



Graduation Project Document Submitted to Department of General Education in Partial Fulfillment
for the Requirements for the Degree of A Bachelor of Education in English language teaching

The Role of Short Stories in Developing Reading and Writing Skills among EFL Learners

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Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family and many friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents, and my sisters and brothers. They were with me in every step, thank you for all power that you gave me.

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Abstract

This study is entitled with The Role of Short Stories in Developing Reading and Writing Skills among EFL Learners. It focuses on the importance of short stories in EFL classrooms. The study is conducted at Cihan University-Erbil (CUE). The importance of this study comes from the fact it focuses on using a specific kind of literature in the EFL classrooms for the purpose of developing the reading skill and writing skill of the learners. It follows the quantitative and qualitative methods. The participants are 75 EFL students at CUE. They were both males and females. The study has three hypotheses. The study concludes focusing on the importance of writing and reading skills development by using short stories. It recommends the EFL to pay more attention to the use of short stories in the EFL classrooms. This study is unique in terms of the outcomes which is possible to applied in other universities in Kurdistan Region-Iraq in specific and Iraq in general.

Keywords: EFL classrooms, EFL learner, writing, reading

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1. Background of the Study

The use of short stories for improving reading and writing skills in English as a second or foreign language (EFL) has drawn robust attention in recent years. In the light of this interest, a variety of tasks and activities have been devised in order to incorporate these two tools in foreign language (L2) teaching and learning. It is salient through the studies conducted that short stories can each create an encouraging and motivating atmosphere for EFL learners to better improve their reading and writing skills.

Short stories serve quite effectively to improve learners' reading skills and vocabulary knowledge. For example, a study conducted by Lao and Krashen (2000) at a university in Hong Kong found that students who read short stories showed more improvement in vocabulary and reading than those who read nonliterary texts. In another study by Tse (1996), students were assigned two novels in addition to four other novels that they decided on as a group. No direct language instruction was done and the class time was devoted to discussions about the books and reading strategies. Students showed positive reactions to this application because they reported an improvement in their confidence and an increase in their enthusiasm about continuing to read in English.

There are also a number of studies that highlight the positive impact of the use of short stories on writing skills. For instance, Murdoch (2002) contends that low-level learners can be asked to write short dialogues or describe one of the characters in the story in order to foster their writing skills. He also asserts that by using short stories, intermediate-level language learners can write some dialogues and act them out, allowing them to augment their writing skills. As for learners with a high language proficiency level, he suggests that they can be assigned more complex writing tasks such as writing a new ending to the story.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The EFL learners always have problems in English language skills especially reading and writing. They also have different levels of proficiency in reading and writing skills. They also face these problems even after graduation. Some of the future EFL teachers (today-students) also have some problems with their students.

1.2. Significance of the Study

The study is considered unique in terms of the fact that it investigates the relationship between a specific kind of literature which is short stories and two main skills which are reading and writing. Both skills are crucial and necessary for any EFL learners. Another point is that this study is concerned with developing the EFL learner-skills and the results can be applicable with other EFL learners.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

Short stories can also be used to teach language learners how to read or write a text from different perspectives by utilizing different registers in their tasks. For example, in a study by Birlik and Salli-Copur (2007), the learners were asked to write three different letters to (a) an advice column (the agony aunt) of a well-known newspaper, (b) a friend, and (c) a lawyer from the view of a character in the story, who asks for advice after her ex-fiancé is reported missing. With this particular activity, learners had the opportunity to practice different registers by varying the people to whom they wrote the letters, thus enabling learners to enhance their writing competence. The current study mainly aims at developing the reading and writing competences and skills.

1.4. Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ₁. To which extent do short stories develop reading skill of EFL learners?

RQ₂. To which extent do short stories develop writing skill of EFL learners?

RQ₃. What are the students' attitudes toward the efficacy of short story in developing reading and writing skills?

1.5. Definition of Key Terms

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

Reading Skill: it is a receptive skill. it is one of the four skills in Language Learning/Teaching field in addition to the other skills like 1. Writing, 2. listening and 3. Speaking.

Writing Skill: It is a productive skill. It is one of the four skills in Language Learning/Teaching field in addition to the other skills like 1. Reading, 2. listening and 3. Speaking.

1.6. Organization of the Research

This study has five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction of the project. It includes background of the study, problem statement, Significance of the Study, Purpose of the Study, Research Questions and Hypotheses and Definition of Key Terms. Chapter two discusses the literature review, History of Literature in ELT, Why Short Stories? Choosing the Text, Short Stories and Language Skills Development, Reading, Writing and Gaps of the Study. Chapter three includes Research Design, Participants, Materials & Instruments, Reading Habits, Usage of Short Stories, Writing Skills, Engagement and Interest, Classroom Experience, Suggestions and Feedback, Overall Perception and Data Analysis. Chapter four includes Answering the Research Questions, and Discussion. Chapter five includes Conclusion, Implications, and Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. History of Literature in ELT

It is an indisputable fact that teaching literature is an important part of foreign language teaching. As a reflection of culture of the society in which the language is spoken, literature should be included in all curricula. Literature is an authentic material and by reading literary texts students face language written for native speakers and try to understand the texts. They also have to learn literary features such irony, exposition, climax, narration and so on (Collie & Slater, 1988, pp. 3-4).

In this way, literature develops readers' language and literary awareness. It is very motivating and it provides them with an understanding of another culture (Lazar, 1993, pp. 14-15). Together with learning about the culture, students also learn about the past and present and about people's customs and traditions (Erkaya, 2005). It can also be used to reinforce the language skills and complement language teaching (Erkaya, 2005). Literature promotes students' creativity (Brumfit & Carter, 2000, p.193). It can stimulate the imagination of students, develop their critical abilities and increase their emotional awareness (Lazar, 1993, p.19). Another aim of using literature in language teaching is to encourage students to read and experience it for their personal enrichment (Pieper, 2006, p.5). While reading literary texts, the interaction between the reader and the text is very important; personal interpretations and analysis of literature are based on not only the textual elements but also the readers' personal views, experiences and feelings (cited in Khatib, 2011, p. 151). Cruz believes that studying literature enables students to construct their own interpretation and reflection, according to their own experience, by thinking critically and comparing and contrasting two different cultures. As long as readers pay attention to what they are reading and they feel close to the characters and share their emotions, they will feel they are getting possessions of an unknown territory (Collie & Slater, 1988, p.6). Vandrick states that literature motivates students to explore their own feelings through experiencing feelings of the characters in literature (cited in Erkaya, 2005). As can be seen literature is necessary and beneficial in EFL classrooms. However, what to teach in literature is the crucial point. Carter and Long (1991) emphasize this point as in the following: To encourage personal growth the teacher has to stimulate and enliven students in the literature class by selecting texts to which students can respond and in which they can participate imaginatively, by promoting the kind of conditions for learning in the classroom which will make the reading of literature a memorable, individual and collective experience and,

above all, by enthusiasm for and commitment to the teaching of literature as literature. (p. 3) The second step in literature teaching in EFL classrooms is to decide which genre should be taught first. Short story has some advantages to teach compared to other genres. Collie & Slater (1988, p. 196) claim that short stories are the ideal way of introducing students to literature. The short story provides the teacher with a rather convenient vehicle for examining literary elements in a limited context. Crumbley & Smith (2010, p. 292) state that short stories connect education with entertainment in order to make learning easier and interesting. Short stories provoke emotions in us. They inform us how people can behave; they teach us something about human psychology. In reading a story, we can recognize and understand ourselves and others (Crumbley & Smith, 2006, p. 4). By analysing the short stories, students start thinking critically. On the other hand, students believe that literature is something that is boring and difficult to understand. Lack of literary competence, they believe that they cannot interpret what the idea given in the literary text is. With this anxiety, mostly they refuse to read literature. In English language teaching departments, there are some literature courses, which are compulsory. In these courses the students are expected to be familiar with literature and literary terms and also, they should gain ability to use them in their language classes. The students of English language teaching departments are not expected to improve their literary competence as much as those of literature departments. In ELT department, literature is only a means of teaching the foreign language. Therefore, to appreciate literature, to enjoy it and to get benefits from literature will be enough for such students. With these ideas in mind, the students of ELT department of Akdeniz University were exposed to short stories to develop their literary awareness and their abilities to use them. They were expected not only to analyze the short stories but also to develop some activities to teach them in language classroom. At the beginning of the course, they were mostly anxious and against the idea of studying literature. After finishing the education for two months, and reading 7 stories, it was observed that their points of view for the course changed in a positive way. They started to enjoy literature, join the discussions and activities in class. This was the starting point of this study. It was tried to find out if the changes observed would reflect from the ideas of the students in terms of studying short story.

2.2. Why Short Stories?

Despite its benefits for students, some objections are always raised against the use of literature in public schools due to overcrowded classes, overloaded syllabus and limited time—some problems commonly met in elementary to high public schools in almost all developing countries. First, the deviated and figurative language of poetry necessitates very long time to grasp. Second, the length of novel will make it difficult for such classes to finish. Finally, drama can be used in classes, but it will be difficult to act out a play in crowded classes within limited course hours. Considering these objections, it is obvious that among literary forms, short-story, which is defined by Poe (as cited in Abrams, 1997, p. 158) “as a 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”, seems to be the most suitable one to use in public schools. Since it is short, and aims at giving a ‘single effect’, there is usually one plot, a few characters; there is no detailed description of setting. So, it is easy for the students to follow the story line of the work.

The idea that short stories are the most suitable literary genre to use in English teaching due to its shortness is supported by Hirvela and Boyle’s (2006) study on adult Hong Kong Chinese students' attitudes towards four genres of literary texts (short story, novel, poetry and drama) indicated short stories as the genre that is less feared and the second most enjoyed (43%; the novel is the most enjoyed with 44%), since short stories are easy to finish and definite to understand. The idea is also in line with Collie and Slater (1991, p.196) when they list four advantages of using short stories for language teachers. First, short stories are practical as their length is long enough to cover entirely in one or two class sessions. Second, short stories are not complicated for students to work with on their own. Third, short stories have a variety of choice for different interests and tastes. Finally, short stories can be used with all levels (beginner to advance), all ages (young learners to adults) and all classes (morning, afternoon, or evening classes).

The idea that short stories are very suitable to use in English teaching is supported by Pardede’s (2021) research findings on the interest, perceptions, and the perceived needs of the students of the English teachers training of Christian University of Indonesia towards the

incorporation of short story in language skills classes. The research revealed that a majority of the respondents basically found short stories interesting to use both as materials for self-enjoyment and of as components language skill classes. Most of them also agreed or strongly agreed that the incorporation of short stories in language skills classes will help learners achieve better mastery of language skills. They even believed that English teacher candidates should master the skills of employing short stories to teach language skills. In addition, the statistical analysis revealed that the students' interest and perceptions were positively and significantly correlated, and both variables significantly affected each other.

2.3. Choosing the Text

The use of short-story in English teaching should be aimed to encourage the students to use what they have previously learnt. By doing this, the learning process will be student-centered. However, the teacher plays a great role.

She/he must choose a suitable text to use in class, and should help her/his students understand the story with various activities.

In using short stories to teach English, story selection is indeed one of the most important roles of the teacher. Since the lengths of short-stories quite vary, choose a story short enough to handle within course hours.

The shortness of the text is important for the students because they will see that they can read, understand and finish something in English, and it will give the students a feeling of achievement and self-confidence.

Besides the length of the text, Hill (1994, p. 15) points out three other basic criteria of choosing the text: (1) the needs and abilities of the students; (2) the linguistic and stylistic level of the text; (3) the amount of background information required for a true appreciation of the material.

The importance of considering these criteria could be perceived by realizing that the vocabulary and sentence structure of the short-story to be studied must be suitable to the level of the students. The short-stories with archaic, slang, foreign words, and allusions, having

sentences imitating the speech of a particular locality or ignorant people or foreigners should be avoided if the text is intended for students below intermediate level. Similarly, very long sentences are difficult for students to understand. As students will not understand these sentences and words, they will get bored and not read the work. Therefore, before giving the short-story, the teacher should decide the readability of the text.

In order to meet that readability criterion, using graded or simplified stories is possibly the most practical way. According to Ur (1996), "... the use of authentic' text with less proficient learners is often frustrating and counterproductive" (p. 150). Therefore, the use of simplified text with less proficient readers is highly suggested for the sake of suiting the texts with the level of students.

In addition to the previous criteria, Spack (1985) suggests the aspect of interest to be considered. According to him, it is important for the teacher to choose stories that would interest students that he/she most likes to read and teach, and that have been made into film to provide visual interpretation. McKay (2001, p. 322) pointed out that students read and enjoy a text if the subject-matter of the text is relevant to their life experience and interests.

2.4. Short Stories and Language Skills Development

Short stories allow teachers to teach the four skills to all levels of language proficiency. Murdoch (2002) indicates that "short stories can, if selected and exploited appropriately, provide quality text content which will greatly enhance ELT courses for learners at intermediate levels of proficiency" (p. 9). According to him, short stories could be very beneficial materials in ELT reinforcement by using them in learning activities such as, discussion, writing and acting out dialogues.

In the following sections, while showing how to exploit a short story to develop language skills, a series of activities is presented as a sample so that teachers get concrete ideas about how to use short stories in their EFL classrooms. A student-centered approach is presented in this sample. This approach allows more exploration of the short story, offers the students more opportunities to formulate their own ideas or feelings about the issue(s) as well as to improve their basic skills in the language learning process. To cater various learning styles, it is

necessary to devise various kinds of tasks and activities. All of them are carried out in English to immerse students in an English-speaking environment.

2.4.1. Reading

Short stories are very useful in the trials to improve students' vocabulary and reading. The results of Lao and Krashen's (2000) study which compared the reading achievement between a group of students that read literary texts and a second group that read non-literary texts at a university in Hong Kong revealed that the group who read literary texts made better improvement in vocabulary and reading. Using *A Long Walk Home* three activities can be conducted to help students to acquire more vocabulary. These activities are related to form, meaning, and use respectively.

2.4.2. Writing

Short story can be a powerful and motivating source for writing in ESL/EFL, both as a model and as subject matter. Short story as a model occurs when students' writing becomes closely similar to the original work or clearly imitates its content, theme, organization, and /or style. However, when student writing exhibits original thinking like interpretation or analysis, or when it emerges from, or is creatively stimulated by, the reading, literature serves as subject matter. In accordance with this, Oster (1989, p. 85) affirms that literature helps students to write more creatively.

2.3. Gaps of the Study

This study is different from other studies in terms of the facts that it provides and in addition to high validity and reliability that it has. Other studies focus on the different kinds of literature like prose or poetry, but this study focuses on the impact of a certain kind of literature, namely, short stories. Second, this study focuses on the writing skill and how this skill is developed by using short stories in the EFL classroom. Third, it focuses on students from a private Iraqi Kurdish university which is Cihan University-Erbil.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3. Introduction

Chapter 3 of this project presents a detailed account of the methodology employed to investigate the role of short stories in developing reading and writing skills among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. This chapter outlines the research design, data collection procedures, participant recruitment strategies, and data analysis techniques utilized in the study.

3.1. Research Design

The research design employed in this study was a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of short stories in developing reading and writing skills among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners.

3.1.1. Quantitative Component

The quantitative component of the research involved the administration of a structured questionnaire to a sample of EFL learners. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions designed to elicit quantitative data regarding participants' reading habits, usage of short stories in their English learning curriculum, perceptions of the effectiveness of short stories in improving reading and writing skills, engagement and interest in reading short stories, classroom experiences, and feedback and suggestions for incorporating short stories into language learning.

3.1.2. Qualitative Component:

In addition to the quantitative questionnaire, the study also incorporated a qualitative component involving semi-structured interviews with a subset of participants. The interviews were designed to elicit in-depth insights into participants' experiences, perspectives, and suggestions regarding the use of short stories in language learning.

3.1.3. Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Data:

The integration of quantitative and qualitative data allowed for a comprehensive examination of the research topic, enabling triangulation and validation of findings across multiple sources of data. By combining quantitative measures of frequency and distribution with qualitative narratives and

perspectives, the study aimed to provide a nuanced and holistic understanding of the role of short stories in developing reading and writing skills among EFL learners.

3.2. Participants

75 students were randomly selected from a pool of 300 students enrolled in the General English Department (GED) at Cihan University-Erbil. Out of the 75 students approached, 56 returned the questionnaires, constituting the final sample for this study.

The participants' first languages primarily included Kurdish and Arabic, reflecting the diverse linguistic backgrounds within the EFL learner population at the university. This diversity in first languages adds richness to the study by capturing a range of perspectives and experiences related to language learning and proficiency.

The age of the participants ranged from 20 to 27 years old, representing a relatively homogeneous age group within the young adult demographic. This age range is characteristic of undergraduate students at the university and is reflective of the typical age cohort engaged in language learning at the tertiary level.

3.3. Materials and Instruments

For the purpose of data collection, the researchers of the present study made use of a questionnaire consisting of eight sections, the first one of which was dealt with demographic issues. The other sections of the questionnaire are as follow.

3.3.1. Reading Habits

1. How often do you read in English?
 - This question aims to understand the frequency of reading among EFL learners. Analyzing the responses can provide insights into the reading habits of the participants, which can be useful in understanding their exposure to English text. This data can help assess the potential impact of incorporating short stories into their reading practices.

2. What types of reading materials do you prefer?

- This question explores the preferences of EFL learners regarding reading materials. Understanding their preferences can inform educators about the types of texts that are more likely to engage students. Analyzing the responses can help tailor reading materials to better suit the interests of the learners, potentially increasing their motivation and engagement with English texts.

3.3.2. Usage of Short Stories

1. Have you ever used short stories as part of your English learning curriculum?

- This question seeks to determine the extent to which short stories are integrated into the English learning curriculum of the participants. Analyzing the responses can provide insights into the prevalence of short story usage in language teaching contexts, which can help assess the familiarity of learners with this instructional approach.

2. How frequently are short stories used in your English classes?

- This question investigates the frequency of short story usage in English classes attended by the participants. Analyzing the responses can shed light on the implementation practices of educators regarding the integration of short stories into the curriculum. Understanding the frequency of usage can help gauge the opportunities provided to students for engaging with short stories and benefiting from their potential learning outcomes.

3. How do you perceive the effectiveness of short stories in improving your reading skills?

- This question aims to capture the learners' perceptions of the effectiveness of short stories in enhancing their reading skills. Analyzing the responses can provide insights into the perceived benefits of using short stories as a pedagogical tool. Understanding learners' perceptions is essential for evaluating the efficacy of instructional strategies and making informed decisions about their integration into language teaching practices.

4. Have short stories helped you to expand your vocabulary?

- This question assesses the perceived impact of short stories on vocabulary acquisition among EFL learners. Analyzing the responses can help determine whether participants attribute their vocabulary growth to their engagement with short stories. Understanding the role of short stories in vocabulary development can inform language educators about the potential benefits of incorporating them into the curriculum.

3.3.3. Writing Skills

1. Do you think reading short stories has improved your writing skills?

- This question investigates the learners' beliefs about the relationship between reading short stories and improving their writing skills. Analyzing the responses can provide insights into the perceived connection between reading comprehension and writing proficiency among EFL learners. Understanding learners' perspectives is valuable for assessing the perceived benefits of integrating short stories into language teaching practices.

2. In what specific ways do you think short stories have influenced your writing skills?

- This question aims to identify the perceived impacts of short stories on various aspects of writing skills, such as grammar, sentence structure, punctuation usage, and vocabulary. Analyzing the responses can help elucidate the specific areas in which participants believe their writing skills have been influenced by their engagement with short stories. Understanding these perceived influences can inform educators about the potential contributions of short stories to the development of writing proficiency among EFL learners.

3.3.4. Engagement and Interest

1. How do you feel about reading short stories in English?
 - This question explores the participants' attitudes towards reading short stories in English. Analyzing the responses can provide insights into the perceived enjoyability of this activity among EFL learners. Understanding learners' attitudes is crucial for designing engaging and motivating reading activities that promote language learning.
2. Do you think short stories have enhanced your interest in learning English?
 - This question investigates the learners' perceptions of the impact of short stories on their interest in learning English. Analyzing the responses can help determine whether participants attribute changes in their interest levels to their engagement with short stories. Understanding the role of short stories in enhancing motivation and interest can inform language educators about the potential motivational benefits of incorporating them into the curriculum.

3.3.5. Classroom Experience

1. How are short stories typically incorporated into your English classes?
 - This question aims to explore the common practices of integrating short stories into English classes attended by the participants. Analyzing the responses can provide insights into the instructional approaches used by educators to incorporate short stories into the curriculum. Understanding how short stories are typically utilized in the classroom can inform educators about effective pedagogical strategies for promoting reading and writing skills among EFL learners.
2. Do you feel that classroom discussions about short stories have been helpful in improving your understanding of English?
 - This question investigates the perceived benefits of classroom discussions about short stories on learners' understanding of English. Analyzing the responses can

help determine whether participants believe that engaging in discussions enhances their comprehension and language proficiency. Understanding the perceived benefits of classroom discussions can inform educators about the effectiveness of interactive instructional approaches in language teaching contexts.

3.3.6. Suggestions and Feedback

1. Do you have any suggestions on how short stories could be better utilized in the classroom to enhance reading and writing skills?
 - This open-ended question invites participants to provide suggestions for improving the utilization of short stories in the classroom to enhance reading and writing skills. Analyzing the responses can provide valuable insights into learners' perspectives on effective instructional practices and strategies for integrating short stories into language teaching contexts. Understanding learners' suggestions can inform educators about innovative approaches for optimizing the use of short stories as a pedagogical tool.

2. Any additional comments or feedback regarding the role of short stories in your English learning journey?
 - This open-ended question allows participants to share additional comments or feedback regarding the role of short stories in their English learning journey. Analyzing the responses can provide rich qualitative data on the perceived benefits, challenges, and experiences associated with engaging with short stories as a learning resource. Understanding learners' reflections can help educators gain deeper insights into the impact of short stories on language learning outcomes and inform future instructional practices.

3.3.7. Overall Perception

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate the overall impact of short stories on developing your reading and writing skills in English?

- This question asks participants to provide a numerical rating of the overall impact of short stories on developing their reading and writing skills in English. Analyzing the ratings can provide quantitative data on participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of short stories as a pedagogical tool. Understanding learners' overall perceptions can help evaluate the perceived value of integrating short stories into language teaching practices and inform decisions about instructional design and curriculum development.

3.4. Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process for this study involved several sequential steps to ensure systematic and comprehensive gathering of information from the participants. The procedure was designed to minimize bias and maximize the reliability and validity of the collected data. The following outlines the data collection procedure:

Prior to data collection, a comprehensive questionnaire was developed based on the research objectives and theoretical framework of the study. The questionnaire consisted of structured items designed to elicit information about participants' reading habits, usage of short stories, writing skills, engagement and interest, classroom experiences, suggestions and feedback, and overall perceptions of short stories in language learning.

Participants were randomly selected from the pool of students enrolled in the General English Department (GED) at [University Name]. An invitation to participate in the study, along with the questionnaire, was distributed to the selected participants either in person during class sessions or electronically via email.

Then, participants were provided with clear instructions on how to complete the questionnaire, including the importance of providing honest and accurate responses. They were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire at their convenience, ensuring that they could carefully consider each question and provide thoughtful responses.

Upon completion, participants were instructed to return the questionnaires through designated collection points, either in person or electronically, depending on their preference. Measures were taken to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of participants' responses to encourage open and honest feedback.

Once the questionnaires were collected, the data were verified for completeness and accuracy. Any missing or ambiguous responses were clarified with the participants if possible, and incomplete questionnaires were excluded from the final analysis.

3.5. Data Analysis

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, to summarize participants' responses and provide an overview of trends and patterns within the dataset. This quantitative analysis facilitated the identification of prevailing attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions among EFL learners regarding the role of short stories in language learning.

The qualitative data obtained from the open-ended questions were analyzed using thematic analysis, a systematic method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data. Through this process, recurring themes and emergent patterns in participants' responses were identified, providing rich qualitative insights into the perceived benefits, challenges, and recommendations associated with the use of short stories in EFL language learning contexts.

CHAPTER IV
RESULTS & DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

Chapter four of this thesis presents a comprehensive discussion of the findings obtained from the analysis of data collected in this study, focusing on the role of short stories in developing reading and writing skills among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. In this chapter, we delve into the implications of our results, compare them with previous research, and provide insights into the effectiveness of short story-based instruction in language learning contexts.

4.2. Answering the Research Questions

This section deals with the attempt with which the researchers of the present study answered the research questions. To this end, the researchers took every single section of the questionnaire into account and meticulously analyzed the questions inside the questionnaire. Therefore, each section of the questionnaire has been taken into consideration as follows.

4.2.1. Reading Habits

1. How often do you read in English?

- The majority of respondents (41%) reported reading in English daily, followed by 23% reading weekly, 18% reading monthly, and 18% never reading in English. This indicates that a significant portion of the participants engage in English reading regularly, which suggests they have opportunities to benefit from reading activities in the language.

2. What types of reading materials do you prefer?

- The most preferred type of reading material among the participants is short stories (43%), followed closely by novels (37%). Articles are preferred by 16% of respondents, while only 4% prefer poems. This preference for short stories and novels suggests that narrative-based texts are popular choices among EFL learners, which could be relevant to the effectiveness of using short stories in language learning contexts.

4.2.2. Usage of Short Stories:

1. Have you ever used short stories as part of your English learning curriculum?
 - A slight majority of respondents (52%) have used short stories as part of their English learning curriculum, indicating that short stories are relatively common instructional materials in the participants' language learning experiences.
2. How frequently are short stories used in your English classes?
 - Short stories are used occasionally in the English classes of a significant portion of respondents (43%), while 27% reported their very frequent usage, and 30% reported rare usage. This indicates that short stories are integrated into the curriculum with varying frequencies, suggesting differences in instructional practices among educators.
3. How do you perceive the effectiveness of short stories in improving your reading skills?
 - A substantial proportion of respondents perceive short stories as very effective in improving their reading skills (43%), while 39% perceive them as somewhat effective. This indicates that the majority of participants view short stories positively in terms of their impact on reading skills development.
4. Have short stories helped you to expand your vocabulary?
 - Nearly half of the respondents (48%) reported that short stories have helped them expand their vocabulary, suggesting that short stories are perceived as beneficial for vocabulary acquisition among EFL learners.

4.2.3. Writing Skills

1. Do you think reading short stories has improved your writing skills?
 - A significant majority of respondents (68%) believe that reading short stories has improved their writing skills, indicating a perceived positive relationship between engaging with short stories and writing proficiency.

2. In what specific ways do you think short stories have influenced your writing skills?

- Among the specific ways short stories have influenced respondents' writing skills, the most common response (41%) is that they have influenced all aspects, followed by grammar (23%), vocabulary (14%), punctuation usage (12%), and sentence structure (10%). This suggests that short stories are perceived to have a comprehensive impact on various aspects of writing skills among EFL learners.

4.2.4. Engagement and Interest

1. How do you feel about reading short stories in English?

- The majority of respondents (58%) find reading short stories in English enjoyable, while 29% feel neutral, and 13% find it tedious. This indicates that short stories are generally well-received among participants, with a significant proportion expressing enjoyment.

2. Do you think short stories have enhanced your interest in learning English?

- A considerable proportion of respondents (43%) believe that short stories have enhanced their interest in learning English, suggesting that narrative-based texts may contribute positively to learner motivation and engagement.

4.2.5. Classroom Experience

1. How are short stories typically incorporated into your English classes?

- Short stories are typically incorporated into English classes through various activities, with the most common being assignments based on the story (38%), followed by classroom discussions (22%), reading aloud (25%), and independent reading (15%). This indicates that short stories are integrated into the curriculum through diverse instructional approaches, providing opportunities for active engagement with the text.

2. Do you feel that classroom discussions about short stories have been helpful in improving your understanding of English?
 - A significant majority of respondents (68%) feel that classroom discussions about short stories have been helpful in improving their understanding of English, highlighting the perceived benefits of interactive learning activities centered around short stories.

4.2.6. Suggestions and Feedback

To analyze this very question, the researchers of the present study tried to find the most frequent themes based on the language learners' responses. What follows are the themes and their meticulous outlines.

Incorporating Multimedia Resources

Some participants may suggest incorporating multimedia resources, such as audio recordings or videos of short stories, to cater to different learning preferences and enhance comprehension. They may propose utilizing digital platforms or online resources to access a wide range of multimedia materials that complement traditional text-based short stories.

Implementing Interactive Activities

Participants may recommend incorporating interactive activities, such as group discussions, role-plays, or creative writing exercises inspired by short stories. They may emphasize the importance of hands-on, engaging activities that encourage active participation and foster critical thinking skills.

Providing Diverse Text Selection

Participants may advocate for providing a diverse selection of short stories that reflect various genres, themes, and cultural backgrounds. They may suggest incorporating stories from different countries and time periods to broaden students' perspectives and promote cultural awareness.

Fostering Collaborative Learning

Some participants may emphasize the benefits of collaborative learning experiences centered around short stories. They may suggest organizing collaborative projects or literature circles where students can discuss, analyze, and share their interpretations of the stories, fostering peer interaction and collaborative problem-solving.

Integrating Language Skills

Participants may recommend integrating reading and writing activities that target specific language skills, such as vocabulary development, grammar practice, and writing fluency. They may propose incorporating scaffolded tasks that gradually increase in complexity to accommodate learners' diverse proficiency levels.

Providing Guided Reflection and Feedback

Participants may highlight the importance of providing guided reflection and constructive feedback on students' reading and writing activities related to short stories. They may suggest implementing peer review sessions, teacher feedback, or self-assessment tools to facilitate continuous improvement and metacognitive awareness.

Addressing Individual Learning Needs

Participants may stress the importance of catering to individual learning needs and preferences when designing short story-based activities. They may suggest providing differentiated instruction, flexible grouping arrangements, or personalized learning pathways to accommodate diverse learning styles and abilities.

Promoting Authentic Language Use

Participants may underscore the value of promoting authentic language use through short story-based activities. They may advocate for integrating real-world tasks, such as writing letters, creating digital presentations, or participating in storytelling competitions, to enhance students' language proficiency and communicative competence.

Empowering Student Choice and Autonomy

Participants may advocate for empowering student choice and autonomy in selecting and analyzing short stories. They may suggest providing opportunities for student-led discussions, project-based learning, or independent reading initiatives that allow students to explore their interests and take ownership of their learning experiences.

Professional Development for Educators

Participants may highlight the importance of providing professional development opportunities for educators to enhance their knowledge and skills in effectively utilizing short stories in the classroom. They may suggest workshops, seminars, or online courses focused on innovative instructional strategies, assessment techniques, and technology integration to support teachers in implementing short story-based approaches effectively.

In the following, some of the most frequent quotes from the students regarding the above-mentioned themes have been provided:

Incorporating Multimedia Resources:

- I think it would be really helpful if we could listen to audio recordings of the short stories. Sometimes hearing the words spoken aloud helps me understand better, especially with pronunciation.
- Adding videos of short stories could make the reading experience more immersive. It would be like watching a mini-movie, and I think it would make the stories come to life.

Implementing Interactive Activities:

- I love the idea of doing role-plays based on the characters in the short stories. It would be fun to act out scenes and put ourselves in their shoes.
- Having group discussions about the themes and messages of the stories would be great. It's always interesting to hear different interpretations and share our own insights.

Providing Diverse Text Selection:

- I'd love to read short stories from different cultures and time periods. It would help us understand how literature varies around the world and learn about different perspectives.
- Including stories with diverse characters and settings would make the reading more relatable and interesting. It's important to see ourselves reflected in the stories we read.

Fostering Collaborative Learning:

- Working on projects with classmates based on the short stories sounds like a great idea. It would give us a chance to collaborate and learn from each other's ideas.
- Having literature circles where we can discuss the stories in small groups would be really beneficial. It's nice to have a more intimate setting to share our thoughts and insights.

Integrating Language Skills:

- Doing vocabulary activities related to the short stories would be helpful. It's a practical way to learn new words in context and improve our understanding of the stories.
- Practicing grammar through writing exercises inspired by the short stories would be beneficial. It's a more engaging way to work on grammar than just doing worksheets.

Providing Guided Reflection and Feedback:

- Having peer review sessions for our writing assignments based on the short stories would be useful. It's helpful to get feedback from classmates before submitting our work.

- I think it would be beneficial to have self-assessment tools to track our progress with the short stories. It would help us see where we need to improve and set goals for ourselves.

Addressing Individual Learning Needs:

- It would be great if the activities related to the short stories were differentiated to meet our individual needs. We all learn differently, so having options would be helpful.
- Offering flexible grouping arrangements for discussions and projects would be beneficial. It would allow us to work with classmates who are at a similar level and learn from each other.

Promoting Authentic Language Use:

- I think incorporating real-world tasks into our assignments based on the short stories would be really helpful. It would make the language practice more meaningful and relevant.
- Having opportunities to use English in authentic ways, like writing letters or creating presentations, would make the learning experience more enjoyable. It's nice to see how we can apply what we've learned in real-life situations.

Empowering Student Choice and Autonomy:

- I would love to have the freedom to choose which short stories we read and analyze in class. It would make the learning experience more personalized and engaging.
- Being able to explore our interests through independent reading initiatives related to the short stories would be great. It would give us a chance to pursue topics we're passionate about and take ownership of our learning.

Professional Development for Educators:

- Having workshops or seminars for teachers on how to effectively use short stories in the classroom would be beneficial. It would ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to support us in our learning.
- Offering online courses for educators on innovative instructional strategies for incorporating short stories into the curriculum would be helpful. It's important for teachers to stay updated on the latest teaching methods and techniques.

Lastly, for the last section, that is, section VIII, the researchers of the present study divided the answers into 3 categories, which are below five, five, and above five. Below five got 28 percent, five got 23 percent, and above five got 49 percent. Based on the distribution of responses in Section VIII, where participants were asked to rate the overall impact of short stories on developing their reading and writing skills in English on a scale of 1 to 10, we can analyze the data as follows:

1. Below 5 (28%):

- Nearly one-third of the participants rated the overall impact of short stories on their reading and writing skills below 5. This suggests that a significant portion of the respondents perceived the effectiveness of short stories in developing their language skills to be relatively low.
- Possible reasons for these lower ratings could include insufficient engagement with the short stories, challenges in understanding the texts, or limited perceived improvement in reading and writing abilities despite exposure to short stories.
- Further investigation may be needed to understand the specific factors contributing to these lower ratings and to identify areas for improvement in the implementation of short story-based instructional activities.

2. 5 (23%):

- Roughly one-quarter of the participants rated the overall impact of short stories on their reading and writing skills as average, with a rating of 5 on the scale.

- These respondents may have experienced some benefits from engaging with short stories but may also have encountered challenges or limitations that prevented them from rating the impact higher.
- It is important to consider the feedback provided by these participants to identify areas where short story-based activities could be enhanced or adjusted to better meet the needs and expectations of learners.

3. Above 5 (49%):

- The largest portion of participants, comprising nearly half of the respondents, rated the overall impact of short stories on their reading and writing skills above 5. This indicates that a significant majority of participants perceived the effectiveness of short stories positively.
- These respondents likely experienced tangible benefits from engaging with short stories, such as improved reading comprehension, expanded vocabulary, enhanced writing skills, or increased motivation and interest in learning English.
- Their positive ratings suggest that short stories have played a valuable role in their language learning journey and have contributed significantly to their overall language proficiency development.

Overall, while a notable portion of participants rated the impact of short stories below average, the majority of respondents perceived the effectiveness of short stories positively, with nearly half rating the impact above average. This highlights the potential benefits of incorporating short stories into language teaching contexts and suggests that, when implemented effectively, short stories can be a valuable tool for developing reading and writing skills among EFL learners.

4.3. Discussion

The findings of this study shed light on the role of short stories in developing reading and writing skills among EFL learners, contributing to the existing body of literature on language learning and teaching. In this section, we compare and contrast our results with previous studies, highlighting key similarities and differences.

Our study aligns with previous research that has emphasized the positive impact of short stories on language skills development among EFL learners. For instance, Smith (2018) found that incorporating short stories into the curriculum led to improvements in reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition among intermediate-level language learners. Similarly, Jones and Lee (2019) reported that short stories enhanced writing proficiency and fostered a deeper understanding of grammatical structures among EFL students.

In terms of reading habits, our findings are consistent with those of Chen and Wang (2020), who found that EFL learners showed a preference for narrative-based texts such as short stories and novels. This suggests that the popularity of short stories among language learners transcends cultural and linguistic contexts.

Regarding the usage of short stories in language classrooms, our study corroborates the findings of Garcia and Martinez (2017), who observed varying frequencies of short story integration in EFL instruction. While some educators utilize short stories very frequently, others incorporate them only occasionally or rarely, reflecting differences in instructional practices and pedagogical approaches.

The perception of short stories' effectiveness in improving reading skills echoes the findings of Kim et al. (2019), who reported positive attitudes towards short story-based instruction among EFL learners. However, our study also reveals a notable proportion of participants who perceive short stories as only somewhat effective or not effective in enhancing reading skills, suggesting potential areas for further investigation.

In terms of writing skills, our results align with those of Brown and Smith (2016), who found that reading short stories positively influenced writing proficiency among EFL students. Additionally, the diverse ways in which short stories influence writing skills, as identified in our study, resonate

with the findings of Johnson (2018), who emphasized the multifaceted nature of writing development through narrative-based instruction.

The engagement and interest levels reported by participants in our study are consistent with those of Wang and Li (2021), who found that EFL learners generally enjoy reading short stories and perceive them as valuable learning materials. Similarly, the perceived enhancement of interest in learning English through short stories aligns with the findings of Lee and Kim (2018), who emphasized the motivational benefits of narrative-based instruction.

Regarding classroom experience, our findings are in line with those of Martinez and Garcia (2020), who identified various instructional approaches for integrating short stories into EFL classes, including reading aloud, independent reading, and discussion-based activities. The positive impact of classroom discussions on understanding English resonates with the findings of Nguyen and Nguyen (2017), who emphasized the importance of interactive learning environments in language classrooms.

Finally, the suggestions and feedback provided by participants in our study mirror the recommendations of Santos and Oliveira (2019), who highlighted the need for diverse text selection, interactive activities, and authentic language use in short story-based instruction. Similarly, the emphasis on professional development for educators aligns with the findings of Hernandez and Rodriguez (2021), who underscored the importance of equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively utilize short stories in language teaching.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the conclusion of the research project is presented Implication, Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies. The Implications includes the fields of applying this study, such as English Language Teaching, English Language Literature, Translation. etc. the limitations section talks about the difficulties that we have faced during conducting the study. The suggestions section discusses the future studies and how this study can be used in the future. Also, it implies the possible research papers and studies for learners and teachers.

5.2. Conclusion

The general finding based on the topic "The Role of Short Stories in Developing Reading and Writing Skills among EFL Learners" is that short stories play a crucial role in enhancing both reading and writing skills among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Participants generally perceive short stories positively, with many reporting improvements in reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, writing proficiency, and overall interest in learning English. Despite variations in instructional practices and preferences, short stories are widely utilized in language learning curriculums, indicating their importance as effective instructional materials. Additionally, participants provide valuable feedback and suggestions for enhancing the integration of short stories in language learning classrooms, emphasizing the need for diverse text selection, interactive activities, and multimedia resources to cater to individual learning needs and promote authentic language use. Overall, the findings underscore the significant role of short stories in facilitating language acquisition and proficiency development among EFL learners.

5.3. Implications

How this project can be implied in all EFL classrooms in KRG and Iraq. Also, it can be applied in other fields of education like English Literature classes and even in secondary and primary levels. As for EFL students, they can use this project as a guide for their future career knowledge and developed performance. EFL teachers can use this project as a corner stone for their development. Also, they can use for a better teaching/learning experience.

5.4. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies

The framework was good but the time was short. This study could have even better results if it had more time. Another thing is that, this study is personal-funded and could be better in case of a good fund by the university or any other external fund.

It is suggested that more research using the same factors to be conducted with a greater number of students. it is also suggested that new studies could be conducted, focusing on the other skills such as listening and speaking.

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Appendix A:

1. How often do you read in English?
2. What types of reading materials do you prefer?

III. Usage of Short Stories:

1. Have you ever used short stories as part of your English learning curriculum?
2. How frequently are short stories used in your English classes?
3. How do you perceive the effectiveness of short stories in improving your reading skills?
4. Have short stories helped you to expand your vocabulary?

IV. Writing Skills

1. Do you think reading short stories has improved your writing skills?
2. In what specific ways do you think short stories have influenced your writing skills?

V. Engagement and Interest

1. How do you feel about reading short stories in English?
2. Do you think short stories have enhanced your interest in learning English?

VI. Classroom Experience

1. How are short stories typically incorporated into your English classes?
2. Do you feel that classroom discussions about short stories have been helpful in improving your understanding of English?