

# **Using Short Stories in EFL Classroom**

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## **Abstract**

English is taught as a foreign language in Indonesia in which students are exposed to English only during the classroom. Students who do not use English in their everyday livewould experience them less knowledge of English. This becomes a challenge for the teachers to make a difference. As English is the target language in which students must be proficient in this global era, it makes even the more difficult. Consequently, to overcome these challenges, teachers need to find an effective way or strategy to use in teaching and learning process. Teachers should make the students keep concentrating and make the situation as interesting as possible in order to attract them to learn. Short story is considered as one of the literary genres that can be used as the material to make English learning more interesting. This paper aims to present how short story can be used in EFL classroom.

**Keywords:**Literary works, short story, EFL classroom

## **Introduction**

The first use of literature in EFL classes was started at the beginning of the century when Grammar Translation Method was the only method which was known to suit ELT classrooms. The use of literature in these classes was limited as the only aim was to translate the literary texts from the target language to their native language (Saricoban & Kocucoglu, 2011).

There has been a great debate on the use of literature in language teaching classes. The proponents of audio-lingual method and communicative approaches reject the use of literature in language classes due to unrealistic nature of literary text. On the other hand, a literary method such as Grammar Translation Method considers literature as an ultimate aim of English instruction (Khatib & Seyyedrezaei, 2013, p. 156).

But in recent years, the role of literature as a basic component and source of authentic texts of the language curriculum rather than an ultimate aim of English instruction has been gaining momentum (Khatib & Seyyedrezaei, 2013). So, using literature in EFL classes give a long break with the use of new teaching methods such as Direct Method or Audiolingual Method (Saricoban & Kocucoglu, 2011).

Starting from the last two decades, the goal of EFL teaching has changed and the aim of English teaching is now to help students to communicate fluently in the target language. As a result of this, teachers and trainers have started to seek for new ways of integrating literature in EFL classes once again because literature has an important role in teaching English. When used appropriately, with their authentic nature, literary genres are functional tools for language classes for all levels (Saricoban & Kocucoglu, 2011).

The integration of literary works in English as a Foreign Language/English as a Second Language (EFL/ ESL) classes has attracted the interest of an increasing number of researchers due to several benefits offered by the use of literature (Collie & Slater, 1991; Lazar, 1996). Literary texts can stimulate language acquisition process by providing authentic contexts. One major problem that language teachers face in the classroom context is the creation of an authentic situation (Kirkgoz, 2012). Language classrooms, especially those in EFL/ESL contexts are isolated from the context of events and situations which produce natural language. Literature can overcome this problem because the language in literary events creates a context of situation enabling it to transcend the artificial classroom situation (Littlewood, 2000).

Then, Oster (1989) affirms that literature helps students to write more creatively. Literary texts provide the students with real world experiences, relationships between people and society where the target language (L2) is spoken (Kirkgoz, 2012). Besides, as McKay (2001, As cited in Kirkgoz, 2012) argues, literary texts can be ideal for all the four language skills. Literature can also help students master the vocabulary and grammar of the language and promotes the four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Povey, 1967; Stern, 1987). With this new era, literature appeared in EFL classroom as appropriate tasks and activities which were designed for language classes (Saricoban & Kocuoglu, 2011).

In this case, there are some parts in literary genres such as novel, drama, poetry, short story and etc (Arıkan, 2005, p. 33). Some researches show that among the other literary genres, short story is the most preferred one in language classrooms (Saricoban & Kocuoglu, 2011). According to Arıkan students find the contents of the novel, poetry, and drama courses more difficult to follow because these types require ways of reading that are different from those required for the short story (Arıkan, 2005, p. 33).

Ellis and Brewster (1991) (As cited in Kirkgoz, 2012) confirm that as stories are motivating and fun, they can help students develop positive attitudes towards the foreign language and enrich

their learning experiences. Thus, in this paper will be discussed how the integration of literature, particularly in short story can be implemented in EFL classroom.

### **Short Story in EFL Classroom**

Short-story is defined “as a narrative that can be read at one sitting of from one-half hour to two hours. It means that, since it is short, there is usually one plot, and a few characters. Therefore, it is easy for the students to follow line of the story (Abrams (1970) (As cited Kirkgoz, 2012). According to Collie and Slater (1991), short stories are practical as their length is long enough to cover entirely in one or two class hours. Second, short stories are not complicated for students to work with on their own. In addition, short stories can be used with all levels and all ages of learners as they appeal to different interests of learners.

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According to Widdowson (1975 as cited in Lazar 1993), short story as a whole expands language awareness. Asking learners to examine sophisticated or non standard examples of language (which can occur in literary texts) makes them more aware of the norms of language use. It is supported by Karaghani (2013), there are many good reasons for using short stories in the classroom:

1. Short stories are authentic .It makes students ready for the type of the language that students find outside the classrooms.
2. Short story encourages interaction. It brings different interpretation depends on the reader and can be successfully used for discussions and communicating feelings or opinions.
3. By examining values in short story, teachers encourage learners to develop attitudes towards them. These values and attitudes relate to the world outside the classroom.

4. Short stories encourage student's motivation. Therefore, students can experience a real sense of accomplishment at understanding a piece of literature. Also, literature is often more interesting than the texts found in course books.

Then, Arigol (2001, (As cited in Hismanoglu, 2005) believes that short stories can have the following pedagogical advantages:

- a) making the students' reading task easier because they are simple and short;
- b) giving learners a better view of other cultures;
- c) requiring more attention and analysis;
- d) presenting a fictional and interesting world;
- e) helping students to be more creative and raising the critical thinking skills;
- f) raising cultural awareness;
- g) reducing students anxiety and helping them feel more relax; and
- h) providing multicultural contexts because of its universal language.

## **Choosing the Right Material**

### **What sort of literature is suitable for use with language learners?**

According to Marsh (1999) states that short stories can be a good source in ELT classes in almost all levels from young learners to adult learners so that they can make good use of short stories in learning the target language. While choosing the right short story, students' proficiency level, age, and interests should be taken into consideration. While, Larry (1971) states that another important thing is the course objectives and appropriateness of the story as content. The needs of the students, interests, cultural backgrounds, and language levels should be taken into consideration when choosing the suitable material for the classroom.

One other significant criterion to consider is whether the particular work stimulates personal involvement by arousing the learners' interest. At this point it is important to choose books which are relevant to the life experiences, emotions, or dreams of the learner (Kirkgoz, 2012). The difficulty level of the story is another important thing to be considered while choosing a suitable material. This is crucial as the learner is attached to the text if she can understand it. In addition, interest, appeal, and relevance should be taken into consideration (Marsh, 1999).

## Introducing literary elements

Introducing literary elements of short stories is important part for the first time to begin the instruction. Start from beginning, intermediate and low levels, instructors can teach simple elements, such as character, setting and plot. The same and more complex elements, such as conflict, climax, resolution, etc., can be introduced with more advanced levels (Erkaya, 2003). According to Larry (1971), the elements of short stories are as follows: **(1) setting**, it is the time and location in which a story takes place. There are several parts of story's setting to consider how setting contributes to a story: time, place, weather condition, social condition, mood or atmosphere. **(2) plot**, it is the sequence of events in a short or play. It has a beginning, middle and end. Short story usually has one plot so it can be read in one setting. Similar with Laurence (1984) states that plot is a sequence of incidents of events of which story is composed. Then, there are five essential parts of plot: (1) Introduction, (2) rising introduction, (3) climax, (4) falling action, (5) denouncement/final outcome. **(3) conflict**, it is the opposition of force which ties one incident to another and makes the plot move. There are two types of conflict, external and internal conflict, **(4) Character**, it can be the person in a work of fiction and the characteristics of a person for instance, Antagonist and Protagonist. **(5) Point of view**, it is defined as the angle from that the story is told. It can be innocent eye, told through the eyes of a child. Stream of consciousness told so that the reader feels as if they are inside the head of one character and knows all their thoughts and reaction. First person, it is told by the protagonist or another character. Omniscient, told from character to character, event to event and have free access to the thought, feelings and motivations of his characters, **(6) theme**, it is the author's underlying meaning or main idea that the author try to convey. Related to this Marsh (1999) states that theme in literature is important subjects and experiences of our public and private lives such as love, death, marriage, hope and so on.

## Some activities by using short stories in EFL classes

According to Gajdusek (1988, p. 233) as cited in Erkaya) explains how literature can be introduced by describing the order of activities: pre-reading activities, factual in-class work, analysis and extending activities. In the pre-reading activities, students have the opportunity to learn about the background of the story and vocabulary (p. 233). In factual in-class work, students should be introduced to who, what, where and when of the story, or point of view, character, setting and action (pp. 238-239). Extending activities, on the other hand, deals with why, that is,

“involvement and experience” (p. 245). Students must be able to use their knowledge of the language to express their ideas. An extending activity that can get students more involved in the story is role-play. Thus, only students who have reached a high intermediate/advanced level of language proficiency should be introduced to these activities.

## Conclusion

Since the goal of EFL teaching must help students to communicate fluently in the target language, a teacher should focus not only on knowledge aspect, but also on other aspects, such as the materials and the way to teach. A short story is appropriate and effective as a teaching media because it gives an easy way for the teachers to deliver the materials. It is also effective in understanding the material delivered by some elements in short story. Then, short stories can be used to make the situation as interesting as possible to learn. As the result, it can make them enjoy and feel comfortable to learn.

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