



EFL Libyan Students' Perspectives on Integrating Short Stories in English Language Teaching

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to investigate underlying Libyan university students' perspectives on using short stories as a tool in English language teaching (ELT) and to discuss methods, benefits, and challenges related to the integration of short stores in language teaching classes. To this end, 90 participants completed a 9-item multiple-choice questionnaire at the English Language Education Department at the University of Zawia, Libya, during the 2023-2024 academic year. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results indicated that the participants have a positive perception of integrating short stories into ELT. Furthermore, the findings underscore the significance of incorporating various short stories into EFL classrooms. This incorporation not only enhances language proficiency but also fosters critical thinking and cultural awareness among students. These advantages underscore the efficacy of short stories as a versatile and effective tool in language education.

Keywords: Literature, Short Story, English foreign language, English Language Teaching, Teaching Materials.



تصورات طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في ليبيا حول توظيف القصص القصيرة في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية

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ملخص البحث

تهدف الدراسة إلى استقصاء آراء طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية في الجامعات الليبية حول استخدام القصص القصيرة كأداة في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية ومناقشة الأساليب، والفوائد، والتحديات المتعلقة بدمجها في الفصول الدراسية وتحقيقاً لهذا الهدف، شارك 90 طالباً من قسم تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة الزاوية في ليبيا، خلال العام الجامعي 2023-2024، في استكمال استبيان مكون من 9 فقرات، وجرى تحليل البيانات وفقاً لأساليب الإحصاء الوصفي.

أظهرت النتائج وجود تصورات إيجابية لدى الطلبة تجاه دمج القصص القصيرة في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية. كما أكدت النتائج على أهمية إدراج قصص قصيرة متنوعة في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لما له من دور في تعزيز الكفاءة اللغوية وتنمية التفكير النقدي والوعي الثقافي لدى الطلبة، مما يبرز فاعلية القصص القصيرة كأداة تعليمية مرنة ومؤثرة في تعليم اللغة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأدب، القصة القصيرة، تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، الوسائل التعليمية.

Introduction

Over the past twenty years, there has been a significant increase in scholarly efforts to develop more effective methods for integrating literature into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms (Doe, 2023). Literary texts boost the language acquisition process by offering authentic contexts, which helps overcome the artificial nature of the classroom environment (Littlewood, 2000). The importance of providing such authentic and multidimensional content is further emphasized by the empirical findings of Elhaj and Hathlol (2023), who identified that Libyan EFL learners at Sabratha University have a predominant preference for the visual learning style. Their study reveals that students rely heavily on seeing and visualizing information to enhance their academic achievement. Consequently, incorporating literature, which is rich in imagery and descriptive language, directly caters to these visual preferences, while also supporting auditory learners through literary discourse and dialogue. By using literary texts, educators can masterfully bridge the gap between classroom theory and the sociocultural dynamics of the target society (Pardede, 2011; Kim & Park, 2022).

As Pardede (2011) demonstrates, literature is "genuine". It is an artistic creation written in the native language. Since literature reflects the cultural motives and values of its speakers, learners absorb not only the language but also its cultural nuances. Using literary texts in ELT classrooms plays an indispensable role, enabling students to understand the language better by providing them with real-world experiences and sociocultural relationships, even if presented through fiction.

Furthermore, literature also aids learners in mastering vocabulary and grammar while enhancing the four macro language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Pishghadam and Zabetipour (2019) highlight the critical role of perceiving literature as a form of discourse, which assists EFL learners in grasping language systems and structures within authentic communicative contexts. Similarly, Kim and Park (2022) explore the impact of literary reading on communicative competence, demonstrating that such activities significantly boost essential language skills. Consequently, incorporating literature into ELT classrooms allows learners to gain a deeper understanding of the language and provides insights into the dynamics of the target society. The integration of short stories into EFL classrooms serves as a practical application of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). According to Jamoom and Abujela (2025), language learning is most effective when students are engaged in authentic communicative tasks that mirror real-life situations. Short stories provide the necessary 'lexical richness' and 'contextualized narrative' that allow teachers to design meaningful tasks. Furthermore, while Jamoom and Abujela (2025) highlight that many teachers struggle with limited pedagogical resources, short stories offer a flexible and adaptable resource that can enhance student engagement and communicative competence across all four language skills.

Consequently, incorporating literature, particularly short stories, into EFL classrooms plays an indispensable role in enhancing overall language proficiency. It allows learners to gain a deeper understanding of the language. It provides them with authentic sociocultural insights and real-world experiences. This exposure helps bridge the gap between classroom learning and the complex relationships between society and individuals in regions where the target language is spoken, even when conveyed through fictional narratives. (Pardede, 2011, p.17)

In this sense, incorporating short stories into EFL classrooms offers numerous advantages for language learners, encompassing educational, cultural, intellectual and linguistic

development. Modern educational theories and recent research support their role in enhancing learners' four language skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking (Taylor, 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Educational Benefits of Short Stories

Incorporating short stories into ELT classrooms offers numerous advantages for language learners, encompassing educational, cultural, intellectual and linguistic development. Modern educational theories and recent research support their role in enhancing learners' four language skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. According to Taylor (2019), "short stories are instrumental in enhancing learners' reading fluency and comprehension due to their concise and focused nature" (p. 45). In line with this, Murdoch (2002) reports that using short stories in language learning has a beneficial and positive impact on these skills. Additionally, short stories help improve learners' understanding of grammar structures in the target language, as short stories offer a richer linguistic experience than grammar books. EFL students become familiar with various sentence structures and methods of connecting sentences through the dialogues in the stories. Kaya (2014) highlights that literary texts provide clear examples of syntactic structures, thereby elucidating the written form of grammatical structures. Recent research in the Libyan context supports this view. Hmouma (2014) found that many Libyan learners experience persistent difficulties in noun phrase construction due to first-language interference and overgeneralization. Ibrahim (2023) also found that EFL Libyan students face some difficulties in understanding and using idiomatic expressions in English. Exposure to short stories as authentic input can help address these challenges by presenting grammatical structures and idiomatic expressions in meaningful and contextualized narrative contexts.

Notable researchers such as Rezaei and Derakhshan (2011) and Abdul Rahman (2010) have asserted that one primary benefit of using short stories is allowing learners to infer meanings contextually. Short stories offer abundant opportunities for acquiring learning and reinforcing the meanings and forms of vocabulary. Using short stories in ELT classes helps learners deduce meanings because they provide lexical richness, repeated exposure, and natural language use. Furthermore, the engaging content and varied sentence structures keep learners interested and motivated. Additionally, class discussions based on these stories allow learners to articulate and share their interpretations, further enhancing their vocabulary acquisition and comprehension.

Short stories are a universal literary genre found in all cultures worldwide, and they serve as a natural bridge between different cultures. Pardede (2011) elaborates that by reading short stories, learners can see the world from another's perspective, observe human values, and experience different ways of living, thus discovering the diversity of human societies. Additionally, Franchisca (2021) asserts that short stories offer learners a multitude of cultural insights about the target language. They convey the beliefs, values, customs, and lifestyles of other cultures, which motivates students to continue reading out of curiosity and gain genuine knowledge of the world through authentic materials. In essence, short stories can spark learners' interest in both the target culture and language.

Moreover, integrating short stories into English language classrooms can simplify and enliven the learning process by blending education with entertainment. As indicated by short stories, they provide a refreshing change of routine and a novel approach, which can motivate learners and actively engage them in the class (Crumbley&Smith, 2010 Pathan, 2013). Short stories can captivate learners' attention and maintain their interest, especially in a time-constrained

educational environment. As Ellis (2021) demonstrates, "The brevity and diverse themes of short stories make them an excellent tool for engaging learners and sustaining their interest" (p. 63). In line with this, Pathan (2013) reports that short stories in EFL classes engage learners' emotions and enhance their cognitive skills by exploring universal themes such as war, love, and friendship. Specifically, learners use their imagination, which fosters empathy and ultimately boosts creativity. Consequently, lessons incorporating short stories are perceived as more motivating and enjoyable. Similarly, Hmouma (2024) reports that Libyan EFL undergraduates value learner-centered and flexible instructional approaches, particularly those that provide personalized feedback and promote active engagement. This supports the use of short stories as adaptable materials that can accommodate diverse proficiency levels and encourage learner autonomy.

Another significant advantage of using short stories in language teaching classes is their ability to encourage learners' critical thinking and classroom discussions. Meyer (2018) asserts, "Short stories often present complex themes and moral dilemmas that prompt learners to engage in critical thinking and reflective discussions" (p. 84). Ellis, R. (2021) adds, "The succinctness of short stories makes them perfect for classroom discussions. They enable learners to explore and debate various interpretations and perspectives, enhancing their ability to articulate and defend their viewpoints" (p. 63).

Choosing Short Stories

Educators need to consider several factors to ensure the content is appropriate and beneficial for their learners. Recent pedagogical research emphasizes the importance of aligning stories with learning objectives to support the targeted language skills or concepts (Smith & Johnson, 2022). Murdoch (2002) emphasizes that, when carefully selected and appropriately utilized, short stories provide high-quality content that can significantly enhance the effectiveness of ELT courses for learners at all levels. First, the language level of the story should match the learners' proficiency to avoid frustration or boredom (Brown, 2021). In relation to this, Tantani (2024) emphasizes that grammatical complexity is a major challenge in the Libyan context, suggesting that L1 can be a supportive tool when stories exceed the learners' level. Second, ensuring cultural appropriateness is essential to prevent offending learners or presenting controversial material (Garcia, 2023). Williams states that selecting engaging content that resonates with learners' interests can enhance their motivation and participation. Third, the short story should reflect the interests, age, and tastes of learners of different levels. Selecting engaging content that resonates with learners' interests can enhance their motivation and participation. Lee (2022) adds that the themes and morals should be age-appropriate, promoting positive and educational messages.

Moreover, the length and complexity of the story should be manageable within the class period and suitable for the learners' attention spans. Davis (2021) emphasizes that selecting stories that are too long or overly complex can overwhelm students and hinder their comprehension and engagement. In addition, stories that match the attention spans of the learners help maintain their focus and interest throughout the lesson. Including diverse perspectives can foster inclusivity and cultural awareness (Martinez, 2023).

Furthermore, the story should provide opportunities for developing various language skills and encourage discussion and analysis, promoting critical thinking (Green, 2021). Teacher-related factors also play a pivotal role in the success of literature-based instruction. Alkarkhi and Hmouma (2025) found that teachers' mental well-being, resilience, and job satisfaction significantly influence their passion for foreign language teaching. This suggests that

supportive professional environments enhance the effective implementation of interactive strategies such as short story discussions and reflective classroom activities. Finally, the availability of supplementary instructional materials can support different learning styles and enhance the overall educational experience. This not only helps in better understanding and retention of the material but also makes the learning process more engaging and effective for each student (Harris, 2022).

Despite the widely recognized value of short stories as a pedagogical tool in ELT, there is a dearth of research on how Libyan university learners perceive this approach and its impact on their language acquisition. Consequently, this study seeks to explore the perspectives of Libyan EFL learners regarding the integration of short stories into their curriculum. Specifically, it aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of their perceptions, ultimately contributing to the development of more effective context-specific EFL teaching methods. To achieve this, the current study attempts to address the following research question: What are the perceptions of Libyan university learners regarding the incorporation of short stories into their English language classes?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive quantitative research design to achieve the main goal of the research. The data was collected through a structured questionnaires distributed at University of Zawia- Libya. The questionnaire was designed to explore Libyan learners' perspectives on integrating short stories into English Language Teaching (ELT). Following the data collection process, the participants' responses were coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were employed to identify the perceived benefits and challenges of using short stories from the perspectives of the learner.

Participants

Ninety English Language Education department students (41 male, 49 female) studying at University of Zawia, Libya in the 2023-2024 academic year. The participants were young adult from ages 18 -27. They were undergraduate students at different academic levels from the first to the fourth year (See Table 1). All participants were native speakers of Arabic who had studied English throughout their primary, preparatory, and secondary education prior to university enrollment. In the Libyan context, English is regarded as the primary foreign language of study at the tertiary level.

Table 1: Distribution of Participants by Demographic Information (N = 90)

| Variables | Gender | | Age | | | Stage (Level) | | | |
|----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | Male | Female | 18 -19 | 20 -23 | 24 -27 | 1st | 2 nd | 3 rd | 4 th |
| Frequency (n) | 41 | 49 | 28 | 40 | 22 | 20 | 28 | 21 | 21 |
| Percentage (%) | 45.6% | 54.4% | 31.1% | 44.4% | 24.4% | 22.2% | 31.1% | 23.3% | 23.3% |

Data Collection

The primary instrument used for data collection was structured a questionnaire, which facilitated gathering a large amount of data in a short time frame. The questionnaire was employed to gather quantitative data. The administration process involved presenting identical questions to all participants, ensuring a standardized comparison of their perspectives. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: the first gathered demographic information, while the second examined Libyan university learners' perceptions of using short stories in ELT. This second section comprised nine Likert-scale items, each offering five options (e.g., Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree). Participants completed the questionnaire in approximately 10 minutes, although no strict time limit was imposed.

Data Analysis

This research study adopted a descriptive quantitative approach to achieve its primary objectives. Data were collected from University of Zawia, Libya. Following the collection phase, the participants' responses were coded and entered into SPSS (Version 26) for statistical processing. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the data, specifically calculating means (*M*) and standard deviations (*SD*) to determine the overall trends in Libyan learners' perspectives toward short stories as a pedagogical tool in English language teaching.

FINDINGS

Descriptive statistics related to learners responses to the questionnaire are listed below.

Table 2: Short Stories and Language Skills

| Questionnaire Item No. 1 | Disagree | | Partly disagree | | Neither agree nor Disagree | | Partly agree | | Agree | |
|--|----------|------|-----------------|------|----------------------------|------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | n | % | N | % |
| Short stories develop learners' language skills. | 6 | 6.7% | 7 | 7.8% | 7 | 7.8% | 28 | 31.1% | 42 | 46.7% |

N = Number, % = Percentage

As seen in Table 2, approximately 46.7% of the participants strongly agree, and 31.1% partly agree, making up a combined 77.8% who hold a positive view on the use of short stories in language learning. A smaller portion of the respondents, 7.8%, are neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing. On the other hand, 7.8% partly disagree, and 6.7% completely disagree, showing a relatively low perception of the impact of short stories in language learning.

Table 3: Short Stories and Vocabulary Enhancement

| Questionnaire Item No.2 | Disagree | | Partly disagree | | Neither agree nor Disagree | | Partly agree | | Agree | |
|--|----------|-------|-----------------|------|----------------------------|------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | n | % | n | % |
| Short stories help learners guess the meanings of difficult words from context and improve essential vocabulary. | 9 | 10.0% | 8 | 8.9% | 2 | 2.2% | 32 | 35.6% | 39 | 43.3% |

It can be seen from the data in table 3 that 39 participants (43.3%) strongly agree with this statement, while 32 participants (35.6%) partly agree, meaning a significant majority (78.9%) agree that short stories help them guess the meanings of difficult words from context and improve essential vocabulary. On the other hand, a small portion of the participants (2 participants or 2.2%) are neutral, while 17 participants (18.9%) express some level of disagreement, with 9 participants (10.0%) disagreeing and 8 participants (8.9%) partly disagreeing.

Table 4: Short Stories and grammar structures

| Questionnaire Item No.3 | Disagree | | Partly disagree | | Neither agree nor Disagree | | Partly agree | | Agree | |
|--|----------|------|-----------------|-------|----------------------------|-------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | n | % | N | % | N | % | n | % | N | % |
| Short stories help learners understand grammar. structures in sentences. | 8 | 8.9% | 9 | 10.0% | 9 | 10.0% | 25 | 27.8% | 39 | 43.3% |

As seen in Table 4, out of 90 participants, a significant number of learners (64, or 71.1%) agree that short stories help them understand grammar structures in sentences, with 39 participants (43.3%) strongly agreeing and 25 participants (27.8%) partly agreeing. Meanwhile, 9 participants (10.0%) neither agree nor disagree, indicating some neutrality. On the opposing side, 17 participants (18.9%) express disagreement, with 8 participants (8.9%) disagreeing and 9 participants (10.0%) partly disagreeing.

Table 5: Short Stories and moral values and the lifestyles of other cultures.

| Questionnaire Item No. 4 | Disagree | | Partly disagree | | Neither agree nor Disagree | | Partly agree | | Agree | |
|--|----------|-------|-----------------|-------|----------------------------|------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | n | % | N | % | N | % | n | % | N | % |
| Short stories teach readers different moral values and the lifestyles of other cultures. | 12 | 13.3% | 11 | 12.2% | 2 | 2.2% | 31 | 34.4% | 34 | 37.8% |

Table 5 indicates that among 90 participants, the majority (65 participants or 72.2%) believe that short stories are effective in teaching readers about different moral values and the lifestyles of other cultures. Specifically, 34 participants (37.8%) strongly agree, and 31 participants (34.4%) partly agree. A small number of respondents (2 participants or 2.2%) remain neutral. In contrast, 23 participants (25.5%) express some level of disagreement, with 12 participants (13.3%) disagreeing and 11 participants (12.2%) partly disagreeing.

Table 6: Short Stories and Behavioral Understanding

| Questionnaire Item No. 5 | Disagree | | Partly disagree | | Neither agree nor Disagree | | Partly agree | | Agree | |
|---|----------|------|-----------------|------|----------------------------|-------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | n | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Short stories provide readers with a better understanding of different behaviors. | 3 | 3.3% | 8 | 8.9% | 10 | 11.1% | 32 | 35.6% | 37 | 41.1% |

As can be seen in Table 6, most participants (76.7%) agree that short stories provide readers with a better understanding of different behaviors. Among them, 37 participants (41.1%) strongly agree, while 32 participants (35.6%) partly agree. The overall response to this question was very positive. A smaller portion, 10 participants (11.1%), neither agree nor disagree, indicating some level of uncertainty. Only a minority expressed disagreement, with 8 participants (8.9%) partly disagreeing and 3 participants (3.3%) disagreeing, totaling 11.2%.

Table 7: Short Stories and Problem-Solving

| Questionnaire Item No. 6 | Disagree | | Partly disagree | | Neither agree nor Disagree | | Partly agree | | Agree | |
|---|----------|------|-----------------|-------|----------------------------|------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | n | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | n | % |
| Short stories help in facing and successfully overcoming life's problems. | 8 | 8.9% | 9 | 10.0% | 5 | 5.6% | 26 | 28.9% | 42 | 46.7% |

As shown in table 7, a majority of participants (75.6%) indicated that short stories help in facing and successfully overcoming life's problems. Specifically, 42 participants (46.7%) strongly agree, and 26 participants (28.9%) partly agree. A smaller segment, 5 participants (5.6%), remain neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Meanwhile, 17 participants (18.9%) express some level of disagreement, with 9 participants (10.0%) partly disagreeing and 8 participants (8.9%) disagreeing.

Table 8: Short Stories and Imagination Enhancement

| Questionnaire Item No. 7 | Disagree | | Partly disagree | | Neither agree nor Disagree | | Partly agree | | Agree | |
|--|----------|-------|-----------------|------|----------------------------|------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | n | % | N | % | N | % | n | % | n | % |
| Reading short stories enhances learners' imagination | 10 | 11.1% | 8 | 8.9% | 8 | 8.9% | 29 | 32.2% | 35 | 38.9% |

The data in Table 8 shows that 61.1% of the sample believes reading short stories can enhance imagination in classes. Specifically, 35.7% of respondents strongly agree, and an additional 25.4% partly agree. A smaller portion, 8.2%, remained neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing. On the opposing side, 8.2% partly disagree, and 10.2% completely disagree with the statement.

Table 9: Short Stories and Interest in Learning

| Questionnaire Item No. 8 | Disagree | | Partly disagree | | Neither agree nor Disagree | | Partly agree | | Agree | |
|---|----------|------|-----------------|------|----------------------------|------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | n | % | N | % | N | % | n | % | n | % |
| Reading short stories makes the learning process interesting. | 7 | 7.8% | 2 | 2.2% | 3 | 3.3% | 34 | 37.8% | 44 | 48.9% |

The analysis revealed in the above table shows that 44.9% of the respondents strongly agree, while 34.7% partly agree, together comprising 82.6% of the sample. This indicates that the vast majority of participants believe that incorporating short stories can make the learning process more engaging and enjoyable. Only a small fraction of respondents, 3.1%, are neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing, suggesting that they see no significant impact of short stories on the learning process.

Table 10: Short Stories and Critical Thinking Development

| Questionnaire Item No. 9 | Disagree | | Partly disagree | | Neither agree nor Disagree | | Partly agree | | Agree | |
|---|----------|------|-----------------|------|----------------------------|------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | n | % | N | % | N | % | n | % | n | % |
| Short stories enhance the critical thinking skills of learners. | 4 | 4.4% | 4 | 4.4% | 8 | 8.9% | 32 | 35.6% | 42 | 46.7% |

The data presents participants' views on the statement, "Short stories enhance the critical thinking skills of learners." The results indicate a predominantly positive response, with 42.9% of respondents agreeing and 32.7% partly agreeing, totaling 75.6%. This suggests that most participants believe that engaging with short stories can stimulate learners' ability to think critically. A small portion of the respondents, 8.2%, is neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing. On the opposing side, 4.1% disagree, and another 4.1% partly disagree.

DISCUSSION

The findings have revealed that participants hold positive views regarding the role of short stories as a pedagogical tool in teaching the English language. However, the success rate was higher or lower in terms of language proficiency. The majority of learners expressed that short stories significantly enhance their language skills, confirming the efficacy of this method in fostering linguistic development. This finding is in agreement with Khatib's (2011) findings, which showed that the use of literature, particularly short stories, enhances all four-language skills by providing meaningful, context-rich materials. Short stories are an excellent tool for improving reading skills. They offer learners opportunities to practice skimming, scanning, and detailed reading. The narrative structure of short stories makes them engaging, helping learners to build reading stamina and improve their comprehension abilities. A study by Rodríguez Sua (2021) demonstrated that implementing cognitive strategies with short stories significantly improved students' reading comprehension. When learners listen to short stories being read aloud, either by the teacher or through audio recordings, they improve their listening comprehension. The British Council emphasizes that listening to short stories helps learners develop skills such as understanding pronunciation, rhythm, intonation, and stress patterns. It also helps them follow the flow of a narrative, improving their ability to understand spoken language in real-time.

Short stories also create opportunities for learners to practice speaking through activities such as summarizing, discussing, or role-playing. Learners can discuss characters, plot, and themes, which encourages them to express their ideas, ask questions, and engage in meaningful conversations. In an earlier study, Pardede (2011) reported that short stories serve as powerful tools for teaching speaking and listening, as they motivate students to engage in oral reading, dramatization, and discussions, facilitating the expression of ideas and meaningful conversations.

Additionally, short stories provide an excellent springboard for various writing activities. Learners can be asked to write summaries, reimagine endings, or create their own stories inspired by the ones they have read. This encourages them to use vocabulary, grammar, and narrative techniques they have learned. A study by Bartan (2017) investigated the impact of reading short stories on improving foreign language writing skills. The findings indicated that engaging with short stories positively affected students' writing abilities in terms of language use, content development, organization, and communicative achievement.

The majority of participants found short stories to be a valuable tool not only for learning new words but also for understanding grammatical structures, both of which are key components in enhancing overall language proficiency. This study's results closely mirror the findings of Nation (2001), who demonstrated that students exposed to narrative texts, especially short stories, are better able to deduce the meanings of unfamiliar words and understand grammatical structures than those who engage with non-literary texts. When learners encounter new vocabulary in a meaningful storyline, it becomes easier to guess the meanings of those words without relying on a dictionary. This approach not only helps in building a larger vocabulary but also encourages the development of inference skills, which are crucial

for language proficiency. In addition to vocabulary development, short stories also help learners understand grammatical structures. By reading grammatically correct and varied sentences in the context of a story, learners are able to see how different tenses, sentence types, and grammatical rules are applied in real texts. This exposure reinforces their understanding of the structures and improves their ability to use grammar effectively in their own speech and writing.

In addition, the results point out that short stories teach moral values and expose them to different lifestyles, thus fostering cultural awareness and enhancing language learning. This finding supports Saeed and Asghar's finding in 2022 that literature-based lessons, especially short stories, help in moral and cultural education, as students are prompted to reflect on values such as honesty, compassion, and social justice, which in turn encourages deeper ethical reasoning. Overall, Short stories provide insights into lifestyles, traditions, and values from different parts of the world. They offer a glimpse into how people live, think, and interact in diverse cultural contexts. By reading about characters from other backgrounds, readers can gain an understanding of customs, beliefs, and ways of life that differ from their own. Another important finding was that as the majority of participants strongly agree that short stories help in overcoming life's challenges. These results are consistent with those of Mar et al. (2020), who found that stories encourage empathy and provide readers with a safe environment to explore moral dilemmas, thereby helping them develop solutions to complex problems. Short stories offer significant potential for fostering personal growth, resilience, and problem-solving skills, making them an academically important tool in confronting life's challenges.

The data indicate that a significant majority of participants believe that short stories are effective in making the learning process more engaging and enjoyable. This finding corroborates the ideas of Ahmad and colleagues (2022), who suggested that literary texts are more engaging than traditional textbook-based learning. Similarly, a 2023 study by Lee and Park examined how reading short stories in a South Korean university setting encouraged students to think critically about social and cultural issues presented in the texts, and their critical thinking abilities had improved through literature-based discussions.

In the present study, it was found that a significant majority of participants believe that using short stories in language teaching classes encourages learners' critical thinking and classroom discussions. This finding corroborates the ideas of El-Sayed and Selim (2019), who explored how short stories can be used as a pedagogical tool to enhance students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. They argue that the themes presented in short stories—often involving ethical dilemmas, societal challenges, and individual conflicts—allow students to practice decision-making and moral reasoning. This process not only develops their understanding of human behavior but also equips them with practical strategies for overcoming real-life challenges.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Libyan learners at University of Zawia hold generally positive views towards the integration of short stories into English language teaching. The findings suggest that short stories are a valuable resource for developing language skills, understanding grammar, expanding vocabulary, and promoting cultural awareness and critical thinking. Moreover, short stories have been shown to make the learning process more enjoyable, thereby motivating students to engage more deeply with the material.

Given the favorable perceptions of short stories expressed by the participants, educators may consider incorporating more literary texts into their curriculum to enhance the learning

experience in ELT classes. However, future studies should explore the long-term impacts of using short stories in ELT and investigate how different genres or types of stories may affect learners differently. Additionally, more research is needed to understand how instructional strategies can be optimized to maximize the cognitive and linguistic benefits of literary texts for diverse learner populations.

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