

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SHORT STORIES IN READING SKILL

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ABSTRACT

Some researchers stated that many problems and difficulties faced by students in learning a foreign languages likes teacher centered, boring teaching and learning material used in the classroom, low motivation of learning. The purpose of this article is to describe the effectiveness of short stories in reading skill. Learning English through short stories can make students to be creative and affect learners' attentions effectively not only in reading skill but also another skills such as listening, speaking and writing. Using short stories is recommended in learning a foreign language because teachers can teach literary works, cultural, and higher –order thinking and many aspects of language.

ABSTRAK

Beberapa peneliti mengatakan bahwa banyak permasalahan dan kesulitan yang dihadapi oleh siswa dalam belajar bahasa asing seperti guru yang menjadi pusat belajar, materi yang di ajarkan membosankan, kurangnya motivasi dalam belajar. Tujuan dari artikel ini adalah menjelaskan efektivitas cerita pendek dalam kemampuan membaca. Belajar bahasa Inggris melalui cerita pendek bisa membuat siswa menjadi kreatif dan memberikan pengaruh perhatian yang efektif tidak hanya dalam kemampuan membaca tetapi juga kemampuan yang lain seperti mendengar, berbicara dan menulis. Menggunakan cerita pendek di rekomendasikan dalam belajar bahasa asing karena guru bisa mengajar literasi, budaya, dan berpikir tinggi dan banyak aspek bahasa lainnya.

Introduction

English is an International language because each country uses English to communicate with people from other countries. The most of books, articles, journals,of science, newspapers, magazines, advertisements, TV Programs, job vacancies use English. In Indonesia, English is a purely foreign language because Indonesian people use “bahasa Indonesia” to communicate to other people so Indonesian students find difficulties in learning English. In Indonesia, it is most likely that students have difficulty understanding English text. They realized that English is difficult to learn before eventually trying to learn it. It is because there are so many vocabularies and complicated vocabulary patterns, and confusing word order. According to Nuttal (1982) there are five problems are mostly faced by students while reading not in their first language. They are the code or letter symbol, vocabulary, sentence structure, cohesive

devices and discourse markers, a problem beyond plain sense and the concepts. Therefore, reading requires comprehension to understand the context and get new information about the text.

Someone in learning is often supported by his willingness to read a lot. It does not matter whether he reads scientific writing (journal or books on social or natural sciences) or popular writing (magazines, newspaper, or novels). All of that give a lot of advantages to the reader to increase his knowledge. The student's interest in reading is very important for improving their achievement, because if the students do not have interest in it they will not be eager to read. The unwillingness in reading and the need to achieve a success in English among junior high school students create a problem. They want to improve their English. but they are not really willing to read English. Learning a language is the most important thing, especially the English language which is regarded as a world language whereby using that language will make us adapt and communicate easily with other people when we move from one country to another.

Furthermore, most of the information sources are published generally in mastering English is complicated because we require to master four language skills, Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing. Reading is one of the language skills that should be mastered by every students. Johnson (2008) stated that "Reading is the practice of using text to create meaning. The two keywords here are creating and meaning. If there is no meaning being created, there is no reading taking place". Therefore, building meaning becomes the primary part when people read. Essentially reading is a complicated activity that involves many things, not just pronouncing the group of words, but also involves a visual activity interpreting what they have read and understood.

Hismanoglu (2005), the ultimate goal of language teaching used to be literature. Nowadays, literature is used as a source of creative material in language classes. The use of literature to teach both basic language abilities (i.e., reading, writing, speaking, and listening) and language areas (i.e., vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation) is particularly popular in this area. Furthermore, many language teachers in translation classes require students to translate literary materials into their home tongues, such as dramas, poems, and stories.

Literature becomes a context for EFL learners as Littlewood (2000) stated that "literature enables learners to understand the language better by providing the learners with the real world experiences, relationships between society and people where the target language is spoken, even if they are fictions." Erkaya (2005) says literature can be used to recover the skills and complements language teaching.

The writer uses Short Story as an alternative way to reduce reading difficulties because it is interesting, inspiring, and concise that only needs a short time to finish. Additionally, many benefits can obtain when reading short stories. In addition to entertaining, reading short stories can increase vocabulary, provides real examples of grammatical structures, and train logical thinking skills. When students read a short story, they become able to distinguish a good and bad thing, rules, restrictions, learn how to make decisions, solve problems, and learn to empathize. Other than that, it can teach the culture of the community in which the story is from so we know how people's traditions are. Pathan (2012) stated that short stories help to develop the language skills of the learners become more effective and attract more of learners' attention than any other normal methods.

Literature Review

The Concept of Short Story

The use of literature had been known since the nineteenth century. Ghosn (2002) stated that four good reasons to use literature in primary school ELT: Firstly, authentic literature provides a motivating, meaningful context for language learning; secondly, literature can contribute many aspects of language in language learning; thirdly, literature can promote academic literacy and thinking skill and prepare children for the English medium instruction; and finally, literature can develop children's emotional and intercultural attitudes because literature has some aspects about human condition. One of the literature is short story. According to MacMillan (1985) "short story is a brief work of prose narrative." It means that short story is a short prose narrative that usually can be read in short time. In other word, the reader does not need much time to comprehend what the short story tells about.

Keegan (2003) defines short story as a narrative, rarely over 1.000 words or below 500 words, more commonly 1500-5000 words-a single-sitting read, but with enough time and weight to move the reader. In common, short story consists of about 1.500 until 5.000 words that has a clear beginning, middle, and ending. Meanwhile, Lazar (1993) said that short story is a work of fiction. It tells one event in a very concentrated way, describes something at moment of crisis, introduces people who are told do not really exist, has plot and characters who are somehow connected with each other.

From the definition above, it is clear that story is a simple literary text which can be considered to be used as material in learning language because of its distinctive features. Considering the statements above, short story is defined as a short fictional narrative in prose that can be read in short time. Beside that, it also has some distinctive features that will make the reader be more enjoyed in reading it than others.

The elements of short story :

The short story has some elements, Gardon and Kuehren (1999) explain that six elements of a short story as follows :

1) Plot

It is a sequence of events in a narrative which arrange in chronological order to get the desired story. Two aspects that build a story plot are causality or cause and effect, which means how events affect other events. The story plot has some stages, the introduction stage, the appearance of conflict, the climax stage, the dissolution stage, and the completion stage. It is a series of actions that are usually organized in chronologically order. There are two aspects that construct a plot : causality and conflict. Causality is needed to substitute of two or more events. A conflict is an internal or external fight between the main character and the opposite character. When a story includes internal conflict, it means that the main character is in conflict with himself for herself. It contrasts, an external conflict happen between the main character and another character, society, or natural forces. Furthermore, the plot structure is divide into six events: exposition, initiating, incident, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.

Exposition is giving description of the situations that the reader need to comprehend the story. The initiating incident is the event that changes the situation that is developed in exposition. The rising action means some events happened that develop complication in the story. Then, climax is the point of the greatest conflict, the emotional high point, the turning point in the plot, or the point where the opposite character gains the advantage. It is the event where the main character must choose some action that will make his/her situation may be worse or better. The events that follows the climax are known as falling action. Then, falling action leads into resolution of the story.

2) Setting

The setting means a description of the time, atmosphere, space, or place where an event occurs in the story, and it writes in specific, general, or every detail in the story. Essentially, the setting is more than described where, when, and how the situation of the event takes place. However, it is closely related to the character or actor in an event. In addition, the setting also really influences the subject matter and the theme of the story. In other words, setting is to describe time and place in the story. It can be general, specific, or every detailed. It may serve some purposes, such as influencing action, defining character, or contributing to mood.

3) Character

Character is a person created for work of fiction. It may autobiographical versions of the author, the people that author knows, the people that may the author has observed or overheard. The character is divided into two categories, major and minor characters. The major characters are protagonist and antagonist characters. Meanwhile, the minor characters are confidant and confidante, foil, a stereotyped character, and piece of furniture character. These are the characters that giving description of the situations that the reader need to comprehend the story. The initiating incident is the event that changes the situation that is developed in exposition. The rising action means some events happened that develop complication in the story. Then, climax is the point of the greatest conflict, the emotional high point, the turning point in the plot, or the point where the opposite character gains the advantage. It is the event where the main character must choose some action that will make his/her situation may be worse or better. The events that follows the climax are known as falling action. Then, falling action leads into resolution of the story.

4) Point of View and Tone

The writer's way of telling a story is called point of view. It is the way of writer puts himself into the narrative. Two types of points of view the first is "I" first person the second is "She, He, and They" third person. The first person of view usually uses the pronoun I or me. When using the first person of view, the reader seems to be a character in the story. The third person of view is the omniscient and the limited omniscient. The omniscient tells everything about the main characters as the third person.

5) Theme

Theme is an author's insight or general observation about human nature or the human condition that is delivered by characters, plot, and imagery. There is a rule to put theme in the story. But, it can be identified in the factual details of plot, characters, and setting.

6) Style

In a short story, we will find many metaphors or language that seem polite or impolite, formal or informal, that's called language style, or we can say that language style is the author's characteristic in conveying his writings to the public. The language style is usually related to situations and atmosphere in certain feelings and circumstances, such as good or bad impressions, discomfort, and pleasure. Style is an author's characteristic way in the story. It is divided into three components: diction, imagery, and symbols, and syntax. The first component is diction. It is the author's choice on using words. It can be chosen as general or specific, formal or informal, abstract or concrete, common, jargon, and etc. The second component is imagery and symbol. Imagery is a term of sense. It involves sight, tastes, smell, touch, and hearing. It also associates with figure of speech like simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, and others. Then, a symbol is concrete anything like an object, a place, a character, and an action. The last component is syntax or sentence structure. It is the individual's pattern or arrangement of words and phrases.

The Criteria for Selecting Short Stories

According to Pathan and Mar'ei (2013) there are six criteria that should be more paid attention by EFL teachers for selecting short stories before using them for developing their students' reading comprehension of narrative text :

- a. The short stories selected should be simple one for the beginners, and not so complex, that will suit their level and will not discourage them while attempting to read.
- b. The short stories should be rich in language, providing maximum examples of various grammatical structure and useful vocabulary.
- c. The short stories should be in line with the norms of Indonesian traditions, culture and faith.
- d. The stories selected, preferably should be the one that are made into films to provide the students visual representation of them as well as to give the students much requires foreign language exposure that will help them in overcoming pronunciation related problems.
- e. The stories selected should be linguistically ideal that will guarantee opportunities or integrating the four language skills in effective way not only for developing reading comprehension skill but all other related skill as listening, speaking and writing.
- f. The stories selected should be such that would motivate the students to read and arouse love and like reading in them thus inculcating the habit of reading in English.

The Advantages of Short stories:

Pathan and Mar'ei (2013) some advantages in short story, they are as follows:

- a. A short story assumes to be the most beneficial in teaching material because it provides wealthy linguistic aspects and powerful stimulation to learners in expressing themselves in different languages.
- b. Short stories provide simple language structures and become original examples of language structures and vocabulary items and present them in the appropriate contexts for their use. Therefore, the reader can use these examples in real-life conversations.
- c. Short stories can improve the reader's insight because they provide information about the countries, people, and cultures whose languages are studied. In conclusion, a short story benefits reader because it can make it easier for them to socialize with those people after understanding their culture through short stories. In addition, short stories can develop the ability to interpret discourse in different language contexts.
- d. A short story is one of the practical stories to be used as teaching materials for English teachers. Because the length of the text does not need a long time to be discussed in its entirety, discussing a short story only requires one or two class meetings. Besides that, it is not complicated as another story, which making students easier to work alone. In conclusion, it can help students in developing their independence when learning a foreign language.
- e. Short stories provide knowledge that can motivate readers and have superb educational value. Therefore, English teachers should choose short stories rather than informative materials that are often used in classes.
- f. A short story increase foreign language students' insight into the country and the people whose language is being learnt, by providing cultural information about the target language, EFL students can also benefit for them. Also such use of stories will help them in fostering their ability to interpret discourse in diferent social and cultural target language contexts.
- g. A short story expose students to a wide variety of styles and language functions, they can help EFL students to enhance their thinking and language abilities, as well as other study skills such as learning vocabulary, discovering questions, evaluating evidence etc.
- h. The proper use of short stories can offer opportunities for EFL teachers to integrate reading comprehension skill with other productive skills, like speaking and writing, and if they are selected and exploited appropriately, this use allows instructors to teach the four language skills to all levels of language proficiency and can enhance ELT courses for students. At this pedagogical aspect, embedded in the use of short stories, can be very helpful in developing the EFL students' language skills, by integrating them, wisely and creatively, with one other interesting way.
- i. The use of the authentic, natural dialogues, in the short stories can also be helpful for the EFL students to get familiarized with actual, functional language use. They can also be helpful for the teachers to maintain high interest and intention levels of their students, which is quite crucial while developing reading comprehension skill in EFL classroom.
- j. As stories are contextual, they can help EFL students to develop various learning strategies such as predicting and guessing meaning of the difficult words from the context etc. This aspect of the use of short stories can help a lot to EFL teachers not only in overcoming the vocabulary related problems of their students but also in effective fostering of their other target language skills.
- k. Stories can help improving communicative competence of EFL students and in developing critical thinking and aesthetic appreciation. They also help in developing EFL students' interpretive abilities and expand their language awareness, so they should be used in the

EFL classrooms for stated reasons.

- l. Stories provide the teaching and the learning material which is motivating, authentic and has great educational value. Therefore, the EFL teachers should opt for them, instead of the informative materials which they use in reading comprehension skill class.
- m. As stories are very enjoyable to read, provide example of different styles of writing, and represent various authentic uses of the target language, they can be a good basis for vocabulary expansion and for effective foster of reading comprehension skill of EFL students.
- n. Stories can expose the EFL students to rich, authentic language, which they otherwise will not encounter in foreign language learning context and listening to them, in the form of film, will help them in becoming aware of the rhythm, intonation and pronunciation of the target language.
- o. Stories help develop EFL students' personal creative powers and other higher level thinking skills and can contribute in developing emotional intelligence as well.
- p. Stories can also contribute in the personal growth of the EFL students and can be used by their teachers, as the best tool, for inculcating various moral and cultural values, which is very important for the culture of any civilized society.
- q. The controlled length, with the concise writing and with carefully selected vocabulary and lexis, is another linguistic benefit of the use of short- stories for EFL teachers and students for developing reading comprehension skill which can also be taken into consideration by the EL teachers and students.

The Concept of Reading

Reading is an effort to conceive the meaning and gain understanding. Reading and understanding are connected, where reading means action to conceive a text while understanding is a purpose of reading Linse (2006). According to Klingner (2007), reading comprehension is creating meaning by interpreting and understanding word meaning and then connecting with ideas in a passage. Similarly, Snow (2002) stated, "reading comprehension is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language."

Emerald (1932) in Ramlan (2002) says that reading is more than a symbol recognition of graphic symbols of words. Its progressive comprehension of the meaning and ideas are represented by a sequence of words. It includes seeing the word, recognizing the word to its context. From the description we could say the reading is not simply thing, calling out the name of the words, but complex intellectual process, knowing the meaning of the words and message of the text.

To get a better sense of the complexity of reading, read what some experts in the field have said about the reading process:

- a. What do we read? The message is not something given in advance--or given at all-- but something created by interaction between writers and readers as participants in a particular communicative situation.(Harris : Rethinking Writing,2000).
- b. Reading is asking questions of printed text. And reading with comprehension becomes a matter of getting your questions answered. (Smith : Reading Without Nonsense,1997).
- c. Reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game. It involves an interaction between thought and language. Efficient reading does not result from precise perception and identification of all elements, but from skill in selecting the fewest, most productive cues necessary to produce

guesses which are right the first time. The ability to anticipate that which has not been seen, of course, is vital in reading, just as the ability to anticipate what has not yet been heard is vital in listening. (Goodman : Journal of the Reading specialist, 196T)

d. Literacy practices are almost always fully integrated with, interwoven into, constituted as part of, the very texture of wider practices that involve talk, interaction, values, and beliefs. (Gee : Social Linguistics and literacies, (1996)

Kinds of Reading

There are two different kinds of reading. They are extensive reading and intensive reading:

1. Extensive reading.

Extensive reading is as skimming and scanning activities, that exposing learners to large quantities of meaningful and fascinating materials and activities will have a significant impact on the learners' knowledge of L2.

2. Intensive reading.

Intensive reading deals with the study of those features of language, syntactical and lexical, which the reader draws on in order to decode the message. Intensive reading is also concerned with related skills, such as developing strategies of expectation and guessing meaning from context, as well as with using dictionaries. The major objective of intensive reading is developing the ability to decode messages by drawing on syntactic and lexical clues, and the emphasis as in all reading is on skills for recognition rather than for production of language features.

The Purposes of Reading

Reading is an activity with a purpose. A reader may read a text to gain information or verify existing knowledge. A reader may also read for enjoyment or to enhance knowledge of language which is being read.

Rivers and Temperly suggest that second language learners will want to read for the following purposes :

- 1) To obtain information for some purpose or because we are curious about some topic;
- 2) To obtain instructions on how to perform some task for our work or daily life;
- 3) To act in a play, play a game, do a puzzle;
- 4) To keep in touch with friends by correspondence or to understand business letter;
- 5) To know when or where something will take place or what is available;
- 6) To know what is happening or has happened; and
- 7) For enjoyment or excitement.

This definition show determine purpose of the reading is very crucial step that should be done before starting reading. When the purpose of reading is determined certainly it will ease the reader to determine what kinds of text that reader wants to read and what kinds of

technique that reader have to use. So, information that the reader wants will be easy to be obtained.

From various experts' opinions, it can understand that reading comprehension is not only how well we read including precise pronunciation and aloud voice. However, reading comprehension means the effort to build an understanding by connecting the meaning of words into sentences so that the reader can find the main ideas and interpret them in their mother language. Additionally, reading comprehension is a strategy carried out and used to understand what the author wants to convey.

Conclusion

There are many ways that can be done in improving reading ability of the students because reading is one of the most important aspects of four language skill, to understand and master English, students should master reading ability. One of them by using short stories in teaching and learning process. Stories are considered to be rich in language and amusing in nature and help overcoming the problem of negative attitudes of EFL learners towards reading comprehension skill. Before using short stories as materials in teaching and learning process, teacher should understand the kinds o short stories appropriate to their students, and understand how to use short stories to make students attracted and interested.

Declarations

I hereby declare that the disclosed information is correct and that no other situation of real, potential or apparent conflict of interest is known to us. I undertake to inform you of any change in these circumstances, including if an issue arises during the course of the meeting or work it (2023)

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