

The Role of Short Stories in Enhancing EFL First Year Students' Writing Skills

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Abstract:

It has been observed by many teachers of English that; there are some problems in students 'writing skills; specially EFL first year students, so this paper comes to investigate the role of short stories in enhancing EFL first year students' writing skills. This study aimed to investigate the importance of short stories in improving first year students' writing skills, to highlight the problematic areas in first year students' writing skills and to develop first year students' writing skills. The study adopted the descriptive analytical methods. The data was collected with two tools: a questionnaire for university teachers and pre and post tests for first year students at university. The sample consist of forty (40) EFL Universities teachers and thirty five (53) first year students of English language at Gezira University Faculty of Education Al Hasahiesa. The data were analyzed with (SPSS) program for the questionnaire and (T) test for the pre and posttests. As the result of the analysis it is found that: Short stories promote students writing mechanism, short stories improve students writing style, short

stories equip students with varying figurative speech, short stories provide students with memorable, grammatical , and vocabulary items,. Based on the findings, the study recommends that: EFL teachers have to pay more attention for teaching writing skill due to its crucial role in the process of teaching EFL, many teachers need to understand the importance of literary text as a tool to reinforce writing skill not only for the entertainment, teacher should use short stories continuously to stimulate students and motivate them to write more, finally improving students' writing skills is highly recommended through short stories.

مستخلص:

لاحظ كثير من مدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية وجود بعض المشاكل التي تعتري مهارة الكتابة لدى الطلاب عامة ؛ وطلاب السنة الأولى بشكل خاص ، لذا تأتي أهمية هذه الورقة العلمية في تسليط الضوء على دراسة القصة القصيرة للكشف عن الجوانب الإشكالية في مهارة الكتابة لدى طلاب السنة الأولى من أجل تطوير مهارات الكتابة لديهم. هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التحقق من أهمية القصة القصيرة في تحسين مهارة الكتابة لدى طلاب السنة الأولى ، واعتمدت المنهج الوصفي التحليلي. وقد تم جمع البيانات باستخدام أداتين: استبيان لمعلمي الجامعات واختبارات ما قبل وبعد لطلاب السنة الأولى في الجامعة. تتكون العينة من أربعين (40) معلماً في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، بالإضافة إلى ثلاثة وخمسين (53) طالباً في السنة الأولى للغة الإنجليزية في جامعة الجزيرة، كلية التربية الحاصحاص. تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام برنامج الحزم الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية (SPSS) للاستبيان واختبار (T) للاختبارات السابقة واللاحقة. وبتحليل الاستبيان فقد وجد أن القصة القصيرة تعزز آلية مهارة الكتابة للطلاب وتحسّن أساليبهم، كما وجد أنّ القصة القصيرة تزود الطلاب بتعابير رمزية متفوّنة، وتزودهم بعناصر نحوية، ومفردات لغوية. خرجت النتائج بعددٍ من التوصيات؛ أهمها يلي:— يجب على معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية المزيد من الاهتمام لمهارات الكتابة التدريسية نظراً لدورها الحيوي في عملية تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ، يجب على معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية فهم أهمية النص الأدبي كأداة لتعزيز المهارات الإنتاجية للطلاب ليس فقط للترفيه ، كما يجب عليهم استخدام القصة القصيرة باستمرار لتحفيز الطلاب على الكتابة أكثر، وأخيراً توصى الدراسة بتحسين مهارات الكتابة لدى الطلاب من خلال الإكثار من قراءة القصص القصيرة وكتابتها

INTRDUCTION:

1.0Background

Learning a foreign language implies the strengthening of strategies that enable effective communication skills in meaningful contexts. Over the years, a debate on the hierarchy of language skills has taken place in language education. Many agree that all skills deserve the same importance, whereas others believe that writing should take first place, given its significance in all social, professional, and academic domains. People use writing for various purposes in different contexts in which individuals are evaluated depending on the control they demonstrate of this ability.

1.0Statement of the Problem

It has been observed by many teachers of English that there are some problems in students' writing skills especially first year students. A teacher of English may encounter many problems in teaching writing to first year students. These problems are restricted to Problems which are related to the content where the teacher employs various techniques and teachers do not know how to use the appropriate content for teaching writing skills.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study is set out to achieve so as to:

1. Investigate the importance of short stories in improving first year students' writing skills.
2. Highlight the problematic areas in first year students' writing skills.
3. Develop first year students' writing skills.

1.3 Research Questions

This study attempts to find answers for the following questions:

1. To what extent short stories develop first year students' Writing skills.
2. How can short stories enrich first year students' abilities to paraphrase in terms of understanding the gist, be able to discuss and write about what they read about?
3. How can EFL students be able to present ideas based on what they read in carefully structured in written forms?

1.4 Hypotheses of the Study

This study is planned to test the following hypotheses:

1. Short stories are effective techniques in promoting EFL learners writing skills.
2. Short stories enable EFL learners to reflect their understanding of text cohesion, coherence, mechanics and style based on their reading of short stories
3. Short stories develop EFL learners' awareness about the rhetoric of discourse.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study will be of great significance to teachers in terms of understanding writing skill problems of the first year students. Moreover, the study will help teachers promote their teaching in terms of writing skills. In addition, the study will help first year students in terms of understanding texts, contextual meaning and cultural background meanings.

1.6 Methodology

The researcher used descriptive analytical methods, a questionnaire and test are used as tools in the collection of data relevant to this study.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to Gezira University, Faculty of Education, Al Hasahiesa first year students of English language (2017-2018).

LITERATURE REVIEW :

2.0 Background

This chapter focuses on the theoretical relevant literature to the subject area of this research which is about investigating the Role of Short Stories in Enhancing EFL First Year Students' Writing Skills

2.1 Short Story

Short story is the work of literature usually written in narrative prose. It is based on a series of events that make up the story. In other words it is very short form of prose fiction. It usually narrates a limited number of events with concentration on a single aim with one plot. It often involves a small number of characters. It has a beginning, middle and end. Each story has its own single simple plot. The short story has a setting, central.

character, action and takes single place during a short of time, such as an hour, few hours, and a day. For example, Ernest Hemingway's "Hills like White Elephants" is a short story based on a conversation that takes place on a single day.

2.2 Using of Short Stories

Using short stories in the EFL classroom exposes learners to distinctive opportunities for educational, intellectual, cultural and linguistic development. Short story is considered as one of the literary genres that can be used in the EFL classroom to enhance language skill, motivate students, and increase their cultural awareness and tolerance. concludes that short stories can be utilized as engines, and a powerful and motivating source for assisting learners consolidate and practice language (grammar, diction). Similarly, (1) emphasize, "as stories are motivating and fun, they can help students develop positive attitudes towards the foreign language and enrich their learning experiences".(2) believes that exposing learners to literature provides them with memorable syntactical or lexical items. Moreover, it also encourages learners to make predictions, inferences and draw conclusions about actions, behaviors of character and ends of literary works.(3)states:

"Reading short stories motivates the students not only to develop their reading skill, but also their imaginative thinking skill." He added that reading skill enables learners "to write the language in a more imaginative way and to discuss everyone's perspectives." According to him, "reading of short stories not only mirrors and illuminates human lives but also improves the learners' communicative competences".

2.3 The following subsections demonstrate the value of using and selecting short stories:

1. **Authenticity:** One of the main advantages for 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 (4).. One of the fundamental characteristics of the communicative approach is that learners should be exposed to authentic materials and extensive reading activities. Thus, “a literary text is authentic text, real language in context, to which we can respond directly”(5). They add that “Literary texts 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 writers and they are exposed to actual language samples of real life experience, so they become familiar with many different linguistic approaches, communicative functions and meanings distorted. As (5) explain:

“Students have also to cope with language intended for native writers 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”.

(6) asserts that “literature provides us with a convenient source of content for a course in a foreign language”. According to him, it could provide motivational and communicative material. (7) explains, “learners are exposed to real, authentic usage of language in literary texts; these texts show them a variety of styles, registers and language learning materials at several stages of difficulty.” (8) explains, “learners’ exposure to great amount of authentic materials “increases their sensitivity to and competence in the target language”. He added that popular materials

such as short stories “have been found most appealing because of their realistic, ready-to-use language and relevance to learners’ mindsets and experiences”. Learners’ exposure to authentic material will prompt the process of natural language acquisition (8).

2. Language Enhancement: Literary texts contribute to language skills enhancement as they are ideal tools for intensive and extensive reading approaches. (5) Mention certain benefits that learners can gain when tackling literary texts. For example:

“learners are exposed to “a rich context in which individual lexical or syntactical items are made more memorable. Moreover, learners can develop their “ability to make inferences from linguistic clues, and deduce meaning from context . Learners’ exposure to short stories will help them gain new vocabulary and encourage them to guess their meaning”.

(9) suggests that “literature will increase all language skills because literature will extend linguistic knowledge by giving evidence of extensive and subtle vocabulary usage, and complex and exact syntax.” (10) suggest:

“The activities that teacher develop should help learners to acquire language unconsciously. Consequently, they state that “stories are the most valuable resource” for helping learners in acquiring a language as they offer them “a world of supported meaning that they can relate to” and can be used to help learners “practice listening, writing, reading, and writing”.

3. Cultural Enrichment: Short stories enhance and enlighten learners' knowledge of the native culture of the learned stories. In order to get better understanding of this aspect, the literary text will not be a translation of a literary work into English. This genre provides the opportunity for learners to explore the various cultural aspects and to see the similarities as well as the differences between their culture and the cultures exposed through their reading. (11) Believes that short stories are very important as they enhance certain values and beliefs.

4. Personal Growth and Reflection: Short stories play a vital role in the development and the growth of the personal experience of learners and their reflection on life through literature and through reading, analyzing, and appreciating. (12) Stated that literary genres encourage intellectual development and personal growth simultaneously. (11) Mentioned in her article, "encouraging individual growth necessitates that "the teacher has to select texts to which students can respond and to which they can use their ideas and imagination creatively."

2.4 The Use of Literature In Teaching Second/Foreign Languages

The use of literature to teach second/foreign languages can be traced back to over one century ago. In the nineteenth century, second/foreign languages were taught with the help of the Grammar Translation Method. Students would translate literary texts from the second/foreign language to their native language(13) affirms that with students at the beginning and intermediate levels,

instructors can use literary texts for “language practice, reading comprehension, and possible aesthetic appreciation

Moreover, students can gain insight into literature by gaining entrance to a world familiar or unfamiliar to them due to the cultural aspects of stories, and taking a voyage from the literary text to their own minds to find meanings for ideas, leading to critical thinking

2.5 Reinforcing the Skills

Short stories allow instructors to teach the four skills to all levels of language proficiency. (14) 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”. He explains why stories should be used to reinforce ELT by discussing activities instructors can create such as writing and acting out dialogues. Also, (15) affirms, “ literature helps students to write more creatively”.

Instructors can create a variety of writing activities to help students to develop their writing skills. They can ask students to write dialogues (16) or more complex writing activities if students have reached a high level of language proficiency. For example, if instructors bring to class “The Wisdom of Solomon,” they can assign the following writing activities:

- a. Write a dialogue between King Solomon and the guard holding the sword after the mother and the son, and the other

woman left the palace.

- b. Paraphrase the first four sentences of the paragraph, “And in this way they argued . . . whose child it was” (fourth paragraph from the bottom).
- c. Summarize the story in three sentences, including the main character, setting, conflict, climax, and resolution.
- d. Write one sentence on the theme of the story.
- e. Write a paragraph on what causes people to lie.
- f. Write a classification essay on different kinds of lies.
- g. Activities (a) and (b)are suitable for beginning levels; activities c, d, for intermediate levels; and activity f, for advanced levels.

2.6 Introducing Literary Elements to Boost Writing Skills

Instructors can introduce literary elements with short stories. With beginning and low intermediate levels, instructors can teach simple elements, such as character, setting and plot. The same and more complex elements, such as conflict, climax, resolution, etc., can be introduced with more advanced levels. (17) Explains, “ how literature can be introduced by describing the order of activities: pre-reading activities, writing activities, factual in-class work, and analysis and extending activities. In the pre-reading and writing activities, students have the opportunity to learn about the background of the story and vocabulary”. Instructors can start by answering and students questions before they are introduced to

2.7 Teaching Higher-Order Thinking

Of all the benefits of short stories, higher-order thinking

is the most exciting one. High intermediate/advanced students can analyze what they read; therefore, they start thinking critically when they read stories. The use of children's stories to introduce critical thinking to college students. (18) Agrees with the use of short stories to teach critical thinking. He points out that instructors have the responsibility to help students to develop cognitive skills because everyone needs to "make judgments, be decisive, come to conclusions, synthesize information, organize, evaluate, predict, and apply knowledge." By reading and writing, students develop their critical thinking skills.

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This part is intended to procedures adopted to conduct the study: sampling, tools of collection and tools of data analysis discussed in the following sections. .

3.1 Methods and Tools of the Study

The researcher used the descriptive analytical, methods as well as the questionnaire and pre and posttests as tools.

3.2 Population and Sample of the Study

The population of this study are (53) First year Students of English language from Gezira University Faculty of Education Al Hasahiesa Department of English Language who answered the tests and (40) Sudanese teachers of English from various universities who responded to questionnaire.

3.4 Tests Procedures

First year students (53) of English language at Gezira University

Faculty of Education Al Hasahiesa-Department of English Language were asked to write a guided composition during the class, the first year students were given one hour to finish the task, then they were given A course on a selected short stories for 10 weeks. The topic was a journey to apart near the convergence of the River Nile after that the papers were collected, numbered and marked by the researcher and three different teachers. The results were analyzed statistically and discussed.

3.5 Reliability and Validity of the Teachers' Questionnaire.

Reliability refers to whether the questionnaire can produce the same or very similar results if it is conducted again under the same or very similar conditions. The researcher used Pearson's correlation and the results obtained as follows:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{N(\sum XY) - (\sum X \sum Y)}{\sqrt{[N(\sum X^2) - (\sum X)^2][N(\sum Y^2) - (\sum Y)^2]}}$$

Where

r = correlation

R: Reliability of the test

N: number of all items in the test

X: odd scores

Y: even scores

\sum : Sum

$R = 2*r/1+r$

$$\text{Val} = \sqrt{\text{reliability}}$$

$$\text{Correlation} = \underline{0.65}$$

$$R = \frac{2 \times r}{1 + r} = \frac{2(0.65)}{1 + 0.65} = \frac{1.30}{1.6}$$

$$\text{Reliability} = \underline{0.78}$$

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This part is devoted to the analysis, evaluation, and interpretation of the data collected through the questionnaire and test

4.2. Analysis of Teachers' Questionnaire

Now, let us turn to analyze the teachers' questionnaire. All Tables show the scores assigned to each of the 16 statements by the 40 respondents.

Statement (1): Short stories help first students to develop their language

Table (4.1)

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	38	95%
Natural	2	5%
Disagree	0	0
Total	40	10%

Table (4.1) shows the respondents who agree 95% and 5% are to Neutral and who disagree are (0%). According to the result (97.5%) of the respondent agree with the claim.

Statement (2): Short stories enable EFL learners to reflect their understanding of text cohesion, coherence, mechanics and style of writing or serve the purpose of developing writing skill.

Table (4.2)

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	30	75
Neutral	7	17.5
Disagree	3	7.5
Total	40	100%

Table (4.2) proves the respondents who agree are 75%, 17.5% Neutral and who disagree are 7.5%. According to the result the (75%) of the respondents agree that short stories serve the purpose of developing writing skills and language.

Statement (3) Short stories raise EFL learner's awareness of discourse rhetoric

Table (4.3)

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	32	80
Neutral	7	17.5
Disagree	1	2.5
Total	40	100%

Table (4.3) reveals the respondents who agree 80%, 17.5% neutral and who are disagree are 2.5%. According to the result (92%) of the respondents agree with the statement.

Statement (4) Short stories raise first year students' language writing skills.

Table (4.4)

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	35	87.5
Neutral	2	5
Disagree	3	7.5
Total	40	100%

Table (4.4) displays the respondents who agree are 87.5 %, neutral are 5% and who disagree are 7.5 %. According to the results (87.5%) of the respondent agree.

Statement (5) Short stories enrich first year student's abilities to paraphrase in terms of understanding the gist, be able to discuss and write about what they read?

Table (4.5)

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	36	90
Neutral	0	0
Disagree	4	10
Total	40	100%

Table (4.5) shows the respondents who agree are 90%, 10% disagree . According to the result (90 %) of the respondent agree that Short stories enrich first year student's abilities to paraphrase in terms of understanding the gist, be able to discuss and write about what they read.

Statement (6) Teachers are aware of using as effective tools in teaching English language.

Table (4.6)

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	33	82.5%
Natural	3	7.5%
Disagree	4	10
Total	40	10%

Table (4.6) reveals that the respondents who agree are 82.5%, 7.5 %neutral and 10% are disagree,according to the result (82.5%) of the respondents support the claim.

Statement(7) Short story helps first year students to enrich their vocabulary

Table (4.7)

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	38	95
Natural	2	5
Disagree	0	0
Total	40	100%

Table (4.7) proves therespondents who agree are 95%, 5% neutral and disagree. According to the results (95%) of the respondents agree with the statement.

Statement (8) Short stories help first students to understand the intended meaning of words.

Table (4.8)

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	31	77.5
Neutral	9	22.5
Disagree	0	0
Total	40	100%

Table (4.8) displays the respondents who agree 77.5%, 22.5%, neutral. According to the result (77.5%) of the respondents supported the claim.

Statement (9): Short stories are effective techniques in promoting EFL learners writing skills.

Table (4.9)

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	22	55%
Natural	11	27.5%
Disagree	7	17.5%
Total	40	100%

Table (4.9) reveals the respondents who agree are 55.5%, 27.5% natural and 17.5 % disagree, according to the result (55%) of the respondents support the claim.

**(Table 4:10) Descriptive statistics of the pretest and posttest
Paired Samples Statistics**

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre	51.6667	53	19.44822	4.24395
	Post	63.9048	53	17.02030	3.71413

Table (4:10) shows mean and standard deviation of the difference of the scores the students got in two tests of study.

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	.Sig
Pair 1	Pre & Post	53	.891.	.000.

Table (4.11) Paired sample result

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. ((2-tailed
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Confidence 95% Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre – Post	-1.22381E1	8.82556	1.92589	-16.25544-	-8.22075-	-6.354-	52	000.

The rise of the study group in terms of pre-test and post-test results was found significant compared in the pre and pre / posttest ($P=0.010$). With this result, it can be short stories had a significant positive effect on the enhancing first years students Writing skills. in scores.

Table (4:12) Total Results of the two Parts of the Test

Section	Pre test				Posttest			
	Pass	%	Fail	%	Pass	%	Fail	%
Students	12	22.4%	41	77.6%	27	50.2%	26	49.8%
Total	53	100%	53	100%	53	100%	0	100%

The table (4.12) shows that the result of the two parts of the test pre and posttest, in the pretest(41) students are fail on the other hand on the posttest just (26) students are fail this means that the

students on the posttest are success that the pretest. In the pretest (20) students gets (zero) mark no one gets (zero)in the post test. More than (15) students get more that 55 marks in the post test. This result meansshort stories enhanceand improve first year students' Writing skills

4.3 Testing Hypotheses

The topic tries to ensure and test the hypotheses that may Answer previous question.

First Hypnosis: Short stories are effective techniques in promoting EFL learners writing skills. According to the statistical analysis of tables (4.5: 90%), , (4-4:78.5%), ,and (4.6: 82%) the majority of respondents agree with the statement. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted.

Second Hypnosis Short stories enable EFL learners to reflect their understanding of text cohesion, coherence, mechanics and style based on their reading of short stories. According to the statistical analysis of tables (4.2:70%),(4-1: %)and (4-8: 77.5%). The majority of respondents agree that, Short stories enable EFL learners to reflect their understanding of text cohesion, coherence, mechanics and style based on their reading of short stories. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted.

Third Hypnosis: Short stories develop EFL learners' awareness about the rhetoric of discourse. According to the statistical analysis of tables(4-3:80%), (4-7: 95%), the majority of respondents agree that, Short stories develop EFL learners' awareness about the rhetoric of discourse. Thus the hypothesis is accepted.

CONCLUSION, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This part is devoted to summarize the study by shortly presenting its conclusion, the findings and the recommendations

5.3 Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate Role of short stories in Enhancing First Years Students Writing Skills, so Writing skills have taken place in language education. Many agree that all skills deserve the same importance, whereas others believe that writing should take first place, given its significance in all social, professional, and academic domains. The respondents in this study are teachers and students. The study explains the finding and sets up many recommendations as the following.

5.4 Findings:

1. Short stories enhance student to write coherent and cohesive text through their reflection on life through literature reading, analysis and appreciatory.
2. Short stories promote students writing mechanism.
3. Short stories improve students writing style.
4. Short stories are literary genres that can be used in EFL classrooms to enhance language skills, motivate students, and increase their cultural Awareness.
5. Practical Application for language can be utilized through short stories
6. Short stories enhance students writing skills to construct cohesive sentence (discourse).
7. Short stories help students to formulate their ideas to build meanings through writing.

5.5 Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

1. EFL teachers have to pay more attention for teaching writing skill due to its crucial role in the process of teaching EFL.
2. Sudanese EFL syllabi need to be revised adapting order to achieve the balance in using the four basic skills.
3. Literature must be used in EFL lecture rooms in a proper way and employed so as to achieve the intended results.
4. Many teachers need to understand the importance of literary text as a tool to reinforce writing skill not only for the entertainment.
5. Teachers should use short stories continuously to stimulate students and motivate them to write more.
6. EFL teachers in Sudanese university have to exploit literature in reinforcing Writing skills to reach better results.

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