

Investigating Students' Attitudes towards Using Short Stories to Develop Writing Skill

تقصى توجهات الطلاب حول استخدام القصص القصيرة لتطوير مهارة الكتابة

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating students' attitudes towards using short stories to develop writing skill. The researchers have adopted the descriptive analytical method. A questionnaire has been used as primary tool for collecting data of the study. The sample of the questionnaire is consisted of (70) students of third year at college of languages, Sudan university of Science and Technology. The researchers applied a ch-squared test to analyze and verify the hypotheses. The findings of the questionnaire revealed that short stories develop students' writing. The study recommends that students should be provided with short stories in the process of writing.

Key Words: Develop, writing process, authentic material

المستخلص:

هدفت هذه الدراسة الى تقصى توجهات الطلاب حول استخدام القصص القصيرة لتطوير مهارة الكتابة. تبنى الباحثون المنهج الوصفي التحليلي. تم استخدام الاستبانة كوسيلة اساسية لجمع بيانات الدراسة. تتكون عينة الاستبانة من عدد (70) طالبا بالمستوى الثالث, لغة انجليزية, بكلية اللغات بجامعة السودان للعلوم و التكنولوجيا. طبق الباحثون اخيبا كاي لتحليل و تحقيق الفرضيات. اوضحت نتائج الاستبانة بان القصص القصيرة تطور مهارة الكتابة لدى الطلاب. اصت الدراسة بضرورة تزويد الطلاب بالقصص القصيرة عند عملية الكتابة.

Introduction

Writing is a crucial language skill that enables people to express their feelings and thoughts. They use it to define themselves, clarify their knowledge and their ideas, to understand the problems. Being so, writing is a means for self-actualization. What people learn about themselves and develop within themselves through writing can help them to realize their individual potential and to achieve potential goals (Hughey, etal, 1983). It is a difficult process even in the first language. It is even more complicated to write in a foreign language. Writing in a

foreign language often presents the greatest challenge to the students in general and basic students in particular, particularly composition writing because in this activity writing is usually extended.

Learning to write in English as a second language allows learners to put their thoughts on papers, see their ideas in prints them with others. Writing also enhances language acquisition as learners experiment with words, sentences and large chunks of writing to communicate their ideas effectively and to reinforce grammar and vocabulary they are learning in classroom.



Writing has been seen as essential, useful integral and questionable part of any language syllabus. It is a process that is the stages the writer goes through in order to produce something in its final form. This process may of course, be affected by the content the writing, the type of writing and the medium it is written in. This process has four main elements: planning, drafting, editing, and final draft.

Poor performances in writing skill wonder about how to organize information to get a coherent paragraph, essay, as well as structured piece of writing without mistakes. So writing is considered as enormous challenge to produce a coherent, fluent, extended piece of writing in L2.

To sum up it is to be said that writing is a skill that is highly important for academic success especially at the college level.

Statement of the Study Problem:

Writing as language skill, is one of the most complex skill for both native and non-native learners. It requires not only linguistic input, but rather requires writer's knowledge to the topic he/she intends to write. This knowledge is achieved through short stories which develop students' grammar, vocabulary and figures of speech. This study investigates the role of short stories on students writing process. It is observed that writers with experience with short stories perform better in writing and Write with high level of proficiency. So the importance of this study stems out of these factors, and investigate, how these factors affect student's writing and the role played by these factors to achieve well-constructed written text.

Significance of the Study

The study is considered a significant one as it tells us about the importance of short stories in enhancing students' performance

in writing a text. This study contributes to writing process. It helps students to build structure through short stories. This study will help students in writing process.

Methodology

This study was carried out at Sudan University of science and Technology with English language students. A purposive sample used for this study includes (70) students. This is a quantitative method research.

The researcher bases inquiry on the assumption that collecting data from questionnaire best provides an understanding of research problem. So the researcher used the questionnaire as primary tool so as to come up with rich information which would improve the validity and reliability of the overall findings. Chi-square test was applied to analyze and verify the hypotheses of the study

Tools of the Study

The researcher used questionnaire and interview as the main tools for collecting the data related to this study. The researcher has designed the questionnaire to find out foreign language teachers conceptions about the role of short stories in student's writing.

Aims and Scope of the Study

This study aims at investigating the role of short stories in student's writing. The scope of the study is limited to EFL students at Sudan University of Science and Technology in Khartoum state, Sudan, in the academic year 2019 – 2020. The total number of the subject of this study was (70) students. The results of the study may not apply generally to all Sudanese Universities. The interview was applied on (20) students at doddering Sudanese Universities in Khartoum state.

Definition of Short Story

A short story is a fictional work of prose that is shorter in length than a novel. Edgar Allan Poe, in his essay "The philosophy of composition" said that a short story should be read in one sitting, anywhere from a half an hour to two hours. In contemporary fiction, a short story can range from 1,000 to 20,000 words. Because of the shorter length, it usually focuses on one plot, one main character and one central theme.

Elements of Short Story

According to Lazar (1993) states that a short story consists of the following key elements:

A- Character: It is a person or a thing who takes part in the action of the story.

B- Setting: It is the time and place of the short story.

C- Plot: It is a series of events and character actions that relate to the central conflict.

D- Conflict: It is a struggle between two people or thing in a short story.

E- Theme: It is the central idea or belief in a short story.

Moreover and according to Kim (1985:177) short stories are brief, coherent and intensive. He goes on to say that their language is sharp, suggestive and can attract attention and make the learning process more enjoyable and interesting.

There are various sources of authentic materials for language teaching. According to Opp- Beckman (2003), four types of authentic materials are as follows:

(a) Multimedia (b) image (c) partial text, and (d) realia

Printed texts include books, newspapers, magazines, short stories novels, comic books... etc.

Short Stories as Authentic Materials

According to Little Wood (2000: 179) states that a major problem of language teaching in the classroom is the creation of an authentic situation for native speakers are isolated. Many text books create a climate of socially isolated learning, teachers need more materials that help students to become thoughtful participants in socially rich environment for learning that feature everyday uses of English. Little Wood (2000: 179) emphasizes the importance of the use of literature in EFL classes by showing the fact that a major problem of language teaching in the classroom is the creation of an authentic situation for language. That is because all language classes outside the community of native speakers are isolated from the context of the events and situations which produce natural language. So literary works especially short stories enable students to understand the language better by providing the students with real world experiences, relationship between society and the people where the target language is spoken.

There are many benefits in using short stories in language classes. Short stories help students to learn to learn the four language skills more effectively because of the motivational benefits embedded in the stories. They also offer many opportunities to practice their grammar, pronunciation and expand their vocabulary and critical thinking.

Finally, short stories explore the lives of English speaking people and their feelings toward some cultural aspects. For example, by connecting religion, superstition and folktales, students explore hidden facts of English speaking culture. Some researchers propose other than language teaching. Harmer (1983) also states that "The

y (written or spoken) have been produced for native speakers” (quoted in Tayler, 1994: 2).

Martinez (2002, p.1) quotes from peacock (1977) on the definition of authentic materials that have been produced to fulfill some social purpose in the language community. Gajdusek (1988 p. 228) defines authentic texts when referring to short stories as original not adapted.

Short stories are the most suitable literary genre to use in English teaching is supported by Collie and Slater (1991: 196) when they list four advantages:

A- They are practical as their length is long enough to be covered in one or two classes' sessions.

B- They are not complicated for students to work on.

C- They have a variety of choice for different interests and tastes.

D- They can be used with all levels, all ages and all classes.

In regard to culture and improving English language skills Stephen seifert continues to explain that in the following:

Another exceptional component to short stories is the element of sharing different cultures and perspectives. Most short stories paint a picture of an event in time or some may have cultural undergone. They may often be able to teach something about history or cultureShort stories serve up a wealth of ESL skills. Instead of focusing on just one aspect of English, short stories connect various essential ESL skills together in and almost seamless way.

“One of the main advantages of using short stories is that they offer authentic material which appeals to the taste, interests and liking of learners in the reading and discussion process”

(Cameron, 2001; Ghosn, 2002; Shrestha, 2008)

They added that “Literary text provide examples of language resources being used to the full, and the reader is placed in active interactional role working with and making sense of this language”

In this regard, learners respond to texts intended for native speakers and they are exposed to actual language samples of real life experience, so they become familiar with different linguistic approaches, communicative functions and meanings. Short stories can be seen as the best opportunities where learners are exposed to authentic material that is genuine.

Finally, as Collie and Slater (1987) explain that “students have also to cope with language intended for native speakers and thus they gain additional familiarity with many different linguistic uses, forms and conventions of the written mode, with irony, exposition, argument, narration and so on”. Skill

Short stories can also be a powerful and motivating source for teaching listening. Oral reading, dramatization, improvisation, role playing, reenactment and discussion are one of the effective ways for enhancing these skills. It is established that listening is a basic language skill prior to other language skills. Lund (1991: 2002) suggests listening after reading.

"Listening after reading helps learners recognize acoustically what they can already comprehend in print and instills satisfaction and confidence in listening."

Listening plays an important in language and it should be given more consideration. But Chastain (1988) suggests that listening might be called; “forgotten skill”.

In order to develop listening skill using short stories, teachers can:

1. Read the story out loud so that students have the chance to listen to a native speaker of English (if at all possible).
2. Play the recording to listen to the story when they listen to it for the first time, the questions can be based on literary structures such as:
 - a. Who is the main character of the story?
 - b. Where does the story take place?
 - c. When does it take place?What is the problem (conflict) in the story?

Types of short Stories

Carter & Long (1991) point out that there are different types of short stories as follows:

(A) Anecdote

It is a short account of something interesting and amusing which usually tells a story about a real person or incident.

(B) Drabble:

It is an exceptionally short piece of fiction usually of exactly 100 words in length- not including the title. The purpose of a drabble is extreme brevity and to test an author's skill of expressing himself / herself meaningfully and interesting in a very confined space.

(C) Fable

It is a succinct story featuring anthropomorphic creatures (usually animals, but also mythical creatures, plants, inanimate objects, or forces of nature) to tell a story with a moral.

(D) Fagot

It is an interesting short story type also known as a story pun or a poetic story joke. It is a humorous piece ending in an atrocious pun.

(A) Flash Fiction

It refers to an extremely short piece of literature. It has no widely accepted length, but has a debated cap of between 300 and 1000 word.

(F) Frame Story

It is known as a frame tale or a nested narrative. It is a literary technique of placing a story within a story, for the purpose of introducing or setting the stage for a main narrative or a series of short stories.

(G) Mini-saga

It is a short story of 50 words. It is a test in brevity. it is an attempt to say a lot in few words.

(H) Story Sequence

It is a group of short stories that work together to form a longer piece, but still functioning as complete short stories on their own.

(I) Sketch Story

It is a shorter than average piece containing little or no plot. It can be a description of a character or a location.

(J) Vignette

It is a short, impressionistic story which focuses on a single scene, character, idea, setting, or object.

2.14.4 Essays

Essays are other types of written literature. Essay is derived from a French word *essayer*, which means to attempt, or to try. An essay is a short form of literary composition based on a single subject matter and often gives personal opinion of an author. According to Oxford dictionary, it is "a short piece of writing on a particular topic". Aldous Huxley defines essays as "a literary device for saying almost everything about almost anything". Essays have two forms; literary and non literary. DiYanni (2000) literary essays are of four types:

(A) Expository essay in which the writer gives explanation of an idea, theme or issue to the audience by giving their personal opinions and is presented through examples, definitions, comparisons and contrasts.

(B) Descriptive Essay which gives description about a particular topic or describes traits and characteristics of something or of a person in detail. It allows artistic freedom and creates images in the minds of readers through the use of five senses.

(C) Persuasive Essay in which the writer tries to convince his readers to adopt his position on a point of view or issue after he provides them solid reasoning in this connection. It requires a lot of research to claim and defend an idea. It is also called an argumentative essay.

(D) Cause and Effect Essay:

It analyzes what causes certain things to happen or why results are brought by certain events for instance the writer may want to write an essay about an event and how it affected his life. This tale will include the cause (the event) and the effect (how it affected his life).

(E) Narrative Essay:

It achieves a certain purpose through telling a story for example, the writer might write a story about meeting someone special to him. He wants to tell how meeting that person affected his decision to attend college. Purposes of writing narrative essays include creating a sense of shared history providing entertainment, offering instruction and providing insight.

(F) Classification or Division Essay

A classification or division essay present several topic by organizing them in a clearly defined patter.

A classification essay takes several essays which are related in some way and sort them in groups and categories while division essay begins with one topic and derives it into parts in order to take a closer, more detailed look at it.

Biography

Another type of written literature is biography. Biography gives an account or detailed description about the life of a person. It contains basic facts such as childhood, education, career relationships, family and death.

Duff and Malay (1991) define biography is a literary genre that portrays all of these events' experiences which happened in the life of a person in chronological order. There are three types of biography:

(A) Autobiography:

It tells the story of a person's life written by her or himself.

(B) Biography:

It tells the story of a person written by another writer.

(C) Memoir

It is a narrative recollection of the writer's earlier experiences, especially those involving unusually people, places or events. Kirszner and Mandell (2001) claim that there are six categories of biographies:

(1) Informative Biography:

It is the most objective and it is called "accumulative" biography in which the author avoids all forms of interpretation except for selection.

(2) Critical Biography:

It is scholarly and critical and it aims at evaluating the works as well as the unfolding the life of its subject

(3) "standard" Biography :

It represents the mainstream of biographical literature as a practice of biography as an art.

(4) Fictionalized Biography:

In this category, materials are freely invented, scenes and conversations are imagined and it depends entirely on secondary sources and cursory research.

(5) “Special – Purpose” biography

(6) Fiction presented as biography

It is a novel written as biography or autography.

(L) Autobiography

Autobiography is derived from three Greek words meaning “self”, “life”, and “write”. Stuart Bates defined autobiography as “a narrative of the past of a person by the person concerned”. (Bates2). Grammatical perspective of the work, the identity of the self, and self- reflection and introspection are common characteristics to the majority of autobiographical works. For instance, most autobiographies are written from the first person singular perspective because autobiography is usually a story one tells about oneself. It is a narrative of a person’s life written by that person.

Informal autobiographies include letters, diaries, journals, memoirs and reminiscences. Formal autobiographies offer special kind of biographical truth. Formal autobiography is a life reshaped by recollection. Finally, there are some specialized forms of autobiography. These forms might roughly be grouped under four heads: the mastic, religious, intellectual and fictionalized (Hirvela, 1996).

2.14.6 Oral Literature

Lazar (1993) defines that oral literature is the standard form of literature found in societies without writing. The term oral literature is also used to describe the tradition in written civilizations in which certain genres are transmitted by word of mouth.

(A) Epics

Epics, ballads, prose tales, ritual and lyric songs are kinds of oral literature. The word epic has been derived from the Greek word *epikos*, which means a word, song or

speech. An epic is well-defined as a long story in verse dwelling upon an important theme in a most elegant style or speech.

According to Britannia Encyclopedia, epic is “long narrative poem recounting heroic deeds... literary usage, the term, the term encompasses both oral and written compositions. The prime examples of the oral epic are Horner’s Iliad and Odyssey”.

There are several characteristic of epic which distinguished it from other forms of poetry. The first characteristic is its bulky size. Secondly, an epic dwells upon the achievements of a historical or traditional hero, or a person of national or international significance. Exaggeration is also an important part of epic. Supernaturalism is a must-have feature of every epic. Morality is a key characteristic of an epic.

Invocation to the muse is another important quality of an epic. The diction of every epic is lofty, grand elegant. Finally, use of Epic simile is another feature of an epic. The types of Epic include Folk Epic and Literary Epic.

(B) Ritual Poetry

According to the great soviet Encyclopedia, Ritual poetry is a poetry connected with fold of everyday including prose, laments, songs and sayings. Ritual poetry may be incantatory if it contains magic effects.

It may be accompanying or symbolic if it accompanies explains or symbolizes a ritual. In the capitalist period, ritual poetry becomes less important daily life. It disappears and acquires a different purpose during the socialist reconstruction of society. Some ritual songs become lyrical; others satirical and still others become part of children’s folklore.

(C) Ballads

Etymologically, the word ballad has been taken from Latin word ballare, which means dancing song.

According to Lazar (1993) states that ballad is a short stanza. F.B Gum has defined the ballad as “a poem meant for singing, quite impersonal in material, probably connected in its origins with the communal dance but submitted to a process of oral traditions among people who are free from literary influences and fairly homogeneous in character”.

There are two kinds of ballad. The first one is folk story, or traditional ballad which was developed in ancient time and handed down to our generation by word of mouth as a verbal poetry. The second one is literary ballad which is an imitation of the traditional ballad. The difference between the two kinds is the authorship. The author of literary ballad is known is a known personality while the author of traditional ballad is anonymous.

(D) Lyric Songs

Lyric songs fall under the category of lyric poetry.

Lyric poetry expresses personal emotions or thoughts of the speaker. lyric poems always have a musical quality, or specific melody which make it easy to be sung.

Lyric poetry is short and written in the first-person point of view. All lyric poems are known for brevity, emotional intensity and musical quality. Sonnet is one type of lyric poem which is divided into two types. They are the Italian sonnet and the English or Shakespearean. The Elegy is another type lyric poem. Elegies commemorate the dead. The third lyric poem is the Ode. Odes are often about positive topics such as truth, love, art, freedom and justice (Lazar, 1994).

Readers of Short Stories

Readers in general can be categorized into two types. They are the mature and immature readers. Mature readers read many genres of literature while the immature readers mainly read escapist literature. Mature readers do not fix certain demands like happy endings on the write limit range to certain genres.

In regard to short stories, immature readers demand they story which contains a theme that confirms their own beliefs. On the other side, mature readers take deep pleasure in fiction which deals significantly with life. Immature readers demand that the story gives them a flattering picture of him and the world. Mature readers expect complex realistic characters. Immature readers demand a sympathetic protagonist with whom he can identify. Mature readers expect plots and themes that may challenge their beliefs. Immature readers demand a plot consisting of continuous excitement and suspense. Mature readers expect plot and themes that may challenge their views of reality. Immature readers demand happy, satisfying ending (Maley, 2001).

Readers like reading short stories. They are the perfect length to read for travelling to work on public transport, or relaxing before bed. Moreover, the time cost to write a short story is much less than a novel. So, having no time to read is one of the major reasons which make people stop reading books (Nunan, 2011).

The second reason why readers read short stories is that the reader will expect a wonderful feeling to come.

It is a feeling of accomplishment and pleasure of finishing the story.

The third reason why readers read short stories is that reading them is an incentive to read more stories especially when what they read haven't met their expectation. So, readers will be more open to try reading completely different stories. The fourth reason why readers read short stories is that it is a convenient way to try new genres and authors (McRea, 1991).

When readers are not satisfied with what they read, they think of refreshing their reading list by trying titles, authors or genres. They check out short stories or short story genres collections from genres or authors they plan to read. Sometimes, after readers finish a long novel, it is good

Hypothesis (3): EFL students have positive attitudes towards the use of short stories in enhancing writing skill.

Table No (1) I increase my active vocabulary while studying short stories.

Answer	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	20	28.6%
Agree	40	57.1%
Not sure	4	5.7%
Disagree	2	2.9%
Strongly Disagree	4	5.7%
Total	70	100%

It is clear from the above table (4.1) that there are (20) participants in the study's sample with percentage (28.6%) strongly agree with "I increase my active vocabulary while studying short stories.". There are (40) participants with percentage (57.1%) agree with that and (4) participants with percentage (5.7 %) are not sure. and

to have a break and refresh their minds by reading a short story. The final reason that makes reader read short stories is that it is to bring back the habit of daily reading because they are suitable to be read in short chunk (Padley, 2006).

Results and Discussion

The researcher used the questionnaire as the main tool for collecting the data related to this study. The researcher has designed the questionnaire to find out EFL students' concepts about the role of short stories in students' writing.

The tables and percentages below illustrate what has been stated above.

(2) participants with percentage (2.9%) disagree, while (4) participants with percentage (5.7%) strongly disagree. The majority of respondents strongly agree with the given statement this indicates that short stories increase students' active vocabulary in writing process.

Table No (2) Short stories assist me to improve my communicative competence

Answer	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	30	42.9%
Agree	25	35.7%
Not sure	5	7.1%
Disagree	7	10.0%
Strongly Disagree	3	4.3%
Total	70	100%

It is clear from the above table (2) that there are (30) participants in the study's sample with percentage (42.9%) strongly agree with "Short stories assist me to improve my communicative competence.". There are (25) participants with percentage (35.7%) agree with that and (5) persons with percentage (7.1 %) are not sure. and

(7) participants with percentage (10.0%) disagree, while (3) participants with percentage (4.3%) strongly disagree. The majority of respondents strongly agree with the given statement this indicates that short stories assist students improve communicative competence.

Table No (3) Short story can be associated with my own experience in real life

Answer	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	32	45.7%
Agree	27	38.6%
Not sure	7	10.0%
Disagree	3	4.3%
Strongly Disagree	1	1.4%
Total	70	100%

It is clear from the above table (3) that there are (32) participants in the study's sample with percentage (45.7%) strongly agree with Short story can be associated with my own experience in real life..". There are (27) persons with percentage (38.6%) agree with that and (7) participants with percentage (10.0 %) are not sure. and

(3) persons with percentage (4.3%) disagree, while (1) participants with percentage (1.4%) strongly disagree. The majority of respondents strongly agree with the given statement this indicates that short stories associate students' experience with real situation.

Table No (4) Reading simplified short stories can enhance my speaking skill.

Valid	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	40	56.1%
Agree	26	35.7%
Not sure	0	0.0%
Disagree	3	4.3%
Strongly Disagree	2	2.9%
Total	70	100%

It is clear from the above table (4) that there are (40) participants in the study's sample with percentage (56.1%) strongly agree with "Reading simplified short stories can enhance my speaking skill." There are (25) participants with percentage (35.7%) agree with that and (0) participants with

percentage (0.0 %) are not sure. and (3) participants with percentage (4.3%) disagree, while (2) participants with percentage (2.9%) strongly disagree. The majority of respondents strongly agree with the given statement this indicates that short stories can enhance students' speaking too.

Table No (5) I grasp the meaning of idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs which are found in the short stories.

Answer	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	35	50.0%
Agree	30	42.9%
Not sure	0	0.0%
Disagree	2	2.9%
Strongly Disagree	3	4.2%
Total	70	100%

It is clear from the above table (5) that there are (35) participants in the study's sample with percentage (50.0%) strongly agree with "I grasp the meaning of idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs which are found in the short stories." There are (30) participants with percentage (42.9%) agree with that and (0) participants with percentage (0.0 %) are not sure. and (2) persons with percentage (2.9%) disagree, while (3) participants with percentage (4.2%) strongly disagree. The majority of respondents strongly agree with the given statement this indicates that short stories enable students understand idiomatic expressions

Discussion

The data collected was analyzed in relation to the first hypothesis of the study. The data was collected through questionnaire which had been administered to University students.

Having analyzed and compared the results with the first hypothesis, the results have shown that short stories have positive role and effect on students' writing. That is to say short story technique is one important factor for well-connected writing. Short stories should be employed in writing process so that students can make use of it in writing process.

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