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**Short Stories in EFL Classrooms: A Focus on Enlightening Reading and  
Writing Skills**

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**Resumen:**

Las historias cortas (short stories) han sido utilizadas para apoyar a los estudiantes de inglés en su instrucción con el idioma. En consecuencia, investigadores han intentado demostrar si las historias cortas pueden ser utilizadas para mejorar las destrezas del lenguaje de cada estudiante, principalmente enfocándose en las destrezas de lectura y escritura. Al recolectar, analizar y categorizar quince estudios primarios, el propósito de esta síntesis de investigación es explorar los efectos de la implementación de las historias cortas en clases de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) para enseñar lectura y escritura. Adicionalmente, esta síntesis examina las percepciones de los estudiantes ante esta instrucción. Los hallazgos han demostrado resultados positivos del uso de historias cortas en clases de inglés. Los resultados expusieron que las historias cortas pueden ayudar a que estudiantes expandan su competencia en lectura y en comprensión lectora. También, los resultados sugieren que las historias cortas ayudan a que los estudiantes mejoren su aptitud de escritura en inglés. Además, las percepciones de los estudiantes revisadas han señalado resultados positivos. En particular, existe una relación entre las historias cortas y la motivación e involucramiento en clases de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera. Las deducciones de esta síntesis de investigación pueden crear conciencia sobre la idoneidad de la enseñanza de lectura y escritura en inglés a través de las historias cortas, así como promover más investigaciones, particularmente en el contexto educativo ecuatoriano, para obtener perspectivas más claras sobre el tema.

**Palabras clave:** Historias cortas. Habilidad de lectura. Habilidad de escritura. Estudiantes de Inglés como lengua extranjera.



**Abstract:**

Short stories have been used to support English learners in their instruction with the target language. Correspondingly, researchers have aimed to demonstrate whether short stories might be employed to further develop learners' language skills, primarily in the case of reading and writing. By gathering, analyzing, and categorizing fifteen primary studies, the purpose of this research synthesis is to explore the effects of the implementation of short stories in EFL classes to teach the reading and writing skills. In addition, this synthesis examines the perceptions students have on this pursuit. Findings have shown positive effects of employing short stories in EFL instruction. Results revealed that short stories can help students increase their proficiency in reading and reading comprehension. Additionally, the results suggest that short stories help learners to improve their writing aptitude in English. Furthermore, the students' perceptions revised have yielded positive results. In particular, there seems to be a noteworthy relationship between short stories and EFL learners' motivation and involvement in class. The outcomes of this research synthesis can both raise awareness of the suitability of teaching reading and writing with short stories and promote further investigations in Ecuadorian educational contexts to ascertain a clearer perspective.

**Keywords:** Short Stories. Reading Skill. Writing Skill. EFL learners.



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## **Dedication**

*To my grandmother, my guiding star, your ceaseless love and support have always been my core and strength.*

*To my brother, Matthew, may you always follow your own path.*

*To my parents and sister, thank you for everything. I will love you forevermore.*



## Introduction

Literary texts have constituted a significant role in language teaching and learning (Novianti, 2016). Accordingly, in terms of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, short stories are a type of literature which has proven beneficial to enhance students' language skills (Pardede, 2011a). Moreover, scholars have postulated that short stories can aid the development of the reading skill (Ceylan, 2016), and the improvement of EFL students' writing performance (El-Mahdy, Qoura & El Hadidy, 2019). Considering the need of English language learners to achieve an appropriate command of the target language, researchers have been concerned with the influence that short stories might have on EFL learners' skills development, especially regarding the reading and writing skills.

Therefore, this research synthesis aims to gather, synthesize, and analyze data from 15 primary studies in order to examine the effects of short stories on EFL learners' reading and writing performance. Furthermore, this study addresses the next research questions: 1) What are the effects of the use of short stories on the development of the reading skill, as reported by the pertinent literature?, 2) What are the effects of the use of short stories on the development of the writing skill, as reported by the pertinent literature?, and 3) What are the students' perceptions on the implementation of short stories in the classroom?

This research synthesis comprises six chapters. The first chapter provides a description of the research, as it addresses the background, problem statement, rationale, research questions, and objectives. In the second chapter, the theoretical framework presents theories and concepts necessary for the understanding of the study. In the third chapter, the literature review manufactures a synthesis of the findings of the 15 primary research studies. The fourth chapter establishes the methodology used in the research, comprising the inclusion and exclusion criteria designated. In the fifth chapter, the findings of the research studies are



analyzed and categorized. Lastly, the sixth chapter encompasses the conclusions and recommendations.



## CHAPTER I

### Introductory Chapter

#### 1.1 Background

As a global medium of communication, English has become an elemental feature of the current social, political, and commercial environment (Hossain, 2015). In doing this, English has been established as the foremost means of acquiring intellectual, cultural, and technical resources (Kurniasih, 2011). In addition, the buildup of multilingualism has made English the predominant language in many international undertakings, thus giving rise to the necessity for improvement in English language instruction (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2009).

In the context of Latin America, test results on English performance are low, as students do not present an adequate level of English proficiency (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017). According to Castro (2018), the issue can be traced to the curricula developed in Latin American countries. The main aspect of curricular development which proves a liability is that the existing educational systems are based on a transmission model; this model is no longer adequate for the rapidly changing environments where students will have to use the language (Castro, 2018). Furthermore, the process of changing a curriculum can be affected by the traditional definitions of education, the categorization of students as passive learners and the prevailing teaching methodologies in many EFL Latin American classrooms (Castro, 2018).

Similarly, in Ecuador, Soto and Espinosa (2015) argue that the national curriculum needs a broader focus on the goal of developing real and meaningful knowledge, considering a balance between practical and affective skills in language learning, according to the needs of the students. As a result, Cronquist and Fiszbein (2017) explain that educative sectors need



to develop additional programs and policies as a way to improve English language learning.

In EFL teaching research, different methods have been developed in accordance to which scheme serves the needs of EFL teachers the best (Oktan & Kaymakamoğlu, 2017). One such perspective, developed to improve English language instruction, advocates the use of literary texts for the linguistic and cultural enrichment that students gain in this process (Bobkina & Dominguez-Romero, 2014).

Literature is embedded in the foundation of the different cultures, beliefs, and traditions of society because it serves as a reflection of reality (Lorenzo, 2014). Hence, the study of language has become progressively linked with the study of literature (Novianti, 2016). Even so, the use of literature in EFL classes is not a modern notion.

As stated by Duff, the idea of using literary texts in EFL teaching environments is rooted from the Grammar Translation Method, where literature texts were examples of ideal writing and proper grammar rules (as cited in Bobkina & Dominguez-Romero, 2014). From there, Topping explains that literature took a descent in EFL contexts and was not used as a learning tool anymore due to its structural complexity and its alteration of grammatical structures (as cited in Bobkina & Dominguez-Romero, 2014). Moreover, the use of literature was removed from most English teaching curricula as linguistics increasingly became the focus of language teaching (Ansari, 2013).

Nevertheless, during the 1980's and 90's, there was a renewed interest in the integration of literature as an integral part in the development of communicative and language skills (Paran, 2008). In current times, literature is characterized as a promising tool in EFL learning environments for its contribution to factors which influence language learning (Khatib, Rezaei & Derakhshan, 2011). This has given rise to research linking literary texts and language learning as a way to develop and improve language materials, syllabi, and curricula (Bobkina & Dominguez-Romero, 2014).



## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Mastering the basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) is the focus of many EFL classrooms (Kurniasih, 2011). Additionally, studying interwoven activities focused on the basic language skills develops an effective communication and competence in EFL learning (Vernier, Del Moral, Del Giusti, Barbuzza, 2008). Consequently, teachers have built various schemes and resources that fit into each skill group and that increase students' involvement in the learning process depending on the type of skill (Hossain, 2015).

Nevertheless, many of the activities used in class, which tend to be taken from textbooks, are deemed artificial because they are designed with the sole purpose of teaching (Al Azri & Al-Rashdi, 2014). Furthermore, an emphasis on the instruction of overtly observable language skills can cause students to perform poorly in real-life circumstances (Iida, 2010).

In a more specific domain, the reading skill is an elemental instrument for the correct development of students in academic settings (Khatib, 2013). Likewise, Pransiska (2018) mentions the importance of reading in a foreign language as a stimulant to increase the perception and knowledge of students, as well as, the relevance of reading as a way of learning other skills.

In regards to the writing skill, it is considered an essential language skill which aids students in professional and academic environments (Apsari, 2018). Besides, the teaching of writing in English is a process consisting of constant buildup of models from which the students guide themselves to create their own compositions (Kurniasih, 2011).

With the importance and relevance of the reading and writing skills settled, the following points can be considered in accordance to Ecuadorian contexts.

For Ecuadorian teachers and students, reading is an issue in English classes (Chico-



Constante, 2019). This occurs to such a degree that Ecuador is located in a low position in the ranking of Latin American and Caribbean reading habits (Ruiz Morales, 2019). Amongst the reasons for this issue, Chico-Constante (2019) emphasizes the lack of interest in the readings and reading activities.

Similarly, Ecuadorian students struggle and find it difficult to write in English because they feel overwhelmed when they carry out writing activities (Pesantez Pesantez & Bastidas Vera, 2018). A cause of this issue is the lack of motivation which occurs due to the writing tasks presented in the students' textbooks and the low academic achievement that ensues (González Sarmiento & Luna Lara, 2018).

These assertions can be proved by the ranking of English Proficiency Level developed by Education First; Ecuador is in the last position of all Latin American countries (English First, 2019). Further, the level of English proficiency attributed is very low.

As a response to these problems, this study proposes short stories as a material that can be used in English as a Foreign Language classes as a way to enhance students' reading and writing skills. As, on the one hand, short stories are great attention grabbers for students, unlike any other reading passage (Pathan, 2013); and, on the other hand, short stories have the power to develop adequate writing proficiency in EFL classrooms (Udhya 2017).

### **1.3 Rationale**

In English teaching contexts, motivation is one of the main characteristics deemed a predictor of success in language learning (Lightbrown & Spada, 2013). Thus, understanding the factors which motivate or demotivate students is considered essential in any educational approach and has received special attention in language teaching research (Smith, 2017).



Bruner states that the argument behind the analysis of motivation in language learning is linked to rendering interest and meaning for the learners which goes beyond the presented situation (as cited in Abd ul-Gayoum, 2011). In addition, motivation itself can be analyzed with a focus on various points. Usually, though, motivation shortage can be attributed to the monotonous and traditional resources that continue to reign over instructors' teaching methods (Bahous, Bacha & Nabhani, 2011).

Lightbrown and Spada (2013) explain the complexities that ought to be considered in regards to motivation in EFL scenarios: the communication needs students have and the attitudes they show in the classroom. These factors can contribute to the decrease of students' productivity and failing academic achievement since motivation is considered a psychological construct that influences language learning (Lasagabaster, 2011).

Furthermore, in EFL teaching, many educators have an emphasis primarily on mastering linguistic elements (Pardede, 2011b). As a result, Pardede (2011a) explains that EFL studies have expanded its fields to contain elements that were used in prior English Language curricula; particularly, with a focus on the reintroduction of literature to EFL classes, which have been proven to kindle interest in the students. Moreover, implementing literature to EFL teaching can make students explore elemental language components by presenting an authentic way of practicing and developing language skills (Rakhees, 2014).

In the analysis of what type of literary text can aid EFL learning, short stories are a favored option for the linguistic, intellectual, educational, and cultural understanding they give students (Zahra & Farrah, 2016). In addition, short stories are motivation enhancers because the language used in these stories is easily understandable for students, which facilitates their engagement with the language (Arias Rodríguez, 2017).

Furthermore, in literature-based educational research, short stories are a type of



literature of particular interest because they can prove potential enhancers of language skills in a more effective way than broader literature due to “the motivational benefit embedded in the stories” (Pardede, 2011b, p.14). Short stories can prove advantageous to enhance all the language skills taught in class (Pardede, 2011a). However, a special emphasis can be given to the development of the reading skill (Ceylan, 2016) and the improvement of the writing skill (El-Mahdy, Qoura & El Hadidy, 2019).

Saka (2014) identified that the use of short stories develops students’ reading proficiency and builds up a higher level of appreciation towards literature by increasing students’ desire to read. Also, using short stories can create a structured environment for developing reading comprehension tasks since the story lines of these literary texts are easy to follow (Ceylan, 2016). Correspondingly, improving students’ writing can be achieved with the use of short stories for the creativity and originality rooted in the texts (El-Mahdy, Qoura & El Hadidy, 2019). Further, short stories are “a useful source of input and a powerful springboard for student writing, offering valuable ideas in terms of food for thought” (Kirkgöz, 2012, p.112).

Besides, a factor which further supports the use of short stories is authenticity (Rakhees, 2014). The use of authentic materials in EFL classes is born from the need of authentic language input which helps consolidate knowledge and demonstrates concrete examples of the target language (Bahrani & Sim, 2013). Similarly, Carmona (2015) states that authentic materials foster language skills and present students with viable cultural information that will be useful for them in future circumstances. With these points in mind, short stories are authentic materials as they enable students to link words to their real-life functions and meanings (Al Siyabi, 2017). Likewise, they provide a realistic model of language use, along with, literary and cultural elements which are beneficial for EFL learning (Pardede, 2011b).



One of the reasons why teachers argue against the use of literature is because of the linguistic barriers which can affect students (Whitener, 2019). Therefore, by using short stories instead of longer literary texts, the teacher will be presented with a “convenient vehicle for examining literary elements in a limited context” (Saka, 2014, p.279).

In our context, Ecuador, teachers are one of the main components of motivation in the classroom (Cirocki, Soto, Encalada & Cuenca, 2019). Further, Cirocki et al. (2019) note that the role of a teacher consists of building formal and informal engagements, creating appealing content, developing a safe classroom environment, and implementing the curriculum in an “innovative and enjoyable fashion” (p.251). In regard to the use of literature in Ecuadorian EFL classes, the National Curriculum has Language through the Arts as a curricular thread. What is more, in the sub thread of Literary Texts in Context, the term literary texts is used to refer to “signs, rules, instructions, poetry, stories, legends, and myths” as well as oral texts like “chants, stories, verbal instructions, rhymes, songs, riddles, and jokes” (English as a Foreign Language National Curriculum, 2016). Despite the presence of literature in the National Curriculum, Chico-Constante (2019) argues that using short stories in EFL classes is hindered by the limitations in the school texts books, but should be implemented because this type of stories expose learners to innovative themes and motivate them to continue learning.

Based on what was presented in this section, researching the effects of short stories in EFL classrooms is significant in proving their usefulness for English teachers and its benefits as a tool not only for enhancing motivation (Pardede, 2011b), but also for improving the different language skills that need to be imparted (Rakhees, 2014).

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

What are the effects of the use of short stories on the development of the reading skill, as reported by the pertinent literature?



What are the effects of the use of short stories on the development of the writing skill, as reported by the pertinent literature?

What are the students' perceptions on the implementation of short stories in the classroom?

### **1.5 General Objectives**

To identify and analyze the effects and implications of the use of short stories for the development of reading and writing as reported in the pertinent literature.

### **1.6 Specific Objectives**

To identify and analyze the effects of short-stories-based tasks on the development of the reading skill in EFL students.

To identify and analyze the effects of short-stories-based tasks on the development of the writing skill in EFL students.

To analyze the perceptions students have on the implementation of short stories in the classroom.



## CHAPTER II

### Theoretical Framework

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses concepts, insights, theories, and viewpoints elemental in understanding short stories, EFL classrooms, and the reading and writing skills. The chapter is divided into five main sections: a) EFL and ESL Instruction, b) Language Skills and the EFL Educational Domain, c) Teaching Approaches for Language Skills, d) English Teaching and Literature, and e) Short Stories and EFL Environments.

#### 2.2 EFL and ESL Instruction

The research synthesis has an emphasis on EFL classrooms. Nevertheless, it is essential to establish the distinction between EFL and English as a Second Language (ESL) and their respective backgrounds. To do this, terms such as: Learning and Acquisition, First Language, Second Language, and Foreign Language need to be addressed.

Regarding language instruction, learning and acquisition are terms that contrast each other. Whereas learning is a conscious process resulting from formal instruction, acquisition is an unconscious process that occurs due to natural exposure to a language (Abdallah, 2016). According to Oxford (1990), however, the terms learning and acquisition can be used interchangeably because they are combined features of language learning.

Turning now to the terms First Language, Second Language, and Foreign language, there are some clear distinctions to be made. A person's First Language (L1) is their native or mother tongue. This language is acquired at childhood when the first exposure to culture and knowledge takes place (Chenu & Jisa, 2009). Moreover, a person can learn another language besides their native one. In the process, this language can be learned either as a Second Language or as a Foreign Language. The distinction lies on the context where the learning occurs.



A Second Language (L2) is a language that is being studied or learnt, apart from a person's native language, in an environment where the acquired language is spoken (Mizza, 2014). On the other hand, a Foreign Language (FL) is learnt mainly in a classroom and is not spoken or used in the environment where the student lives (Moeller & Catalano, 2015).

Henceforth, EFL and ESL instruction were originally recognized as a dichotomy, with clear-cut differences and practices; yet, the gradual recognition of the complexities involved in the language learning process has given rise to the analysis of EFL and ESL teaching as a continuum closely linked together (Gilquin & Granger, 2011). Thus, the teaching of English can be as a Second Language or as a Foreign Language. This will be contingent with the location where the instruction is given and the dominance of the English language in said context or environment (Oxford University Press, 2011).

### **2.3 Language Skills and the EFL Educational Domain**

In the field of EFL education, there is a concentration on the four primary language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing). As reported by Oxford (2001), teaching with a skill constituent in mind, leads to optimal communication in EFL students. Furthermore, the author reports on the significance of developing “vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, syntax, meaning, and usage” (p.2) as related components of the main four skills.

Collected works raise a division of the language skills in English. This categorization consists of receptive and productive skills. According to Al-Jawi (2010), the receptive skills include listening and reading while speaking and writing constitute the productive skills. Both types are categorized in accord to their role in students' instruction. For instance, receptive skills are considered “the ways in which people extract meaning from the discourse they see or hear” (Al-Jawi, 2010, p.3). On the contrary, productive skills “mean the transmission of information that a language user produces in either spoken or written form” (Golkova & Hubackova, 2014, p.478). Despite their divergent meanings, productive and



receptive skills are intimately associated, as they both represent active and passive trainings that are essential for learning a language (Golkova & Hubackova, 2014).

Although the four language skills are employed and studied in EFL instruction, for the purposes of the research, the sections below will underline the reading and writing skills.

### **2.3.1 Principles and Features of the Reading Skill**

There are numerous viewpoints on the reading skill. For starters, Akaydın, & Çeçen (2015) report a range where concepts of reading have varied from “vocalizing written symbols to building-up and interpreting meanings” (p. 184). Similarly, reading has been defined as “comprehending the emotion, thought and messages in a written text, beyond vocally or silently decoding known writing characters” (Karatay as cited in Akaydın, & Çeçen, 2015, p. 184). These definitions show a notion where reading is presented as a process that expands that of the written word, by showcasing a process of analysis and interpretation of the inscribed message. In agreement, Alyousef (2006) proposes the confluence of the reading skill as an interactive process where the reader interacts with the text in a dynamic way to elicit meaning and knowledge.

Further, the significance of learning and practicing the reading skill stems from the applications of reading in terms of academic purposes, obtaining and analyzing information and entertainment (Al-Jawi, 2010). Besides, Macalister (2015) accounts the ten principles of reading (Day & Bamford, 2002) that establish the foundation of reading in a foreign language and provide a basis for executing reading practices. Amongst these principles, some that stand out are: the nature of the reading, the purpose, reading speed, reading material, and the roles of the teacher and the student.



### **2.3.2 Reading Subskills**

Reading is considered a complex process which researchers and educators have attempted to understand by analyzing it as a set of features, also known as the subskills of reading (Grabe as cited in Alyousef, 2006).

Kurniasih (2011) has indicated that the sub reading skills consist of “word recognition, skimming, scanning, sentence comprehension, getting the topic, and background knowledge” (p.77). The presentation of a reading system centered on the aforementioned subskills has the objective of understanding and receiving specific information from the reading texts (Pan, 2009). In addition, research placed on the reading skill has demonstrated a focus on students’ comprehension while reading (Alyousef, 2006). Albeit the many subskills of reading have an important role in the development of the skill, the research will concentrate on reading comprehension.

As stated in Glenberg (2011), the term reading comprehension can be divided into comprehension of situations and comprehension situated in linguistic contexts. The author defines comprehension as “the ability to take effective action on the basis of affordances related to the body, the physical world, and personal goals and cultural norms” (p.5). Then, comprehension in the context of language learning is stated by the author as a stimulation of perception, action, and emotion from the text to the reader.

Correspondingly, reading comprehension refers to the ability readers have of understanding implicit and explicit meanings of a text (Ahmadi, Ismail & Abdullah, 2013). Also, it is important to highlight the significance of students’ background knowledge to extract the information of the text (Meneghetti, Carretti & De Beni, 2006).

### **2.3.3 Principles and Features of the Writing Skill**

Writing is denominated “the process of communicating with others in which a writer sends his ideas and thoughts in written forms to readers” (Hidayati, 2018, p. 23).



Additionally, the process of writing is influenced by the topic of the text, when the writing takes place, the demographic of the readers, and the language that needs to be used (Tahvildar & Zade, 2012). The writing skill has also been considered the process of transmitting information of original ideas in a sequential way in the new language (Rivers, 1981). Moreover, the significance of learning the writing skill is linked to its necessity in many circumstances both educational and personal (Browker, 2007).

In EFL contexts, writing is deemed a difficult skill. Gautam (2019) mentions the challenges of this skill and explains that these originate from inherent factors of writing such as “clarity, conciseness, exactitude, and appropriacy” (p.75). Likewise, there are two main principles which can be traced to good quality writing: cohesion and coherence in the texts. Cohesion refers to the presence or lack of connectors and guiding prompts in the text and coherence means a quality representation of the text in the readers’ minds (McNamara, Crossley & McCarthy, 2010).

#### **2.3.4 Writing Subskills**

Writing instruction in EFL is centered on two main sequences of writing: controlled or guided writing and free writing (Verghase as cited in Zarei & Dodangeh, 2015). To begin with, controlled writing is a direct learning practice that contains three elements: “students as learning subject, teacher as mediator and facilitator, and the situation which is set by the teacher to get effective and planned learning process” (Juriah, 2015, p.140). The term guided writing can be used interchangeably with controlled writing, however, guided writing has a focus on structural terms and controlled writing is more concerned with organization (Verghase as cited in Zarei & Dodangeh, 2015). In opposition, the objective behind free writing is in “the opportunity it gives individuals to develop their ideas with little or no editorial interference” and in the creation of “an open space for expression to occur without intervention or restriction” (Bean & Elbow, 2009, p.6). Other types of writing subskills



derive from the main categories of controlled and free writing. For present purposes, the subskills creative writing, reaction writing, and narrative writing will be highlighted.

Creative writing is listed as the study of writing, which can include genres like poetry, fiction, drama, and non-fiction through creative production and reflection (Bennett, Clarke, Motion, & Naidoo, 2008). According to Senel (2018), creative writing springs from the potential of creativity and artistic tasks to foster encouragement in language teaching contexts. In addition, research on creative writing has demonstrated that this subskill has an artistic purpose in language courses, as a way to build inspiration in the students (Babae, 2015).

The second subskill to be considered is reaction writing. The term reaction writing was born from reaction paper assignments, where students had to write their reactions to lectures, relevant topics, or cultural significant points of interest (Mio & Barker-Hackett, 2003). Hence, in broad terms, reaction writing is a process where students are directly involved with a reading text and identify the main and supporting ideas, so they can state their responses and reactions to those ideas in a written format (Omar & Ghazali, 2016).

Turning now to the final subskill, for Roth (2000) narrative writing is a form of writing which “reflects knowledge of text structure and indicates understanding of event-organized information” (p.15). The indication of narrative writing is the telling of an event, which can be fact or fiction, in a specific sequence (Baldick, 2008). Correspondingly, the process of narrative writing is defined by the meaning of narratives: telling a story or account (Manik & Sinurat, 2015). Narratives are among the most frequently taught written texts in foreign language courses, due to its prominence in authentic communication situations (Kormos, 2011). This interpretation is in the same line with Adam’s (2015) remarks. The author states that narrative writing is of precedence in educational contexts, as well as cultural environments by rise to imagination and cultural awareness in students.



## 2.4 Teaching Approaches for Language Skills

An equally important aspect of the language skills in EFL is the application of various approaches and techniques to teach the language. Saya (2013) defines an approach as a standpoint towards teaching. Besides, the author mentions that among an approach, a technique, a method, and a model; an approach is considered the broadest term and a technique the most specific, but the terms can be used interchangeably.

In a more definite field, language teaching methodology has undergone many shifts during the years; these fluctuations have been consistent with changes occurring in our society and culture (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Furthermore, methods in language education have derived from “social, economic, political, or educational circumstances, partly from theoretical consideration (...), partly from practical experience, intuition, and inventiveness” (Liu & Shi, 2007, p.69).

As settled by Richards and Rodgers (2014), new teaching methods have continuously been created and advocated as a way to improve the effectiveness of language teaching. One of these types of teaching methods promotes creating a link between literature and EFL learning (Bobkina & Dominguez-Romero, 2014). Thus, the upcoming section will highlight and describe the approaches that center on the use of literature in EFL classes, with an emphasis on the reading and writing skill.

## 2.5 English Teaching and Literature

Literature can be defined as “writings in prose or verse” which contain a focus on “excellence of form or expression” (Merriam-Webster, 2020). Additionally, the term literature can be used to refer exclusively to fictional texts. The notion of fiction denotes stories that stem from a writer’s imagination, as opposed to stories based on facts or real events (MasterClass, 2020a). The most well-known works of fiction are novels, novellas, and short stories, where elements like: point of view, characters, plot, setting, theme, and



style distinguish them from other fictional narratives (Al-Alami, 2016). Centering on a more specific point, the primary difference between novels, novellas, and short stories is terms of the length. Novels are considered the longest work of fiction, followed by novellas, and then short stories (MasterClass, 2020b).

All stories bring introspection to our existence and convey reflections for the understanding of decision making (Young & Annisette, 2009). Stories also have influence in our lives and make situations meaningful for us (Ezzy, 1998). As a consequence, the study of literature has developed a relationship with language and education (Carter, 2007). Further, the study of literary texts has been persistent in investigations involved with scholastic fields due to the significant role literature has developed in the teaching and learning of languages (Novianti, 2016). In regards to EFL environments, investigations have shown the advancement from a canonical analysis to a more modern and accommodating use, where stories have been adopted for the treatment of language skills (Carter, 2007).

### **2.5.1 Literature Approaches used in EFL Education**

The idea of using literary texts in EFL environments is rooted from the Grammar Translation Method, where literature texts were examples of ideal writing and proper grammar rules (Duff as cited in Bobkina & Dominguez-Romero, 2014). From there, literature took a descent in EFL contexts and was not used as a learning tool anymore (Topping, 1968). In a similar vein, due to the lack of contribution from research and data, an Alternative Linguistic Approach compatible with literature was developed. The approach focused on intuitive methods that gave relevance to students' attitudes towards the literature provided (Carter; Cumming & Simmons as cited in Ansari, 2013).

Moreover, there are two models that are used in the teaching of literature in EFL and ESL. On one hand, the Culture Model focuses on literature as content, as a gateway to history, literary points, and authors. On the other hand, the unnamed second model uses



literature as a tool for personal growth and enrichment. The second model in particular is considered an invitation for students to enjoy the stories they are reading, to not only focus on the literary aspects themselves, but to create a junction between what they are learning and their own personal experience (Carter & Long; Lazar as cited in Khatib, Rezaei & Derakhshan, 2011).

Next, the Text World Theory has been selected. The premise of the theory is divided into the importance of two sections. Firstly, uses of language can occur in contexts of situations named “the discourse world”; and secondly they can occur in a “text world” considered a theoretical sphere of understanding (Werth as cited in Whiteley, 2011). The theory in action enables students to develop further appreciation of the texts and helps interpret them, as a way of building up a kind of negotiation of meaning (Mohammadzadeh, 2017).

Furthermore, authors Timucin (2001) and Savvidou (2004) have proposed the Integrated Approach. The main idea behind this theory is to embrace prior approaches and models as a way of adaptation in accordance to the context, setting, and background of the class. Particularly, Timucin (2001) performed an investigation where the results explained the relevance of further points to be considered in teaching and learning with literature, like motivation and participation (Khatib, Rezaei & Derakhshan, 2011).

Lastly, another approach focusing on EFL and literature is the Comprehensive Approach. This comes from a union of four approaches. Firstly, the Text Approach which is dedicated to the literary terms of the story; second, the Context Approach, with a focus on the contexts of the stories; third, the Reader Approach which emphasizes the connection of the reader and the text; and fourth, the Language Approach, which concentrates on the development of the students’ language skills (Bloemert, Paran, Jansen & Van de Grift, 2017).



### **2.5.2 Literature Approaches wielded in teaching Reading**

In a more specific domain, using literature in class has been identified to have merits in the reading skill. As an example, Khatib, Rezaei, and Derakhshan (2011) state that a focus on intensive and extensive reading practices is an asset of using literature. Thus, the center of this section will be on models that show a focus on the reading skill.

To begin, Maley (1989) developed an approach denominated Critical Literary Approach. This approach fixates on the literary aspects of the text, such as: plot, background, values, and themes. Also, it analyzes the literary figures that may appear in the text (Khatib, Rezaei & Derakhshan, 2011).

Another approach is Amer's (2003) Story Grammar Approach (SGA) in which the reader is intertwined with the story and analyzes the type of genre the reading text belongs to. By doing this, the student will have a better understanding of the story (Khatib, Rezaei & Derakhshan, 2011).

The last model that has been analyzed in terms of the reading skill is the Reader Response Approach (RRA) or Reader Response Theory (RRT). The point behind the approach is to study literature as a collecting of information. As maintained by Amer (2003), the objective of the model is to cause a response in the reader's mind; doing this will evoke a reaction of emotions, feelings, and opinions from the reader. Besides, the exploration of the theory highlights the contrast between "efferent" and "aesthetic" reading (Rosenblatt as cited in Al-Bulushi, 2011). The first type of reading is concentrated on information and practicality, and the latter type is focused on experiencing and involvement with the text (Al-Bulushi, 2011).

### **2.5.3 Literature Approaches wielded in teaching Writing**

When it comes to the writing skill, the process of writing needs an aim and a focus on the message to be transmitted (Nation, 2008). With this in mind, theorists have developed methods centered on literature that aid the writing process.



The first model to be considered is the Product Approach. In this line, the writing task consists of a four step process: familiarization of a particular text, a controlled followed by a guided writing section, and free writing performed by the student (Pincas as cited in Badger & White, 2000).

Further on, two more approaches have been used in writing courses. First, the Process Approach, whose predominant goal is on linguistic skills, such as planning, drafting, revising, and editing. Correspondingly, the role of the teacher is a facilitator of the writing, but not a provider of input (Badger & White, 2000). Then, we have Genre Approaches to teaching writing. They focus on the context in which the writing will take place and the type of text to be written (Badger & White, 2000).

From a confluence of the three approaches aforementioned, the former authors present the model of Process Genre Approach. The criterion to be followed in this method depends on the learner's level and knowledge of a specific genre of writing. Additionally, the input from the teacher relies on the learners themselves and on what they are missing to complete their tasks. Lastly, the model follows a series of stages. This approach could be used in general writing classes and could be applied to the use of literature with a focus on the sub-writing skill of Narrative Writing.

As has been described, some literature models have been used in EFL teaching. However, the models presented have been engrossed namely on the use of literature in general terms. Therefore, authors have searched for different types of literary texts which can present more specific activities to be done in class, and literary texts which can bear value beyond the linguistic one (Shtepani, 2012). A literary text considered valuable in teaching EFL is short stories. Erkaya (2005) illustrates this point by stating that "short stories allow instructors to teach the four skills to all levels of language proficiency" (p.3). In a similar manner, short stories have "a powerful effect on us due to its emotional content since we



connect them to our real life situation” (De Trigueros, 2016, p.1). In consequence, the final section of the theoretical framework will define short stories and explain their significance in EFL classrooms.

## **2.6 Short Stories and EFL Environments**

The definition of short stories can be traced to the notion of narratives. According to Ryan (2017) “a narrative is a use of signs – language, image, perhaps music, and their various combinations – that evoke in the mind of the receiver a certain type of representation known as “story”” (p.518). Thus, a short story is a short literary fiction written in prose (Pasco, 1991). In addition, the element that is particular in short stories is the use of figurative language to impress the reader in the small quantity of pages of the story (Al-Alami, 2016).

As far as short stories and EFL is concerned, authors have supported the use of this literary text. For instance, Berrarbi and Bahous (2018) argued that short stories motivate students, develop students’ cultural knowledge, and stimulate their discussion skills. Likewise, authors, Collie and Slater (1987), have mentioned some benefits of short stories for language instruction. First, short stories are practical and can be used in a short amount of sessions. Second, short stories have varied genres and create a broad scope for students to choose from; and third, stories are suitable for different levels of language proficiency.

In terms of language skills, short stories have also proven valuable tools. Pardede (2011a) has stated that short stories are easy for students to follow as these stories have limited characters, settings, and plots. The author also mentions that short stories can improve students’ reading and vocabulary skills; as well as, can be a “powerful and motivating source for writing in ESL/EFL, both as a model and as subject matter” (p. 21).

With respect to approaches dedicated on EFL teaching with short stories, there is scant research. The only model encountered has been the Read for Writing model. Bartan (2017) developed this methodology for his research. It was built up as an adaptation for the



Talk for Writing model. The original version was dedicated on teaching writing in primary school. It displayed three stages: imitation, innovation, and independent application (Corbett & Strong as cited in Bartan, 2017). The Read for Writing version implemented short stories to improve participants' writing skills. By this addition, students had the liberty of choosing what story will be at the core of their analysis (Bartan, 2017).

## **2.7 Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter, theories, concepts, and viewpoints from different authors have been accounted in order to provide a view on short stories, EFL classrooms, and the reading and writing skills. This theoretical framework is considered fundamental as it contributes to the understanding of the research synthesis. Besides, the chapter will assist in the development of subsequent sections.



## CHAPTER III

### Literature Review

#### 3.1 Introduction

The chapter addresses significant findings and descriptions of the 15 studies analyzed. The literature that has supported this project centers on the use of short stories in EFL classrooms. Furthermore, the articles have been divided into four categories: a) The Use of Short Stories and Foreign Language Teaching, b) Short Stories and the Reading Skill, c) Short Stories and the Writing Skill, and d) EFL Students' Perceptions on the Implementation of Short Stories.

#### 3.2 The Use of Short Stories and Foreign Language Teaching

In first instance, some authors have rendered their research on the use of short stories as an instrument in EFL teaching. Short stories have been established as a useful tool in this context, particularly in terms of learning language skills and increasing cultural knowledge.

Arias Rodriguez (2017) conducted a study centered on displaying the impacts of using short stories, through listening and reading activities, as a way to enhance students' linguistic competence and language skills. The study was carried out with 52 Colombian university students who were learning EFL in the University's Language Department. Students' artifacts, the researcher's journal, and a survey were used to collect data. The author applied four workshops, each based on a different short story, where the students had to perform specific activities with the guidance of the teacher. Findings were divided into two categories: a) students' cultural awareness and development through short stories, and b) students' approach to literature through short stories. In the former category, findings exhibited that students' acquired new vocabulary and expressions. This first category also encompassed how short stories were models of the target language since students could review the language structures and the use of specific expressions. On the other hand, students' cultural



enrichment through short stories was at the center of the second category. In this part, findings demonstrated how students were exposed to new information and to multiple topics related to language, customs, traditions, and religions. In addition, the author encountered one barrier in the execution of her study: some of the students did not understand the vocabulary presented in the stories and had to review meanings and concepts in the dictionary. For this, the author explained that before teaching with short stories, it is essential to analyze the story and implement the adequate text according to the level of the students.

In line with the aforementioned analysis, Zahra and Farrah (2016) studied if the use of short stories had an impact on learner's language skills, their personal reflections, and cultural knowledge. The researchers used a questionnaire and tasks with pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading assignments based on short stories. Findings demonstrated that short stories proved beneficial in enhancing learners' language skills, personal development, and reflection, as well as, their cultural understanding and tolerance regarding the characters of the stories.

In this section, the main links presented in the articles between the uses of short-story based assignments and EFL students' language learning have been the language skill development which can be achieved, the cultural enrichment, awareness, and tolerance students learn while learning with short stories.

### **3.3 Short Stories and the Reading Skill**

The impact of literature on the language skills has given rise to research centered on the effects of literature-grounded tasks on specific skills. In this next section, studies have been gathered in terms of the reading skill and reading comprehension. Here, authors with research on the influence of short stories in EFL students' reading performance have been assessed.



Mohammadzadeh, (2017) led research on the teaching of short stories through the Text World Theory. The participants were a focus group classified in accordance to their proficiency level: low, moderate, and high-achiever. The data for the research was collected through a model taught and tested for the focus group. The model was based upon students' background knowledge, places, events, characters, and locations of the stories. Further, the researcher performed a follow up interview with the participants from the different proficiency levels. Findings demonstrated increased reading skills and reader-response skills from the focus group. Moreover, it was revealed that the use of the Text World Theory deepened the interaction among the students and the stories. The researchers explained how the approach applied and the short stories implemented demonstrate how short stories could be used in different proficiency levels.

Another important point considered in the junction of short stories and students' reading skills is the impact of this literary text on reading comprehension. To illustrate, Hasbaini and Manan (2017) sought out the effectiveness of short stories in enhancing students' reading quality and reading comprehension. A total of 80 EFL Indonesian learners were selected for the study and later divided into control and experimental groups. The study consisted of three main stages. First, students were given a pre-test as a way to analyze their prior knowledge and competence in the field of reading comprehension. Second, learners practiced reading comprehension according to the group: whereas the experimental group used short stories, the control one practiced reading comprehension through regular reading texts. Finally, a post-test was applied to gather the resultant data. Findings showed that the reading proficiency of learners who were exposed to short stories was significantly higher from that of learners who used regular reading texts.

In a similar vein, Mustafa's (2018) study aimed to discover if short stories could influence learners' reading comprehension. The research was done in two cycles divided into



four primary stages: planning, action, monitoring, and reflection. Both cycles were linked together because the performance of the second cycle was continued and developed based on the reflection of the first cycle. In terms of the first cycle, results showed students' reading comprehension proficiency at 73, 25%. Nevertheless, the author explained that there was room for improvement in terms of student participation and overall reading performance. Thus, the researcher implemented further activities centered on the analysis of main and supporting ideas of the text, along with more active tasks to increase learners' participation. Findings of the second cycle showed an improved level of students' reading comprehension at 87%. The researcher interpreted these findings as a positive parallel between short stories and reading comprehension.

Other authors concerned with reading comprehension were Khalili and Rezvani (2015). Their research centered on the effects of online short stories on students' reading comprehension. Furthermore, the authors analyzed whether there was a difference in reading performance regarding printed and online short stories. The participants of the study were chosen according to the English proficiency level they obtained in an Oxford Placement Test (OPT). Hence, the 60 Iranian EFL students categorized into the intermediate level in the test were selected and divided into two experimental groups. The first experimental group was taught with printed short stories and the second one used online versions of short stories. The results portrayed an increased level of reading comprehension performance from the experimental group that used online short stories of 13,67 % in the pre-test to 16,75% in the post-test. Moreover, the percentage of reading proficiency level was higher in online short stories (15,20%) than in printed stories (12,64%).

The literature presented in this section established that using short stories had a positive effect on students' reading abilities and on their reading comprehension



development. Further, research in this field has shown constructive outcomes of implementing online versions of short stories to develop students' reading skills.

### **3.4 Short Stories and the Writing Skill**

Besides the focus of employing short stories to aid reading skills, authors have investigated the effects of short stories on the writing skill. Hence, the upcoming points were gathered from literature belonging to authors' research on the enhancement and teaching of writing skills with the implementation of short stories.

Bartan (2017) inquired on the effects of reading short stories on the improvement of EFL students' writing skills. Participants of the study were divided into an experimental and a control group. The researcher developed activities based on the Read for Writing model, an approach built by an adaptation done by the researcher himself. The students in the experimental group read short stories, analyzed them, and performed writing activities based on the texts. Conversely, participants of the control group performed writing tasks based on their course books. In the results, the author explained how the achievements and scores of students in the experimental group were substantially increased on the post-test from a 16,97% to 26,47% performance. Furthermore, the author remarked on the specific points of writing skill improvement in terms of language, content, and organization.

Similarly, Nozen, Kalajahi, Abdullah, and Jabbarzadeh's (2017) study tested the impacts of reading and analyzing short stories on students' writing skills, specifically centered on precision and complexity of writing. For the research, 34 EFL learners took a pre-test and a post-test to determine their writing proficiency before and after the study. The core of the experimental group was on the use of a short-story based extensive reading program. In contrast, the control group used the regular writing assignments of their workbooks. After the experiment, it was determined that experimental students outperformed control students in terms of writing aptitude. Likewise, the authors settled that both students'



precision and accuracy were enhanced. Examiners suggested further research on short stories and EFL classrooms because they considered short stories as motivation and proficiency enhancers.

The aforementioned findings are consistent with Udhya' s (2017) research. The author found that there was a significant relationship between the use of short stories and EFL students' writing skills. In the study, the author inserted short stories to certain activities from the students' course book. Data for interpretation was collected through written quizzes and presentations. The author concluded by explaining how short stories influenced students' writing and established a stimulating way to do so. Moreover, the findings revealed how students showed improvement in terms of writing subskills such as: vocabulary development, grammar, logical, and critical thinking.

In vein with what was presented above, researchers have explored the impacts of short stories on the subgenres of writing, since many EFL programs teach writing skills with a focus on more specific subgenre domains. A case in point is Omar and Ghazali (2016). The researchers examined the potential of implementing short stories as a way to enhance students' reaction writing. In particular, the authors sought out development in the way students expressed their opinions towards current issues. The study consisted of three main stages. First, students read one of the selected short stories and developed a reaction paper based on it. Second, the researcher reviewed the papers and identified elements that affected the quality of the papers. Lastly, students were given lessons focused on summarizing, analyzing, and reacting to the short story they read. Accordingly, findings showed that the students' reaction writing aptitude was increased with short stories. The researcher remarked on how students employed the short story as a model to write and refer back for their reaction papers. Nevertheless, the authors mentioned that some considerations need to be made when



using these literary texts in EFL contexts. They pointed out that the length and vocabulary of the story have to be proportionate to the students' English level and proficiency.

Turning now to Adam (2015), his research explored if there was a correlation between teaching short stories and students' narrative writing skills. On the one hand, outcomes of the research present a substantial difference between the experimental group's 9,5 score in the pre-test to their 15 score on the post-test. On the other hand, learners in the control group augmented their performance by only one point. Moreover, the tests showed that with short story instruction, students increased the quality of their writing in matters of creative writing features like: setting, point of view, characters, dialogue, and plot.

These results are similar to those reported by El-Mahdy, Qoura, and El Hadidy (2019). The authors presented elements such as: fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration as important subskills improved with the short story based program implemented. In the study, the authors inspected the effects of applying a short story based program to teach EFL students' creative writing. Two instruments were used to compile information: a questionnaire of creative writing, to assess the most important creative writing features to be developed, and a pre-test and a post-test to measure the students' proficiency level prior and after the study. Findings proved that short stories settled a high influence on students' creative skill development.

This segment recounted research centered on teaching EFL writing skills with short stories. In their research, authors exposed how short stories aided students' motivation and writing proficiency. In addition, authors portrayed short stories as tools used to develop writing subskills, like content and organization, and enrich writing subgenres such as: narrative writing, reaction writing, and creative writing.



### 3.5 EFL Students' Perceptions on the Implementation of Short Stories

The inquiry on students' perceptions of novel procedures of instruction is valuable to educational fields. Therefore, the subsequent information was taken from research fixated on examining the perceptions and attitudes EFL students have regarding the implementation of short stories in their English classes.

For instance, both Saka (2014) and Ceylan (2016) developed similar studies aimed at describing the ideas of 40 EFL Iranian students on the contributions of using short stories in their instruction. Results of both studies showed positive perceptions from students towards implementing short stories, as students agreed that short stories: broaden their perspectives, enable them to see from others' point of view, increase their understanding, build cultural knowledge, show different lifestyles, and teach ethical and moral values. Furthermore, findings demonstrated that students consider short stories as beneficial tools for their learning, since in nine out of the twelve questions, which asked whether students agreed with certain benefits of short stories, 40% to 50% of the students fully agreed with the benefits presented (Saka, 2014). Similarly, results exhibited that the majority of students agree with statements asserting that short stories provide better understandings of behavior and increase literature appreciation (Ceylan, 2016).

Along with the previously mentioned authors, Siyabi and Said (2017) were also concerned with EFL students' perceptions on short stories in their English lessons. Instruction consisted on discussing the themes in the story, reading the short story, summarizing, and answering comprehension questions. The main source of data was taken from a survey composed of twelve questions. There were two sections on the survey: students' perceptions of using short stories and benefits of reading short stories. On the one hand, findings in the first section showed that the majority of students agreed that using short stories was amusing, interesting, and enjoyable. Additionally, students considered the



activities to be a good practice and a rewarding experience. On the other hand, results in the second section revealed that around 60% of students alleged that short stories encouraged them to read more, improved reading comprehension, taught them new vocabulary, and presented good exposure to the target language.

The last subdivision of the literature review was related to crucial perceptions and opinions of EFL students concerning the study and learning of English by means of short stories. Results have revealed that students deem short stories as useful tools which should be employed.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

Short stories seem to play a considerable role in English teaching research since they have proven beneficial in EFL contexts. Research has attempted to show how short stories might aid and improve learners' language skills, particularly reading and writing. Additionally, there has been interest in exploring the perceptions students have towards the use of short stories in their English classes. Thus, in this section, literature has been revised in accordance to the effects of using short stories in EFL classes, the impact of short stories on both the reading and writing skills, and the perceptions students have exhibited on this implementation.



## CHAPTER IV

### Methodology

The aim of a research synthesis is to build a systematic secondary review of collected research across primary research studies, as to increase the applicability of those findings (Wyborn et al., 2018). To develop a research synthesis, the primary studies need to pass through a process of identification, selection, and categorization (Norris & Ortega, 2006). Thus, the following inclusion criteria were chosen in accordance to the reviewed primary studies.

- The articles reported on empirical studies. This criterion was established because of the nature of a research synthesis. The articles needed to be primary research studies as a way to increase generality and applicability of those findings (Wyborn et al., 2018).
- Articles with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodological approaches were considered. This criterion was established because the methodology of the articles was used to answer the research questions of this research synthesis. The questions analyze the effects and perceptions of students on short stories in EFL classes. Whereas effects are analyzed from a quantitative perspective, perceptions are examined from a qualitative perspective, and mixed methods can analyze both (Norris & Ortega, 2006).
- The articles focused on EFL contexts. This criterion was established because the research synthesis was written and presented in an EFL context.
- The articles focused on the implementation of short stories. This criterion was established because short stories are considered a suitable choice to enhance students' language skills (Pardede, 2011b).



- The articles had an emphasis on the enhancement of reading and writing or their respective subskills. This criterion was established because short stories are a type of reading passage that improves the reading skill (Pathan, 2013) and aids the development of writing proficiency (Udhya, 2017).
- The articles discussed students' perceptions on the implementation of short stories in the classroom. This criterion was set because students can have a wide range of experiences and perceptions on classroom development and by analyzing these perceptions; teachers can learn about the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching (Mcdermott, n.d).
- The publication date of the articles was from 2014 and onwards. This criterion was established as a way to analyze updated information.

On the other hand, the exclusion criteria considered for the investigation were: 1) unpublished studies, 2) non-peer-reviewed studies, 3) studies from secondary sources.

There were no limitations in regards to the level of the participants. The materials encountered remained digital for practical purposes. The necessary information was attained in online databases, such as Google Scholar, Academia, Repositorio Digital in the University of Cuenca and Google Search. The key words used to search on the necessary data and documents were: (a) short stories, (b) EFL, (c) teaching, (d) literature, (e) reading, (f) writing, (g) skills, and (h) enhancement.

The revised journals were: IUG Journal of Humanities Research Peer-reviewed Journal of Islamic University-Gaza, International Online Journal of Education and Teaching, English Language Teaching, Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, International Journal of Management and Applied Science (IJMAS), Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research, English Education Journal, Journal of Nusantara Studies (JONUS), The Reading Matrix: An International Online



Journal, International Journal of Advanced Research, European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies, Journal of Research in Curriculum Instruction and Educational Technology, Indonesian Journal of EFL and Linguistics. Lastly, 15 articles were found. They were categorized in accordance to criteria which arose during the analysis process.



## CHAPTER V

### Analysis

#### 5.1 Introduction

For this research synthesis, 15 studies were selected for the analysis intended to answer the research questions. Subsequently, as studies were surveyed, different categories arose. These categories were the research focus of the studies, location, research methodological approaches, reported effects of short stories on the reading skill, reported effects of short stories on the writing skill, and students' perceptions and attitudes on using short stories in EFL classes. In addition, the findings were distributed and elucidated in tables.

#### 5.2 Research Focus

Research on the study of short stories as a tool to aid the teaching and learning process in EFL has focused on the impacts of this literary text on various linguistic features of the language. Moreover, research has been concerned on the perceptions and attitudes both students and professors have on the application of short story based tasks in class. Thus, table 1 exhibits the research focus of each of the analyzed articles. It was crucial to divide the articles in accordance to their research focus to organize information and build on the categories in the upcoming tables.

**Table 1***Research Focus*

<b>Focus</b>	<b>N° of Studies</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>Author/Year</b>
The Use of Short Stories to Develop Language Skills	4	27	Arias Rodríguez (2017); Saka (2014); Siyabi & Said (2017); Zahra & Farrah (2016); Ceylan (2016); Hasbaini & Manan (2017);
The Use of Short Stories to Develop the Reading Skill	5	33	Khalili & Rezvani (2015); Mohammadzadeh (2017); Mustafa (2018) Adam (2015); Bartan (2017); El-Mahdy, Qoura, & El Hadidy (2019); Nozen et al. (2017); Omar & Ghazali (2016); Udhya (2017)
The Use of Short Stories to Develop the Writing Skill	6	40	

**Note.** N= 15

Table 1 shows the research focus of the revised studies. All 15 articles were divided into three categories centered on the use of short stories to a) improve language skills, b) develop the reading skill, and c) develop the writing skill. For the first category, four studies implemented short stories in their EFL classes as a way to teach the four main language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing). The second category contains five studies focused on the employment of short stories to develop the reading skill, as well as, the improvement of students' reading comprehension. Lastly, there were six studies in the third category. They had a base on the impacts of short stories to develop the writing skill and writing subgenres.

From the data, the research focus which has received the most attention is on the use of short stories to improve the writing skill. Bartan (2017) suggests that the use of literary texts is advocated to learn writing because they represent good examples which students can analyze. Similarly, most studies have concentrated on the writing skill as short stories have proven beneficial in the enhancement of writing subskills (Adam, 2015; Omar & Ghazali,



2016; El-Mahdy, Qoura, & El Hadidy, 2019). As an example, creative writing teaching was highly influenced by short stories, particularly in terms of writing fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration (El-Mahdy, Qoura, & El Hadidy, 2019).

Moreover, despite the attention of research on the writing skill, studies on the implementation of short stories have accentuated positive outcomes on developing students' four main language skills (Arias Rodríguez, 2017; Saka, 2014; Siyabi & Said, 2017; Zahra & Farrah, 2016).

### 5.3 Location of the Studies

**Table 2**

*Location of the studies*

Continent	N° of Studies	(%)	Author/Year
Asia	13	87	Adam (2015); Bartan (2017); Ceylan (2016); Hasbaini & Manan (2017); Khalili & Rezvani (2015); Mustafa (2018); Mohammadzadeh (2017); Nozen et al. (2017); Omar & Ghazali (2016); Saka (2014); Siyabi & Said (2017); Udhya (2017); Zahra & Farrah (2016)
Africa	1	6.5	El-Mahdy, Qoura, & El Hadidy (2019)
Latin America	1	6.5	Arias Rodríguez (2017)

**Note.** N= 15

Table 2 indicates the location where the studies took place. This table displays that 13 out of 15 studies were done in Asia, one in Africa, and one in Latin America. It is of importance to mention the location of the studies in order to a) analyze the research done in our own environment and b) try to find gaps where further research can be done.

Consequently, the only Latin American study took place in Colombia. Arias Rodríguez (2017) performed a study that adopted listening and reading activities through



short stories with the intention of enhancing students' language skills. Among the author's findings was the simulation of real life communication that was given to the students with the short story based activities, as students had the possibility to practice reading, listening, writing, and speaking at the same time. Furthermore, short stories proved a language model "to understand the function of the language and improve grammar use, cohesion, and coherence" (p.116). Lastly, the author suggested the addition of short story based activities and materials, so students' language practice could be encouraged.

Lastly, this table discloses how the majority of research on short stories, its impacts, and students' perceptions on its implementation has been widely analyzed in Asian educational contexts. If we focus on our own context, even though Arias Rodriguez's (2017) study in Colombia has shown positive results, it can be established that there has not been extensive interest in the study of short stories in academic contexts for the American continent.



## 5.4 Research Methodological Approaches

**Table 3**

*Research Methodological Approaches*

Focus	N° of Studies	(%)	Author/Year
Quantitative	6	40	Adam (2015); Arias Rodríguez (2017); El-Mahdy, Qoura, & El Hadidy (2019); Hasbaini & Manan (2017); Khalili & Rezvani (2015); Nozen et al. (2017)
Qualitative	None		Ceylan (2016); Bartan (2017); Mohammadzadeh (2017); Mutakhirani (2017); Mustafa (2018); Omar & Ghazali (2016); Saka (2014); Siyabi & Said (2017); Udhya (2017); Zahra & Farrah (2016)
Mixed-methods	9	60	

**Note.** N= 15

Table 3 demonstrates that 9 out of 15 studies adopted mixed-methods to collect data, and the remaining 6 studies used a quantitative approach. In terms of a qualitative approach, there were not any studies that implemented this methodology. A point of interest in this table is the number of studies which used a mixed approach. This could be attributed to the fact that most studies researched two main points. Firstly, whether there was any effect, impact, or relationship between short-story based activities and students' language skills; and secondly, most studies developed an analysis of students' opinions on short stories and the benefits they encountered while learning with this literary text.

For instance, Zahra and Farrah (2016) used both quantitative and qualitative instruments as a way to examine both the impacts of short stories on learners' language skills and the general attitudes students had during the study. Equally, Mohammadzadeh (2017) developed his research with a mixed methodological approach. The study aimed at



discovering the usefulness of short stories adapted to the Text World Theory in EFL classes, and collecting data on the views of the students on the utilized model.

### 5.5 Effects of Short Stories on the Reading Skill

**Table 4**

*Effects of Short Stories on the Reading Skill*

Author/ Year*	Reading Skill Improvement	Cultural Enrichment	Impact on Reading Comprehension	Others
Ceylan (2016)	✓	✓		✓ (Literature Appreciation)
Hasbaini, & Manan (2017)	✓		✓	
Khalili & Rezvani (2015)	✓		✓	
Mohammadzadeh (2017)	✓	✓		
Mustafa (2018)	✓		✓	✓ (Student reading increase)

**Note.** N= 5

\* Only studies with a research focus on the use of short stories to develop the reading skill were considered.

Table 4 exhibits the effects of the use of short stories on the reading skill. The effects in this table have been categorized as follows: reading skill improvement, cultural enrichment, impact on reading comprehension, and others.

In the first category, all the studies that presented reading skill improvement were gathered. Out of the five studies analyzed here, all reported a higher achievement in students' reading skills after the use of short story based activities. This is exemplified in the work done by Mohammadzadeh (2017). In the research, the author provided students with pre-reading activities, while-reading activities, and post-reading activities that centered on



specific short stories. Amongst the findings, the pre-reading activities activated students' previous knowledge and connected their thoughts to the world around them. In regards to the while-reading activities, the students showed increased creative reading skills and reader-response skills. Lastly, the post-reading activities encouraged students to practice their reading skills. Therefore, it can be said that the most significant effect of the use of short stories in this category is linked to the skill enhancement which can occur with the aid of short stories.

Next, the studies that reported an increased level of cultural enrichment from students were grouped in the second category. Short stories presented an adequate model for students to analyze the different situations that the characters had to manage (Ceylan, 2016). This category is further corroborated by findings that established how students became more aware of the culture and background of the characters in the stories, which in turn made students connect their culture and values with the ones from the fictional characters (Ceylan, 2016; Mohammadzadeh, 2017).

The third category in table 4 centers on the impacts of short stories on reading comprehension. The majority of studies reported this effect (Hasbaini & Manan, 2017; Khalili & Rezvani, 2015; Mustafa, 2018). To exemplify, Mustafa (2018) revealed that the impact of short stories on students' reading comprehension occurred in an active manner. The author states that students were able to express their ideas, for the reading comprehension activities, in a better way. Furthermore, the author portrayed how students' active reading comprehension was shown in their better understanding of the reading texts. Hasbaini and Manan (2017) disclosed similar discoveries in their study. In their case, the authors decided to compare student groups that performed the same activities with short stories and with longer stories. The results showed how the students, who used short stories, outperformed the other group in terms of their reading comprehension. Likewise, the authors explained that



developing reading comprehension activities were aided by the many points of interest available in short stories.

To finish, effects found on two studies were gathered into the category named ‘Others’. With the increased development of the reading skill and the use of stories that proved thought-provoking, the students developed a new found appreciation for literature (Ceylan, 2016). Short stories seemed to demonstrate how literature could be enjoyable and interesting for EFL learners. Likewise, another effect gathered in this category was reported by Mustafa (2018). The author exhibited how short stories amplified students’ desire to increase and expand their reading, which might help proliferate their vocabulary and reading skill later on.

## 5.6 Effects of Short Stories on the Writing Skill

**Table 5**

*Effects of Short Stories on the Writing Skill*

<b>Author/ Year*</b>	<b>Writing Skill Improvement</b>	<b>Cultural Enrichment</b>	<b>Positive Environment for Skill Development</b>	<b>Impact on Subgenres</b>
Adam (2015)	✓	✓		✓ (Narrative Writing)
Bartan (2017)	✓			
El-Mahdy, Quora, & El Hadidy (2019)	✓			✓ (Creative Writing)
Nozen, et.al (2017)	✓		✓	
Omar & Ghazali (2016)	✓	✓		✓ (Reaction Writing)
Udhya (2017)	✓		✓	

**Note.** N= 6

\* Only studies with a research focus on the use of short stories to develop the writing skill were considered.



Table 5 illustrates the effects of short stories on students' writing skill. The effects encountered in the articles have been divided into four sections: writing skill improvement, cultural enrichment, positive environment for skill development, and impact on subgenres.

To begin with, skill improvement has proven the major and most relevant reported effect in this category. All six studies with the research focus on the writing skill have reported skill improvement after the use of short stories. For instance, Bartan (2017) claimed that with the aid of short stories, students improved their writing in terms of language, content, and organization. Likewise, short stories have been demonstrated to enhance writing skills by creating an easier writing process for students (Adam, 2015). In the same way, Nozen, et al. (2017) showcased that short stories improved students "complexity of writing" and "accuracy of writing" (p.67). Thus, confirming the influence of short stories in improving students' writing skills.

In the case of cultural enrichment, two out of the six studies reported a higher achievement of cultural knowledge from students. For this part, Adam (2015) explained how short stories developed a level of understanding between the learners and the story, which in turn taught students about the culture of the characters. Omar and Ghazali (2016) chanced upon similar results. The authors portrayed how students created and discussed connections with the stories and their own personal lives.

In terms of positive environment for skill development, two studies demonstrated this outcome. Nozen, et.al (2017) performed a study which analyzed the impacts of extensive short story reading on teaching writing skills. The authors discussed the results of the study by establishing that using short story based activities provided "an excellent environment for improving EFL learners' complexity of writing" (p.67). By complexity of writing, the author refers to "the linguistic complexity of the sentence structure" (p.61) detected in students' compositions.



Table 5 also contains the category of impact on subgenres. A total of three studies proved that short stories have impacts on writing subgenres. El-Mahdy, Quora, and El Hadidy (2019) researched on the subgenre of creative writing. Their study found that students accomplished significantly better in their compositions, especially in terms of fluency of writing, flexibility of thinking, originality, and elaboration. Correspondingly, a study that corroborates the impact of short stories on writing subgenres centered on developing students' narrative writing (Adam, 2015). In the research, students who worked with short stories improved their narrative writing skills. Further, the author encountered writing improvement in terms of characters, point of view, setting, dialogue, and resolution. In addition, in terms of reaction writing, short stories proved guidance tools and models, so students could get ideas and form interpretations for their reaction papers (Omar & Ghazali, 2016).

### 5.7 Students' perceptions and attitudes on using short stories in EFL classes

**Table 6**

*Students' perceptions and attitudes on using short stories in EFL classes*

<b>Perceptions</b>	<b>N° of Studies<sup>a b</sup></b>	<b>Author/Year</b>
Buildup of Cultural Awareness	4	Ceylan (2016); Mohammadzadeh (2017); Saka (2014); Zahra & Farrah (2016)
Impulse to Generate Personal Reflections	6	Ceylan (2016); Mohammadzadeh (2017); Mustafa (2018) Saka (2014); Siyabi, & Said (2017); Zahra & Farrah (2016)
<b>Attitudes</b>	<b>N° of Studies<sup>a b</sup></b>	<b>Author/Year</b>
Motivation and Student Involvement	3	Mustafa (2018); Udhya (2017); Zahra & Farrah (2016)
Desire to read more	4	Ceylan (2016); Saka (2014); Mustafa (2018); Omar & Ghazali, (2016)

**Note.** N= 8

<sup>a</sup> Only studies showing students' attitudes or perceptions towards the use of short stories were considered

<sup>b</sup> Studies are counted in more than one category.



Table 6 displays the perceptions and attitudes of students towards the application of short story based tasks in their classes. For this analysis, studies were selected because, apart from their respective research focus, they aimed to analyze the opinions and thoughts of students towards short stories. In consequence, eight studies were categorized in table 6.

To begin, there were two noted perceptions in the studies: buildup of cultural awareness and impulse to generate personal reflections. As far as buildup of cultural awareness is concerned, four out of eight studies portrayed this perception from students. Saka (2014) performed a study where students utilized short stories and later on expressed their thoughts on the process by answering a questionnaire. In the results, students agreed that short stories broadened their perspectives by enabling them to see beyond their own environments. Also, students settled that short stories showed them different life styles and provided them with a way to compare their own culture with the ones in the stories. Then, in terms of personal reflections, six studies demonstrated how students believed that short stories had impuled them to build personal reflections. In addition, in this category, students alleged that short stories helped them to develop empathy (Ceylan, 2016), to form tolerance, and to acquire ethical values (Saka, 2014).

Turning now to students' attitudes on using short stories, the reported points have been classified into motivation, student involvement, and desire to read more. A total of three studies disclosed how students were motivated and involved during the learning process with short stories (Zahra & Farrah, 2016; Udhya, 2016; Mustafa, 2018). Additionally, studies showed how the students seemed interested in learning more stories and appeared driven to read more after the development of short story-based activities (Ceylan, 2016; Mustafa, 2018; Omar & Ghazali, 2016; Saka, 2014).



## 5.8 Conclusion

Taking into account the former analysis, it can be established that the use of short stories in EFL classes has positive impact on students' language skills; particularly, in terms of both the reading and writing skills. The prime reported effect of short stories in both skills is the skill development that can be achieved with this type of literary text. Moreover, students have shown positive perceptions and attitudes towards short story based tasks, which further supports the implementation of short stories into classes. Accordingly, the outcomes presented in this section indicate that short stories are useful tools which might aid the learning process. Furthermore, all the categories of the analysis aided to answer the research questions and met the research objectives.



## CHAPTER VI

### Conclusions and Recommendations

#### 6.1 Conclusions

This section provides a discussion of the findings accounted in the previous chapter. As mentioned in the prior segment, the 15 studies were grouped and coded into six categories which were aimed to answer the three research questions: a) What are the effects of the use of short stories on the development of the reading skill, as reported by the pertinent literature?, b) What are the effects of the use of short stories on the development of the writing skill, as reported by the pertinent literature?, and c) What are the students' perceptions on the implementation of short stories in the classroom? After the analysis was developed, the following conclusions can be stated.

In terms of the first research question, the findings exhibit that adapting short stories to EFL instruction has produced constructive results towards the reading skill. In first instance, the studies show how short stories have supplemented students to improve their reading skills (Ceylan, 2016; Hasbaini & Manan, 2017; Khalili & Rezvani, 2015; Mohammadzadeh, 2017; Mustafa, 2018). This finding is supported by research which has deemed short stories practical tools for skill instruction due to features of short stories as: length, variety of topics, adaptability to learners' age, and flexibility of language proficiency (Collie & Slater, 1987; Pardede, 2011b).

Furthermore, as the analysis has shown, short stories influence EFL learners' performance in reading comprehension (Hasbaini & Manan, 2017; Khalili & Rezvani, 2015; Mustafa, 2018). After instruction with short stories, students yielded improved results in their reading comprehension ability because of the active manner of involvement the learners had with the stories (Mustafa, 2018). Indeed, adequate reading comprehension performance needs stimulations of perceptions, actions, and emotions from the text to the reader (Glenberg,



2011). Similarly, students displayed enhanced results in finding main and supporting ideas in the short stories (Mustafa, 2018), which is directly associated to the main purpose of reading comprehension: to understand explicit and implicit meanings of the texts (Ahmadi, Ismail & Abdullah, 2013).

Findings have also demonstrated that students increased their cultural awareness while reading short stories. Learners became increasingly aware of the culture and experiences of the characters in the stories, which subsequently created a connection between the students' own culture and ideals (Ceylan, 2016; Mohammadzadeh, 2017). This association seems plausible since short stories construct kinship with its readers by linking the stories with real life (De Trigueros, 2016). Further, reading short stories can stimulate reflection by introducing cultural related problematics (Berrarbi & Bahous, 2018). Correspondingly, associating critical features like cultural values and themes from stories can support learning a language (Maley, 1989).

Regarding the second research question, short stories have aided students to evolve their writing aptitude (Adam, 2015; Bartan, 2017; El-Mahdy, Quora & El Hadidy, 2019; Nozen, et al., 2017; Omar & Ghazali, 2016; Udhya, 2017). Particularly, students developed organized texts with enriched content (Bartan, 2017). These results are considered beneficial because short stories have helped students build on the two main principles of writing, coherence and cohesion, which are the groundwork for good quality writing (McNamara, Crossley & McCarthy, 2010).

Additionally, studies have reported short stories as innovative implements that generate a positive environment for the writing skill to be developed (Nozen, et al., 2017; Udhya, 2017). Given this information, a correlation can be established with Pardede's (2011b) remarks. The author appraised short stories as powerful subjects for EFL students to use as models for their writing activities, since short stories have few characters and short



plots which make these stories simpler for students to write about. Equally, literature texts are considered examples of good writing and appropriate grammar rules which students can replicate (Duff as cited in Bobkina & Dominguez-Romero, 2014).

In the literature revised, short stories have been associated with the writing subgenres of creative writing, narrative writing, and reaction writing due to the benefits they have provided in these environments (Adam, 2015; El-Mahdy, Quora & El Hadidy, 2019; Omar & Ghazali, 2016). Firstly, creative writing is born from student inspiration and creativity (Senel, 2018). For this reason, short stories are considered encouraging for students since these stories help learners expand their thinking (El-Mahdy, Quora & El Hadidy, 2019). Secondly, as it was aforementioned, short stories can create a model for students to write about. This in turn helps learners of narrative writing by showing them representations of plot points (Adam, 2015), which are core for writing a narrative or tale (Manik & Sinurat, 2015). Lastly, the foundation of reaction writing is centered on topics of interest for its writers (Mio & Barker-Hackett, 2003). Thus, the conflicts existing in short stories can aid learners to develop their reaction writing (Omar & Ghazali, 2016).

Concerning the third research question, students have expressed positive views towards employing short stories in their instruction. To begin with, students expressed how short stories impulse them to generate personal reflections (Ceylan, 2016); Mohammadzadeh, 2017; Mustafa, 2018; Saka, 2014; Siyabi & Said, 2017; Zahra & Farrah, 2016). This is attributable to the fact that learning with short stories can help people have introspections and reflections about their personal lives (Young & Annisette, 2009) which can influence them and generate meaningful connections (Ezzy, 1998).

Moreover, students that utilized short stories in their classes presented high levels of motivation and student involvement (Mustafa, 2018; Udhya, 2017; Zahra & Farrah, 2016). This is in accordance to research which deems motivation as a predictor of language learning



effectiveness (Lightbrown & Spada, 2013). Expressly, short stories are sources of motivation because of the broad genres they employ (Arias Rodriguez, 2017) and due to linguistic, educational, and cultural factors they provide (Zahra & Farrah, 2016).

In brief, research has shown the effectiveness of employing short stories in EFL instruction. These literary texts can help students increase their proficiency in reading and writing in English. Furthermore, there seems to be a noteworthy relationship between short stories and EFL learners' motivation and involvement in class, as the studies have showed a significant correlation among the variables.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

This research synthesis concludes by addressing certain recommendations and observations. Firstly, as the investigation showed, employing short-story-based tasks in EFL classrooms has facilitated students to enhance their reading and writing skills; nonetheless, further inquiries could center on the impacts of short stories on teaching listening and speaking to EFL students. Secondly, most of the analyzed studies have been located in Asian settings. Thus, more studies are needed in Latin America, particularly in Ecuadorian EFL classrooms, in order to analyze the effectiveness of short stories in our own background and to gather data from a more familiar context. Thirdly, additional studies could epitomize the advantages and disadvantages of applying online short story resources against using printed short story components. This could be of particular interest as technological tools are being highlighted for the benefits they can provide (Roberts, 2004). Likewise, further research could concentrate on analyzing the effects of specific genres of short stories which can interest students: horror, mystery, science fiction, speculative fiction, among others.

Lastly, the findings encountered in this research intend to raise awareness of the suitability of teaching and learning with short stories and promote its implementation in EFL learning environments. Hence, the present findings encourage EFL teachers to incorporate



short stories in their teaching lessons since the study has shown positive results when developing and improving EFL learners' reading and writing performance. Likewise, learners should consider short stories as ways to enhance their learning motivation and as a scheme to practice their target language.



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## Appendix 1

### List of Primary Studies for Analysis

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