

The Role of Reading Short Stories in enhancing EFL Secondary Schools Students' Paragraph Writing from the Teachers point of view

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Abstract

The study aims at **investigating the Role of Reading Short Stories in enhancing EFL Secondary Schools Students' Paragraph Writing from the Teachers point of view.** The study was applied on a purposeful sample of second year secondary school's students in a governmental school in Khartoum. This study is mainly done through a questionnaire delivered to the sample of trained teachers of English language who have been teaching in secondary level in order to have their points of view, advice, comments and suggestions. The total number of the sample is eighty (males and females) teachers represent all participant in Khartoum state. The teachers were asked to answer the questionnaire by put tick in appropriate box / es which represent their point of view. The Content validity and reliability were established for the instrument. It was 0.89 for the questionnaire. This study recommended that Teachers have to use short stories in order to enable the students practice paragraph writing, also joining sentences could be mastered by using short stories reading. Students need to be provided with opportunities to practice using short stories reading that will enhance their paragraph writing. During lesson time there should be extensive exercise to develop the students paragraph writing.

Keywords: investigating, Short Stories, reading, Development, second year, paragraph writing, suggestions.

المستخلص:

هدفت الدراسة إلى التحقق من أثر قراءة القصص القصيرة في تعزيز كتابة الفقرة لطلاب المدارس الثانوية من وجهة نظر المعلمين. تم تطبيق الدراسة على عينة هادفة من طلاب الصف الثاني الثانوي في أحد المدارس الحكومية بالخرطوم. تمت هذه الدراسة بشكل أساسي من خلال استبيان تم إرساله إلى عينة من معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية المدرسين الذين يدرسون في المرحلة الثانوية من أجل الحصول على وجهات نظرهم ونصائحهم وتعليقاتهم واقتراحاتهم. بلغ العدد الكلي للعينة ثمانين معلماً (ذكور وإناث) يمثلون جميع المشاركين بولاية الخرطوم. طُلب من المعلمين الإجابة على الاستبيان عن طريق وضع علامة في المربع / المربعات المناسبة التي تمثل وجهة نظرهم. تم إنشاء صلاحية وموثوقية المحتوى للأداة. كان 0.89 للاستبيان. أوصت هذه الدراسة بضرورة استخدام المدرسين للقصص القصيرة من أجل تمكين الطلاب من ممارسة كتابة الفقرة، كما يمكن إتقان جمل الانضمام باستخدام قراءة القصص القصيرة. يجب تزويد الطلاب بفرص لممارسة استخدام قراءة القصص القصيرة التي من شأنها تحسين كتابة فقرتهم. خلال وقت الدرس، يجب أن يكون هناك تمرين مكثف لتطوير كتابة الفقرة للطلاب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحقيق، قصص قصيرة، قراءة، تطوير، السنة الثانية، كتابة فقرة، اقتراحات.

Introduction

Ritlyová (2014) "Short story reading is considered a basic activity when using literary texts in the language teaching. At a basic level, everyone is familiar with the

reading skill. No matter whether students know the alphabet and are able to connect the single letters into words and sentences, they still need to learn reading strategies in learning a foreign language.

Skill in writing like all skills takes time to develop and can only develop when learners are given many opportunities to read. Language teachers can use many strategies they can use to build and improve writing skills when teaching short stories reading”.

According to Langer (1995): “Literature plays a critical role in our life, often without our notice. It helps us to explore both ourselves and others, to define and redefine who we are, who we might become, and how the world might be..... In its best sense, literature is intellectually provocative as well as humanizing, allowing to use various angles of vision to examine thoughts, beliefs, and actions.”

Langer (1997) describes the traditional second language classroom in which literature is absent. In such classroom, learners do not have a chance to practice language through personal and meaningful engagement and are often limited to studying language in texts through low-level literal questions. Learners “are often given short passages and fill in exercises meant to develop their English skills before being provided with context that permits them to use those skills in interesting and meaningful ways.” Consequently, such reading experience can have a negative effect on students’ attitude to and confidence in reading authentic materials, and may often lead to reluctance in reading in English for pleasure (Cho and Krashen (2001).

Benefits of Using Literature

With reference to the benefits of using literature in language learning, Collie and Slater (1990) state that there are four reasons for using literature in the classroom: valuable authentic material, cultural enrichment, language enrichment and personal involvement. Furthermore, Heath (1996) indicates, “Literature has no

rival in its power to create natural repetition, reflection on language and how it works, and attention to audience response on the part of learners.” Thus, integrating literature into L2 learning can create a learning environment that will provide comprehensible input and a low affective filter Rodrigo et al (2004).

Strong (1996) also argues that literature should form an important part of any language teaching class because it offers a rich source for learning reading. Literature may form part of communicative pedagogy in three different ways: 1) providing a context for in which to develop students’ reading strategies and knowledge of non-fiction and literary texts; 2) forming the basis for an extensive reading program with the attendant acquisition of new vocabulary as well as grammatical forms; 3) offering the opportunity to explore cross-cultural values.

Widdowson (1977) draws our attention to the important point that literary texts have a unique advantage over non-literary ones. Literary texts depend heavily on the reader’s interpretation. A literary work is “separate, self-contained” with its language structured into “patterns of recurring sounds, structures and meanings” on symbolic and thematic levels.

Recent research shows that literature can play a positive role in L2 learning Cho, Ahn, and Krashen(2005); Hess (2006). Learners show increase in vocabulary Wang and Guthrie (2004), and significant gain in reading comprehension Holden (2003). In addition, literature provides L2 learners with a combination of pleasurable and comprehensible texts Krashen(2004). This will help learners to develop a positive attitude towards reading in a second language.

This positive attitudinal change is likely to lead to more independent reading which can be beneficial for their language acquisition Kim(2004). According to Dornyei (2005), using literature in the classroom can help in “creating an overall positive motivational climate in the classroom.” Creating a rich literature second language environment will enhance learners’ intrinsic reading motivation Morrow(2004).

Literature presents a rich source of vocabulary. Beck and McKeown’s (2001) research showed that *explicit* vocabulary activities resulted in a significant increase in vocabulary. Dixon-Krauss (2002) and Kuhn and Stahl (1998) reviewed research that investigated the effect of literary text context on vocabulary development. They concluded that the vast majority of learned words did not come from direct instruction but were learned *incidentally*. Research in second language shows similar results Wang and Guthrie (2004); Holden(2003).

Using Stories to Teach Language

Literature-based language instruction is primarily a meaning-oriented approach Rosenkjar(2006), formal grammar instruction may partially be integrated into the context of literary texts Elley(1997). As stated by Heath (1996,), literature has no rival in its power to create *natural repetition*. For example, the following short story provides a natural context for repeating the grammatical structures “Can you break this bundle of sticks, son?”and “The son tried but he couldn’t” several times. The story may also be used to teach regular and irregular verbs. Learners’ attention may also be drawn to the contracted form, which is a feature of conversational English.

Once upon a time, an old man lived happily with his sons in a small village. The man wanted to teach his sons the last lesson before his death. He brought a bundle of sticks and called his sons. “Can you break this bundle of sticks, son?”, the father said to his eldest son. The eldest son tried but he couldn’t. “Can you break this bundle of sticks, son?”, the father said to his second son. The second son tried but he couldn’t. “Can you break this bundle of sticks, son?”, the father said to his youngest son. The youngest son tried but he couldn’t. Then, the father untied the bundle. He gave each son one stick. “Now can you break the stick?”, the father said to his sons. Each son broke the stick. The father said to his sons: “Now, have you learned the lesson?”

Statement of the Problem

Writing skills for EFL students is a sophisticated process. The main reason might be that writing skills needed the students to master the use of the language components. The problem of the students writing skills could be solved by using short stories reading. So the aim of, this study focus on developing the students writing skills by using short story reading. Hence, Short stories reading is one of the most effective method in language learning.

The Significance of the Study

The significance of this paper is to identify how to reinforce paragraph writing skills through using short stories reading. This paper concentrates on how to achieve effective paragraph writing through teaching short stories reading. The importance of this study is to use short stories reading as means of development for the students’ paragraph writing and creates effective teaching environment.

Objectives of this Study

This paper attempts to achieve the following objectives:

- To identify how to improve EFL students writing skills in English language through using short stories reading.
- To enhance EFL students writing skills by focusing more attention on using short stories reading in the classroom.

The purpose of this study is to improve Secondary school EFL students in writing skills. In this regard, one of the most important techniques for enhancing teaching and learning processes for the students is literature in term of short stories reading. Using literature such as novels, short stories, plays and poetry are seen as of great benefit in developing Sudanese Secondary school's students paragraph writing. These literature works are the meaningful and playful contexts for young learners. The purpose beyond using these type of literature is to make writing proficiency more effective.

Methodology

The researcher used an experimental approach. To reinforce EFL students writing skills through short stories reading. This study implemented two steps procedures: Data collection and data analysis. Data were gathered from teachers of English through questionnaire. The questionnaire targets (80) the male and female teachers who have been Teaching English Language. As a tool of data collection the questionnaire of this study covered some variables items which were determined. It has one part consisted of (15) questions printed in two pages. The piloting of the questionnaire was done by 10 teachers. To test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire that applied

to teachers' reactions during class lessons. The statements of questionnaire were designed and checked by teachers, then manipulated using the features of statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS), through Pearson Coefficient Factor Test (for the validity of the questionnaire) and Alpha Cranach's (for the reliability of the questionnaire).

On the other hand, validity of the test and questionnaire was used to measure and to identify the validity degree among respondents according to their answers on the tests and their observations on the statements which analyzed by the SPSS. In the validity of the test and questionnaire were the tools should measure the exact aims, which they had been designed for.

Subjects

The population of this study was the teachers at secondary governmental schools in Khartoum south. The questionnaire includes items related to how short stories reading helps in the development of EFL students paragraph writing. Teachers are asked to express their point of view by checking the boxes/s that express their own opinions.

Materials of the Study

The researcher distributed the questionnaire for about (80) teachers to collect data. To achieve the objectives of the study and to verify hypotheses, statistical methods were used the following:

1. Frequency distribution of the answers.
2. Percentages.
3. Charts.

To get accurate results, the researcher has used statistical software SPSS, which indicates a shortcut to Statistical Package for Social Sciences. This study included eighty English language teachers from Khartoum south.

Table (1) illustrates the frequency and percentage for Short Stories reading helps students understand sentence structure

Value	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly agree	59	73.75%
Agree	20	25.0%
Undecided	0	0.0%
Disagree	1	1.25%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
Total	80	100.0%

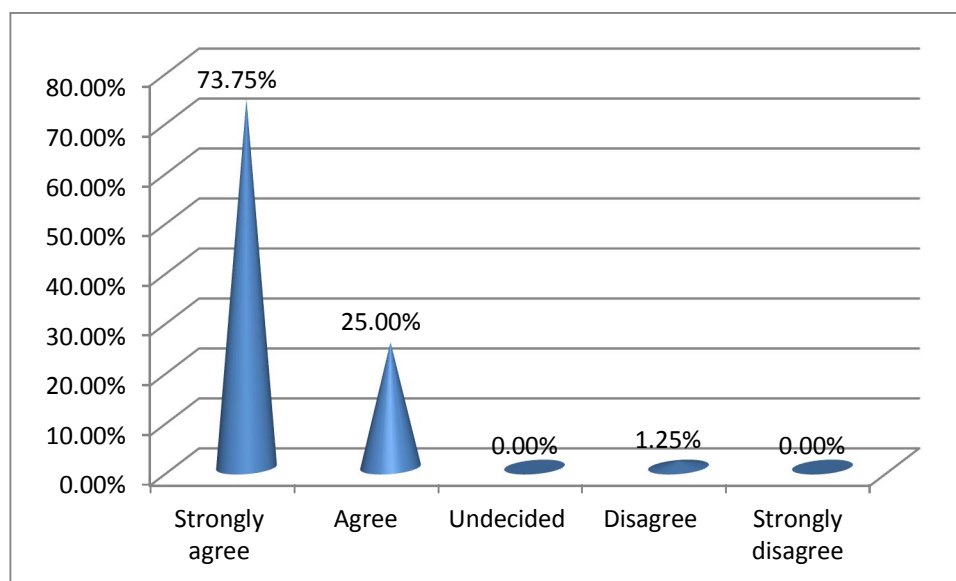


Table (1) illustrates the views of the distribution of the sample by strongly agree by (%73.75) and agree by (%25.0) and undecided by (%0.0) and disagree by (%1.25) and strongly disagree by (%0.0).

Table (2) illustrates the frequency and percentage for Short Stories reading enables students to write well-formed sentences

Value	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly agree	57	71.25%
Agree	21	26.25%
Undecided	1	1.25%
Disagree	1	1.25%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
Total	80	100.0%

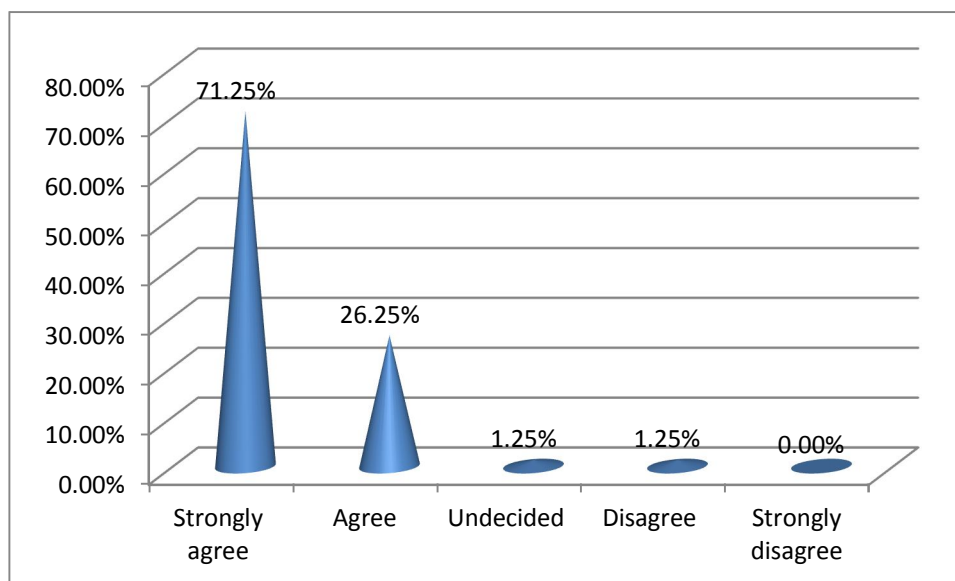


Table (2) illustrates the views of the distribution of the sample by strongly agree by (%71.25) and agree by (%26.25) and undecided by (%1.25) and disagree by (%1.25) and strongly disagree by (%0.0).

Table (3) illustrates the frequency and percentage for EFL Students can use punctuation marks by doing extensive exercises in Short Stories reading

Value	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly agree	31	38.75%
Agree	37	46.25%
Undecided	6	7.5%
Disagree	5	6.25%
Strongly disagree	1	1.25%
Total	80	100.0%

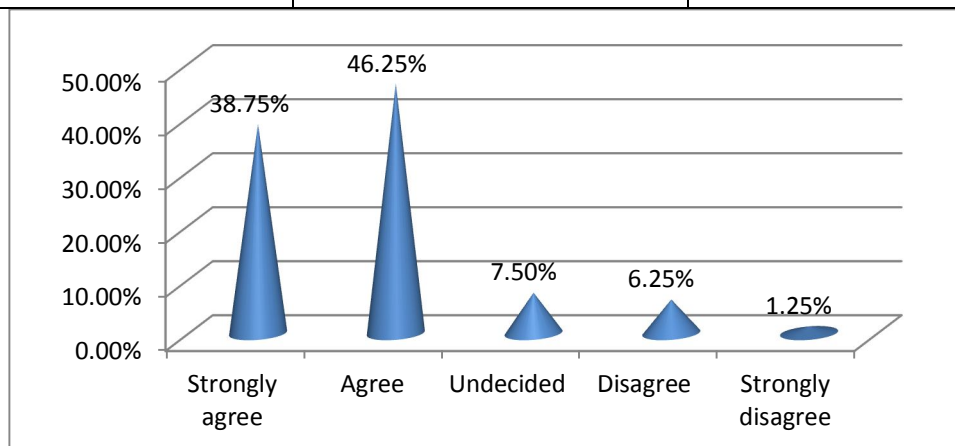


Table (3) illustrates the views of the distribution of the sample by strongly agree by (%38.75) and agree by (%46.25) and undecided by (%7.5) and disagree by (%6.25) and strongly disagree by (%1.25).

Table (4) illustrates the frequency and percentage for Short Stories reading enhances EFL students' knowledge in paragraph writing

Value	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly agree	35	43.75%
Agree	32	40.0%
Undecided	6	7.5%
Disagree	7	8.75%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
Total	80	100.0%

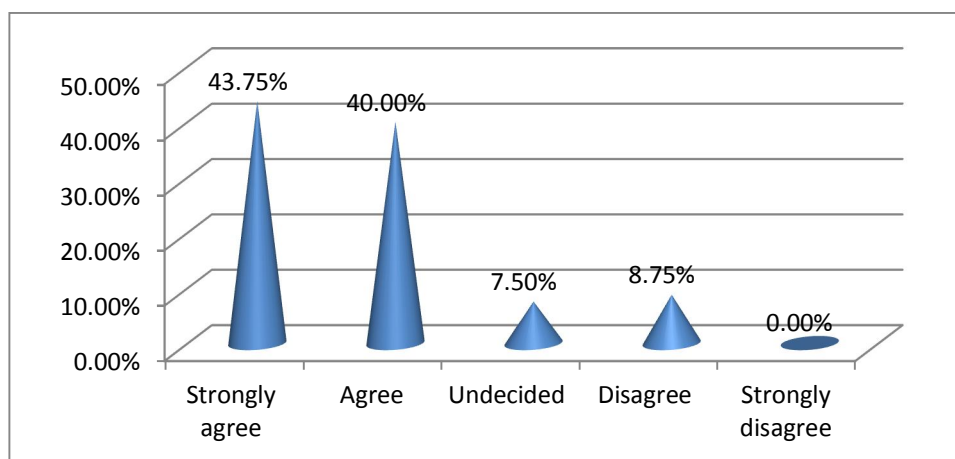


Table (4) illustrates the views of the distribution of the sample by strongly agree by (%43.75) and agree by (%40.0) and undecided by (%7.5) and disagree by (%8.75) and strongly disagree by (%0.0).

Table (5) illustrates the frequency and percentage for EFL students positively learn to join English sentences through short stories reading

Value	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly agree	41	51.25%
Agree	33	41.25%
Undecided	3	3.75%
Disagree	1	1.25%
Strongly disagree	2	2.5%
Total	80	100.0%

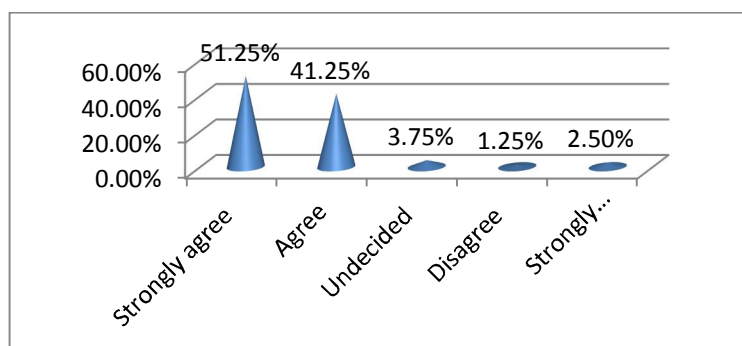


Table (5) illustrates the views of the distribution of the sample by strongly agree by (%51.25) and agree by (%41.75) and undecided by (%3.75) and disagree by (%1.25) and strongly disagree by (%2.5).

Results Discussion

Is there an effect of using short stories on the development of EFL students paragraph writing? Teachers attitudes toward this assume positive This hypothesis translated the question into the following hypothesis:

1- Short Stories reading helps students understand sentence structure. According to table (1), the previous results concluded that (%73.75) of the teachers strongly agree with the hypothesis whereas (%0.0) strongly disagree which means that using short stories on the development of the EFL students to understand sentence structure which will improve during the application of the study. In light of the above, the researchers indicated that the new method “Short Stories reading” as a method of teaching supports the students paragraph writing, so the researchers think that teachers should adopt it with their students in their classes.

2- Short Stories reading enables students to write well-formed sentences. According to the table (2), the previous results concluded that (%71.25) of teachers strongly agree that Short Stories reading is fruitful could lead students to write well-formed sentences, which means that there was an effect of using short stories on the development of the EFL students paragraph writing and accuracy. Meanwhile (%0.0) strongly disagree with the hypothesis.

3- EFL Students can use punctuation marks by doing extensive exercises in

Short Stories reading. According to table (3), the previous results concluded that (%38.75) strongly agree and (%46.25) agree which means that EFL Students can use punctuation marks when using short stories reading and practice cohesive exercises. According to the above, the researchers indicated Short Stories reading enhance the students paragraph writing. So, the researchers think that teachers should use it with their students in their classes and encourage them to give great deal with short stories.

4- Short Stories reading enhances EFL students’ knowledge in paragraph writing. According to the table (4), the previous results concluded that (%43.75) of teachers strongly agree that Short Stories reading enhances EFL students’ knowledge in paragraph writing. Whereas (%40.0) agree with the hypothesis. This indicate that most of the teachers to large extent convinced with the use of short stories to enhance the students paragraph writing.

5- EFL students positively learn to join English sentences through short stories reading. According to the table (5), the previous results concluded that (%51.25) of teachers strongly agree that Short Stories reading enable EFL students to join English sentences when using short stories reading. Although (%41.75) agree strongly disagree with the hypothesis.

Conclusion

There is significant effect on enhancing paragraph writing through short story reading. This study focuses on improving and reinforcing students paragraph writing. So, Short stories reading enable the students to join English language sentences, enhances EFL students' knowledge in paragraph writing, enables students to write well-formed sentences, helps students understand sentence structure and use punctuation marks in appropriate manner.

Recommendations

The recommendations based on the findings of this study as follows:

1. Teachers at secondary schools should have to use short story reading as it help the students to understand language structure which enhance paragraph writing.
2. Short Stories reading should be concentrated on in teaching language as it enables the students to write well-formed sentences consequently promote paragraph writing skills.
3. During lesson time there should be extensive exercise to develop the students paragraph writing.
4. training programs could be offered to train teachers on using the short stories reading technique. Students need to be provided with opportunities to practice using it

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