



Investigating the role of short stories in enhancing first year students productive skills

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the role of short stories in enhancing first years students' productive skills. English language learners' students face difficulties and hindrances when they start speaking and writing in English, therefore, this study aimed to help students to overcome those problems. The researcher used descriptive analytical, quantitative and qualitative methods as well as questionnaire and test as tools in the collection of data relevant to this study. The researcher was design a questionnaire for teachers to identify their views in using short stories to solve problems that encounter first year students of English language as well as a test to identify the problems encountered first year students in Gezira University, Faculty of Education Hasahiesa, department of English Language. The questionnaire was distributed for the teachers of English in Sudanese Universities which contained (40 copies). The data obtained by the questionnaire was entered and processed using (SPSS). The study has found out the following: firstly, Short stories enhance student to write coherent and cohesion text through their reflection on life through literature reading, analysis and appreciatory. Secondly, Short stories promote students writing mechanism. Thirdly, Short stories enrich students learning experience.

Keywords: appreciatory, promote

Introduction

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. According to Tribble (1996) and Harmer (2007) ^[3], people use writing for various purposes in different contexts in which individuals are evaluated depending on the control they demonstrate of this ability.

In the last two decades, the teaching of writing has evolved from being focused on a final product (product approach) to a view in which writing is seen as a process embedded in a social situation (process genre approach). Traditionally, in the linear product-oriented method, writing was mainly associated with linguistic knowledge about the appropriate use of language, while writing development was seen as a result of imitating texts provided by the teacher (Badger and White, 2000) ^[1]. Nowadays, however, writing is understood to involve not only knowledge about the structure of language but also knowledge about the context in which writing happens, the purpose of writing, and skills in the use of language. Writing development takes place by developing learners' potential and by providing feedback to learners' responses.

Hyland (2002) ^[2] states that writing is essentially a problem-solving activity that involves a cognitive process, *process approach*, and a socially oriented proposal, *genre approach*. Salem (2009) and Tangpermpoon (2008) both observe that

writing is a non-linear process since it allows writers to reformulate their ideas as they strive to build meaning. They agree that writing is a cycle of activities that moves learners from the generation of ideas, through revising drafts, and ultimately to the production of a final text that combines both editing and cognitive stages. On the other hand, they also state that writing is mainly a social activity since it is focused on the way writers and texts interact with readers, an aspect that has been associated with *genre approach*. Badger and White (2000) ^[1] claim that the genre-based approach enables students to distinguish different writing patterns (such as the ones found in short stories) given the fact that they can identify and manage the characteristics of a particular type of text as a basis to elaborate and communicate their ideas successfully. Lingzhu (2009) ^[4] establishes that mechanical writing activities do not motivate students since they are not engaged in real and communicative writing scenarios in which they have to write for a particular audience in a specific context. He concludes that "genre theory is a theory of language use" since texts differ according to the context in which they are used.

Review of Literature

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. The writer of a short story avoids unnecessary repetition and detailed descriptions because the short story demands economy and conciseness.

Origins

The development of the short story first began before man could write. To help himself in building and memorizing tales. The early storyteller often depends on stock phrases, fixed rhythms, and rhyme. As the result, many of the oldest narratives in the world, such as the famous Babylonian tale the Epic of Gilgamesh (c. 2000 bc), are in verse. Indeed, most major stories from the very old Middle East were in verse: "The War of the Gods," "The Story of Adapa" (both Babylonian), "The Heavenly Bow, "and" The king Who Forgot" (both Canaanite). These tales were graven in wedge-shaped on mud during the second (2nd) millenary bc.

"The short story is to the novel what the lyric is to the epic – the first is personal, compressed, fragmented and emotional, and the second universal, expansive, totalizing and objective". As Harold Orel has argued, the British tradition in short fiction is very different from that of the Americans, for whom the short story", he writes developed independently.

In North America magazines: The pioneer Poe was writing for and about a specifically American version of the short story, which he named the "tale". American literature is absolutely not just British of English literature with a different accent; it has a particular history and set of contexts.

In a series of essays and reviews from the 1840s in which he repeats and purify his ideas, Poe describes the short prose the tale as his ideal form of fiction for the modern world. He was seeking to develop a new genre that would speak specifically to and for the "new" country America, contrasting the modernity of the United States with the near death traditions of fiction in Europe, particularly Britain.

Poe's short stories tend towards the sensational, the shocking, the ghostly, and unnatural. Indeed, in a piece published in 1838, "How to write a Blackwood's Article", he wrote: "Sensations are the great things after all.

His stories also show – as this quotation would suggest – a lively eye to the financial main chance. Thus, although there are problems with adopting Poe as a founding father for the British short story. He did identify two keys ways in which the short story might be understood.

1. The short story has its origins in magazine fiction: it is commercial fiction, made for the marketplace, often as filler material to pad out editorial matter and occupy the space between advertisements. That economic fact has a main influence on its artistic shape.
2. Emphasis on reading. Short stories have probably been found, in the sense of short narrative being told, since the dawn of time.

A third element of definition is the question of what we mean by ' British '. A number of the writers to whom we pay attention are not strictly British. Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923) was born in New Zealand, Henry James (1843- 1916) in

the United States, James Joyce (1882-1941) in Ireland- and there are other examples.

As we have already suggested, then, compared with writers and critics in the United States, where the short story has for a long time been known a form with its own moral, social and artistic dimensions, British writers and critics have been far less willing to write about it. Certainly it is the case that when we look at mid-nineteenth century Britain, there is no exact starting-point; it is impossible to find an Edgar Allen Poe- like figure who supports the kind of unified effect excelled by early American critics. And a great deal of the influence on the British short story has come from elsewhere, from figures such as the French realist writer Guy de Maupassant (1850 – 93) and the migrant American Henry James. The appearance in 1871 of James's " The Passionate Pilgrim", a story about the clash between American and Europe cultures, seemed to show how the short story or novella could offer the surface really much larger than the mere offered face of the work', as James later put it. The fiction of the creative Russian dramatist and short story writer Anton Chekhov (1860 – 1904), which included more than fifty stories, also influenced the development of the form, particularly in its modernist incarnations. Translated into English in the early years of the twentieth century, his tales of frustrated love affairs, economic worries and the dullness of middle-class marriage, which admirably condensed the subject matter of the nineteenth century novel into key episodes in a character's life, offered a blueprint for the realist short story in Britain during the twentieth century. His interest in character and psychology, and his skill at dialogue gained from his success as a dramatist, were copied by important modernist writers of the 1920s, including Katherine Mansfield, who cited his work as a key influence on her own. The British short story is thus a complex, multiform creature. It is made up of relationships between the material world of the demands of publishing and the market place, specific aesthetic schemas and program, the conventions of genre and the influence of the writers of other nations.

History of short story

The short story was born in Britain in 1884. This was the year the term "short story " was used for the first time, as Roger Luck Hurst recorded.

Short stories date back to oral storytelling traditions which originally produced epics such as Homer's Iliad and Odyssey. Oral narratives were often told in the form of rhyming or rhythmic verse, often including coming back sections or, in the case of Homer, Homeric epithets. Short sections of verse might focus on individual narrative that could be told at one sitting, with particular simple style to recall or to remind the events of a story easily.

The other very old form of short story, the anecdote, was popular under the Roman Empire. Anecdotes functioned as a sort of parable. Many surviving Roman anecdotes were collected in the 13th and 14th century. They remained popular in Europe well into the 18th century, when fictional anecdotal letters of Sir Roger de Coverley were published.

In Europe the oral story- tradition began to develop into written stories in the early 14th century, most notably with Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales and Giovanni

Boccaccio's Decameron. Both of these books are composed of individual short stories. The mid-17th century in France saw the development of purify short novel, the "nouvelle", by such authors as Madame de Lafayette. Also in France, Mateo Falcone was written by Prosper Merimee in 1829.

There were early examples of short stories published separately between 1790- 1810, but the first true collections of short stories appeared between 1790 – 1810, but the first collections of short stories appeared between 1810- 1830 in several countries around the same period.

One of the earliest short stories in the United Kingdom was gothic tales like Richard Cumberland's "remarkable narrative" "The Poisoner of Montremos "(1791). Great novelists like Sir Walter Scott and Charles Dickens also wrote some short stories.

One of the earliest short stories in the United States was Charles Brockden Brown's "Somnambulism" from 1805. Washington Irving wrote mysterious tales including "Rip van Winkle" (1819) and "The legend of Sleepy Hollow" (1920). Nathaniel Hawthorne published the first part of his Twice – told Tales in 1837.

In Germany, the first collection of short stories was by Heinrich von Kleist in 1810-1811. The Brothers Grimm published their first volume of collected fairy tales in 1812.

In Russia, Ivan Turgenev gained recognition with his story collection A Sportsman's Sketches. Nikolai Leskov created his first short stories in the 1860s.

In India, the greatest Indian writer was Munshi Premchand. He pioneered in the Hindustani language and was writing short stories and novels in a satisfying style characterized by realism, an unsentimental and authentic. In other words he wrote about his own complicated Indian society Premchand's work, including his over 200 short stories (such as the story "Lottery" and his novel "Godaan" remained as the most significant of his work.

In Poland, Boleslaw Prus was the most important author of short stories. In 1888 he wrote "A Legend of Old Egypt".

In Brazil, Machado de Assis, one of the majors novelist and was the most important short story writer from his country at that time, under influences (among others) of Xavier de Maistre, Lawrence Sterne, Guy de Maupassant. In the end of the 19th century the writer Joao do Rio became popular by short stories about the bohemianism. Also, the most famous modern story writer in Brazil is Mario de Andrade.

In Portuguese, the well-known short story writers like Mario de sa –Carencro, Florbela Espanca and Fernando Poessa, although their major genre was poetry.

Canadian short story writers include Alice Munro, Mavis Gallant and Lynn Coady.

In Italy, Italo Calvino published the short story collection Marco Valdo, about a poor man in a city, in 1963.

The Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges is one of the most famous writers of short stories in the Spanish language. "The Library of Babel" (1941) and "The Aleph " (1945) handle difficult subjects like infinity.

In Colombia, the Nobel Prize laureate author Gabriel Garcia Marquez is the main novelist and short story writer, known by his magical realist stories and his defense of the Communist Party in his country.

In Sudan, the Nobel Prize –winner, the Sudanese greatest

novelist AL-TayebSalih, was the most well- known author from his country. He wrote a lot of novels and short stories in style characterized by satisfaction, realism and authentic (from his own environment).

In Egypt, the Egyptian Nobel Prize- winner Naguib Mafouz is the most well- known author from his country, but has only a few short stories.

The short story developed during the nineteenth century, reaching in turn, the height of its development in the aesthetic blooms of modernist writers such as James Joyce, Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf (1882 – 1941) in the early twentieth century.

Recent study made by Tim Killick. He notes that there are a plethora texts which have some kind of relationship to the modern short story – works of Maria Edgeworth (1767- 1849), Walter Scott (1771- 1832), John Galt (1779 – 1839) and Mary Russeel Mitford (1787- 1855) being notable examples. What we tend to see is that their shapes, together with the labels given them ("tale, sketch ") are different. They are episodic and often connected by continuing characters and themes. Nor are these the only early examples.

Literary form. But although in this sense it may seem to be of its own new writing style. The fact is that short prose fiction is nearly as old as language itself. Through the history of humankind, a man has enjoyed different kinds of short narratives as for examples: Short myths, jests, anecdotes, moralizing fairy tales, short legends and abbreviated historical legends ... etc.

The most of literary criticism on short story concentrates on the ways or the techniques of writing. Many and often the best of the technical works, advice the young reader to be aware of different devices used by the skilled writer on" how to write stories" for the young writer, and not serious critical material.

The two words, "sketch" and "tale" were generally used in the nineteenth century. In the United States alone there were hundreds of books claiming to be collections of sketches, others were collections of tales. What is the difference between these two terms? Tale is much older than sketch. They are frequently fully understood only by member of the particular culture to which they belong. A tale is a medium through which a culture speaks to itself. In other words the old speak to the young through tales.

The sketch by contrast, is intercultural depicting some phenomenon of one culture for the benefit or pleasure of a second culture. Factual and journalistic, in essence the sketch is more descriptive and less narrative or dramatic than the tale. Moreover, the sketch by nature is indicative, incomplete. The tale is often exaggerated. In addition the sketch is written but the tale is spoken. That means the sketch writer can have, his eye on his subject but the tale refers to the events happened in the past.

The tale was the only kind of short story until the 16th century, when a rising middle class interest in social realism on the one hand and in foreign lands on the other put a present on sketches of subcultures and foreign regions. Elements of the tale with elements of the sketch were combined by certain writers – those one might call the "fathers" of the modern story, examples: Nikolay Gogole, Hawthorne, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Heinrich von Kleist, Prosper 'Merimee, Poe – in the 19th century. Therefore, the modern short story then ranges

between the highly imaginative tale and the photographic sketch and in some ways draws on both.

The short stories of Ernest Hemingway may often get their strength from traditional mythic, he used, for examples (fish, water, woundsetc.). But they are more closely related to the sketch than to the tale. In contrast to him William Faulkner who's his stories more closely resemble the tale. Both his language and his subject matter are rich traditional material (the past).

The modern short story is a unification of sketch and tale today. It is scarcely debatable, clear, distinguishable, and independent and its writing style is still developing.

The study of literature does not only enhance the four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) but also reading literature from different periods add understanding to human experiences and values. Teaching and reading different literary genres can contribute to enhancing students' creative writing. In this regard literature is considered to be the core of language learning.

Frank (1995) ^[7] asserts that literature is the best stimulator for creative writing. Therefore, Frank urges language educators to make it a vehicle for familiarizing their students with literature in all its forms. Frank believes that literature is the best means to stimulate and encourage Students to write. Hence, he calls on teachers to use English literature for the development of their students' writing skills and make of them successful, creative professional writers.

Morley, David (2007) points out that reading works of literature, such as novels and poems, is the reason behind the wish of many individuals to become a writer. McKay (1980) argues that literature will increase all language skills, for literature enhances linguistic knowledge by giving evidence of widespread and rich vocabulary usage and complex and exact syntax. Littlewood (1986) who observes that notwithstanding the fact that literary texts were predominantly valuable for developing language skills, it could further be exploited for the purposes of explaining grammar and indicating various types of language usage.

Likewise, Collie and Slater (1987) ^[6] are in favor of the inclusion of literature in classroom language teaching. They claim that literature provides valuable authentic material and develops the students' personal participation and contributes to the enrichment of culture and language.

O'Sullivan (1991) ^[15] believes that since literature has the power to develop the students' creativity and imagination, it is only natural to include it in language teaching. Principally, the aim of teaching Literature is to increase the students' abilities and confidence through the study of literary texts.

Likewise and Lazar (1993) ^[9] point out that literature should be seen as valuable resource of motivating material that would provide access to cultural background. Further, Lazar believes that literature enhances language acquisition, expands the students' language awareness and abilities of interpretation. She Thinks that the use of literary texts in language teaching, provide the students with the cultural knowledge about the target language and its use in context. It also helps good interpretation. She believes that teaching literature can help to stimulate the imagination of learners, develop their critical abilities and increase their emotional awareness.

Smith, Hazel (2006) asserts that creative writing used to be

treated like a poor relation to literary studies within higher education. Literary texts were the prime object of attention, and students were given no opportunity to write such texts themselves. Stern (2001) has also supported the view that literature can be a rich and inspiring source for writing; both as a model and as a subject matter.

Literature as a model can be found in the students' writings which will closely resemble the original works or great literary writers or imitate the content, theme, organization or style. Literature as a subject matter can be displayed by the students in their demonstration of original thinking, interpretation or analysis all of which may have evolved from or have been inspired by the literary works they have read. Stern believes that the learners' writing is better improved when they are exposed to literary texts.

Oster (1989) asserts that literature exposes the learners to coherent and expert writing which fact helps in better writing. Reading literary texts by different authors is believed to introduce the learners to different writing styles; and this will, in turn, insight learners and encourage them to develop their own writing styles.

To stress the importance of creative writing to the students' achievements, Tompkins (1982) points out that there are seven reasons for requiring the students to write stories and poetry: To foster artistic expressions, to explore the functions and value of writing, to stimulate imagination, to clarify thinking, to search for identity and to learn to read and write. Creative writing enhances the general writing skills among students. Richards (1990) points out that writing is a requirement at every level of the students' academic pursuit and is not entirely limited to language and literature. This serves the objective of writing programmes, which is to enable the students to produce different kinds of writings.

Creative writing develops critical reading skills. In support of this, Kramsch (1993) ^[8] has observed that creative writing leads to more

Creative reading. By being engaged with what they are writing the learners are expected to reach the level of intuitive understanding of how the texts function, which fact makes similar texts easier to read.

Bastrukmen and Lewis (2002) ^[5] assert that the notion of success in learning English creative writing is associated with self-expressions, the flow of ideas, outsider expectations, growing confidence and enjoyment of academic writing. They believe that good writing involves the ability to express ideas clearly and confidently to readers. Also, they stress that creative writing enables the students to express themselves more efficiently and with great confidence.

Teaching literary works in the language classroom has various valuable advantages to the EFL learners in relation to language, self-motivation, critical thinking and culture. Also, teaching literature can be encouraging, enjoyable and interesting to EFL learners. Learners, therefore, become more creative, tolerant to other culture and this lead to their personal and intellectual round ability, and open mindedness. The world of short fiction both mirrors and illuminates human lives (Sage, 1987:43).

Teaching short fiction enhances the development of imagination, creativity and self-awareness among EFL students.

Objectives of the Study

This study is set out to achieve at the following objectives:

- a. To investigate the importance of short stories in improving first year students' writing skills.
- b. To highlight the problematic areas in first year students' writing skills.

To develop first year students' speaking and writing skills

Questions of the Study

This study attempts to find answers for the following questions:

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

Hypotheses of the Study

This study is planned to test the following hypotheses:

1. Short stories are effective techniques in promoting EFL learners writing and speaking 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

Short stories develop EFL learners' awareness about the rhetoric of

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.

Material and Method

The researcher was use descriptive analytical, quantitative and qualitative methods as well as questionnaire and test as tools in the collection of data relevant to this study. The researcher will design a questionnaire for teachers to identify their views in using short stories to solve problems that encounter first year students of English language as well as a test to identify the problems encountered first year students in Gezira University, Faculty of Education Hasahiesa, department of English Language.

The Research Instrument

The researcher used two tools to collect the information of this study. One includes the questionnaire which was given to forty (40) Sudanese English teachers whom were selected randomly. The other tool was a test which was given to first year students of English language at Gezira University Faculty of Education Al Hasahiesa Department of English Language -, the academic year 2016-2017. The researcher chooses thirty five (53 first year students as the sample).

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.

Table 1: Short stories help first students to develop their language

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

Table 2: Short stories raise first year students' language productive skills.

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	35	87.5
Neutral	2	5
Disagree	3	7.5
Total	40	10%

Table 3: Short story help first year students to enrich their vocabulary

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

Table 4: Short stories help first year students to be able to analyze stories

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	19	47.5
Natural	9	22.5
Disagree	12	30
Total	40	100%

Table 5: Short Stories help first year students to develop argument

	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	21	52.5%
Neutral	19	47.5%
Disagree	0	0
Total	40	100%

Table 6: Short stories are effective techniques in promoting EFL learners both writing and speaking skills.

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

Findings of the Study

- Short stories enhance student to write coherent and cohesive text through their reflection on life through literature reading, analysis and appreciatory.
- Short stories promote students writing mechanism.
- Short stories improve students writing style

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate Role of short stories in Enhancing First Years Students Productive Skills, in this study theories and principles which provide the basis for strategies that enable effective communication skills in meaningful contexts. so productive 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.

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