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University of Kurdistan
Faculty of Language and Literature
Department of English Language and Linguistics

A Thesis
Submitted to the Postgraduate Studies Office in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of M.A. In Teaching English as a Foreign Language
(TEFL)

Title:
A Quest for Increasing Iranian Male and Female EFL
Learners' Reading Skill in Short Story Narrating

By:
Somayeh Zaheri

Supervisors:
Dr. Habib Soleimani

Advisor:
Dr. Jalil Fathi

September, 2023



***In the Name of God,
The compassionate the merciful***



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The above thesis was evaluated and approved by the following members of the thesis committee with **very good** quality on September 09 ,2023

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Abstract

The present study was an attempt to increase Iranian male and female EFL learners' reading skill in short story narrating. To do so, A sample of 30 male and female elementary EFL learners participated in this study. These learners were studying English as a foreign language in language institutes located in Sanandaj. The participants' age ranged from 11 to 15. To carry out the sampling for participants, convenience samplings were used to select participant learners. In convenience sampling, the researcher selected participants who were willing to and available to participate in the study. A preliminary English test, short story narrating questionnaire, and semi-structured interview were used as the instruments in the present study. Mixed method design was conducted as an approach to inquiry that combines or associates both interview and questionnaire as qualitative and quantitative phases respectively. The findings indicated that the level of "Usefulness of Short Stories" factor is higher than "Interest on Reading Short Stories" and "Acceptance of Using Short Stories" factors. Additionally, the results of short story narrating questionnaire revealed that factors such as usefulness, interest and acceptance of using short stories among female EFL learners are almost the same but the level of "Acceptance of Using Short Stories" factor is higher than "Usefulness of Short Stories" and "Interest on Reading Short Stories" factors. Finally, the results indicated that the majority of male and female EFL learners who participated in this study have positive attitudes and perceptions towards reading skill using short story narrating. Hence, hopefully the findings of this study will assist educational teachers, administrators, academicians to better understand the usefulness of short stories narrating in male and female EFL learners' reading skill.

Keyword: Reading Skill, Short Story, Narrating, Iranian EFL Learners



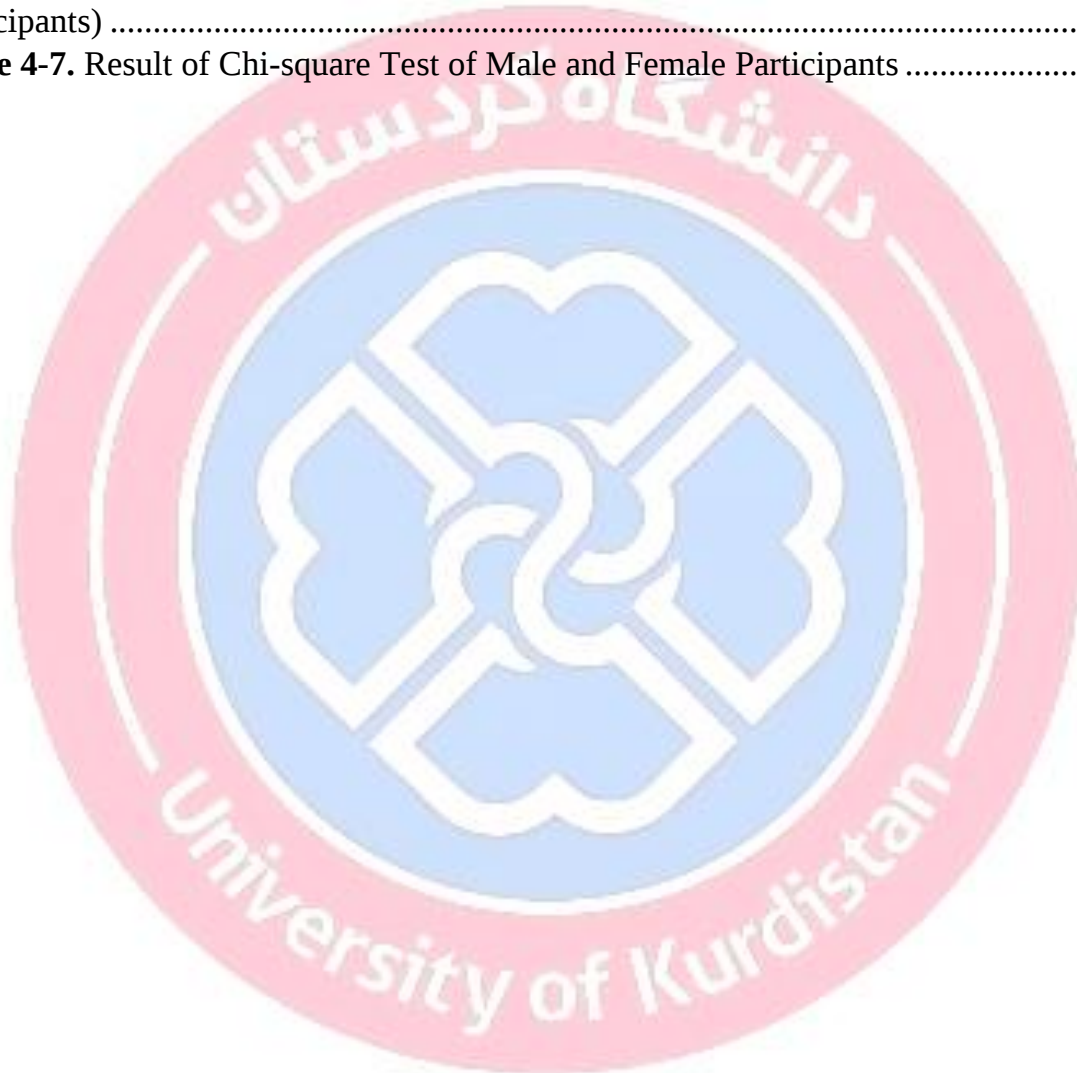
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1.1. Overview

The first chapter of this thesis initiates with background of the study which follows by statement of the problem, significance of the study, and purpose of the study. Research questions and related hypotheses are mentioned correspondingly. Then, definition of major key terms that might frequently appear in this study is discussed. To end with, chapter closes with the limitations and delimitations of the current study.

1.2. Background of the Study

Reading is a very important skill that students acquire as the years go by in their academic studies, but many of them get stuck and have not been able to understand what they read even from the first paragraph (Mutiarra & Bugis, 2018). Peñafiel (2014) considers that students are not good readers even if they have to read each year academic books. Students also are not attracted to read even in their language so reading in another language for them is very boring. Another problem is that the classes are monotonous, the teachers do not vary their activities for reading skills, or the instruments that they use are not appropriate for the level of the students they are dealing with. In addition, when students see such long reading, they get bored and prefer not to read them, from here the students are no longer predisposed to work (Anwar, 2020).

Learners of a foreign language when beginning to learn English are rarely efficient readers. This has to do not only with deficiencies in linguistic knowledge but also with the strategies employed in reading. Learners frequently read a foreign language text by looking in a dictionary for meanings. Reading comprehension goes beyond deciphering words, words are one component of comprehension, however, to achieve that is important to create and develop by using a variety of reading strategies to encourage students to interact with text in meaningful ways (Khalaf & Mohammad, 2017).

Moore (2010) states that “students improve their reading performance when they learn to apply strategies” (p. 2). According to him, a text can be understood if students apply a technique or strategy to make what they are reading something more productive. When students want to understand a text, students should interact with text so that if students notice they are losing the meaning as they read, they can use various strategies to readjust their understanding.

Additionally, reading skill plays an important role in teaching and learning processes. Hence, it should be given much attention by both of the teachers and the learners because it has good effects in enhancing learners’ vocabularies, spelling and eventually, writing skill. Moreover, it is useful in increasing the learners’ knowledge about several topics (Moore, 2010). On the importance of reading Ayhan, Simsek, and Bicer, (2014) state that reading enables the individual to express him/herself better and more accurately because it gives him/her the opportunity to speak, improves his/her abilities and skills, cognitive and concrete thoughts, imagination and it supports his/her personal development. Moreover, it has a great role in determining a society’s status within civilization, its economic backgrounds and cultural level.

To sum up, researchers agree that reading is a fundamental receptive skill which has a variety of definitions. They also have the same opinion that it is not a passive action; it is rather a cognitive process. Although reading is an essential skill, especially in English as the first language in the world, EFL learners are still facing difficulties in reading in English. They cannot read long texts of their own, and they make so many

mistakes (pronunciation, grammar, etc) when reading short texts (Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). According to Álvarez-Cañizo, et al. (2020), there are many issues students faced in reading comprehension, which were: identifying the main idea of the reading, looking for specific details, and understanding the vocabulary through guessing meaning from context.

In their pursuit of attracting students to reading, EFL literature teachers need to select material that is enjoyable and beneficial at the same time. Short story narrating is intended to be enjoyable and provides students with satisfactory input thanks to the characteristics of this genre. The reasons why short stories were chosen are: first of all, they motivate students to read and capture their attention as there are different genres such as fables, anecdotes, and vignettes. Another important fact is that stories enhance students' creativity, vocabulary, and awareness (Dania, 2020). Finally, Murdoch (2002) indicates that “short stories can, if selected and exploited appropriately, provide quality text content which will greatly enhance English Language Teaching (ELT) courses for learners at elementary levels of proficiency”.

Besides, every culture has a repository of short stories. They are short narratives that have characters, a plot, a setting, and a climax. According to Perfetti and Roth (2017), “a short story, usually about imaginary characters and events that is short enough to be read from beginning to end without stopping”. Nevertheless, some modern and post-modern short stories do not follow the conventional patterns of a short story. Pathan and Al-Dersi (2013) define short stories “as a short piece of prose fiction organized into a plot and with a kind of dénouement at the end”. They explain short stories as “a narrative that can be read at one sitting of from one-half hour to two hours, and that is limited to ‘a certain unique or single effect,’ to which every detail is subordinate” (p. 158).

1.3. Statement of the Problem

Reading in a foreign language is considered one of the most efficient skills to enhance students' capacities in language achievement. The ability to read and to understand the deep content of the text opens up new worlds and opportunities. It enables students to gain new knowledge and enjoy learning a new language. But in fact, the majority of EFL students find it quite hard to read and understand the texts on the syllabus because they haven't been taught or haven't developed the skills and strategies needed to read and understand texts, although they have spent a long-time studying English. Moreover, most EFL teachers come to class with the opinion that learners know how to read but they never take into account whether students know how to read or not (Ahmadi 2017).

In recent years, researchers have done studies on the role of a short story narrating in educational contexts. For example, a study is done by Ghasemi (2011) on the effectiveness of teaching the short story to improve L2 reading and writing skills. Another study is done by El-Mahdy, Qoura, and El Hadidy (2019), on the effectiveness of a short story-based program on developing creative writing skills. Another study is done by Bouache (2010) on the impact of listening to short stories on comprehension. Moreover, another study is conducted by Tarakçioğlu and Tunçarslan (2014) on the influence of short stories on teaching vocabulary to very young learners. But by exploring previous studies, the researcher couldn't find any study on the role of a short story narrating in increasing Iranian male and female EFL learners' reading skills. Therefore, the present study is designed to address this purpose and see whether short

story narrating plays any role in the reading skill of Iranian male and female EFL learners.

The present study, therefore, aims to fill this gap and shed light on the contribution of the short story narrating to EFL learners' reading skills. It is hoped that by doing this research on students' reading skill and the role of short story narrating on it, learners, as well as teachers, will be more aware of the importance of short story narrating not only in the learning process but also in the teaching process; specifically, in the field of EFL learning and teaching.

As cited in Farhady (2005), the reading skill is so complex that different but multiple skills, strategies, and techniques are required. Due to the intricacy of these prerequisites for effective comprehension, the area of reading comprehension is often the area where students with learning disabilities experience the most difficulty. Consequently, teachers should establish a solid foundation for teaching reading comprehension strategies such as using short story narrating as a supplementary tool to improve reading comprehension of their students. It is supposed that short story narrating as a one of the genres of reading skill could assist male and female EFL learners in increasing their reading skills.

Two major problems of this study are as following: (1) short story narrating has not yet been applied at low levels such as elementary in increasing EFL learners' reading skills; and (2) learners' views towards the effectiveness of the implementation of short story narrating in reading skill have not yet been elicited. To consider the stated problems concisely, the present study will reinforce male and female EFL learners to narrate short story within a specified framework and procedure. In the next section, the key goals of this study are mentioned.

Moreover, students use different ways to express that they understand and interact with the text. Thus, they connect the skills in a good manner, they use a range of reading strategies that they learn before and they use the prior knowledge that they have already and effective readers are always aware of these steps while they are getting comprehension. Furthermore, comprehension is occurred through the awareness of how to apply these steps appropriately. Since, learning the reading strategies can help students to get comprehension in the easiest ways. That is, reading is considered a complex process. For that, it is no surprise to find that learners encountered difficulties in reading (Cele-Murica, Brinton & Ann, 2014).

EFL students face difficulty in improving their level of comprehension, because of their teaching environment which gives much importance to the productive skills; rather than receptive skills that are ignored. Reading skill is taught with less awareness about the different comprehension strategies, which hurts students' achievement during reading. Despite the teachers' great effort to encourage learners to read and to comprehend what they read, some EFL students still face difficulties in performing the reading task. These difficulties can be in terms of their interest in reading. It is observed that some English students have difficulties in reading caused by a lack of interest which affects their understanding of the text, their participation, and motivation to read more. This issue affects negatively the students' perception of the reading course and the reading skill in general.

5.4. Limitation of the Study

Apart from the accomplished findings, there were some limitations to be recognized in the current investigation. Since using short story narrating is a new learning approach and because of some limitations identified in this study, this exploration research work raised various issues and questions that may provide a basis for future research. Firstly, this study was conducted over a short time. As it was not a longitudinal study and did not allow the researcher to tackle all the related issues to this new educational wave, any conclusions established do not provide a full picture of short story narrating as an interesting way in increasing reading skill.

Another limitation of the study was the limited number of the participants. The findings of the study may not be generalized to represent all the educational contexts. Therefore, more generalizable results could be attained if the research was conducted with more participants in more than one setting. Next, research is set up in order to effectively manage the research results of all levels. Thus, further research should include all the different levels to clearly compare the findings.

Additionally, this study faced serious obstacles such as the lack of primary resources and the appearance of Corona virus (COVID-19). This problem affected learners to leave their pedagogical seats to be safe. Another limitation concerns the research tool. These circumstances obliged the researchers to use and gather data using only one instrument. Also, data would have been much more accurate if the classroom observation were carried out with or teachers' narrative inquiry.

5.5. Suggestions for Further Research

In light of the findings, some recommendations for further studies can be listed. First, it can be recommended that experimental research designs including three or more groups with different level of language proficiency should be preferred using short story narrating. Second, the instruction process should be extended. In order to see the relationship between the use of short story narrating in reading comprehension, demographic and extraneous variables, descriptive and correlational should be performed. In addition, for a deeper understanding of learners' perceptions, expectations, and needs, qualitative studies should be warranted.

At the beginning of each academic period, teachers should diagnose students' weaknesses and strengths in reading comprehension through the application of several evaluation instruments as tests in order to identify students' issues. After that, the teacher should select the most suitable strategies according to students' level of English needs and preferences.

It is recommended for teachers the application of short stories as an appropriate strategy to solve students' problems in reading comprehension with the support of pre/while and post reading activities, which permit students increase their reading capabilities such as: skimming for the gist, scanning for specific details and guessing meaning from context.

Educators should be aware that short stories provide many benefits to improve reading comprehension skills. Short stories easily catch students' attention making them to act with enthusiasm and increase their social interaction in classes. Short stories also give facilities to the students to become independent readers as they understand the most important elements and content of a story.

Some practical recommendations can be noted regarding the use of using short story narrating. First, as it is evident that EFL learners already feel motivated in terms of reading skill, teachers can mainly prefer traditional teaching activities in the teaching process. Within this scope, it can be recommended that EFL teachers should integrate using short stories into their teaching activities due to practicality. Second, short story narrating can be preferred to increase the low level of motivation among learners in terms of rewarding, teachers' favors or competing with their peers, as it precedes competition among students in the classroom settings. The schools may be provided opportunity of training for teachers in order to know the short story narrating use in classrooms effectively. The education institution or schools should put more emphasis on the learning activities for teacher in addition to theory i.e. teaching methods and instructional method. Thus, it can be concluded that using of short story narrating may be implemented in the schools.

Students need to improve their reading comprehension; therefore, it is necessary to motivate them to have more reading habits. Some students might need a little guidance from teachers to engage in reading activities, understand vocabulary and main and secondary ideas to continue with the development of reading comprehension. It is important to never assume students understood all teachers' instructions present it in multiple ways to be sure that students understand. Creating a good atmosphere to work with the students is necessary they need to feel relaxed.

Students are advised to improve their reading skill using short story narrating. Students are suggested to be responsible for their reading comprehension process. EFL students are recommended to integrate their learning process with narrating short stories. Students are recommended to use short story narrating as an additional mean to increase their reading skill. Students should search for the right and suitable short stories appropriate for their language proficiency level. Students should be aware of the benefits of the short story narrating in reading skill and should search for the suitable stories to develop their reading comprehension.

The teacher should integrate lessons with the use of short story narrating. Teachers should raise the significance and the awareness on the use of short story narrating in reading skill. Short story narrating could provide an effective learning process. Short story narrating should focus on some pedagogical decision to meet students' needs in reading skill. Short story narrating should be seen as a learning instrument on the part of EFL learners and it should be incorporated in academic contexts and in language instruction as well. Increasing reading skill through short story narrating could motivate EFL students. Short story narrating could have impact students' interest, increase students' attitudes, and give better results for students' reading comprehension.

The Educational policies are recommended to train teachers in short story narrating in teaching and learning process. Educational policies are recommended to ensure the implementation of integrating short story narrating in classroom environment. Educational institutions and authorities are recommended to recognize the pedagogical potential of short stories and they have to support teachers to use them in their teaching process.

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چکیده

پژوهش حاضر تلاشی برای افزایش مهارت خواندن زبان آموزان ایرانی مرد و زن در روایت داستان کوتاه است. برای انجام این کار، نمونه‌ای متشکل از ۳۰ زبان‌آموز انگلیسی زبان ابتدایی مرد و زن در این مطالعه شرکت کردند. این زبان‌آموزان در مؤسسات زبان واقع در سنندج به مطالعه زبان انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی می‌پرداختند. محدوده سنی شرکت‌کنندگان از ۱۱ تا ۱۵ سال بود. برای انجام نمونه‌گیری از شرکت‌کنندگان، از نمونه‌گیری در دسترس برای انتخاب فراگیران شرکت‌کننده استفاده شد. در نمونه‌گیری آسان، محقق، شرکت‌کنندگانی را انتخاب کرد که مایل بودند و در دسترس بودند تا در مطالعه شرکت کنند. در پژوهش حاضر از آزمون مقدماتی انگلیسی، پرسشنامه روایت داستان کوتاه و مصاحبه نیمه ساختاریافته استفاده شد. طراحی روش ترکیبی به عنوان رویکردی برای تحقیق انجام شد که هر دو مصاحبه و پرسشنامه را به ترتیب به عنوان فازهای کیفی و کمی ترکیب یا مرتبط می‌کند. یافته‌ها حاکی از آن است که میزان فاکتور «مفید بودن داستان‌های کوتاه» بیشتر از عوامل «علاقه به خواندن داستان‌های کوتاه» و «پذیرش استفاده از داستان‌های کوتاه» است. علاوه بر این، نتایج پرسشنامه روایت داستان کوتاه نشان داد که عواملی مانند سودمندی، علاقه و پذیرش استفاده از داستان کوتاه در بین زبان‌آموزان زن انگلیسی تقریباً یکسان است، اما میزان پذیرش استفاده از داستان کوتاه بیشتر از «مفید بودن داستان کوتاه» است. داستان‌ها و «علاقه به خواندن داستان‌های کوتاه». در نهایت، نتایج نشان داد که اکثریت زبان‌آموزان مرد و زن انگلیسی شرکت‌کننده در این پژوهش، نگرش و ادراک مثبتی نسبت به مهارت خواندن با استفاده از روایت داستان کوتاه دارند. از این رو، امید است که یافته‌های این مطالعه به معلمان آموزشی، مدیران و دانشگاهیان کمک کند تا سودمندی داستان‌های کوتاه را در مهارت خواندن زبان‌آموزان مرد و زن درک کنند.

واژگان کلیدی: مهارت خواندن، داستان کوتاه، روایت‌گری، زبان آموزان ایرانی، زبان انگلیسی.





دانشگاه کردستان

دانشکده زبان و ادبیات

گروه زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی و زبان شناسی

پایان نامه‌ی کارشناسی ارشد رشته زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی گرایش آموزش زبان
انگلیسی

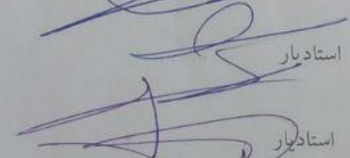
عنوان:

بررسی افزایش مهارت خواندن زبان آموزان مذکر و مونث
ایرانی در بیان داستان کوتاه

پژوهشگر:

سمیه ظاهری

در تاریخ ۱۴۰۲/۶/۱۸ توسط کمیته تخصصی و هیأت داوران زیر مورد بررسی قرار گرفت و با
درجه‌ی بسیار خوب به تصویب رسید.

امضاء	مرتبه علمی	نام و نام خانوادگی	هیأت داوران
	استادیار	دکتر حبیب سلیمانی	۱- استاد راهنما:
	دانشیار	دکتر جلیل فتحی	۲- استاد مشاور:
	استادیار	دکتر علیرضا امجدی پرور	۳- داور خارجی:
	استادیار	دکتر محمد احمد نژاد	۴- داور داخلی:

مهر و امضاء معاون آموزشی و تحصیلات تکمیلی دانشکده:

مهر و امضاء مدیر گروه:

دکتر مسعود دهقان





دانشگاه کردستان
دانشکده زبان و ادبیات
گروه زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی و زبان‌شناسی

پایان‌نامه‌ی کارشناسی ارشد رشته زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی گرایش آموزش زبان انگلیسی

عنوان:

بررسی افزایش مهارت خواندن زبان آموزان مذکر و مونث ایرانی در بیان
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سمیه ظاهری

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دکتر حبیب سلیمانی

استاد مشاور:

دکتر جلیل فتحی

شهریور ۱۴۰۲



دانشگاه کردستان
دانشکده زبان و ادبیات
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