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Investigating the Impact of Reading Short Stories on EFL

Learners Reading Proficiency: The Case of Second Year

Students of the English Language at the University of Ghardaïa

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Dedication

To Allah first and foremost

It is by His light that I was guided, by His grace that I advanced and by His mercy that I arrived.

All praise is due to Him in the beginning and the end; no pen writes and no tongue speaks except by His will.

To my family: Ben Seddik and Souilem

whose roots run deep within me like oaks, offering shade when the sun of hardship scorched, and whispering wisdom when the world grew loud.

To those who shared with me the silence of books, the weariness of long hours, and the dryness of tired pens: You were the light when the lamps dimmed, the strength when my patience waned.

And to my mother: Lady of my heart and companion of my path, who poured your spirit into my days, turning hardship into ease and confusion into peace.

In every line of these pages lies your love, and in every thought, the echo of your prayers.

To my dearest friend Chaima Guellaadem "faithful soul and kindred spirit" : you were a quiet force behind the curtain of each day, your words though softly spoken, held the strength of anchor and wind alike.

In your companionship I found not only solace, but the kind of loyalty that poets dare not hope for but once in a lifetime.

This work would not have been born without your enduring patience.

To all of you: I offer the yield of my striving not merely as pages to be read,

But as a living trace of gratitude, alive with your memory, eternal in your love.

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To all: I owe more than ink can hold.

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Abstract

This research explores the effectiveness of using short stories to enhance reading proficiency among second-year EFL students at the University of Ghardaïa. Recognizing the pedagogical value of literary texts in foreign language instruction, the study investigates the extent to which learners engage with English short stories both inside and outside the classroom, how they perceive the impact of these stories on their vocabulary, comprehension, and grammar, and their overall attitudes toward using literature in reading classes. A quantitative approach was employed, using a structured questionnaire distributed to EFL students to gather data on their reading habits, perceptions, and preferences. The findings reveal that the majority of students regularly engage with short stories and view them as beneficial tools for improving various language skills, particularly vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension. Furthermore, students expressed positive attitudes toward incorporating short stories into reading classes, highlighting their motivational value and contribution to more meaningful learning experiences. The study concludes that short stories represent a valuable and engaging resource for supporting language development in university-level EFL contexts.

Keywords: EFL learners, short stories, reading proficiency, vocabulary development, reading comprehension.

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List of abbreviations

EFL : English as a foreign language.

L2: Second language.

SSBLT: Short story-based language teaching.

SQ3R: Survey, Question, Read, Recite.

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General Introduction

General Introduction

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1. Background of the Study

Reading is an essential component in the process of acquiring a new language, especially for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Among the various types of reading materials used in language instruction, short stories have proven to be not only engaging but also pedagogically powerful. Their brevity, rich language, and cultural insights make them ideal for classroom use, especially when the goal is to enhance learners' reading comprehension and foster a deeper connection with the language.

EFL learners often face difficulties in reading due to limited vocabulary, lack of exposure to authentic texts, and insufficient reading strategies (Chen & Chen, 2015). However, when introduced to short stories, learners are exposed to context-rich vocabulary, narrative structures, and relatable themes that stimulate cognitive and emotional involvement. This combination is key to facilitating a more natural and meaningful learning experience(Erkaya,2005).

Moreover, short stories encourage extensive reading, which, according to Krashen (1997), significantly contributes to language acquisition through what he terms "Free Voluntary Reading". This process enables students to improve their reading fluency, expand their vocabulary, and develop inferential and critical thinking skills (Kispal,2008;Graesser,Singer,&Trabasso,1994).

This dissertation aims to investigate the role of short stories in enhancing the reading skills of EFL learners. It explores the theoretical foundations of reading in language learning, the pedagogical value of literature, and the specific benefits of using short stories in the classroom. By focusing on the experiences of second-year EFL students, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of literary texts in developing reading competence and comprehension.

2.Statement of the problem

Despite the significant role that reading plays in the development of language proficiency, many EFL learners continue to struggle with reading comprehension. Traditional reading materials and approaches often fail to capture learners' interest or provide the contextual depth needed to promote meaningful learning. In particular, Algerian EFL students may face challenges such as lack of motivation, limited exposure to authentic English texts, and insufficient use of literary materials in the classroom. The underutilization of short stories—a rich, compact literary form—may represent a missed opportunity for enhancing reading skills in a more engaging and effective way (Bartan, 2017; Habibi, 2015).

3.Research Objectives

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- 1. To explore the extent to which EFL students read English short stories inside and outside the classroom.
- 2. To examine students' perceptions of the role of short stories in improving vocabulary, reading comprehension, and grammar.
- 3. To investigate EFL learners' attitudes toward the use of short stories as a tool in English reading classes.

4.Research Questions

In light of the problem identified, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1. To what extent do EFL learners engage in reading English short stories inside and outside the classroom?
- 2. How do EFL learners perceive the impact of reading short stories on their vocabulary, comprehension, and grammar proficiency?
- 3. What are EFL learners' attitudes toward using short stories as a tool in English reading classes ?

5.Research hypotheses

In response to the research questions posed in this study, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- 1. Most EFL students read English short stories both inside and outside the classroom.
- 2. EFL students believe that reading short stories helps improve their vocabulary, comprehension, and grammar.
- 3. EFL students have positive attitudes toward using short stories in English reading classes.

6. Research Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive design, quantitative approach to explore the role of English short stories in enhancing the reading proficiency of EFL learners at the University of Ghardaïa. The research was conducted during the academic year 2024/2025 with a selected sample of 32 second-year students from the English Department.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to the students in order to gather quantitative data about their engagement with short stories, their perceptions of the impact of these texts on their vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension, and their attitudes toward the use of short stories as a tool in English reading classes. The questionnaire included a combination of close-ended and multiple-choice questions aimed at obtaining clear, measurable responses.

7.Rationale

Reading has become a focal point in Algerian higher education, particularly through the inclusion of the Reading and Text Study module in English Licence programs. While reading comprehension involves foundational elements such as vocabulary, grammar, and word recognition (Davies, 1995), students also need strategic and discourse-level skills to fully understand written texts (El Kouti & Goui, 2018; Kouti, 2025).

Traditional reading materials may not fully engage learners, whereas short stories provide authentic language input, contextualized vocabulary, and critical thinking opportunities that support language development (Collie & Slater, 1987; Lazar, 1993). For second-year EFL students, short stories are especially effective in enhancing vocabulary, grammatical awareness, and comprehension (Erkaya, 2005; Pardede, 2011). They also boost motivation and promote positive attitudes toward reading (Hall, 2005).

This study investigates how English short stories can be used to improve reading proficiency in EFL contexts, aiming to inform learner-centred and communicative teaching practices, especially at the University of Ghardaia.

8.Limitations of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights into the use of English short stories in enhancing reading proficiency among second-year EFL students at the University of Ghardaïa, it is important to acknowledge several limitations that may affect the generalizability and scope of the findings.

Firstly, the study was limited to a sample of thirty-two (32) second-year students of English from a single university department. As such, the results cannot be generalized to all EFL learners in Algeria or to students from different academic levels or institutions.

Secondly, the research relied primarily on self-reported data collected through a questionnaire. Although efforts were made to ensure the clarity and reliability of the questions, students' responses may be influenced by personal perceptions, social desirability, or limited self-awareness regarding their language abilities and reading habits.

Thirdly, the study did not include classroom observations or language proficiency tests to objectively assess the improvement in reading skills. Therefore, conclusions regarding the impact of short stories on vocabulary, grammar, or comprehension are based solely on students' perceptions rather than empirical performance data.

Additionally, the duration of the study did not allow for long-term monitoring of students' reading development. A longitudinal approach would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how sustained exposure to short stories influences EFL learners' progress over time.

Finally, while the study explored students' attitudes and experiences, it did not investigate the perspectives of teachers or examine how short stories are actually implemented in classroom instruction. Including educators' insights could have enriched the findings and offered practical recommendations for pedagogical improvement.

Despite these limitations, the study offers a focused and context-specific contribution to the field of EFL education, particularly in the integration of literature-based approaches to language teaching

Part One

Literature Review

Chapter One: Reading Proficiency

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Introduction

This literature review is divided into two chapters. The first examines reading proficiency in EFL contexts, covering definitions, comprehension components, reading types (extensive and intensive), and models of reading (bottom-up, top-down, interactive). It also discusses key strategies like skimming and scanning, the stages of the reading process, and theories such as Krashen's and schema theory. Common reading difficulties are also addressed.

The second chapter explores the use of short stories in EFL instruction. It defines and categorizes short stories, highlights their narrative elements, and outlines their benefits for language learning. It also discusses story selection, literature teaching models (cultural and personal growth), literary theory integration, and methods like SQ3R for improving comprehension.

Together, both chapters provide a theoretical basis for using short stories to enhance reading skills and learner engagement in EFL classrooms.

1.1. Reading

Reading is widely recognized as a complex cognitive process that extends beyond the simple recognition of words on a page. It involves the interaction between the reader and the text, shaped by the reader's prior knowledge, linguistic competence, and inferential skills. Although there is no universally agreed-upon definition of reading, it is commonly understood as an interactive and purposeful activity through which readers construct meaning from written language (Dubin, Eskey, & Grabe, 1986). Nuttall (1996) highlights that reading entails the transfer of meaning from one mind to another, requiring an active engagement between the reader, the writer, and the text.

Over time, scholarly perspectives on reading have evolved from viewing it as a passive act of decoding symbols to acknowledging it as an active and dynamic process. Spiro, Brewer, and Treyens (1981) describe reading as a multi-level interactive activity in which meaning is constructed at various textual levels, from the individual letter to the discourse as a whole. Goodman (1976) famously conceptualized reading as a "psycholinguistic guessing game," emphasizing the reader's active role in reconstructing the intended message using contextual cues and prior knowledge. In this vein, Grabe (1991) emphasized the strategic dimension of reading, suggesting that students must be taught to utilize techniques such as prediction, contextual guessing, and inferencing to read more effectively.

Moreover, reading is not merely a skill but a developmental process that continues to evolve throughout one's life. Delbridge (2009) stresses that reading is not a one-time technical skill acquired in early education, but a continually growing cognitive capacity that expands as learners are exposed to diverse types of texts. As such, reading serves not only as a source of information but also as a means of extending one's intellectual repertoire and consolidating knowledge (Wilga, 1980).

From a pedagogical standpoint, reading in a foreign or second language (L2) is particularly challenging and requires explicit instruction. Grabe and Stoller (2002) argue that without systematic guidance from educators or caregivers, the acquisition of reading skills may not occur naturally. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Carrell (1988) considers reading a foundational skill that often surpasses speaking or writing in importance due to its centrality in academic and real-life contexts. Rao (2009) similarly contends that reading enables learners to develop their linguistic resources and facilitates access to new information, making it indispensable in both educational and non-educational settings. In sum, reading is best understood as a purposeful, interactive, and strategic process in which readers decode, interpret, and construct meaning from texts by drawing on both linguistic and schematic knowledge. It is not a straightforward or passive act but a problem-solving process whereby comprehension is achieved through continuous engagement with the written word.

1.1.2 The Importance of Reading in EFL Learning

Reading plays a pivotal role in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, serving as a primary conduit for language acquisition and cognitive development. It is not merely a passive activity but an active process that enhances vocabulary, grammar, and overall language proficiency. Goldberg (1997) emphasizes that incorporating reading into beginner-level EFL programs introduces learners to various language forms, refining their linguistic experience. Goodman (1988) further asserts that engaging with second language texts positively influences vocabulary growth and language proficiency.

Recent studies have reinforced these perspectives. Tsang and Yeung (2024) found that young EFL learners' interest in reading storybooks and their reading self-efficacy significantly predict their language proficiency, highlighting the motivational aspects of reading. Anqoudi et al. (2023) demonstrated that intensive reading programs using platforms like ReadTheory can enhance reading skills and motivation among EFL learners. Extensive reading practices have also been shown to improve reading comprehension, vocabulary, and writing skills (Lindawati, 2022; Ateek, 2022). Moreover, reading English books has been linked to improved coherence in EFL students' writing, as it exposes them to various writing styles and structures (Safarova et al., 2023).

These findings underscore the multifaceted benefits of reading in EFL contexts. By engaging with diverse texts, learners not only acquire language skills but also develop critical thinking, cultural awareness, and autonomous learning abilities. Therefore, integrating reading into EFL instruction is essential for fostering comprehensive language development.

1.3 Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is a multifaceted cognitive and linguistic process through which readers construct meaning from written texts. It extends beyond the mere decoding of words or recognizing sentence structures; rather, it involves interpreting, analyzing, and synthesizing information to derive coherent understanding. Proficient readers engage actively with the text, drawing upon their prior knowledge, linguistic competence, and contextual awareness to comprehend explicit content and infer implicit meanings. According to Kintsch and van Dijk (1978), comprehension results from the interaction between the reader's mental representations and the textual information, forming a coherent model of meaning. This process is dynamic and integrative, requiring the use of strategies such as prediction, summarization, and monitoring for comprehension breakdowns. Furthermore, effective reading comprehension relies on understanding the purpose, genre, and structure of texts within their sociocultural contexts. It is thus essential not only for academic success but also for effective communication and critical thinking.

Key Components

Reading comprehension comprises several interrelated competencies:

- 1. Linguistic Competence: This includes mastery of vocabulary, grammar, and the writing system. Readers must accurately decode words and understand syntactic constructions to grasp sentence-level meaning.
- 2. **Discourse Competence**: Readers interpret larger units of meaning by identifying organizational patterns, cohesive devices, and discourse markers. This helps establish logical connections between sentences and paragraphs for global comprehension.
- 3. Sociolinguistic Competence: Understanding the text's cultural and social dimensions is critical. This includes recognizing tone, register, and genre conventions, which shape how information is conveyed and interpreted.
- 4. **Semantic and Syntactic Processing**: Effective readers decode the meanings of individual words (semantics) and analyze how these words function in syntactic structures, ensuring accurate sentence interpretation.
- 5. **Inferencing and Use of Background Knowledge:** Readers draw inferences by combining textual cues with prior experiences and world knowledge, especially when information is implied rather than directly stated (Graesser, 2006).
- Metacognitive Awareness: Skilled readers monitor their understanding by identifying confusion and applying strategies such as re-reading, predicting, or summarizing to maintain coherence (Baker & Brown, 1984).

- 7. **Strategic Reading Behaviors:** These include note-taking, using graphic organizers, and applying contextual interpretation to clarify meanings of unfamiliar or polysemous words.
- 8. **Integration and Mental Representation:** Comprehension involves continuously constructing and updating mental models of the text's meaning as new information is introduced and connected.

Reading comprehension, therefore, is not a passive reception of information but an active, strategic, and socially influenced process of meaning-making, central to both language learning and cognitive development.

1.4 Types of Reading in EFL Learning

In EFL instruction, reading is commonly categorized into two principal types: extensive and intensive reading.

1.4.1 Extensive reading

Refers to the practice of reading large amounts of material for general understanding and enjoyment, typically outside the classroom setting. It is student-centered, allowing learners to select their own reading materials and develop fluency through exposure to language in context (Grabe, 2009; Harmer, 2015). This approach fosters motivation and nurtures a positive reading habit, which is essential for long-term language development.

1.4.2 Intensive reading

In contrast ,involves a close, detailed examination of shorter texts that are often selected by teachers for specific learning purposes. It requires learners to focus closely on vocabulary, grammar, and text structure to deepen comprehension and develop accuracy (Eskey, 2005; Nunan, 2015). This type of reading is often supported by teacher guidance, discussion, and the use of dictionaries or translation tools.

Recent research supports the pedagogical value of both types. Extensive reading has been shown to enhance vocabulary acquisition, reading speed, and learner autonomy (Lindawati, 2022), while intensive reading improves analytical skills and supports deeper linguistic awareness. Ideally, a balanced integration of both types in EFL programs promotes comprehensive literacy development by catering to both fluency and accuracy goals.

1.5 Models of Reading

The study of reading has evolved significantly since the rise of cognitive psychology in the 1970s, as researchers began to explore the intricate mental processes underlying reading comprehension. This shift led to the emergence of three major models of reading: the bottomup model, the top-down model, and the interactive model (Samuels & Kamil, 1988). Each model offers a different lens through which to understand how readers process and construct meaning from text.

1.5.1 The Bottom-Up Model

Conceptualizes reading as a linear decoding process. According to Nunan (1991), this model treats reading as the conversion of written symbols into corresponding sounds, progressing from letters to words and ultimately to sentence-level comprehension. It emphasizes text-driven processing, where meaning emerges only after low-level decoding has occurred (Dechant, 2013). However, this model has been criticized for its over-reliance on perceptual decoding, which can overwhelm working memory and slow down comprehension (Nunan, 1991; Harrison, 2004). This mechanistic approach fails to account for the role of background knowledge and prediction in the comprehension process.

1.5.2 The Top-Down Model

In contrast, views reading as an active and predictive process. Rooted in schema theory and Goodman's (1982) "psycholinguistic guessing game," this model highlights the reader's ability to use prior knowledge, expectations, and inferences to make sense of the text (Anderson, 2000). Grabe (2009) supports this view, asserting that comprehension is facilitated when readers bring their experiences, goals, and interests into the reading act. However, critics argue that this model lacks a clear explanation of how readers derive specific inferences and may neglect the importance of accurate word recognition (Samuels & Kamil, 1988).

1.5.3 The Interactive Model

Synthesizes the strengths of both previous models by proposing that reading is a dynamic and recursive process. As Manzo (1990) explains, reading involves strategic operations such as predicting, confirming, and self-correcting, which interact simultaneously

during comprehension. Dechant (2013) further describes this model as a synergy of graphic recognition and contextual inference. Stanovich's (2000) "interactive compensatory hypothesis" expands on this view, suggesting that readers with deficiencies in one area (e.g., phonological processing) may compensate using strengths in another (e.g., semantic cues). This model has gained wide acceptance for its realistic portrayal of the cognitive flexibility involved in reading, especially for diverse EFL learners.

Recent findings in neuroscience and eye-tracking studies have further validated the interactive nature of reading by illustrating how the brain switches between bottom-up decoding and top-down prediction in real time (Rayner, Pollatsek, Ashby, & Clifton, 2012). Moreover, in EFL contexts, studies have shown that interactive strategies—such as encouraging learners to activate prior knowledge while attending to vocabulary cues—are particularly effective in fostering reading comprehension (Park, 2018).

1.6 Reading Strategies

In the field of reading instruction, the application of effective strategies plays a critical role in enhancing learners' reading comprehension and efficiency. Reading strategies are deliberate, goal-directed efforts that readers use to construct meaning from a text. According to Grabe and Stoller (2002), skilled readers employ a variety of cognitive strategies during reading to facilitate understanding, monitor progress, and overcome comprehension difficulties. Among the most prominent and widely practiced strategies are skimming, scanning, and reading for details, each serving distinct purposes within the broader reading process.

1.6.1 Skimming

Skimming is a high-speed reading technique used to gain a general overview or the main idea of a text without reading it word for word. It is particularly useful when readers need to preview material quickly to determine its relevance or overall content. Brown (2001) defines skimming as "looking for the gist or main idea of a text, often by reading the first and last paragraphs and noticing headings or other typographical cues" (p. 306). This strategy helps learners become more efficient readers by allowing them to identify the theme, structure, and tone of a passage in a limited time frame. It is especially effective during the pre-reading phase when students are encouraged to form initial impressions and predict the content of the text.

1.6.2 Scanning

While skimming focuses on global meaning, scanning is a more targeted strategy aimed at locating specific information within a text, such as a date, name, number, or keyword. Readers do not read every word but instead move their eyes rapidly over the text to find the particular piece of information they need. As Grellet (1981) explains, scanning involves "searching through a text to locate specific information without reading everything" (p. 4). This strategy is commonly used in tasks such as looking for answers in a comprehension question, checking schedules or instructions, and verifying facts. Scanning enhances learners' ability to navigate texts efficiently and is particularly useful in academic and real-world contexts where time is constrained.

1.6.3 Reading for Details

Unlike skimming and scanning, reading for details is a slow and careful reading strategy that aims at full comprehension. It requires the reader to understand not just the main ideas, but also the supporting details, implications, and nuanced meanings in the text. This strategy is often employed in the "while reading" or "post-reading" phases of instruction, where comprehension questions, summarization tasks, or critical discussions are required. Nuttall (1996) asserts that "reading for detailed understanding requires students to attend to the literal meaning, relationships between ideas, and the writer's intent" (p. 57). This approach is especially valuable in academic settings where deep understanding and text analysis are essential.

In summary, strategic reading is fundamental to effective language learning. Teaching EFL learners when and how to use skimming, scanning, and reading for details equips them with flexible tools to engage with texts purposefully. Each strategy contributes uniquely to reading comprehension and supports learners in becoming more autonomous and confident readers.

1.7 The Reading Process

The reading process is typically divided into three interrelated stages: pre-reading, while reading, and post-reading. These phases are designed to scaffold learners' comprehension and strategic engagement with a text, helping them become proficient readers. According to Paran (2003), "teachers need intensive reading to increase the three phases of learning called pre, during and post reading for better language readiness, retention, and activation strategies."

Similarly, Koda (2004) emphasized that each stage serves a distinct cognitive function: prereading activates prior knowledge, while-reading focuses on inference-making and main idea detection, and post-reading consolidates comprehension and encourages reflection (p. 207).

1.7.1 Pre-Reading Stage

Pre-reading activities prepare learners cognitively and emotionally to engage with a text. Strategies such as predicting, brainstorming, and using graphic organizers (e.g., KWL charts) are designed to activate background knowledge and spark interest (Harmer, 1991, p. 188). Teachers often guide students by asking content-related questions, displaying relevant images, and pre-teaching essential vocabulary (Brassel & Rasinski, 2008). Ferry (2009) also notes the importance of building prior knowledge for ESL learners through visual aids and discussions. The pre-reading phase aims to foster motivation and provide a clear purpose for reading.

1.7.2 While-Reading Stage

During this stage, students engage directly with the text through strategies such as skimming for gist and scanning for details. They refine their understanding by confirming or revising their pre-reading predictions. Richards (1990) describes this stage as a dynamic interplay of top-down and bottom-up processes, where readers use both schematic knowledge and textual clues to construct meaning (p. 87). According to Bradford and Day (1998), comprehension questions given before reading can guide students' focus during this stage, enhancing vocabulary acquisition and discourse awareness.

1.7.3 Post-Reading Stage

The post-reading phase is essential for consolidating comprehension and assessing students' understanding. Activities such as summarizing, answering questions, completing cloze tasks, and matching exercises help students reflect on the text (Haller, 2000). Teachers also assess objectives such as word recognition, grammar, and comprehension accuracy. Students may be asked to relate new information to prior knowledge or to present their own interpretations, thus fostering critical thinking and retention.

1.8 Krashen's Language Acquisition Theory

Stephen Krashen's Language Acquisition Theory, initially developed in the 1980s, has played a pivotal role in shaping second language (L2) pedagogical practices, particularly in the domain of reading. The theory comprises five central hypotheses: the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, the Monitor Hypothesis, the Natural Order Hypothesis, the Affective Filter Hypothesis, and the Input Hypothesis. When applied to L2 reading, these hypotheses underscore the importance of providing learners with meaningful, comprehensible input in a low-anxiety environment, thereby facilitating natural language acquisition. Extensive reading, in particular, aligns well with Krashen's framework as it exposes learners to large amounts of language input in a non-threatening context (Krashen, 1982). The following subsections discuss each hypothesis and its relevance to the development of reading skills in a second language.

A variety of strategies are employed before, during, or after reading a text to help students comprehend the reading material.

Pre-reading activities	During/while-reading activities	Post-reading activities
Predicting	List of questions	Reviewing of the content
Teaching key vocabulary	Scanning and skimming	Working on sentence
Word association	Working out the meaning	grammar
Discussions	of unfamiliar words	Vocabulary in context
Text surveys	Pattern study guides	Writing an assignment
	Summarizing	Discussions
	Clarifying	Debates
	Questioning	Role-playing
		Project work

Table 01: The Framework for Reading Process

1.8.1 The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis

Krashen (1982) distinguishes between two independent systems of second language performance: the 'acquired' system and the 'learned' system. Acquisition refers to the subconscious process of absorbing language through meaningful communication, whereas learning involves the conscious knowledge of grammatical rules. In the context of L2 reading, this hypothesis suggests that reading should prioritize acquisition over explicit instruction. That is, learners should be encouraged to read for pleasure and meaning rather than merely to analyze grammar or vocabulary. Through such authentic engagement with texts, learners can internalize syntactic patterns and vocabulary in a more natural and enduring manner. This aligns with the principles of extensive reading, where the focus is not on formal instruction but on fostering a habit of regular and enjoyable reading.

1.8.2 The Monitor Hypothesis

The Monitor Hypothesis posits that the learned system functions primarily as an editor or 'monitor' of language output, allowing for error correction only under specific conditions sufficient time, focus on form, and explicit knowledge of the rules (Krashen, 1982). In reading, the monitor has limited utility, as comprehension is typically a receptive, meaning-focused process rather than a production-focused one. However, in post-reading tasks such as summarization or retelling, learners may use the monitor to refine their output. Overreliance on the monitor during reading, especially in the early stages, may hinder fluency and reduce the pleasure associated with reading, thereby discouraging learners from engaging in the activity.

1.8.3 The Natural Order Hypothesis

According to the Natural Order Hypothesis, the acquisition of grammatical structures occurs in a predictable sequence, independent of the order in which they are formally taught. In L2 reading, this implies that exposure to a wide range of texts enables learners to encounter various structures repeatedly and naturally, thereby allowing them to acquire these structures in the sequence that reflects their internal readiness. For instance, learners may encounter simple present tense constructions before more complex conditional forms in their reading, regardless of the syllabus order. Thus, reading provides an ideal environment for natural order acquisition, as it offers rich and diverse linguistic input without imposing an artificial grammatical sequence.

1.8.4 The Affective Filter Hypothesis

Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis emphasizes the role of emotional variables such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety in language acquisition. A high affective filter can block input from reaching the language acquisition device, thereby impeding learning (Krashen, 1982). In the realm of reading, a supportive and low-anxiety environment is crucial. If learners are anxious about making mistakes or feel overwhelmed by difficult texts, their ability to comprehend and internalize language may be compromised. Encouraging self-selected reading materials that align with learners' interests and proficiency levels can lower the affective filter, enhance motivation, and foster positive attitudes toward reading. Moreover, group reading activities, reading circles, or book discussions can also build learners' confidence and create a more emotionally supportive learning context.

1.8.5 The Input Hypothesis

The cornerstone of Krashen's theory is the Input Hypothesis, which asserts that language is acquired through exposure to input that is slightly beyond the learner's current level of competence (i+1). In L2 reading, this principle is foundational to the practice of extensive and intensive reading. Providing learners with texts that are comprehensible yet slightly challenging promotes acquisition by continuously extending their linguistic capabilities. Reading offers abundant opportunities for encountering i+1 input, especially when learners are exposed to authentic materials or graded readers that match their proficiency level. As Krashen (2004) later affirmed, "free voluntary reading is the most powerful tool we have in language education." This underscores the role of reading not just as a support skill, but as a central mechanism for language acquisition, making it indispensable in any L2 instructional context.

1.9. Schemata and Reading

Understanding a written text in a second or foreign language goes beyond the linguistic code; it involves the activation of prior knowledge stored in the reader's memory. This stored knowledge, referred to as schemata, plays a fundamental role in the reading process, particularly in shaping the reader's interpretation and comprehension of texts. Schema theory, which emphasizes the interaction between a reader's background knowledge and new textual input, has had a significant influence on language comprehension research (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983).

Schema, defined broadly as organized patterns of thought or mental frameworks, guides perception, understanding, and memory (DiMaggio, 1997; Nadkarni & Narayanan, 2007). Bartlett (1932) introduced the concept by suggesting that understanding is not passive reception but an active organization of past experiences. These mental frameworks help readers anticipate textual structures, predict content, and fill in gaps left by ambiguous or implicit information. As such, schemata are not limited to factual knowledge; they encompass ideologies, cultural expectations, textual conventions, and linguistic structures (Rumelhart, 1980; Smith, 2004).

Schemata operate on various levels, generally categorized into formal, content, and cultural schemata (Carrell, 1987). Formal schemata pertain to the structural aspects of texts—knowledge of genres, rhetorical organization, and discourse patterns. For instance, recognizing whether a passage is a narrative or an argumentative essay enables readers to anticipate its structure and function. Content schemata involve background knowledge about the topic of the

text. If readers are familiar with the subject matter, they are more likely to comprehend it efficiently. Finally, cultural schemata refer to culturally embedded expectations and norms that influence how information is interpreted. A lack of cultural schema may lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations, particularly in EFL contexts where cultural references are unfamiliar (Kramsch, 1998; Alderson & Urquhart, 1984).

The interaction between schemata and reading comprehension is dynamic and contextdependent. Readers continuously integrate new textual information with pre-existing knowledge structures (Alderson, 2000). However, as Tuckey and Brewer (2003) note, schemata can sometimes hinder comprehension, particularly when stereotypes or biased expectations distort perception. For example, preconceived notions may cause a reader to misremember details of a story in a way that aligns with their existing schema, rather than with what was actually presented.

The educational implications of schema theory are substantial. Teachers must recognize the central role of background knowledge in comprehension and actively work to help learners activate relevant schemata prior to and during reading. Ambrose et al. (2010) argue that when learners' schematic knowledge is appropriately activated, it provides a solid foundation for acquiring new information. Conversely, if this knowledge is insufficient, inaccurate, or remains dormant, it may obstruct learning. Visual tools such as schema activation charts and pre-reading discussions can aid in making this implicit knowledge explicit and accessible.

Overall, schema theory underlines the notion that reading is not merely a linguistic process but a cognitive one, requiring the active engagement of the reader's prior knowledge. Texts, according to Carrell and Eisterhold (1987), do not carry meaning by themselves but provide cues for readers to construct meaning based on their stored experiences. Consequently, improving reading comprehension in EFL settings necessitates not only language instruction but also strategies to enhance and activate learners' schemata—formal, content, and cultural alike.

1.10 Reading Problems for EFL Learners

Reading comprehension problems have long been a prominent issue in EFL teaching and learning contexts. Numerous studies have demonstrated that many EFL students face considerable challenges in comprehending English texts. For instance, Vogel (1998, as cited in Chen & Chen, 2015) reported that approximately 52% of adults with second-language reading comprehension problems also experienced difficulty in learning foreign languages. The challenges that learners face are often multidimensional. Many EFL learners are not enthusiastic about reading literature in the target language because it demands intensive cognitive effort to understand the content. Other common issues observed in EFL classrooms include insufficient vocabulary, limited understanding of linguistic structures (such as syntax and lexis), inaccessible language input, underdeveloped reading skills, and a lack of background schemata (Grabe, 1991; Birch, 2002; Alyousef, 2006; Rahman, 2004; Fitriani, 2014).

These problems appear in various forms. EFL readers may struggle to distinguish between different meanings of a single word (e.g., the word left) or different words with similar pronunciation (e.g., rite, write, right, wright). Without knowledge of collocations, idioms, and proverbs, learners may misinterpret figurative language by translating it literally. As Nuttal (2000) noted, complex noun phrases, nominalizations, coordinating conjunctions, participial constructions, and prepositional phrases often render texts more difficult to process for language learners. Furthermore, readers may lack the necessary background knowledge to make sense of a text, which hinders comprehension. Goodman (1979) emphasized that even skilled readers can struggle to connect new information with prior knowledge. Therefore, reading comprehension difficulties are generally categorized into two types: linguistic and non-linguistic reading problems.

1.10.1 Linguistic Reading Problems

Linguistic reading problems relate to difficulties in understanding the language itself. According to Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams (2003), linguistic knowledge involves an unconscious awareness of phonological, syntactic, semantic, and morphological systems. Good readers tend to process these systems effortlessly and accurately (Lili, 2014), whereas poor readers face challenges in decoding and interpreting linguistic forms. Linguistic difficulties in reading typically fall under three categories: semantic, lexical, and syntactic problems. Semantic problems include limited vocabulary and unfamiliarity with appropriate collocations. Lexical problems involve a lack of understanding regarding derivations, word forms, and word classes. Syntactic problems encompass a weak grasp of grammatical structures and sentence formation rules.

1.10.2 Non-Linguistic Reading Problems

Non-linguistic reading problems are those that do not stem from gaps in language knowledge but from cognitive, strategic, or contextual factors. These may include an inability to identify and connect ideas within a text, difficulty distinguishing main ideas from supporting details, absence of effective reading strategies, and lack of exposure to the target culture. Additional factors contributing to non-linguistic reading challenges include lengthy or dense texts, inadequate background knowledge, limited working memory, and the absence of training in speed reading.

Chapter Two: Short Stories

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Conclusion

2. Short stories

The short story stands as one of the most enduring and flexible forms of narrative literature. Despite its compact size, it has long been used to convey human experiences, social values, and imaginative ideas in a concentrated way. While the literary world has extensively examined novels, the short story remains relatively underexplored, often overshadowed by longer narrative forms (Pasco, 1991). This imbalance has led to ambiguity in defining what truly constitutes a short story. Scholars generally agree on its brevity, yet other features remain a subject of debate.

Technically, short stories are characterized by their focus on a single event, a unified setting, a small cast of characters, and a narrative arc that can typically be consumed in one sitting. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (7th edition) refers to it as "a story, usually about imaginary characters and events that is short enough to be read from beginning to end without stopping." In contrast to novels, short stories tend to aim for a single emotional or thematic effect, often leaving a strong impression within a limited span. However, modernist and postmodernist works such as Dubliners by James Joyce have demonstrated that not all short stories adhere to traditional expectations, sometimes prioritizing introspection and psychological realism over plot development (Yuan & Hong, 2016).

Perhaps one of the more inclusive definitions is that offered by Pasco (1991), who defines the short story as "short literary prose fiction." This definition, while concise, encapsulates its key components: a fictional nature, a prose format, and a brief narrative structure. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that short stories can blur the boundaries between fiction and lived experience, often drawing from real-life inspiration to illustrate a point or convey meaning.

In essence, short stories are more than just brief narratives—they are powerful literary tools that merge clarity with depth, making them especially valuable in language education contexts. Their concise form offers both accessibility and richness, inviting readers into a complete world within just a few pages.

1.1 Types of short stories:

In literary pedagogy, understanding the variety of short story types enhances both teaching and student engagement. Different genres serve different pedagogical and emotional

purposes, supporting learning through entertainment, inquiry, reflection, and imagination. While classifications are many, this section highlights some of the most common and impactful types, with fiction often acting as a shared foundation among them.

2.1.1 Fables

Fables are among the most enduring and educational forms of storytelling. As defined in the Oxford Dictionary, a fable is "a traditional short story conveying a moral lesson, typically featuring animals as characters." This genre simplifies complex human values through animal figures who exhibit human traits, allowing readers—especially younger ones—to grasp ethical lessons in a subtle and entertaining way. These narratives are particularly useful in educational settings, as they blend simplicity, symbolism, and moral instruction. The anthropomorphism seen in fables fosters emotional connection and deeper understanding of the consequences of choices and behaviours.

2.1.2 Fiction

Fiction, with its imagined worlds and characters, provides a broad canvas for learners to explore life beyond their immediate realities. Donelson (1974) underscores the liberating role of fiction in the educational experience, noting that "reading fiction has the potential to free students from their temporary bonds of time and place." Through fictional short stories, learners enjoy the following benefits:

1. Emotional enjoyment and mental relaxation.

2. The ability to view personal problems through an objective lens by identifying with characters.

3. An expansion of imaginative capacity through exposure to diverse times, places, and people.

4. Development of critical thought as readers evaluate embedded values, ideologies, and social norms.

These features make fiction an invaluable component of literature curricula, both for language acquisition and personal development.

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2.1.3 Detective Stories

Detective short stories are distinctive for their promotion of logical reasoning and problem-solving skills. Unlike other genres, they invite readers to act as investigators, forming hypotheses and analysing textual clues. This active engagement in narrative reconstruction supports critical thinking. Freire (1970) emphasized the role of curiosity in learning, a concept reinforced by Clark and Seider (2017), who note that adolescents naturally display inquisitiveness and engage more deeply with explorative content during their developmental years. As such, detective stories are highly suitable for learners who thrive on analytical challenges and narrative suspense.

2.1.4 Humour

Humorous short stories play a unique role in both engagement and affective learning. According to Lyons (2005), humour can transform difficult learning situations by making lessons more accessible, even to resistant learners. Humorous narratives, characterized by witty descriptions and satirical scenarios, do more than entertain—they help reduce classroom anxiety and lower the affective filter, a psychological barrier that can hinder language acquisition and academic performance. By creating a relaxed atmosphere, humour allows learners to absorb content more readily and interact more freely with the material.

2.2 Elements of Short Stories

To deeply understand and appreciate short stories, learners must familiarize themselves with their essential structural components. These elements not only provide a framework for literary analysis but also allow students to better engage with the narrative and its characters. Below are the fundamental elements that constitute a short story.

2.2.1 Characters

Characters form the heart of any narrative. In short stories, the number of characters is usually limited, which helps maintain clarity and focus. This minimalism supports comprehension, especially for language learners, as they are not overwhelmed by numerous personalities and relationships. Klarer (1999) emphasizes that the psychological approach to character analysis classifies them into flat and round types. Flat characters are defined by a single, consistent trait, making them easier to understand, while round characters are more layered and dynamic, mirroring real human complexity. Other classifications commonly used in literary analysis include the protagonist, antagonist, main characters, and minor figures. Understanding these roles enhances a reader's ability to interpret plot developments and thematic depth.

2.2.2 Plot

The plot is the narrative backbone of a short story. It dictates the sequence of events and the progression of the story's central idea. Klarer (1999) defines plot as "the logical interaction of the various thematic elements of a text which lead to a change of the original situation as presented at the outset of the narrative" (p. 14). Webster (2017) offers a more accessible explanation, noting that plot is "how the author arranges events to develop his or her basic idea," typically unfolding in a structured sequence of beginning, middle, and end. Traditional short stories follow a linear progression, usually consisting of six key stages: exposition, complication, conflict, climax or turning point, resolution, and conclusion. This linearity helps learners track narrative development and comprehend cause-effect relationships within the story.



Figure 1: Plot Structure: Freytag's Pyramid (Klarer, 1999).

2.2.3 Setting

Setting provides the backdrop against which a story unfolds. It includes the geographical location, historical period, weather conditions, societal norms, and overall atmosphere. Klarer (1999) defines setting as "the location, historical period, and social surroundings in which the action of a text develops" (p. 25). According to Webster (2017), examining a story's setting

requires considering several components: physical environment, time of day or era, climate, and cultural context. These aspects contribute significantly to the story's mood and influence the behaviour and decisions of its characters. An effectively constructed setting enriches the narrative, immersing readers into the fictional world and aiding their interpretation of the story's themes.

2.3 Implementing short story in EFL

The integration of short stories into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction has increasingly gained recognition for its pedagogical potential. When thoughtfully selected and purposefully embedded into language lessons, short stories can foster linguistic competence and simultaneously nurture students' emotional and intellectual growth. As literary texts, short stories not only expose learners to authentic language use, but also encourage reflection, imagination, and intercultural understanding (Gajdusek, 1988). However, effective implementation depends largely on how well educators align the material with learners' interests, needs, and language proficiency (Collie & Slater, 1987).

2.3.1 Benefits of Incorporating Short Story in EFL Classrooms

A wealth of literature has endorsed the role of short stories in EFL education. According to Erkaya (2005), the genre can serve as a vehicle for meaningful language input, cultural exploration, and personal expression. Kohan and Pourkalhor (2013) emphasize that literature enables learners to engage emotionally with content, which fosters deeper learning and motivation. Moreover, Khatib and Nasrollahi (2012) argue that short stories, through their accessible structure and brevity, offer learners manageable yet intellectually stimulating experiences.

Chambers and Gregory (2006) further point out that literature-based approaches in EFL classrooms promote autonomy in interpretation, deepen empathy through character engagement, and challenge the prescriptive norms of traditional language instruction. They highlight how literary texts encourage learners to participate actively in meaning-making processes and to appreciate diverse human experiences. In line with this, Lazar (1993) stresses that literary reading cultivates memory retention of vocabulary and syntax through context-rich exposure.

One notable advantage of short stories is their ability to accommodate a variety of teaching contexts and schedules. Collie and Slater (1987) describe short stories as especially

suitable for classrooms with limited time or fluctuating attendance, given their compact nature and potential for immediate impact. Compared to novels, short stories introduce students to concise narratives, fewer characters, and a focused plot, which simplifies comprehension without sacrificing literary quality.

Murdoch (2002) supports this view, noting that appropriately selected short stories can offer high-quality language and content, particularly beneficial for intermediate learners. According to Brown (2000), a low-anxiety classroom environment contributes significantly to language acquisition, and the familiarity and relatability of short stories help create such spaces.

The short story emerges as a multifaceted pedagogical tool that not only enriches language learning but also enhances students' engagement, interpretation, and cultural literacy. Its flexibility and narrative appeal make it a "rewarding genre" for both educators and learners (Collie & Slater, 1987).

2.3.2 Characteristics of Short Story-Based Teaching

Short story-based language teaching (SSBLT) embraces a multidimensional pedagogical approach that integrates linguistic, cognitive, emotional, and cultural elements into the learning process. This method aligns with principles of communicative language teaching, humanistic education, and cooperative learning. According to Khatib and Seyyedrezaei (2013), SSBLT emphasizes the communicative function of language, fostering interaction and shared meaning-making through authentic narrative content.

One defining trait of SSBLT is its human-centred orientation, It views learners not merely as passive recipients of language but as active participants whose personal, cultural, and emotional experiences are acknowledged and integrated into the classroom. This approach encourages a learning environment rooted in empathy, respect, and shared discovery (Khatib & Seyyedrezaei, 2013). As students engage with characters and conflicts within stories, they naturally develop linguistic skills alongside emotional and cultural awareness.

Furthermore, SSBLT promotes integrated language learning. All four language skills reading, writing, listening, and speaking—are practiced in harmony, often revolving around the same narrative text. Short stories offer fertile ground for vocabulary acquisition in context, grammar awareness through natural sentence structures, and pronunciation practice via dramatized readings or dialogues (Lazar, 1993). This balanced focus helps learners build competence holistically. Another critical characteristic is the emphasis on critical thinking. Short stories often present ambiguous situations, complex characters, or open-ended conclusions that invite interpretation. Learners are encouraged to analyse, debate, and justify their perspectives, which sharpens reasoning and expands intellectual flexibility (Chiang, 2005, as cited in Khatib & Seyyedrezaei, 2013). This kind of interpretive engagement also enhances learners' ability to understand and navigate real-world communication.

SSBLT also recognizes the importance of a low-anxiety learning environment. Inspired by Krashen's Natural Approach, the method aims to reduce affective barriers by creating a friendly and supportive atmosphere where learners feel safe to experiment with language (Brown, 2000). This stress-free setting increases motivation and facilitates more effective acquisition.

Interaction is a central pillar of SSBLT. Activities often involve teacher-student exchanges, peer discussions, role plays, and group reflections. These collaborative practices help learners internalize language through meaningful communication while also fostering social skills (Khatib & Seyyedrezaei, 2013).

Lastly, SSBLT permits occasional use of the learners' native language for discussing abstract cultural or procedural points, ensuring clarity and deeper understanding, especially at early stages. However, the dominant classroom language remains English to maximize immersion and practice opportunities.

Short story-based teaching represents a rich, inclusive, and effective method that blends linguistic instruction with human development. It cultivates not only language proficiency but also empathy, critical thinking, and intercultural sensitivity—qualities essential in today's globalized world.

2.3.3 Criteria for Selecting Material

Selecting the appropriate short story for EFL instruction is a critical step that determines the success or failure of the literature-based approach. While short stories are inherently rich in narrative and linguistic value, not all of them are equally effective for language learning purposes. According to Wallace (2010), thoughtful selection ensures that learners remain engaged, challenged, and able to connect personally and intellectually with the material.

One of the primary considerations when choosing a short story is linguistic appropriateness. The language used in the story should match the learners' proficiency level.

If the vocabulary and sentence structures are excessively difficult, students may become frustrated or disengaged. Conversely, overly simplistic texts may not provide enough cognitive stimulation or opportunities for learning (Nuttall, 2005). Ideally, the text should contain a balance of familiar structures and new items that can be acquired through context or guided instruction.

Another important criterion is cultural relevance. **Stories that reflect learners' own cultural backgrounds or that present universal themes**—such as love, courage, loss, or identity—are more likely to resonate emotionally and stimulate interest. At the same time, exposure to other cultures through literature can help broaden students' perspectives and foster intercultural understanding (Wallace, 2010).

Length and structure are also significant. Short stories should be concise enough to be completed in a classroom session or two, yet rich enough to allow for meaningful analysis and discussion. Collie and Slater (1987) advocate for texts with clear plotlines, limited characters, and manageable length to reduce the cognitive load on foreign language learners while still offering the satisfaction of reading a complete literary piece.

Thematic depth and emotional appeal contribute greatly to a story's effectiveness. Stories that invite interpretation, evoke empathy, or provoke discussion encourage students to engage with the text beyond surface comprehension. This interpretive dimension not only enhances language acquisition but also supports the development of critical thinking and personal expression (Lazar, 1993).

Furthermore, **literary quality should not be overlooked**. Well-crafted narratives, vivid imagery, and realistic dialogues provide rich input for vocabulary and grammar learning. Wallace (2010) points out that aesthetically powerful texts can leave lasting impressions on learners, making language learning more memorable and meaningful.

The process of selecting short stories for EFL classes should be guided by a balance of pedagogical, linguistic, cultural, and affective factors. Well-chosen texts become not only tools for language development but also windows into human experience, sparking curiosity, empathy, and lifelong learning.

2.3.3.1 Suitability of Content

Among all criteria, the suitability of content stands as perhaps the most pivotal in selecting reading materials. As Nuttall (2005) argues, readers are far more likely to remain

engaged when they find the content personally relevant or stimulating. If a story fails to connect with learners' interests or experiences, motivation diminishes, and the potential for language learning is compromised. Therefore, short stories chosen for EFL classrooms should not only be familiar and accessible but also spark curiosity and emotional resonance. Variety in content also ensures that diverse tastes and learning preferences are met, making it more likely that students will find at least some of the stories both enjoyable and meaningful (Nuttall, 2005).

2.3.3.2 Exploitability

Exploitability refers to the degree to which a text can serve as a resource for language teaching and learning. According to Nuttall (2005), it is "the art of using language that conveys content for a purpose" (p. 172), suggesting that texts should be mined not only for what they say but how they say it. Wallace (2010) frames exploitability in slightly different terms—as the use of a text to teach linguistic structures and vocabulary. Beyond grammatical focus, exploitability also entails integrating multiple reading skills, such as prediction, inference, and summarization. Thanks to their compact form and rich narrative structure, short stories provide fertile ground for this integrative approach. Their layers of meaning, diverse language features, and emotional undertones make them ideal vehicles for varied classroom activities.

2.3.3.3 Readability

Another vital factor is readability, which Nuttall (2005) defines as "the combination of structural and lexical difficulty" (p. 174). Teachers must assess not only the syntactic complexity and lexical load of a text but also how these elements align with students' proficiency levels. If learners face excessive unfamiliar vocabulary or complex sentence constructions, their comprehension and confidence may suffer. Yet, even when difficult passages arise, the narrative coherence of short stories often helps guide the reader through, offering context that supports understanding. Wallace (2010) adds that readability should be tailored to the cognitive and linguistic readiness of the learners, balancing challenge with accessibility.

2.3.3.4 Authenticity

The concept of authenticity remains subject to debate. Meinhof (1987, as cited in Wallace, 2010) defines authentic texts as those that originate naturally in communication between native speakers, without any pedagogical intention. However, Nuttall (2005) adopts a more pragmatic stance, suggesting that authenticity also involves maintaining the texture of real discourse even when texts are adapted for learners. The essence of authenticity, then, lies in

preserving the natural rhythm, tone, and intention of language, enabling students to encounter English as it is truly used. Carefully selected short stories—whether unaltered or slightly adapted—can expose learners to idiomatic expressions, stylistic nuance, and real-world cultural references, enriching their linguistic competence without sacrificing accessibility.



Figure 2: Criteria for Selecting Reading Material

2.4 Teaching Literature

Teaching literature in the EFL classroom poses a delicate yet rewarding challenge. Literary texts are known for their figurative language, emotional resonance, and multiple interpretations. These features can either enrich the learning experience or alienate students, depending on how they are introduced. If presented in a rigid or overly analytical manner, literature may seem daunting or irrelevant to learners, especially those struggling with language proficiency. However, when literary texts are used creatively and thoughtfully, they can lead to genuine engagement, emotional connection, and meaningful language development. Active student participation, open discussions, and critical reflection become possible outcomes of literature-based instruction. In this regard, selecting an appropriate method for teaching literature becomes essential. Over time, scholars have proposed various approaches, each focusing on different educational aims. Carter and Long (1991, as cited in Pădurean, 2015) classified these methods into three principal models: the language model, the cultural model, and the personal growth model. Importantly, these models are not mutually exclusive. Instead, teachers can draw upon each depending on their objectives and students' needs, creating a blended and adaptive pedagogical strategy.

2.4.1 The Language Model

The language model emphasizes the linguistic aspects of literary texts. It aims primarily to improve students' command of the target language by using literature as a source of authentic linguistic input (Lazar, 2000, as cited in Bousbai, 2010). Within this model, texts are dissected for their vocabulary, grammatical patterns, and stylistic devices, offering learners a chance to analyze real-life language use. The model directs attention to how language is structured and functions in context rather than focusing solely on narrative meaning (Bibby & McIlroy, 2013; Pădurean, 2015).

A significant strength of this approach is that it immerses learners in rich, varied, and often poetic language forms that rarely appear in everyday instructional texts. Literature exposes students to idiomatic expressions, figurative language, and unique syntactic arrangements, broadening their understanding of how English can be used creatively (Bousbai, 2010). For instance, through stylistic analysis, learners can be prompted to notice how word order, tone, or punctuation contribute to meaning—skills that deepen both comprehension and production.

However, the model is not without criticism. It is sometimes viewed as mechanical or overly analytical, focusing on form over meaning. Some educators argue that this emphasis might hinder communicative competence, as it may not sufficiently foster spontaneous language use or emotional engagement (Pădurean, 2015).

A practical classroom application of this model could be in the post-reading stage. For example, the teacher might provide students with an initial narrative from a short story—such as Cinderella—and then ask them to co-construct the continuation using specific verb tenses (e.g., past simple and past perfect). One student might begin with: "Once upon a time, there was a beautiful girl named Cinderella," and the next continues, "She lived with her stepmother

after her mother had died." Such activities reinforce grammatical knowledge in meaningful contexts, For more advanced learners, the model also allows for stylistic interpretation, inviting students to infer implied meanings and analyze literary techniques—thus fostering both linguistic and critical thinking skills (Bibby & McIlroy, 2013).

2.4.2 The Cultural Model

The cultural model views literature as a mirror of society, offering learners valuable insights into the beliefs, values, traditions, and ideologies of the culture in which a literary work was produced. By integrating literary texts into EFL instruction, educators can enrich learners' intercultural awareness and help them decode the social and historical contexts underlying the target language. This model does not focus primarily on language forms, but rather on fostering an understanding of the "foreign" culture and promoting tolerance and empathy through literary exploration (Pădurean, 2015).

Carter and Long (1991, as cited in Pădurean, 2015) underline that literature provides a direct route to the cultural heritage of English-speaking countries. It enables students not only to acquire linguistic skills but also to perceive different worldviews, enhancing their sociocultural competence. For instance, reading a short story by an American or British author might expose students to everyday customs, historical struggles, or gender norms that would otherwise remain abstract or unknown.

One of the strengths of this approach lies in its potential to bridge cultural gaps and spark meaningful classroom discussions. Learners are invited to reflect on both the similarities and differences between their own culture and the one depicted in the text. This process encourages the development of critical thinking and nurtures a global perspective—skills that are increasingly important in today's interconnected world (Bibby & McIlroy, 2013).

However, this model can pose challenges when learners have limited background knowledge about the culture presented. Without adequate support from the teacher, students may misinterpret or oversimplify cultural references. Therefore, literature should be accompanied by pre-reading activities that contextualize the story, introduce key cultural concepts, and provide a foundation for deeper understanding (Lazar, 1993), For example, before reading Chinua Achebe's short story Civil Peace, learners can explore the historical context of post-civil war Nigeria and discuss how resilience and family values emerge in times of conflict. Such tasks turn the story into a platform for examining real human experiences through a cross-

cultural lens. Ultimately, the cultural model not only teaches language, but also cultivates empathy, curiosity, and openness—qualities that lie at the heart of both literary and language education.

2.4.3 The Personal Growth Model

The personal growth model emphasizes the learner's individual response to literature, making it the most humanistic among the three models. This approach values the emotional, intellectual, and imaginative engagement of the student with the text. It aims to create a personal connection between the reader and the literary work, where learners not only interpret but also relate and react to the themes, characters, and situations presented (Pădurean, 2015). It encourages students to express opinions, explore their identities, and discover meanings that resonate with their personal experiences.

According to Lazar (1993), literature has the power to affect learners on a deep, individual level by presenting them with universal human experiences. This model positions learners at the center of the learning process, where their interpretations are not only welcomed but essential. The text becomes a starting point for introspection, dialogue, and self-discovery. In this way, literature transcends its linguistic function and serves as a tool for personal and emotional development. From a pedagogical perspective, this model fosters active learning. Teachers facilitate rather than dominate classroom discussions, encouraging learners to voice their perspectives and support them with textual evidence. This dynamic helps develop learners' confidence, analytical thinking, and interpretive skills. Furthermore, it aligns well with communicative teaching approaches, as it promotes genuine language use for expressing thoughts and feelings (Bibby & McIlroy, 2013). An example of applying the personal growth model would be inviting students to write reflective journals after reading a short story, in which they connect the story's theme to their own lives. For instance, after reading The Last Leaf by O. Henry, learners may reflect on personal experiences of hope, sacrifice, or illness, discussing how such themes touched them emotionally and what lessons they drew from the story. Although highly beneficial, this model requires sensitivity from the teacher, especially when learners are asked to reveal personal feelings or experiences. A safe, respectful classroom atmosphere is crucial for students to feel comfortable enough to share.

The personal growth model views literature not only as language or culture, but as a mirror of the self—a means through which learners explore their identities, broaden their perspectives, and grow both emotionally and intellectually.



Figure 3: : Models in Teaching Literature

2.5 Advantages of Teaching Literature on Facilitating Language Acquisition

In recent decades, the integration of literature into language teaching has gained wide recognition for its pedagogical value. Literature offers learners an expansive and authentic corpus of language that is culturally rich and linguistically diverse. As Carter and Long (1991, as cited in Li, 1998) suggest, literature supports "an activity-oriented, student-centred, and language-sensitive approach," encouraging learner autonomy and natural language use.

Many learners express a preference for language learning through literature because it offers an immersive experience where language is acquired almost unconsciously (Li, 1998). This aligns with Krashen's (1982) Natural Approach, which posits that when the affective filter is low—meaning students feel relaxed and motivated—language acquisition is at its peak. Literature, with its emotive and humanistic appeal, naturally fosters such conditions.

Furthermore, literature stimulates curiosity by exposing students to new perspectives, cultures, and experiences. The more curious students become, the more inclined they are to read, thus enhancing their exposure to language. Marquardt (1982, as cited in Li, 1999) reinforces this idea by emphasizing that true mastery of a language is not solely based on the

ability to use conversational patterns but also on grasping its deeper cultural and structural nuances:

"Knowledge of the deep structures of the target language and of the underlying values, assumptions, beliefs, and intergroup attitudes of its culture are now seen to be as important in the real mastery of a language as a facile use of the patterns of everyday speech."

Integrating a diverse and engaging body of short stories into language instruction enhances linguistic competence and nurtures cultural awareness in a way that is both natural and enjoyable.

2.6 Teaching Literary Theories

Introducing students to literary theory is a significant pedagogical endeavor that moves learners from passive reception to active interpretation of literary texts. Literary theories serve as analytical frameworks-conceptual lenses that help readers uncover deeper meanings, authorial intent, and thematic undercurrents. Without such frameworks, texts such as Beckett's Waiting for Godot may seem absurd or meaningless; however, an understanding of existentialism illuminates symbolic depth philosophical richness. its and Despite its importance, teaching literary theory can be daunting, particularly because many students enter university with limited, if any, background in critical analysis (Gregory & Chambers, 2006, p. 73). Initial exposure to abstract concepts and analytical tasks can be overwhelming, leading to disengagement.

To counteract this challenge, Chambers and Gregory (2006) recommend a staged approach. First, instructors should introduce the essential characteristics of each theory through lectures or seminars. Then, in small group settings, teachers can model how a specific theory can be applied to a selected literary text. For instance, while studying Waiting for Godot, students might identify moments of inaction, absurdity, and disillusionment—hallmarks of existentialist thought.

This guided practice, followed by independent application, boosts learners' confidence and analytical ability. Moreover, group discussions allow students to articulate and negotiate meaning, often encountering diverse interpretations that enrich their understanding. Over time, learners begin to engage with texts autonomously, offering creative and insightful readings that reflect critical maturity. To promote purposeful reading, instructors must pose focused questions that anchor students' attention. For example, asking learners to identify existential elements in Waiting for Godot shifts their reading from passive decoding to active investigation (Chambers & Gregory, 2006, p. 77).

2.7 Planning a Reading Lesson of a Short Story

Ellis and Brewster (2014, p. 22) propose the Plan–Do–Review model as a structured yet flexible approach to teaching short stories. This story-based methodology is organized into three recursive stages designed to maximize student engagement and language learning.

Plan (Pre-Reading): This phase involves preparatory activities such as displaying images, asking predictive questions, and activating background knowledge. These tasks aim to contextualize the story and introduce key vocabulary, ensuring that students are primed for comprehension.

Do (During Reading): In this stage, students read and interact with the story. Teachers may guide comprehension through vocabulary tasks, discussions, or dramatizations. The emphasis is on experiential learning—students encounter the target language in action, applying newly introduced words and structures in meaningful contexts.

Review (Post-Reading): Here, learners reflect on and consolidate what they have learned. They may engage in writing tasks, oral presentations, or creative retellings. This phase not only reinforces language but also personalizes it, making the story's language and themes part of the learners' own expression.

A notable strength of this model is its rotational nature, which enables teachers to link one lesson with the next. According to Ellis and Brewster (2014, p. 23), this creates cohesion across the short story curriculum and fosters a sense of continuity. Moreover, when students are made aware of the model's benefits, the process engages the placebo effect—where belief in the method enhances its effectiveness.

2.7.1 Reading Lesson Activities

According to Harmer (1989), the effectiveness of a reading lesson hinges not only on the text itself but also on the design and delivery of accompanying activities. If students are not engaged by the material or tasks, learning is unlikely to occur. Thus, teachers must carefully curate activities that are stimulating, relevant, and pedagogically sound. Collie and Slater (1987) provide a set of principles for selecting reading activities in the literature classroom:

1. Select activities that complement one another, balancing language-focused tasks with those aimed at deepening comprehension and encouraging personal response.

2. Avoid an overload of tasks that might overshadow the simple pleasure and immersion of reading.

3. Keep in mind that the primary objective is to cultivate a love for reading; activities should enhance, not hinder, this goal.

4. Vary the modes of presentation—alternate between silent reading, group reading, and listening to recordings to maintain variety and engagement.

5. Choose texts that resonate personally with the teacher and are likely to appeal to the students. Passion for the material translates into more effective and joyful teaching.

Activities must be varied, complementary, engaging, and enjoyable, designed not only to teach but to inspire.

2.7.1.1 Pre-Reading Activities

The pre-reading phase is essential for activating prior knowledge and establishing a cognitive and emotional connection to the text. Harmer (1989) emphasizes that prediction and anticipation set the stage for deeper comprehension. Through hints, questions, or context-building cues, teachers help students prepare mentally for the text. Collie and Slater (1987) suggest using visual stimuli, such as pictures or videos, to stir imagination and introduce key ideas. These strategies serve to bridge the gap between the learners' existing knowledge and the upcoming content, ensuring a smoother and more meaningful reading experience.

2.7.1.2 While-reading Activities

Narrative texts invite specific reading strategies that enhance the interpretative experience and scaffold learners' engagement with language. Two predominant reading techniques are commonly employed: reading aloud and silent reading. According to Collie and Slater (1987), reading aloud plays a significant role in enriching learners' engagement. When paired with expressive tone, mimicry, facial gestures, and body language, this method draws students' attention and enlivens the classroom atmosphere. Such expressive reading does not

merely add dramatization but functions as a pedagogical tool to emphasize phonological aspects, improve pronunciation, and establish graphophonemic connections.

In contrast, silent reading is recommended particularly for more advanced learners, as it fosters independent processing of textual information. It allows readers to interact with the narrative at their own pace and develop individual responses to the text. While it lacks the collective vibrancy of oral reading, silent reading cultivates deeper cognitive involvement and personalized comprehension.

To secure students' engagement during the while-reading phase, Collie and Slater (1987) propose a variety of purposeful and practical activities. First, the use of grids proves to be an efficient strategy to guide comprehension and organize textual elements. Grids can direct students' attention to specific narrative components such as character development, plot structure, or thematic evolution. Second, posing questions before reading establishes a clear purpose and implicitly frames the learners' reading objectives. These guiding questions stimulate anticipation and cognitive readiness. Lastly, jigsaw activities—wherein students are given fragmented sections of the story to reconstruct—introduce an element of mystery and inquiry. These gaps in narrative not only spark curiosity but demand attentive focus and collaborative reasoning.

2.7.1.3 Post-reading Activities

The post-reading phase is vital in consolidating comprehension and transforming passive reception into active production. Collie and Slater (1987) advocate for activities that allow students to revisit, reflect upon, and creatively engage with the text. Among these is the task of designing a review of the short story, which involves summarizing core ideas, analyzing content, and evaluating the text's value or appeal. This task can be conducted individually or in groups and is ideally followed by a presentation session where students share and justify their interpretations.

To exemplify, learners may be asked to simulate working for a publishing house, tasked with promoting the short story to potential readers. They would then create visual or textual story reviews aimed at captivating an audience. Following the design phase, students present their work to peers, justifying their choices and persuasive strategies. Such a task not only deepens comprehension but also enhances students' communicative and analytical abilities through creative expression and peer feedback.

2.8 Using the SQ3R Procedure to Reading Short Story

The SQ3R method—standing for Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review—was pioneered by F. P. Robinson in 1946 and remains a robust strategy for developing reading comprehension (Wallace, 2010, p. 106). This approach is adaptable to various subjects and student levels, including both advanced learners and younger readers. It transforms reading into an active, goal-driven process (Nuttall, 2005). The model proceeds through five interconnected stages. Initially, the Survey stage prompts readers to skim the text, forming a preliminary overview. Then, in the Question and Read stages, learners activate their background knowledge, form hypotheses, and test them against the text's content. This interaction nurtures inquiry-based reading, where the text becomes a space of exploration rather than passive consumption.

In the final stages, Recite and Review, learners integrate new information into their cognitive framework, reinforcing retention and comprehension. These stages aim to ensure that reading results in tangible knowledge gain, often conceptualized as "i+1" in Krashen's Input Hypothesis—indicating a level just above the learner's current proficiency.

According to Wallace (2010), the SQ3R method is well-suited to literary texts due to their universal themes and emotional resonance. Stories invite students to draw upon their personal experiences, encouraging hypothesis-making, validation, and intellectual negotiation. The short story, in particular, lends itself to this approach owing to its brevity and compact narrative structure, which facilitates detailed discussions and thorough exploration. The concise format enables focused application of the SQ3R steps, culminating in enriched language acquisition and critical literacy.

Survey	Skimming the text for relevance.	
Survey	An overview of the main points.	
	Setting the purpose of reading by asking questions or raising	
Question	hypotheses.	
	Activating background knowledge	
	Involving Prediction.	
	Reading the text carefully.	
Read	Answering previously asked questions.	
	Confirming or Rejecting Hypotheses.	

Conclusion

Daoita	Reprocessing gained answers from the text by writing to fix them in	
Recite	mind	
	Organizing information in mind.	
Review	Assessing its importance.	
	The aim is to integrate new information into previous knowledge and	
	experience.	

Conclusion

This chapter has presented an in-depth exploration of the key concepts related to reading in the EFL context and the pedagogical use of short stories to support language learning. It has demonstrated that reading is a complex, dynamic process that involves multiple cognitive and linguistic components, and is essential for the development of vocabulary, grammar, and overall language proficiency. Effective reading involves various strategies and processes that help learners extract meaning from texts, whether through detailed analysis or general comprehension.

The review has also highlighted the importance of theoretical perspectives that explain how reading skills are acquired and developed. These include views on how learners interact with texts, how prior knowledge influences comprehension, and how emotional and motivational factors can either facilitate or hinder learning.

Short stories were discussed as a valuable instructional resource that not only enriches language input but also fosters learner motivation and cultural awareness. Their narrative structure and literary elements provide meaningful contexts for language use, making them effective tools for developing reading skills and language fluency. The integration of carefully selected stories into language teaching can support learners' engagement, enhance their interpretive abilities, and provide opportunities for personal connection with the material.

In sum, this chapter emphasized the complementary relationship between reading instruction and literature-based teaching. By combining theoretical insights with practical strategies, it laid the groundwork for understanding how reading short stories can contribute to EFL learners' language development. These insights will inform the subsequent analysis of learners' engagement with short stories, their perceived benefits, and their attitudes toward using literature in language learning.

Part Two

Practical Part

Chapter Three: Research Methodology and Data Analysis

Introduction

- 3.1 Research Design
- 3.2 Research sample
- 3.3 Data collection Tool
- 3.4 Description of Students' Questionnaire
- 3.5. Data analysis
- 3.6. Discussion of the Findings

Conclusion

Introduction

The present chapter outlines the research methodology adopted for this study. It provides a detailed description of the research design, the sample population, the data collection tool used, and the procedures followed for data analysis. This chapter also presents and interprets the findings derived from the administered questionnaire, which forms the core of the data collection process in this investigation.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative approach to investigate EFL learners' engagement with English short stories and their perceptions of how this reading practice influences their vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, and grammar proficiency. The research was conducted during the academic year 2025 with a group of second-year students of English at the University of Ghardaïa. The primary tool for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed to gather students' responses regarding their reading habits, attitudes, and experiences with short stories. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistical methods to identify patterns and tendencies in learners' perspectives. All ethical considerations were taken into account, and participants were informed of the study's purpose and their right to voluntary participation.

3.2 Research sample

The target population of this study consisted of thirty-two (32) second-year students from the Department of English at the University of Ghardaïa. This specific academic level was purposefully selected because these learners have already developed a foundational understanding of English and are at a stage where they are increasingly exposed to more complex texts and academic reading. The sample was chosen based on convenience and relevance to the research focus, ensuring that the participants had prior experience with reading materials, including short stories, either as part of their coursework or as outside classroom reading.

3.3 Data collection Tool

To achieve the research objectives, the study employed a quantitative data collection method through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to elicit students' self-reported reading practices, preferences, and opinions about the use of short stories in EFL classrooms. This instrument allowed the researcher to gather a broad range of responses efficiently and to statistically analyse the results to draw meaningful conclusions.

3.4 Description of Students' Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire was administered to second-year EFL students at Ghardaia University to collect the necessary data related to the impact of reading short stories on their reading proficiency. The questionnaire consists of thirteen (13) items, divided into three main parts: general information, students' perceptions of the impact of short stories on reading proficiency, and students' attitudes towards the use of short stories in reading classes.

Most of the questions are close-ended, requiring students to select one option from multiple choices or indicate their level of agreement on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree). This structure was chosen to ensure clarity, ease of analysis, and reliable quantification of students' responses. The items are as follows:

Question 1 seeks to collect demographic information regarding the gender of the participants.

Question 2 aims to identify the age range of the respondents.

Question 3 explores the frequency with which students read short stories in English.

Question 4 investigates whether students read short stories as part of their university coursework.

Question 5 looks into whether students engage in reading short stories for pleasure outside their academic responsibilities.

Question 6 asks students about their preferred format for reading short stories (e.g., print, digital, audio).

Question 7 identifies the genre(s) of short stories students enjoy most (e.g., fiction, romance, horror, etc.).

Question 8 assesses students' views on the importance of including short stories in university studies.

Question 9 examines whether students consult the university library when searching for short stories.

Question 10 investigates whether students face difficulty finding stories that match their interests.

Question 11 seeks to understand whether the university library provides adequate access to preferred short stories.

Question 12 includes five Likert-scale statements measuring students' perceptions of how reading short stories affects vocabulary, comprehension, and grammar.

Question 13 contains five Likert-scale items assessing students' attitudes toward using short stories in reading classes, including motivation, preferences, and engagement.

The primary objective of this questionnaire is to gather quantitative data that reflects students' experiences, preferences, and perceptions regarding the integration of short stories into English language instruction, specifically in terms of enhancing their reading skills.

3.5. Data analysis

Question01: Gender

Table 2.1	: Gender
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Options	Number	Percentage
Male	4	12.5%
Female	28	87.5%
Total	32	100%

The data presented in Table 1 shows the gender distribution of the respondents. Out of the 32 participants, 4 (12.5%) were male and 28 (87.5%) were female. This reflects a significant gender imbalance in favour of female participants. Such a distribution is common in many EFL contexts, particularly in language education, where female students often outnumber their male counterparts. While gender is not the central focus of this research, this demographic detail may offer valuable context for understanding students' attitudes and behaviours regarding reading short stories in English.

Question02: Age

Options	Number	Percentage
18–20	20	62.5%
21–23	11	34.4%
24 or above	1	3.1%
Total	32	100%

Table 2.2 : Age Distribution

The majority of participants (62.5%) are between the ages of 18 and 20, while 34.4% fall within the 21–23 age range. Only one participant (3.1%) is 24 years old or above. This distribution suggests that most of the surveyed individuals are within the typical age range for second-year university students, indicating a relatively homogeneous age group. Such demographic consistency may contribute to more unified responses, especially regarding reading habits and language learning experiences.

Question 03: How often do you read short stories in English?

Table 2.3: Frequency of Reading Short Stories

Option	Number	Percentage
Never	1	3.1%
Rarely	11	34.4%
Sometimes	8	25.0%
Often	9	28.1%
Always	3	9.4%
Total	32	100%

As shown in Table 3, 34.4% of the participants reported that they rarely read English short stories, making this the most common response. Around 25% indicated that they sometimes engage in this activity, while 28.1% said they read short stories often. A smaller group reported that they always read short stories (9.4%), and only 3.1% said they never do. These findings suggest that while many students occasionally read short stories, frequent and consistent engagement is still limited, indicating room for improvement in fostering regular reading habits.

Table 2.4: Frequency of Reading Short Stories as part of university coursework			
Options	Number	Percentage	
Yes	25	78.1%	
No	3	9.4%	
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Question 04: Do you read short stories as part of your university coursework?

Options	Number	Percentage
Yes	25	78.1%
No	3	9.4%
Sometimes	4	12.5%
Total	32	100%

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As shown in Table 4, a significant majority of students (78.1%) confirmed that they read short stories as part of their university coursework. A smaller portion (12.5%) indicated that they sometimes do, while only 9.4% reported that they do not read short stories as part of their academic studies. This highlights the strong presence of literary materials-particularly short stories-in the university curriculum, which could be strategically leveraged to enhance reading proficiency and language acquisition among EFL students.

Question 05: Do you read short stories in English for pleasure outside of your coursework?

Table 2.5: Frequency of Reading Short Stories for please	asure
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Options	Number	Percentage
Yes	7	21.9%
No	8	25.0%
Sometimes	17	53.1%
Total	32	100%

Table 5 shows that 53.1% of students reported that they sometimes read short stories in English for pleasure outside their coursework. Meanwhile, 21.9% responded with a definite yes, and 25.0% indicated they do not engage in this activity at all. These results suggest that while extracurricular reading is not consistently practiced, a majority of students still engage with English short stories at least occasionally for enjoyment, indicating potential for encouraging more voluntary reading habits

	Table 2.6: Preferred feet	ormat for read	ling short stories
Options		Number	Percentage
Print		8	25.0%
Digital		20	62.5%

Question 06 : In what format do you prefer reading short stories?

Options	Number	Percentage
Print	8	25.0%
Digital	20	62.5%
Audio	3	9.38%
Other	1	3.12%
Total	32	100%

Table shows that the majority of participants (62.5%) prefer digital formats for reading short stories, reflecting the growing popularity of technology-based reading. 25.0% still favour print formats, while 9.38% prefer audio versions. Only 3.12% selected other formats, suggesting minimal variation outside the primary modes. This trend emphasizes the importance of incorporating digital materials in EFL reading instruction.

Question 07: What genres of short stories do you enjoy the most?

Options	Number	Percentage
Fiction	12	37.5%
Non-fiction	3	9.38%
Fantasy/Science Fiction	5	15.62%
Mystery/Thriller	4	12.5%
Historical	2	6.25%
Romance	3	9.38%
Horror	2	6.25%
Other	1	3.12%
Total	32	100%

Table 2.7: favourite genre of short stories

The table indicates that fiction is the most preferred genre among respondents, with 37.5% of the participants selecting it. This is followed by fantasy/science fiction (15.62%) and mystery/thriller (12.5%), suggesting a strong interest in imaginative and suspenseful narratives. Genres like non-fiction and romance were chosen by 9.38% of participants each. Less popular choices include historical and horror (6.25% each), while 3.12% selected other. These findings suggest that EFL learners tend to be more engaged with creative and fictional stories, which may influence how literature is integrated into classroom activities.

Question 08 : How important is it to include short stories in university studies?

Options	Number	Percentage
Very Important	20	62.5%
Somewhat Important	7	21.88%
Neutral	3	9.38%
Not very Important	1	3.12%
Not important at all	1	3.12%
Total	32	100%

Table 2.8: Students' Perceptions of Including Short Stories in University Studies

The results show that a significant majority (62.5%) of respondents view the inclusion of short stories in university studies as very important, followed by 21.88% who consider it somewhat important. Only 6.24% of students believe that integrating short stories into academic coursework is not very important or not important at all, while 9.38% remain neutral. These findings suggest a strong student preference for incorporating literary texts—specifically short stories—into formal EFL education, reinforcing their perceived educational value in enhancing language skills and engagement.

Question 09: Do you go to the university's library when looking for short stories?

Options	Number	Percentage
No	20	62.5%
Yes	12	37.5%
Total	32	100%

The data reveals that 62.5% of respondents do not use the university library when looking for short stories, while only 37.5% reported that they do. This indicates a relatively low reliance on the university's library resources for accessing short stories. Possible reasons may include limited availability of relevant materials, preference for digital or online sources, or lack of awareness of the library's offerings. This result highlights the need to either improve access to literary resources within the library or to encourage students to explore existing collections through orientation or promotional activities.

Options	Number	Percentage
No	15	46.88%
Yes	17	53.12%
Total	32	100%

Question 10: Do you face difficulty in finding short stories you prefer?

Options	Number	Percentage
No	15	46.88%
Yes	17	53.12%
Total	32	100%

Table 2.10: Students' Difficulty in Finding Preferred Short Stories

The data shows that a slight majority (53.12%) of participants do face difficulty in finding short stories they prefer, while 46.88% report no such difficulty. This finding suggests that more than half of the students struggle to access or locate short stories that align with their interests or preferences. This could be due to limited variety, insufficient categorization, or a lack of guidance in choosing appropriate materials. The results point to the need for better resource curation, recommended reading lists, or increased availability of diverse short story collections to support EFL learners' engagement and enjoyment.

Question 11: Does your university library make efforts to offer you the short stories?

Table 2.11: Library Effective	orts to Provide Short Stories
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Options	Number	Percentage
No	18	56.25%
Yes	14	43.75%
Total	32	100%

The data reveals that 56.25% of respondents believe their university library does not make sufficient efforts to offer short stories, while 43.75% acknowledge that some effort is made. This slight majority suggests a gap in resource accessibility or visibility. While nearly half of the students recognize efforts by the library, the prevailing perception points to a need for improvement in either promoting available materials, expanding the short story collection, or actively supporting students' literary preferences. These findings indicate that enhancing the library's role could positively influence reading habits and engagement with English short stories in EFL contexts.

Part Two: Perceptions of the Effect of Short Stories on Reading Proficiency

Statement 1: Reading short stories has helped me improve my vocabulary.

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	14	43.75%
Agree	12	37.5%
Neutral	4	12.5%
Disagree	1	3.12%
Strongly Disagree	1	3.12%
Total	32	100%

Table 2.12: Vocabulary Improvement through Short Stories

The results indicate that a large majority (81.25%) of students either agree or strongly agree that reading short stories has contributed to their vocabulary development. Only 6.24% express disagreement, while 12.5% remain neutral. This suggests that short stories are perceived as an effective tool for enhancing lexical knowledge among EFL learners. The findings support the integration of literary texts in language learning, particularly as a means of natural vocabulary acquisition through contextualized reading.

Statement 2: I find it easier to understand English texts after reading stories.

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	10	31.25%
Agree	15	46.88%
Neutral	5	15.62%
Disagree	1	3.12%
Strongly Disagree	1	3.12%
Total	32	100%

Table 2.13: Impact of Short Stories on Text Comprehension

The data show that 78.13% of respondents either agree or strongly agree that reading short stories has helped them better understand English texts. A smaller portion, 15.62%, remain neutral, while only 6.24% express disagreement. These results imply that short stories play a supportive role in enhancing overall text comprehension, likely due to increased exposure to grammar, vocabulary, and narrative structure in context. This finding reinforces the use of

short literary texts as a pedagogical strategy to build reading fluency and interpretative skills in EFL learners.

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	13	40.62%
Agree	14	43.75%
Neutral	3	9.38%
Disagree	1	3.12%
Strongly Disagree	1	3.12%
Total	32	100%

Statement 3: Short stories help me improve my reading comprehension.

Table 2.14: Impact of Short Stories on Reading Comprehension

A significant 84.37% of respondents reported that short stories help improve their reading comprehension, with 40.62% strongly agreeing and 43.75% agreeing. Only 6.24% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and a small percentage (9.38%) remained neutral. These findings indicate that short stories are widely perceived as effective tools for enhancing comprehension skills among EFL learners. The narrative structure, contextual vocabulary, and coherent progression of ideas likely contribute to this development, making short stories a valuable resource in reading instruction within English language classrooms.

Statement 4: Reading stories helps me recognize grammar patterns in context.

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	9	28.12%
Agree	15	46.88%
Neutral	5	15.62%
Disagree	2	6.25%
Strongly Disagree	1	3.12%
Total	32	100%

Table 2.15: Effect of Reading Stories on Grammar Recognition

A majority of 75% of participants either strongly agreed (28.12%) or agreed (46.88%) that reading stories helps them recognize grammar patterns in context. A smaller portion (9.37%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 15.62% remained neutral. These results highlight that learners generally perceive contextualized grammar exposure through short stories as beneficial. Stories naturally present grammar structures in meaningful and functional

contexts, supporting learners' ability to internalize patterns rather than just memorize rules. This aligns with communicative language teaching principles, where grammar is acquired implicitly through exposure to authentic language use.

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	17	53.12%
Agree	10	31.25%
Neutral	3	9.38%
Disagree	1	3.12%
Strongly Disagree	1	3.12%
Total	32	100%

Statement 5: Short stories make reading practice more enjoyable and useful.

Table 2.16: Impact of Short Stories on Reading Enjoyment and Usefulness

A substantial majority of participants—84.37%—either strongly agreed (53.12%) or agreed (31.25%) that short stories make reading practice more enjoyable and useful. Only 6.24% expressed disagreement, while 9.38% held a neutral stance. These findings suggest that most students find short stories engaging and educationally valuable, reinforcing the dual role of literature in language learning: fostering pleasure and practical skill development. This supports the integration of literary texts in EFL contexts to increase motivation, enhance comprehension, and sustain student interest in reading activities.

Part Three: Students' Attitudes toward Using Short Stories in Reading Classes

Statement 1: I feel more motivated to read when the text is a short story.

Options	Number l	Percentage
Strongly Agree	15	46.88%
Agree	12	37.5%
Neutral	3	9.38%
Disagree	1	3.12%
Strongly Disagree	1	3.12%
Total	32	100%

Table 2.17: Motivation to Read When the Text is a Short Story

The data reveals that a significant majority (84.38%) of students either strongly agreed or agreed that they feel more motivated to read when the text is a short story. A small proportion—6.24%—disagreed with the statement, and 9.38% remained neutral. These results indicate that short stories serve as a motivational tool in reading classes. Their engaging narratives, manageable length, and relatability likely contribute to students' increased interest in reading. This aligns with research suggesting that literary texts, particularly short stories, can enhance students' emotional involvement, attention span, and positive attitudes toward reading in a second language.

Statement 2: I prefer reading short stories to other types of reading texts.

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	10	31.25%
Agree	13	40.62%
Neutral	6	18.75%
Disagree	2	6.25%
Strongly Disagree	1	3.12%
Total	32	100%

Table 2.18: Preference for Short Stories over Other Reading Texts

A total of 71.87% of the respondents (Strongly Agree and Agree) expressed a clear preference for short stories over other types of reading texts. Only 9.37% (Disagree and Strongly Disagree) reported the opposite, while 18.75% remained neutral. These findings suggest that short stories are not only motivational but also preferred by a majority of students as instructional materials in reading classes. Their compact structure, engaging plots, and relevance to learners' interests might explain this preference. Furthermore, short stories likely provide quicker feedback and satisfaction, making them more appealing compared to longer or more technical texts. This preference reinforces the pedagogical value of integrating short stories into EFL reading programs, especially when aiming to sustain students' interest and foster a love for reading.

Options	Number I	Percentage
Strongly Agree	14	43.75%
Agree	13	40.62%
Neutral	3	9.38%
Disagree	1	3.12%
Strongly Disagree	1	3.12%
Total	32	100%

Statement 3: Stories help me relate reading to real-life experiences or feelings.

The results indicate that 84.37% of students (Strongly Agree and Agree) believe that reading stories helps them relate the content to real-life experiences or emotions. A small minority (6.24%) disagreed, while 9.38% maintained a neutral stance. This high level of agreement demonstrates the emotional and experiential relevance that short stories offer to EFL learners. Literature, especially in the form of narrative fiction, can act as a bridge between language learning and personal reflection. When students identify with characters or situations, they are more likely to internalize language, develop empathetic understanding, and engage in deeper reading comprehension. Incorporating stories that reflect common human experiences or cultural themes relevant to learners' lives can enhance motivation, empathy, and retention, making reading not only a linguistic task but also a meaningful experience.

Statement 4: I would like more stories to be used in the reading module.

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	16	50.00%
Agree	11	34.38%
Neutral	3	9.38%
Disagree	1	3.12%
Strongly Disagree	1	3.12%
Total	32	100%

A significant majority of students—84.38% (Strongly Agree and Agree)—expressed a positive preference for the inclusion of more short stories in the reading module. Only 6.24% of students showed disagreement, while 9.38% remained neutral. These findings highlight a
strong demand among students for a richer literary component in their reading classes. The enthusiasm for more story-based content suggests that students perceive narrative texts as engaging, beneficial, and relevant to their language learning process. Pedagogically, this supports the integration of literature-based instruction in EFL classrooms, especially in modules aimed at developing reading comprehension, critical thinking, and cultural awareness. Short stories, in particular, offer compact yet powerful narratives that allow for linguistic input, emotional engagement, and cultural exposure, aligning well with communicative and experiential learning goals.

Statement 5: Reading stories increases my interest in reading in English.

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	17	53.12%
Agree	10	31.25%
Neutral	3	9.38%
Disagree	1	3.12%
Strongly Disagree	1	3.12%
Total	32	100%

Table 2.21: Students' Interest in Reading English Through Stories

A notable majority of students—84.37% (Strongly Agree and Agree)—reported that reading stories significantly increases their interest in reading in English. Only a small fraction, 6.24%, disagreed with this statement, while 9.38% remained neutral. This clearly suggests that short stories are effective motivational tools in encouraging students to engage with English reading materials. The high percentage of positive responses reflects the engaging and enjoyable nature of story-based texts, which likely provide meaningful context and relatable content, thus stimulating learners' curiosity and willingness to read. From an educational perspective, these findings advocate for incorporating more short story reading activities in EFL curricula to foster intrinsic motivation and develop a lifelong interest in English reading.

3.6. Discussion of the Findings

This section discusses the findings in relation to the research objectives and in light of relevant theoretical frameworks. The data collected through the student questionnaire reveals a generally positive perception of short stories among EFL learners, confirming the pedagogical potential suggested by previous literature.

First, the engagement of students with short stories, both inside and outside the classroom, reflects Krashen's (1997) theory of Free Voluntary Reading, which argues that learners acquire language most effectively when reading is self-selected and meaningful. The fact that many students read short stories "often" or "sometimes" outside coursework indicates an emerging culture of voluntary reading, which is crucial for fostering long-term literacy habits and language acquisition.

Students' perceptions of the linguistic benefits gained from reading short stories—such as vocabulary enrichment (81.25%), improved reading comprehension (84.37%), and grammar recognition (75%)—align with Erkaya's (2005) argument that literary texts, especially short stories, provide contextually rich environments for language learning. These findings suggest that learners internalize grammar and vocabulary more naturally when exposed to authentic, emotionally engaging narratives, supporting the input hypothesis that emphasizes comprehensible input in real contexts (Krashen, 1982).

Moreover, the data reveal that students find short stories more enjoyable and motivating than other types of reading texts. Over 84% reported increased motivation when engaging with narrative texts, and 71.87% preferred short stories over traditional materials. This confirms Graesser, Singer, and Trabasso's (1994) view that narrative structures promote deeper cognitive engagement, which is essential for inferential thinking and memory retention.

Importantly, students expressed that stories help them relate reading to real-life experiences—a key aspect of constructivist learning theory, where knowledge is built through personal connection and emotional involvement. This lends credence to Kispal's (2008) claim that literature encourages critical thinking and empathy, both of which are fundamental to language and literacy development.

However, the findings also reveal institutional limitations. The lack of access to preferred stories and underutilization of the university library point to a disconnect between learners' interests and institutional support. Despite students' enthusiasm, the limited availability of curated story collections may hinder the full pedagogical impact of story-based reading. This gap echoes Bartan's (2017) critique of traditional EFL settings where literary texts are often underused due to logistical or curricular constraints.

In conclusion, the findings strongly validate the theoretical position that short stories are effective tools for enhancing EFL learners' reading skills. Beyond their linguistic value, they serve as motivational and culturally enriching texts that align with both cognitive and affective dimensions of learning. For these reasons, it is recommended that reading modules integrate a wider variety of short stories and that institutions ensure better access to literary resources to fully capitalize on their benefits.

Conclusion

In line with the research aim, "Investigating Students' Attitudes toward the Use of Short Stories in Reading Classes," the analysis of the collected data reveals that short stories play a significant and positive role in enhancing EFL students' reading experiences. The findings demonstrate that the majority of students hold favourable attitudes toward the integration of short stories in reading modules, recognizing their value in developing vocabulary, improving comprehension, and increasing motivation.

Students reported that short stories made reading more enjoyable and meaningful. A substantial percentage agreed that stories facilitated vocabulary learning and allowed them to understand grammar in context. Additionally, many respondents indicated that they felt more motivated to read when the material was a story rather than a traditional expository or academic text. This affirms the hypothesis that short stories can serve as a motivating and effective pedagogical tool in EFL reading instruction.

The analysis also revealed that students were able to connect the themes of stories with real-life experiences and emotions, supporting the notion that literature can humanize language learning and foster deeper engagement. The desire for more stories to be included in the curriculum further confirms the pedagogical potential of narrative texts.

However, the findings also brought attention to some challenges, particularly the lack of sufficient story-based resources in the university library. While students showed interest in reading stories, they also reported difficulties accessing them, which may limit the overall impact of this approach unless institutional support is improved.

In conclusion, the data analysis clearly supports the integration of short stories in reading instruction for EFL learners. Their ability to enhance vocabulary, contextual understanding, and learner motivation positions them as a valuable resource in the English classroom. Nonetheless, for their benefits to be fully realized, improvements in resource accessibility and institutional support are necessary.

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General Conclusion

General conclusion

In the context of EFL instruction in Algerian universities, where reading is often limited to textbook-based content, the integration of short stories offers a more engaging and effective approach to language learning. This research explored the extent to which EFL learners engage with English short stories, how they perceive their impact on language skills—namely vocabulary, comprehension, and grammar—and what attitudes they hold toward the use of such literary texts in reading classes.

To address the central topic, three research questions guided the investigation:

- 1. To what extent do EFL learners engage in reading English short stories inside and outside the classroom?
- 2. How do EFL learners perceive the impact of reading short stories on their vocabulary, comprehension, and grammar proficiency?
- 3. What are EFL learners' attitudes toward using short stories as a tool in English reading classes?

In response to these questions, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- 1. Most EFL students read English short stories both inside and outside the classroom.
- 2. EFL students believe that reading short stories helps improve their vocabulary, comprehension, and grammar.
- 3. EFL students have positive attitudes toward using short stories in English reading classes.

The study was structured into a theoretical and a practical component. The first chapter presented the theoretical underpinnings of reading as a language skill, the pedagogical benefits of literature—particularly short stories—and how narrative texts can be used to promote vocabulary acquisition, grammatical awareness, and reading comprehension. The second chapter included the fieldwork and data analysis, which was based on a questionnaire administered to a sample of second-year EFL students.

The findings confirm all three hypotheses. First, the data showed that a considerable number of students reported reading short stories both within and beyond the classroom, suggesting an encouraging level of engagement. Second, students perceived a strong connection between reading short stories and the improvement of key language skills especially vocabulary enrichment, enhanced comprehension, and better recognition of grammar patterns in context. Third, students expressed generally positive attitudes toward the use of short stories in English reading classes, appreciating their motivational and enjoyable nature, as well as their relevance to real-life situations and personal experiences.

In summary, this research highlights the pedagogical value of using short stories in EFL reading instruction. Short stories not only contribute to language development but also promote learner engagement and motivation. However, for these benefits to be fully realized, institutional support—such as improved access to literary materials and training for instructors on how to integrate stories effectively—must be enhanced. Ultimately, short stories represent a powerful, yet often underutilized, resource in the EFL classroom, capable of transforming reading from a mechanical activity into a meaningful, learner-cantered experience.

Recommendation and suggestions

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the use of short stories in EFL reading modules:

- **Curriculum Designers** should integrate a wider selection of short stories into reading syllabi, with attention to themes, genres, and difficulty levels that suit students' linguistic proficiency and interests.
- **Teachers** are encouraged to utilize stories not just for passive reading but for active language learning—by designing tasks that involve vocabulary exploration, grammar identification, role-plays, and thematic discussions.
- University Libraries should expand their digital and physical collections of English short stories, prioritizing accessibility and variety to cater to different student preferences.
- **Training Workshops** could be organized for EFL instructors to introduce innovative methods for teaching reading through literature, such as using stories for extensive reading, critical thinking, and contextual grammar instruction.
- Student Engagement Initiatives—such as reading circles, story-telling contests, or creative response assignments—should be implemented to promote a culture of reading beyond the classroom.
- Collaboration between Teachers and Librarians should be fostered to ensure that required and supplementary reading materials are available and aligned with instructional goals.
- Further Research is recommended to assess the long-term impact of story-based reading on students' language proficiency and to explore the effectiveness of different genres or story types on various aspects of language acquisition.

By adopting these recommendations, Algerian universities—particularly English departments—can create a more supportive and engaging environment for language learners. The use of short stories not only enriches linguistic competence but also fosters motivation, cultural understanding, and a lifelong love for reading in a foreign language.

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Appendices

Students' questionnaire

Dear student,

This questionnaire is part of a research study conducted to explore how reading short stories in English affects students' reading skills and attitudes. Your answers will remain anonymous and will be used for academic purposes only. Please answer honestly.

Part One: General Information

1.Gender

- o Male
- o Female
- 2. Age
 - o 18-20
 - o 21-23
 - o 24 or above

3. How often do you read short stories in English?

- o Never
- o Rarely
- o Sometimes
- o Often
- o Always

4. Do you read short stories as a part of your university coursework?

o Yes

- o No
- o Sometimes

5. Do you read short stories in English for pleasure outside of your

coursework?

- o Yes
- o No
- Sometimes

6. In what format do you prefer reading short stories?

Print

Digital

Audio

Other:

- 7. What Genres of short stories do you enjoy the most?
 - o Fiction
 - Non-fiction
 - Fantasy/Science Fiction
 - Mystery/Thriller
 - o Historical
 - o Romance
 - o Horror
 - Other:

8. How important do you think it is to include short stories in your

university studies?

- o Very Important
- o Somewhat Important
- o Neutral
- o Not very Important
- Not important at all

9. Do you often go to the university's library when looking for short stories?

- o Yes
- o No

10. Do you find difficulty in finding short stories you prefer?

Appendices

- o Yes
- o No

11. Does your university library make efforts to offer you the short stories?

- o Yes
- o No

Part Two: Perceptions of the Effect of Short Stories on Reading Proficiency

12. Mark only one oval per row.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Reading short stories has helped me					
improve my vocabulary.					
I find it easier to understand English					
texts after reading stories.					
Short stories help me improve my					
Reading comprehension.					
Reading stories helps me recognize					
grammar patterns in context.					
Short stories make reading practice					
more enjoyable and useful.					

Part Three: Students' Attitudes toward Using Short Stories in Reading

Classes.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel more motivated to read when					
the text is a short story.					
I prefer reading short stories to other					
types of reading texts.					
Stories help me relate reading to					
real-life experiences or feelings.					

13. Mark only one oval per row.

I would like more stories to be used	
in the reading	
module.	
Reading stories increases my	
interest in reading in English.	

ملخص البحث

ملخص البحث

تستقصي هذه الدراسة فعالية استخدام القصص القصيرة في تعزيز مهارات القراءة لدى طلبة السنة الثانية تخصص اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بجامعة غرداية. وبالاعتراف بالقيمة التعليمية للنصوص الأدبية في تعليم اللغات الأجنبية، تهدف الدراسة إلى معرفة مدى انخراط الطلبة في قراءة القصص القصيرة باللغة الإنجليزية داخل الفصل وخارجه، وكيف يدركون تأثير هذه القصص على مفرداتهم اللغوية، وفهمهم، ومستواهم النحوي، بالإضافة إلى مواقفهم العامة تجاه استخدام الأدب في مفرداتهم اللغوية، وفهمهم، ومستواهم النحوي، بالإضافة إلى مواقفهم العامة تجاه استخدام الأدب في مول عاداتهم في القراءة. اعتمدت الدراسة على منهج كمي من خلال توزيع استبيان منظم على الطلبة لجمع بيانات حول عاداتهم في القراءة، وتصوراتهم، وتفضيلاتهم. كشفت النتائج أن غالبية الطلبة يقرؤون القصص القصيرة بانتظام ويعتبرونها أدوات مفيدة لتحسين مهارات اللغة المختلفة، خاصة في اكتساب المفردات وفهم المقروء. كما أعرب الطلبة عن مواقف إيجابية تجاه دمج القصص القصيرة في دروس القراءة، مشيرين إلى دورها التحفيزي ومساهمتها في خلق تجارب تعليمية أكثر معنى. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن القصص القصيرة تمثل مورداً قيماً وجذاباً لدعم تعارب تعليمية أكثر معنى. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن

الكلمات المفتاحية :طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية، القصص القصيرة، مهارة القراءة، تنمية المفردات، فهم المقروء، القواعد، مواقف الطلبة.