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**The Use of Short Stories as Materials for Teaching English as a foreign Language**

Research Project

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# ABSTRACT

This quantitative paper investigated the use of short stories in the EFL classroom. It examined students’ general attitudes towards using short stories in the EFL classroom. Moreover, it evaluated if short stories enhance learners’ language skills, develop their personal reflection. Additionally, The sample of the study included 3rd year students of English Department of the academic year 2022-2023 in Salahaddin University, Collage of Education , Erbil . The number of the questionnaires filled was 30 and %50 Fifteen percent of the respondents are females and the rest are males. The results showed that students held positive attitudes towards using short stories in the EFL classes. Moreover, the purpose of this article is to familiarize EFL instructors with the effectiveness of using short stories in EFL class. Nevertheless, among literary genres, short stories seemed to be the most suitable choice for Language learning. Eventually, before novice instructors attempt to use short stories in their EFL classes, they should understand the benefits of short stories and plan classes that meet the needs of their students.

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# SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

## Nowadays, teaching short story for university students is one of the most powerful and considered materials to develop language skills like inputs as well as outputs. Additionally, through teaching short story various cultures, traditions, also the way of thinking can be easily transferred. However, This research dives into teaching short stories and using it for university students as a material , and the research can help students develop attitudes towards the foreign language and enrich their learning experience. Similarly, through this research short story can also be a powerful and motivating source for both teachers and students in terms of all skills in English language

## 1.2: The Problem of the Study

Teaching short stories in EFL classroom is a beneficial source for cultural knowledge and language awareness. Short stories can be creative sources in practicing language teaching, it is also seen as a teaching material that makes EL learners participate actively in the learning process by using different classroom activities. But most of EL students face certain problems in understanding and comprehending the short stories that are taught in literature lectures for certain reasons such as the traditional teaching methods that lack the new and update strategies. The application of traditional way may stimulate one but disappoint the others at the same time. Therefore, instructors and lecturers have to provide a careful lesson plan with inclusion of various teaching techniques and strategies so as to satisfy the entire Students’ needs and they can participate in different activities and express their ideas concerning the main elements of any the short story that is taught in the class.

## 1.3: The Aim of The Study

1. Declaring the importance of teaching short stories in EL classes regarding all skills such as listening, reading, writing, and speaking.

2. Finding more benefits and strategies in teaching short stories.

3. To become much more familiar with the perspectives of students on the use of short stories in EL classes.

## 1.4: The Value of The Study

## The study demonstrates the crucial role of the significance that short stories plays in the growth and improvement of all skills in EL classes. The research also highlights the benefits of teaching short stories that are used in EL classes currently. Finally, this research presents the students' perspectives towards teaching short stories.

## 1.5: The Procedure of The Study

The researchers in this study are going to apply the following steps:

1. The society of this study will be the students of the third grade. In order to reach accurate data the selection of samples will be in this way:-

2. The statistical means that will be:-

• Checklist for the students to observe their daily activities and performances.

OR

• For the teachers a questionnaire will be prepared to recognize their opinions.

3- The researchers after application all the above steps and getting all the results will analyze all the results by using statistical calculation to reach the most accurate results.

4. The researchers will reach certain conclusions and suggestions concerning the problem of the research.

5. On the base of the results the researchers will list certain recommendations for modification.

# SECTION TWO: (Theoretical Part)

## 2.1 Definition of Short Story

## A short story is fictional work of prose that is shorter in length than a novel. As contemporary fiction, a short story can range from 1,000 to 20,000 words, usually between five and sixty pages. Because of the shorter length, a short story usually focuses on one plot, one main character (with a few additional minor characters), and one central theme, whereas a novel can tackle multiple plots and themes, with a variety of prominent characters.

## 2.2 Characteristics of Short Story

* Short- Can usually be read in one sitting.
* Concise\_ Information offered in the story is relevant to the tale being told.
* Usually tries to leave behind a single impression or effect. Usually, though not always built around one character, place, idea, or act.
* Because they are concise, writers depend on the reader bringing personal experiences and prior knowledge to the story.
* The term short story most often refers to a work of fiction no longer than 20,000 words and no shorter than 1,000.

**2.3** **The Importance of the Short Story for Teaching Literature today**

# Abrams (1970, p. 158) defined short stories as the “narrative that can be read at one sitting of from one-half hour to two hours, and that is limited to ‘a certain unique or single effect,’ to which every detail is subordinate”. Its ‘single effect’ with usually only one plot and a few characters nature allows students to follow the storyline easily makes it a suitable literary text to be used in ESL. Advocates who make use of short stories to teach ESL identifies many benefits of short stories. They believe learners are exposed to distinctive opportunities for educational, motivational, intellectual, literary, cultural and linguistic development. Among some benefits pointed out by Ariogul (2001, pp. 11-18) that short stories make learners’ reading task easier because of the simplicity and briefness compared with the other literary genres, short stories motivate learners due to its authenticity and short stories allow for learners’ creativity as well as promoting critical thinking skills. In terms of cultural advantages, Ellis (2000) mentioned that short stories provide a rich, authentic and meaningful context for reading. This is supported by Pardede (2011) in his article that short stories allow learners to view the world through a different perspective, discover human values and experience a different lifestyle in different societies. Learners will also understand and become aware of the social, political, historical, cultural events happening in a certain society, hence deepening their cultural understanding. Learners’ motivation will also increase as suggested by Ceminin (2009), reading short stories enhance learners’ motivation and encourage more independent learning on their part. Short stories are a universal literary genre in all parts of the world. The benefits are manifold and teachers are waiting to discover to expose their students to this world of literary wonder.

## 3.1 Benefits of Short Story

Short fiction is a supreme resource for observing not only language but life itself. In short fiction, characters act out all the real and symbolic acts people carry out in daily lives, and do so in a variety of registers and tones. The world of short fiction both mirrors and illuminates human lives (Sage 1987:43). The inclusion of short fiction in the ESL / EFLcurriculum offers the following educational benefits (Arıoğul 2001:11-18):

• Makes the students’ reading task easier due to being simple and short when compared with the other literary genres.

• Enlarges the advanced level readers’ worldviews about different cultures and different groups of people.

• Motivates learners to read due to being an authentic material.

• Offers a world of wonders and a world of mystery.

• Gives students the chance to use their creativity.

• Promotes critical thinking skills.

• Makes students feel themselves comfortable and free.

• Helps students coming from various backgrounds communicate with each other because of its universal language.

• Helps students to go beyond the surface meaning and dive into underlying meanings.

• Acts as a perfect vehicle to help students understand the positions of themselves as well as the others by transferring these gained knowledge to their own world.

In brief, the use of a short story seems to be a very helpful technique in today’s foreign language classes. As it is short, it makes the students’ reading task and the teacher’s coverage easier. An important feature of short fiction is its being universal. To put it differently, students all over the world have experienced stories and can relate to them. Moreover, short fiction, like all other types of literature, makes contribution to the development of cognitive analytical abilities by bringing the whole self to bear on a compressed account of a situation in a single place and moment (Sage 1987:p43).

## 3.2 Using Short Stories in Teaching Writing Skills

Using Short Stories in Teaching Writing Skills ESL learners consider writing one of the most difficult skills to master. Students experience problems producing interesting and creative writing. Because of that, students find writing dull and they lack the motivation to write. Kirkgoz (2012), who conducted a study on how short stories can be integrated in the classrooms, found that learners’ problems in writing can be solved by using short stories which provide a rich source of input. Besides, students are also presented with a purpose for writing when they reflect on their thoughts, opinions and feelings as well as background experiences. Kirkgoz (2012) also added that short stories introduce learners to different ideas, characters and subject matter, whereby they are transported to an imaginary world and “get to know” the characters. This is highly interesting and motivating for the learners. Other researchers are also in the opinion that short stories can indeed facilitate writing. Pardede (2011) proposed that short stories being powerful and motivating, can serve as a model and give a context for creative writing to help ESL learners develop their writing skills. In a study by Truong et al (2020), they reported that respondents felt using short stories helped them write more effectively, upgrade their writing skills and could expand on their word choice to assist them in better writing.

# SECTION THREE: (Practical Part)

**3.1 Sample Selection**

Sample selection is one of the most important steps in conducting any type of research; therefore, the researcher should select the suitable criteria to identify the participants who will be legible for the study such grade and age. In this research a sample from the third grade students in the department of English language of the academic year 2022/2023 has been selected. The sample includes (30) students. (15Male) and (15female).

**3.2Application of the Students’ questionnaire**

The researcher has selected the students’ questionnaire to be the data collection tool for this study. The questionnaire includes two parts. The first part includes open-ended questions about the students' perceptions of using short stories in the class. While the second part of the questionnaire includes open-ended questions about the relationship between the oral performance and teaching short stories in EFL classes.

**(15**) Items. Item no.1 is about eight items

While item no2 is about eight items.

**Questionnaire Items**

Section one:

|  |
| --- |
| I am familiar with short stories |
| The teachers use short stories in your classes |
| The teachers often use short stories in class |
| I think that short story is useful |
| Based on short stories, I prefer to deal with retelling and discussion activities in class |
| according to short stories, the simplicity of the plot and its shortness suit to students |
| Based on short stories, the small number of characters and the limitation of time and setting suit to you |
| Among the four skills of the FL , short stories enrich speaking and writing most |
| Among the four skills of the FL , short stories enrich reading and listening |
| I would like to deal with short stories through watching |

Section Two: Relationship between oral performance and short stories.

|  |
| --- |
| The use of short story in oral expression positively affects EFL learners' oral performance |
| Do you think that teachers ought to use short stories more frequently in EFL classes as a tool for improving learners' oral performances? |
| After experiences with one of the activities based on short stories, I evaluate the use of short stories as a beneficial tool for oral performance |
| Do you agree, the use of short stories have retained your repertoire and helped you perform fluently and accurately than before? |
| Self-expression due to short stories helps students increases motivation , enhances vocabulary learning and improves cultural information |
| Has my experience with Short story improved my oral performance |

**3.3Presentation of the Results**

The aim of this section is to present the explanation of the results that have been reached after the application of the students’ questionnaire. All this process will be based on the main aim of the research which is finding out the benefits of using short stories as materials for teaching English as a foreign Language to EL university students .The following results have been reached:

Table 1: the results of the items 1 to 8

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Items | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly  Disagree |
| I am familiar with short stories | | 75% | 22% | 0.00% | 3% | 0.00% |
| The teachers often use short stories in your classes | | 35% | 20% | 30% | 10% | 5% |
| I think that short story is useful | | 65% | 15% | 20% | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Based on short stories, I prefer to deal with retelling and discussion activities in class | | 70% | 13% | 9% | 8% | 0.00% |
| according to short stories, the simplicity of the plot and its shortness suit to students | | 35 % | 20% | 20% | 15% | 10% |
| Among the four skills of the FL , short stories enrich speaking and writing most | 57% | 30% | 0.00% | 13% | 0.00% |
| I would like to deal with short stories through watching | 64% | 20% | 0.00 | 6% | 10% |

Table 2: The results of the items 11 to 14 regarding the relationship between oral performance and short stories

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The use of short story in oral expression positively affects EFL learners' oral performance | 50 | 35 | 0.00% | 15% | 0.00% |
| Do you think that teachers ought to use short stories more frequently in EFL classes as a tool for improving learners' oral performances? | 100% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| After experiences with one of the activities based on short stories, I evaluate the use of short stories as a beneficial tool for oral performance | 60% | 27% | 13% | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Do you agree, the use of short stories have retained your repertoire and helped you perform fluently and accurately than before? | 77% | 10% | 5% | 7% | 0.00% |
| Self-expression due to short stories helps students increases motivation , enhances vocabulary learning and  improves cultural information | 36% | 25% | 26% | 10% | 4% |

# SECTION FOUR: Discussion of the Results

This chapter presents us the results or answers put forward in the past chapter. However in the table 1, which can be seen in the first item the focus on familiarity with teaching short stories regarding the students. Thus, 75% of the students were strongly familiar with short stories as well as 22% of them basically agree, although 3% of the students were not familiar.

The teachers often use short stories in students' class is the second item that is presented in the table and really confirmed by the researchers. Wherefore, the participants had variety of ideas regarding the item as they were neither in total agreement nor disagreement. In other words, 35% of the participants strongly agree, while 5% of them strongly disagree. In addition, 25% of the students agree as well as 30% are in between (neutral), nevertheless, 15 % of the participants disagree.

65% of the participants strongly agree on that short story is useful which the result of this item was delightful, meanwhile, 15% of them agree despite 20% of the participants didn’t give their opinions in this respect.

Happily, 70% of the participants strongly agree, withal, 13 % of them agree with that retelling and discussion activity based on short stories are preferable. With respect to, the same item, 9% of the students that were given the questionnaire prefer not to show their agreement or disagreement, in spite of that fact 8% of the participants disagree. Over all, the majority of the participants were not against that retelling and discussion activity concerning short stories.

According to short stories, the simplicity of the plot and its shortness are mentioned within one item that can be considered in item number 5. Fortunately, 35% of the participants shown their agreement towards the item along with 20% of the participants also agree which was delightful in the sense of that majority of the participants were interested in the simplicity of the plot and its shortness. On the other hand 20% of the participants didn’t feel agreeable to show their perceptions in this respect. However, 15% of the participants normally disagree to this item as well as 10% of them strongly conveyed their disagreement.

In the light of item number 6, 57% of the participants strongly agree with that short stories can enrich writing and speaking among the four skills of FL which was worth to be happy because more than half of the students' perspectives were positive towards the item. Additionally, 30% of the participants agree on that through teaching short stories speaking and listening can be increased.in contrast, 13% of the participants' opinion were against that belief which short stories is be able to boost speaking and writing skills among the four skills up.

After all, the last item in the table 1 can be considered as a new item that linked to teaching short stories via technology. Therefore, 6%of the participants disagree because they might not be in touch with technology despite its availability everywhere. In addition, 10% of them expressed their disagreement strongly. Nonetheless, a chief number of the participants as it can be seen in the table 1, 56% of the participants shown their strong agreement as well as 30% of them agree too in terms of the item.

Apart from table 1, table 2 focuses specifically on oral performance through teaching short stories in EFL classes. However, in the light of the first item in the table 2, the use of short stories can positively affect EFL learners' oral performance 50% of the participants strongly agree plus 35 % of the participants in terms of the same item. Thus, the vast majority of the participants responded the item positively. On the other hand, 15% of the participants were against that the use of short stories can positively affect learners' oral performance.

Alongside with the items, 100% of the participants would like to show their strong agreement regarding the teachers ought to use short stories more frequently in EFL class item to improve oral performance. The percentage of the item must be considered by the EFL teachers because most of the participants strongly agree.

Throughout the table 2, 60% of the students strongly agree as well as27% of them show their agreement based on one of the items in the table 2 which expresses that after students' experiences with one of the activities concerning short stories as a beneficial tool for oral performance, while 13% of the participants were not sharing their opinions at all. Fortunately, the item could obtain most of the students' perceptions positively.

As it is noted in another item, 77% of the participants were strongly taking the side of that the use of short stories have retained their repertoire and helped them perform fluently and accurately than before. Nevertheless, 10% of the participants demonstrate their agreement but 50 of them preferred staying in neutral. While, 7% of the participants were against the item.

Self-expression through short stories helps the students to increase motivation, enhance vocabulary learning and improve cultural information. Thus, 36% of the participants were siding the item strongly and 25% of them also show agreement which is the great rate totally. On the other hand, 10 % of the participants were against the item which is not a big deal to be concerned.

# SECTION FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

It is evident that using literature in general and short stories in particular in EFL classroom, can develop and enhance students’ critical thinking, imagination, creativity, language structure, acquisition and cultural awareness. It is apparent, in this research that participants reacted positively to short stories and their response and engagement were a testimony for that. Students’ involvement in the Questionnaire and their analysis, responses to the questions, prove that using literature in EFL class is vital and recommended. Eventually, integrating short stories into the curriculum will help holistic development of EFL learners which is necessary for survival in the target language.

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