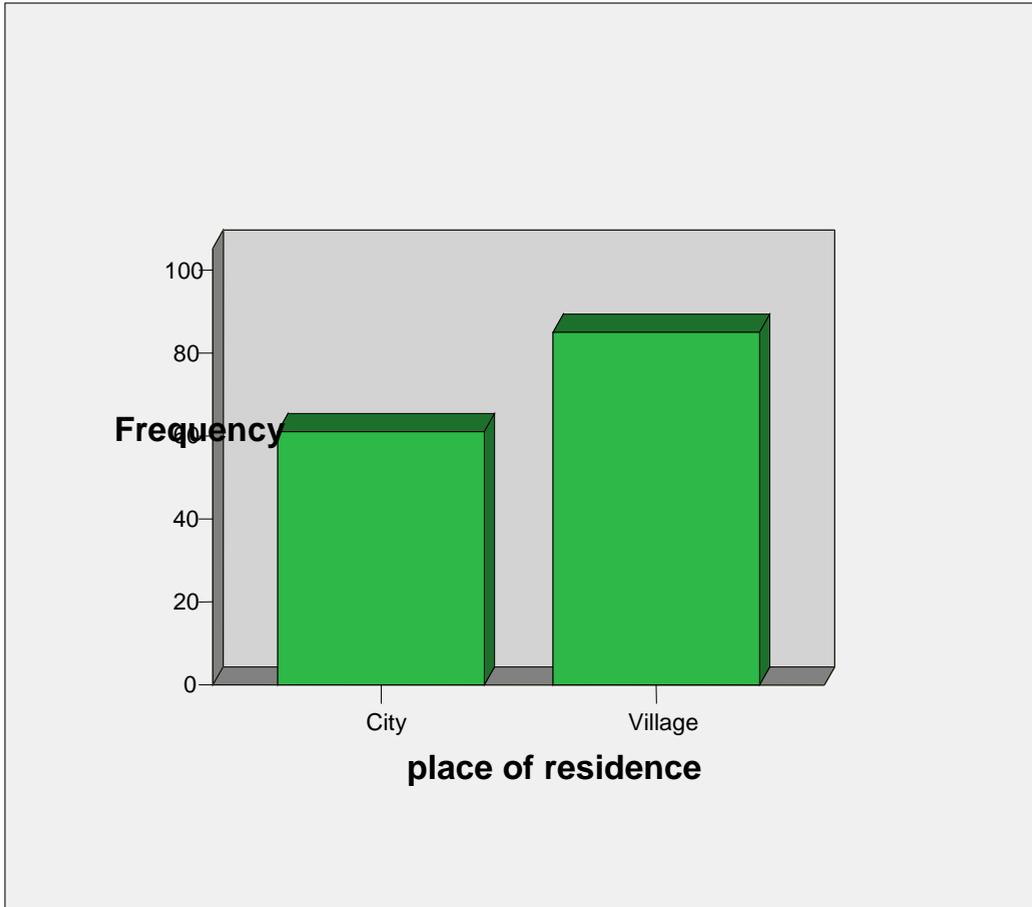
**Figure 2:Uni**



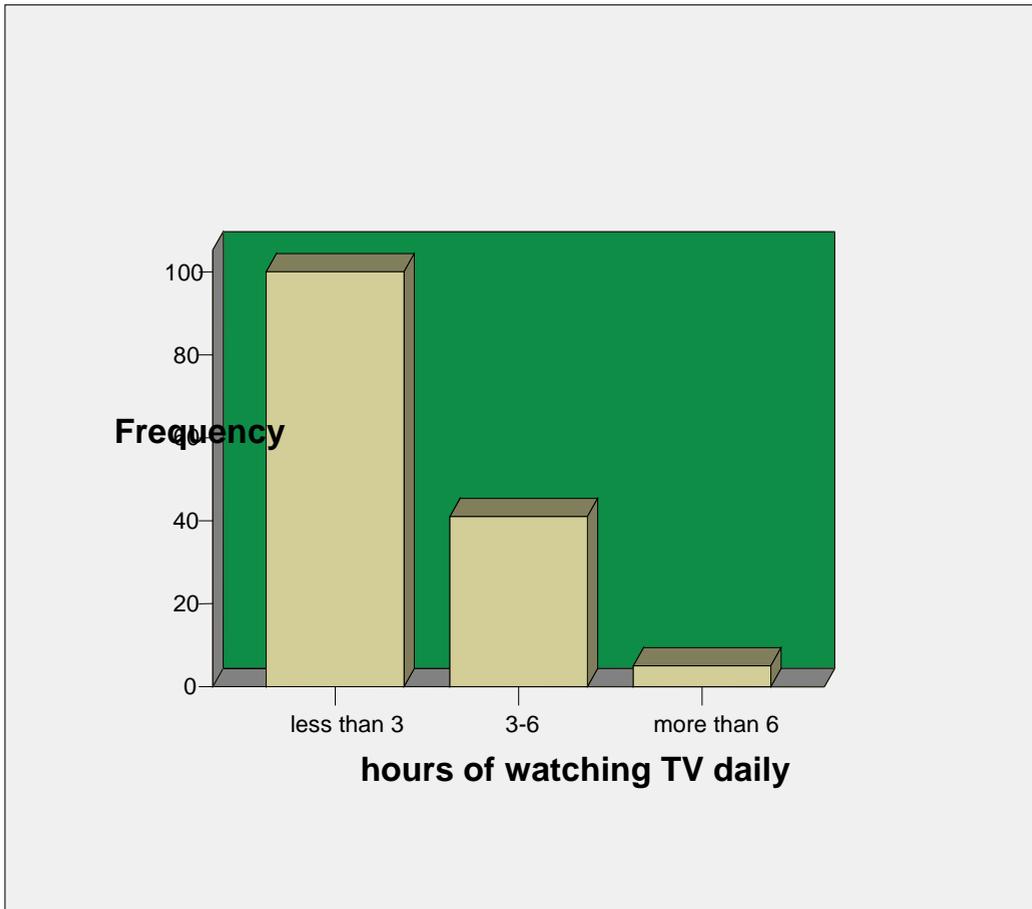
**Figure 3:L2 profeciency**



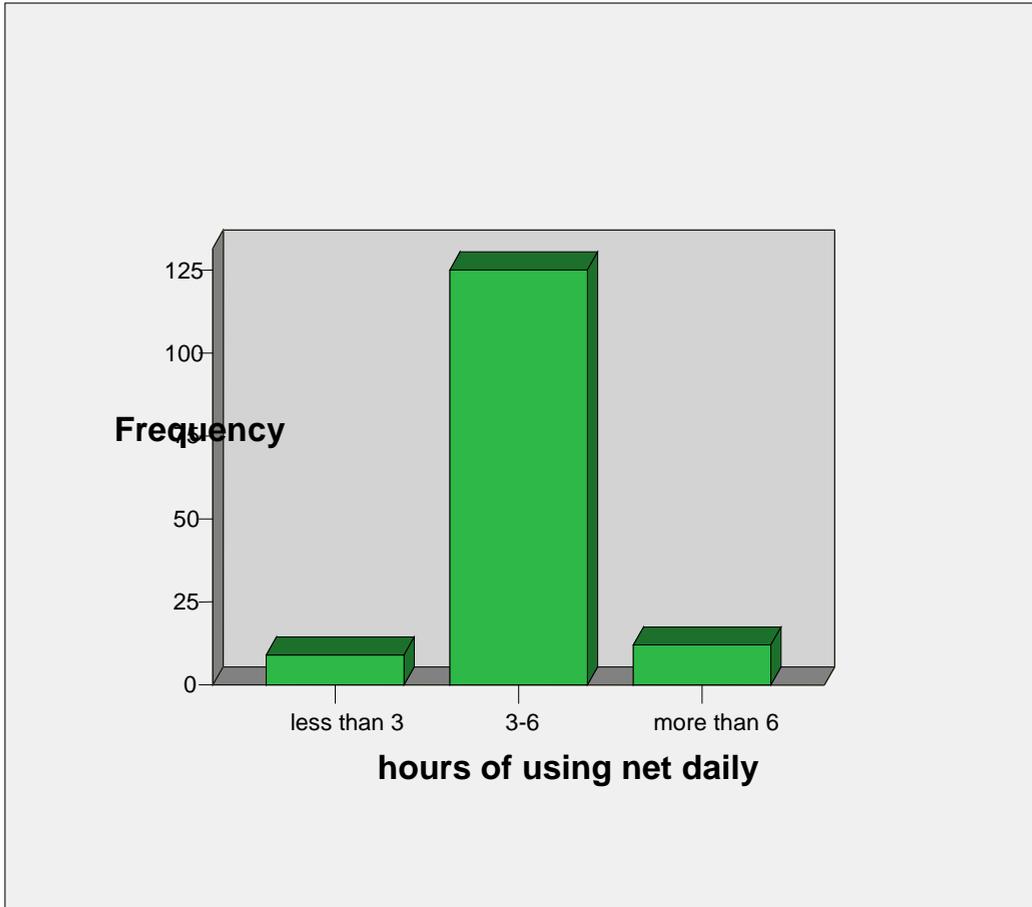
**Figure 4:place of residence**



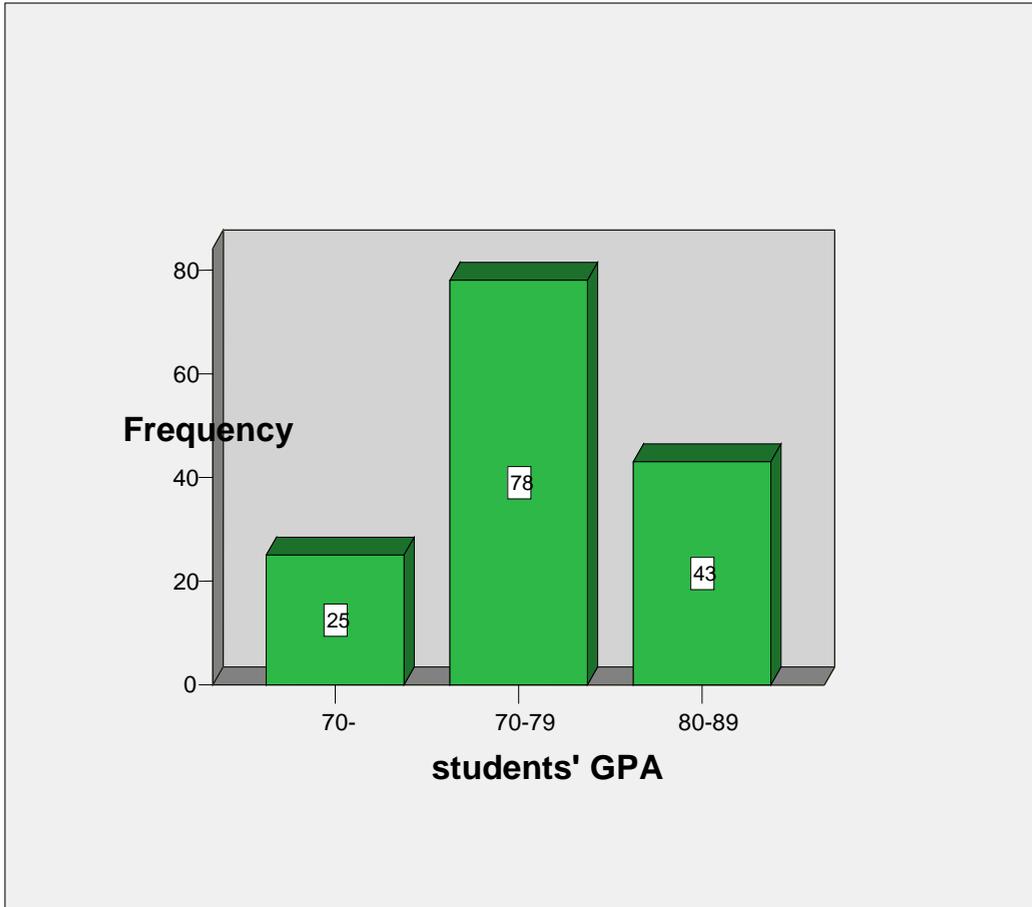
**Figure 5:hours of watching TV daily**



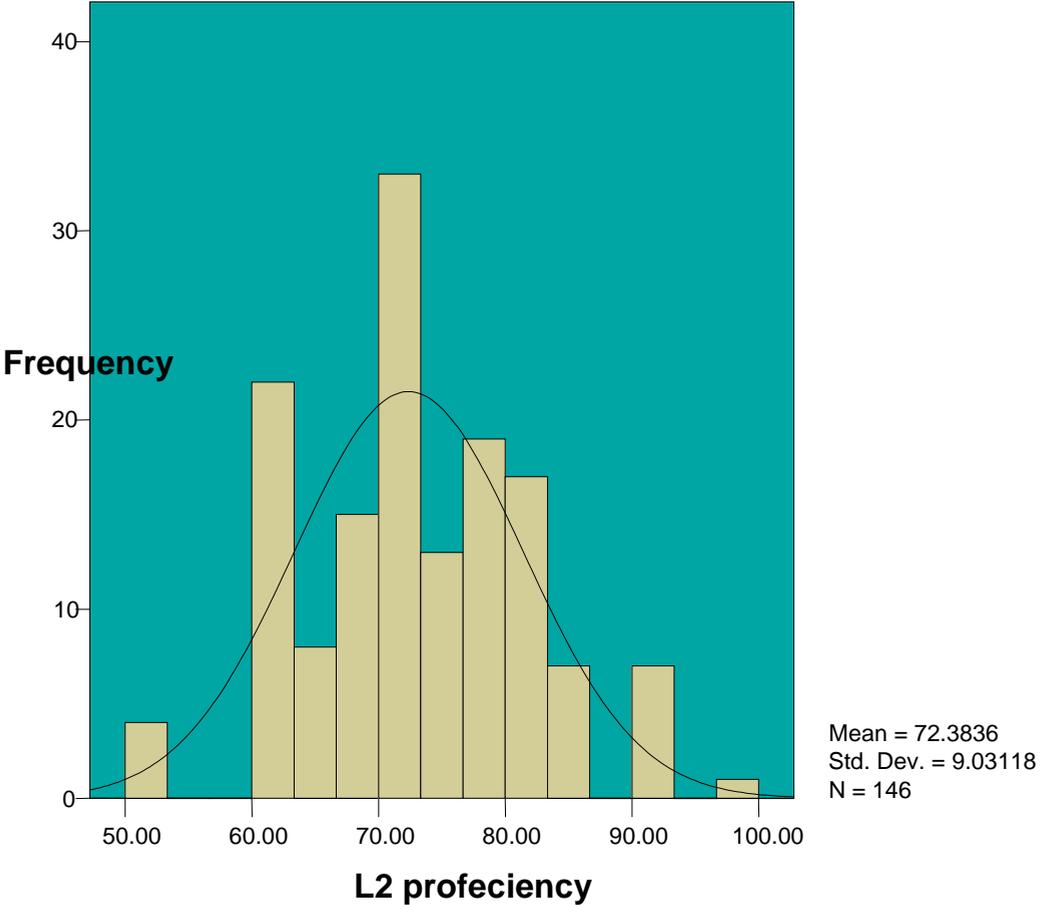
**Figure 6:hours of using net daily**



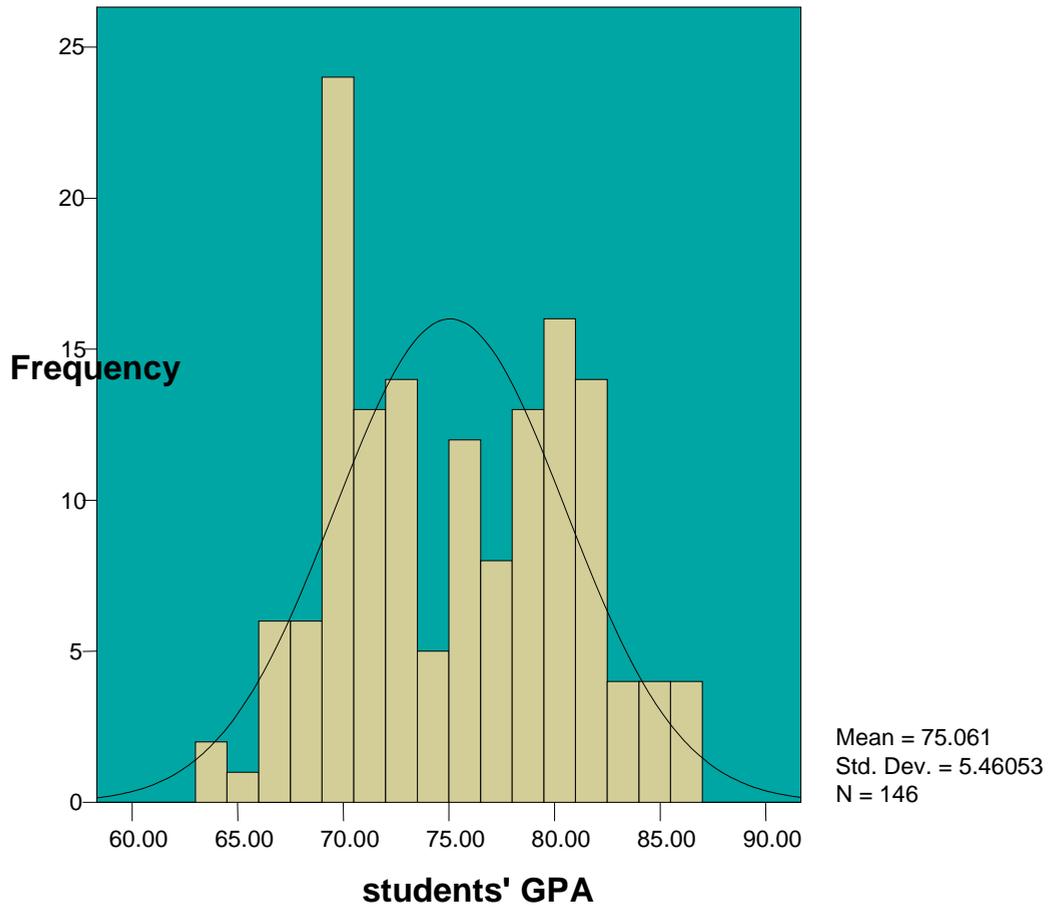
**Figure 7:students' GPA**



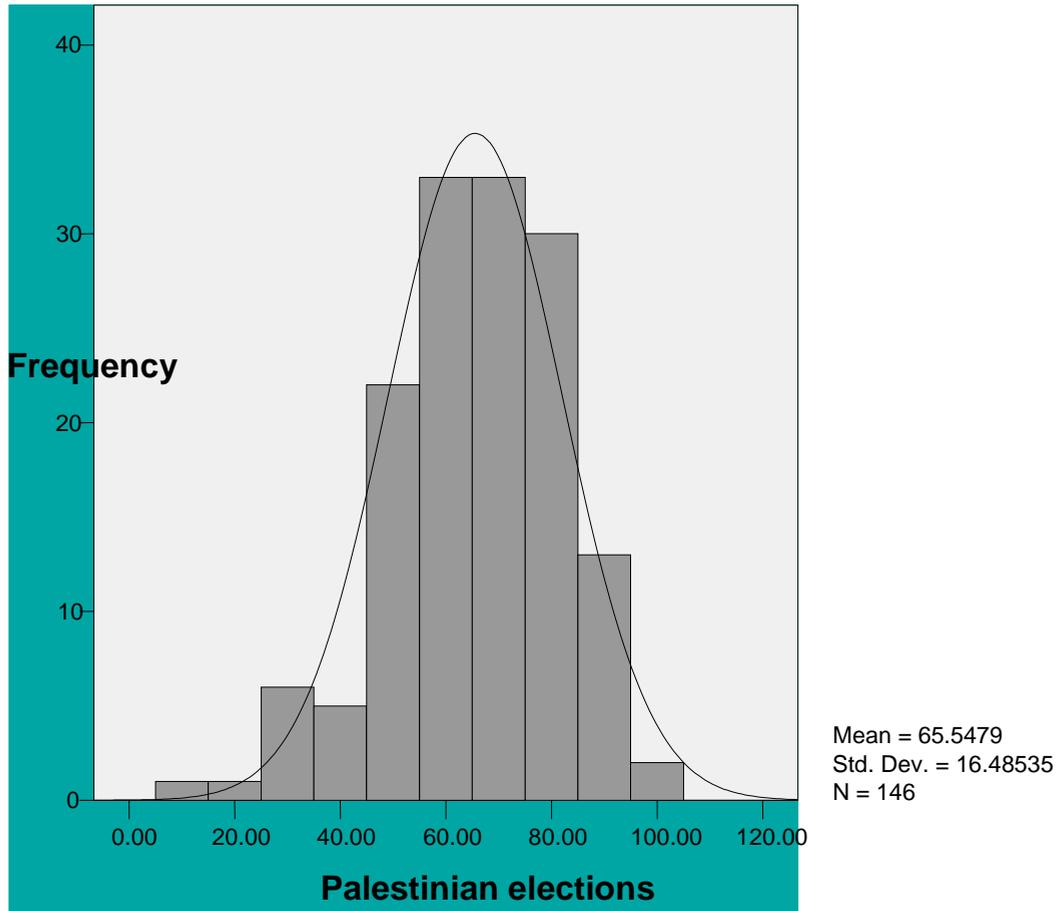
**Figure 8:L2 profeciency**



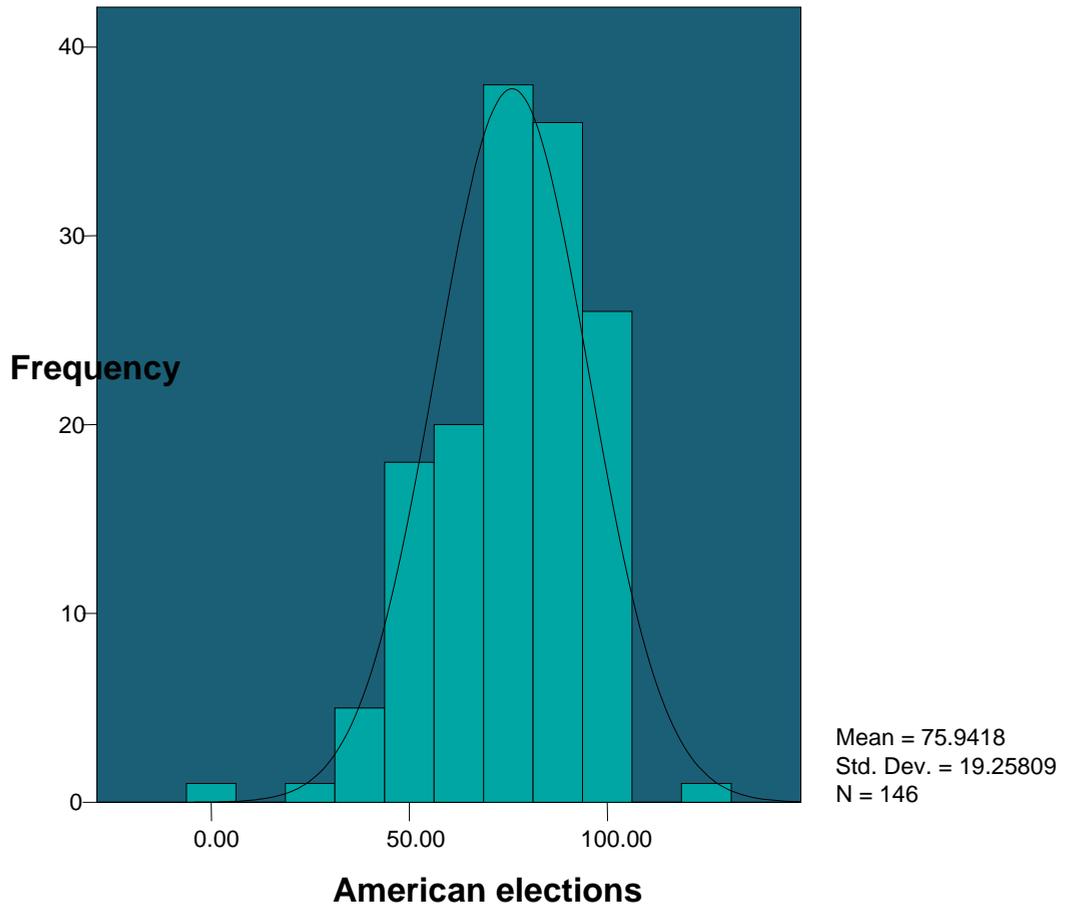
**Figure 9:students' GPA**



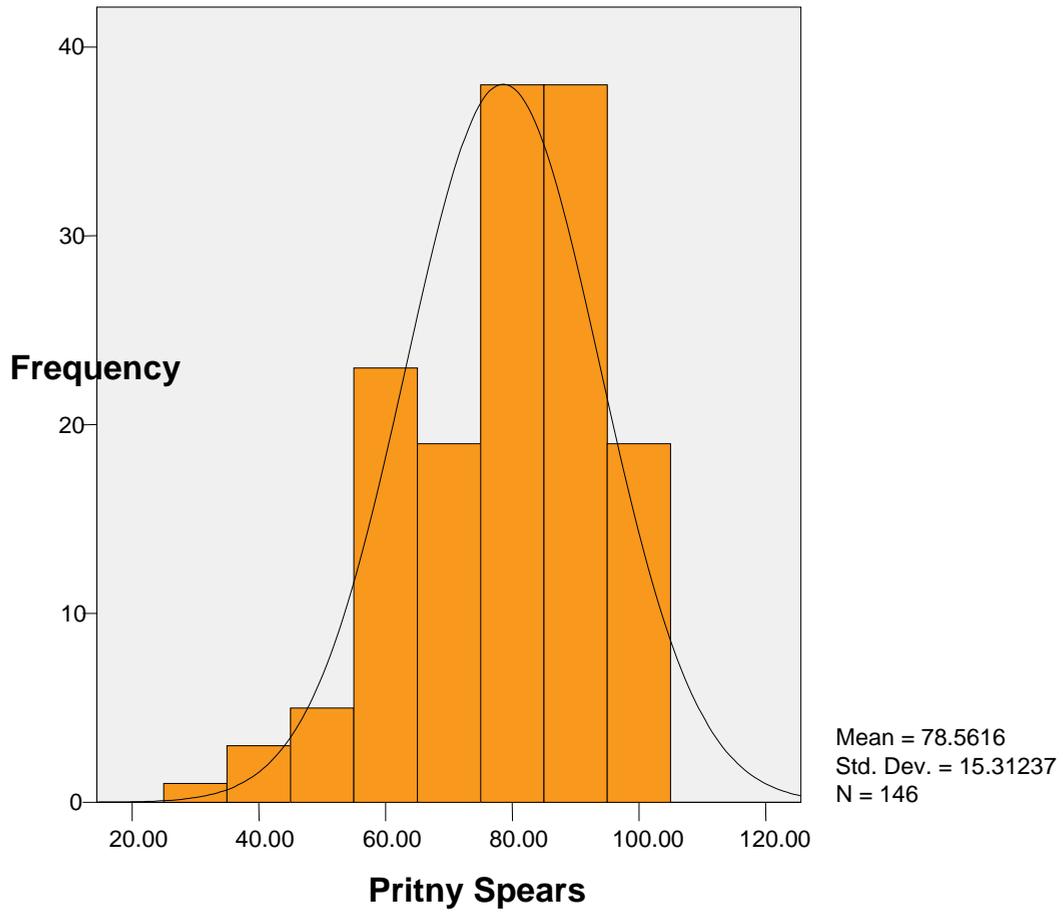
**Figure 10:Palestinian elections**



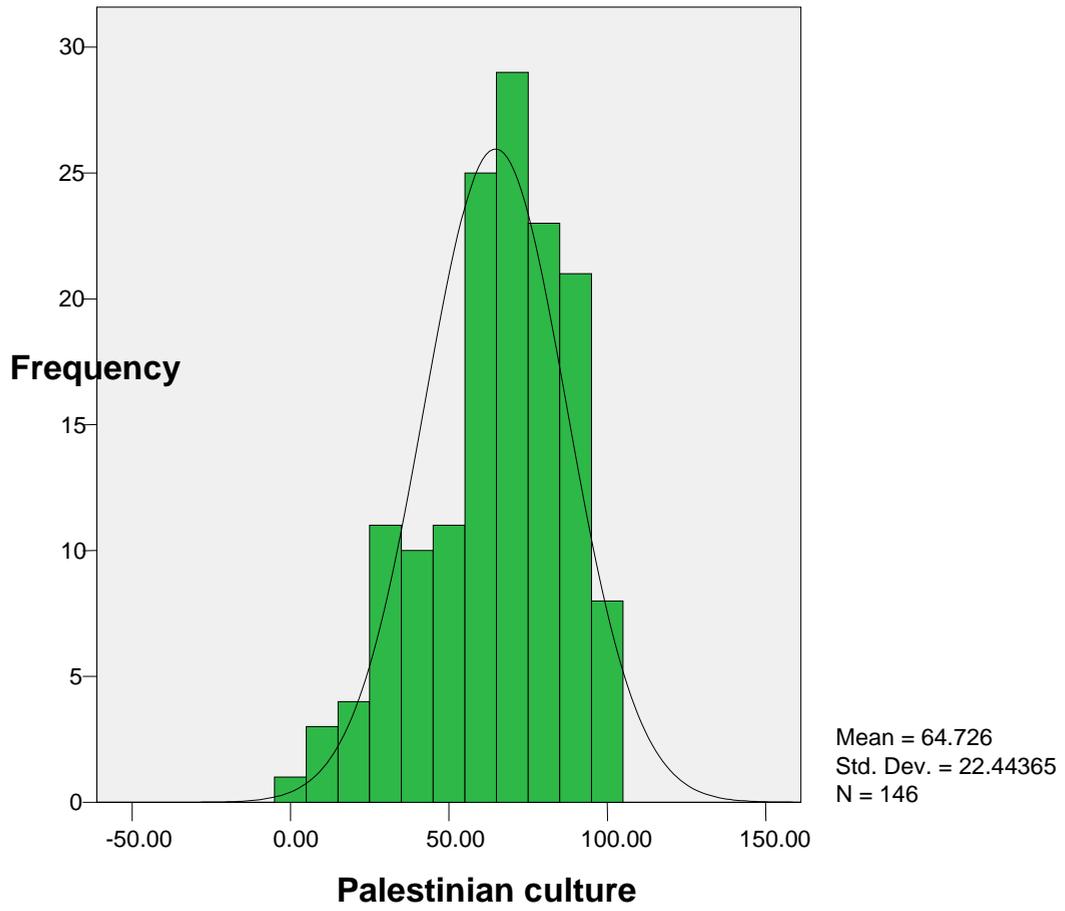
**Figure 11: American elections**



**Figure 12:Pritny Spears**



**Figure13: Palestinian culture**



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