

**Using Short Stories to Enhance ESL Teaching and Learning:
A Case Study of Egyptian Students**

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Abstract

The integration of literature into the curriculum is advocated to improve students' language skills, their communicative and cultural competence, and enhance their critical thinking skills. Research showed that using literature in language teaching is very beneficial as it motivated students, enhanced critical thinking skills and led to developing linguistic knowledge and cultural awareness. This research paper shows how short stories were integrated in the general English classroom in the Higher Technological Institute, Egypt, Students were surveyed and interviewed to identify changes in their motivation and critical thinking skills. An analysis of students' written reflections on the stories also indicates improved language skills.

Introduction

The appearance of the Communicative Approach in the late 70s and very early 80s led to the disregard of using literature in the English classroom. Teachers aimed at teaching language functions and grammar. However, since the 1980s, the integration of literature and especially short stories in the ESL classroom has emerged. This integration of literature into the curriculum was done to improve students' language skills, their communicative and cultural competence, and enhance their "critical thinking" (Butler, 2006) skills. Besides, studies, like those of Lazar (1993), Carlisle (2000), Ellis (2011), and Fitts and Brower (2013), advocate the integration of literary texts into the ESL/EFL curriculum to develop language use and cultural awareness. Maley and Duff's (2007) research on integrating literature in the English classroom favors a content-focused curriculum. Morrow (2004) asserts that most of the time teachers disregard motivation. This current action research focuses on the integration of literature into the EFL curriculum of the Higher Technological Institute in Egypt, and the issue of motivation as well.

Formal Statement of Research Question

This research project was primarily designed to answer the following research question: *How does the addition of short stories to the curriculum impact students' interest and motivation for the course?* A further sub-question is *What impact does the addition of short stories have on students of all levels of proficiency and will it help improve students' critical thinking skills?*

I think that adding short stories to the curriculum will help all students of different proficiency levels. Students of all levels will learn something from reading the short stories. They will see vocabulary in context, grammar in use, and they will be exposed to the language. Writing their opinion on the short stories will improve their critical thinking skills and they will

gain confidence that they can express themselves. The idea of choosing short stories on more than one topic is motivational and interesting to students. It will enhance the idea of independent learning via reading on all subjects they like.

Literature Review

The short story is one of the most convenient genres of literature that can be added to the ESL class as it can be covered in one or two teaching sessions. The themes should be challenging but understandable and the language should be within the students' range (Lazar, 1993, p. 206). Reading whole, unabridged and non-simplified literary texts helps students gain confidence. Howie (1993) agrees with the benefits of using literature and asserts its role in enhancing students' critical thinking skills as students learn to "make judgments, be decisive, come to conclusions, synthesize information, organize, evaluate, predict, and apply skills" (p. 24). Literature really adds a new dimension to the ESL curriculum. It can enhance the literary, cultural, and higher order thinking skills. Murdoch (2002) asserts that if "short stories are selected and exploited appropriately . . . they will greatly enhance ELT courses (p. 74). Obediat (1997) notes that literature, especially short stories, enhances motivation. Paran, (2006) in his research, asserts that students who read literary texts improve in vocabulary and reading.

Literature, and especially short stories, has long been used for reading exercises in English as a first language (L1). In recent years, there has been a growing interest in utilizing short stories in second language (L2) classrooms. Integrating short stories into L2 learning can create a learning environment that will provide comprehensible input and a low affective filter. Short stories can be used in both intensive and extensive reading.

Benefits of Using Literature

Collie and Slater (1990) advocate integrating literature in the classroom as it exposes students to valuable authentic material and leads to cultural enrichment, artistic evaluation, language enhancement and personal involvement. Langer (1997) asserts the relevance of literature: “Literature plays a critical role in our life, often without our notice. It helps us to explore both ourselves and others, to define and redefine who we are, who we might become, and how the world might be (p. 5).” Langer (1997) believes that when literature is absent, learners do not practice language through personal and meaningful engagement and thus lose the opportunity of developing their skills (p. 613). Rodrigo et al. (2004) explain that integrating literature into L2 learning can create a learning environment that will lead to comprehensible input and a low affective filter. Strong (1996) asserts the relevance of integrating literature in the ESL curriculum as it develops students’ reading strategies and knowledge of non-fiction and literary texts; acquisition of new vocabulary as well as grammatical forms; and offers the opportunity to explore cross-cultural values (p. 291). Widdowson (1977) explains that literary texts have a unique advantage over non-literary ones as literary texts depend on the reader’s interpretation as each literary work is “separate” and “self-contained” (p. 36). Hess (2006) calls for adding literature, especially short stories, for their cultural and educational values (p. 29).

Literature and Culture

Studying literature from other cultures gives learners insight into the values and customs of other places. Strong (1996) asserts literature is a powerful tool in teaching the relativity of cultural values and the innate problems in cross-cultural communication (p. 303). Paran (2006) explains that literature does not only enrich the language but also the culture. McNicholls (2006) notes that rich cultural content is embedded in literature, and literature is a powerful tool that can

tell learners about their own culture, themselves, the world, and others (Hancock, 2000). Also, as Butler (2006) notes, literature can enhance ESL learners' critical thinking skills as they learn to appreciate the similarities and tolerate the differences between their culture and other cultures.

Teaching Short Stories Rather Than Other Genres

The short story is a universal literary genre across all cultures of the world. Owing to this universality, it is a natural part of language learning experiences of people in every culture. It is "one of the most fundamental uses of language known to humans" (Butler, 2006, p. 19). Short stories can be a natural bridge between cultures. According to Ellis (2011), stories are a powerful educational tool as they provide rich, authentic and meaningful context for reading. Pardede (2011) further explains, "By reading literary works, learners learn to see a world through another's eye, observing human values and a different kind of living and discovering that others are living in very different societies" (p. 16).

Notable researchers such as Banks (1989), Ellis (2011), Murdoch (2002), Erkaya (2005), Paran (2006), and Pardede (2011) have all asserted the effectiveness of the implementation of literature in the language classroom. The world of short fiction both mirrors and illuminates human lives (Sage 1987). Leahy and Lo (1997), Wang and Guthrie (2004), Thiyagarajan (2014), and Lowe (2015) note the value of short stories in teaching language. It is also clear that the inclusion of short fiction in the ESL/EFL curriculum offers many educational benefits (Arıoğul, 2001), and reading short stories helps develop students' cognitive and analytical abilities (Sage 1987, p. 43).

Integrating Short Stories to Motivate Students

Research on short story teaching and L2 acquisition shows that it enhances students' motivation. The more short story topics, the better the results, as students feel more involved and

learn something new with every new story. Integrating short stories in the ESL curriculum also leads to emotional involvement, and enriches students' learning experiences. ESL teachers should choose short stories according to the students' level of English proficiency.

Research indicates that literature and specifically short stories can be used to increase students' motivation. Kim (2004), Krashen (2004), Cho et al. (2005), and Cemin (2009) state that reading literature especially short stories, enhances students' motivation and eventually students start doing extra activities on their own. Fisher and Medvic (2003) identified seven components of an effective short story choice: appropriateness to students' interests; emotional and social involvement; selection and previewing by the teacher; clear purpose for reading the text; teacher involvement; use of animation and expression; periodic students' questioning to focus on specifics of the text; and connections to independent reading and writing. Reading short stories with appropriate practice, students gradually realize that they can achieve a higher level of comprehension by reading larger meaningful units of texts rather than focusing on individual units. They begin to understand punctuation signals, stress, and intonation. Teachers could use direct questions regarding setting, characters, and plot which can be answered by specific reference to the text. Questions may be open-ended that can help students make speculations and interpretations as well as present their own point of view (Stern 1991, p. 332).

Methods

After carefully analysing available research and publications in this field, I developed a variety of steps for the implementation of the action research. Each of these steps is explained below in more detail.

Research Context and Description of Participants

I teach in the Higher Technological Institute. I am highly interested in improving the quality of my teaching and making a real difference in students' lives. I believe in a student-centred approach. This made me try to use literature, especially short stories, to enhance students' motivation, critical thinking, and language proficiency. The action research was carried out in the first semester of the academic year 2017-2018 (September–January term).

The group (class) was comprised of 65 students; 45 students were males and 20 were females. The whole group was enrolled in the action research program. The students' ages were 18-23. Their proficiency in the language varied, as they came from different educational backgrounds. The students in the action research came from all over Egypt: Cairo (50%), Ismailia (15%), Suez (5%), Sharkiya (10%), and Upper Egypt (20%). They were mostly middle and upper-middle class. 80% of the enrolled students were graduates of public schools. Only 20% were from either private or international schools (19% private schools and 1% international schools).

English is a secondary subject in comparison to the subjects in students' majors, so they lack motivation. Still, all students understand the importance of English in enhancing their educational and professional opportunities. As such, many students attend class and do assignments. Some work on extra-curricular activities at their own pace and take courses. The problems I continuously face in the classes I teach are students' different levels of proficiency and interest. I want to make students interested in learning English and improve their critical thinking skills, so I thought about adding short stories to the curriculum.

Intervention Procedure

Students were given 12 short stories over the course of a term (15 weeks). The format of these stories was both paper-based and electronic in order to engage the students in the readings. Four short stories were tackled in class and eight were given as home assignments. Over the course of 12 weeks, three questionnaires, an interview for eight students, and four teaching reflective logs were written. Forty-five students responded to the first questionnaire, 48 to the second questionnaire and 43 to the third. Only eight students of the 65 agreed to be interviewed. One of the most significant drawbacks of the current research is the limited time slot which hindered the researcher from keeping track of all material. Besides, not all the students did all the assigned short stories.

The short stories covered a range of topics. I tried to use short stories written by writers from all over the world. Among the short stories I integrated in the ESL curriculum were stories written by Arab writers writing in English and short stories translated from Arabic texts written by renowned Arab writers. The texts I used were short stories collected in *The Director and Other Stories from Morocco*, by Leila Abouzeid, *Naguib Mahfouz at Sidi Gaber: Reflections of a Nobel Laureate, 1994-2001* by Naguib Mahfouz among other short stories. The administration's acceptance of the idea of adding short stories to the curriculum of general English was a major concern. To make things go smoothly, I spoke to my colleagues and supervisors before taking steps. I was also concerned that the students would struggle to express their opinions as Egyptian students are not used to expressing their opinion. I spoke to students and explained to them the relevance of expressing opinion and how self-expression is a skill that can be improved.

Data Collection Procedure

I collected data from various resources: questionnaires, students' and teachers' reflective journals and student interviews. All formal data collection was conducted in English.

Questionnaires.

Questionnaires helped me collect as much information as possible on the impact of using short stories for enhancing students' motivation and critical thinking skills. Three questionnaires were conducted: at the beginning of the course, at the mid-point, and after the course. The three questionnaires were paper-based. The first questionnaire consisted of five open-ended questions related to adding short stories to the curriculum. The mid-course questionnaire consisted of 22 scale questions and two open-ended questions. The final questionnaire consisted of five scale questions. The three questionnaires are included in Appendix A.

The interviews.

The interviews were conducted after the course. There were five interview questions:

1. Did you like adding short stories to the curriculum? Why?
2. Did reading short stories develop your language skills? How?
3. Did it improve your personal reflection?
4. Did reading short stories increase your cultural understanding/tolerance? How?
5. Did reading short stories motivate you to read on your own?

Careful notes were taken during each interview, and these notes were reviewed later for qualitative data analysis. Interview questions and sample responses can be seen in Appendix B.

Student reflection and teacher reflection journals.

Each time they read a short story in class or at home, students were required to write a reflective paragraph and commentary on the short story and the learning experience they

attained. The main reason was to make sure that the chosen short story was beneficial. Writing reflections made students gain the habit of reflection and provided me with valuable qualitative data. I also reflected on integrating short stories in the curriculum using teacher reflective journals. I reflected after each class and after reading students' reflections. My reflections complemented students' reflections and responses to the questionnaires. The tools supplemented one another.

Data Analysis Procedures

I analyzed the different answers provided by the students to make sure the action research plan was well conducted or if it needed adjustment. Qualitative data was collected in this action research. The qualitative data collection was done through the questionnaires, interviews and reflections. The method of descriptive analysis was then used to analyze the data. The qualitative data that was collected from the eight students who participated in the interview is reported in the paper. Students in the interviews were asked to explain the meanings of their statements in order to produce better understanding of their experience. The notes that I took during the interview were read repeatedly and were then sorted and summarized in a systematic way (Banks, 1989). Themes were generated to produce meaningful interpretations (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). These themes were then organized to produce a comprehensive analysis that was then interpreted in the findings.

Quantitative data was also collected from scale questions on two of the questionnaires. Student responses were compared, and the results supplemented the qualitative analysis.

Results

Findings

Findings are presented below for each of the instruments analysed, and themes from these findings are summarized in the discussion section which follows.

First questionnaire.

Forty-nine out of 65 students answered and submitted the first questionnaire. Thirty out of 49 noted they liked adding short stories to the curriculum. Twenty out of the 49 noted it would be great to read stories written in English by Arab writers or stories written by Arab writers translated into English, while 29 preferred stories written by native writers. As for the themes, 20 asked for themes related to love, 20 for stories related to immigration, 20 for themes related to life challenges, and 5 for themes related to women's lives.

Mid-course questionnaire.

The second questionnaire was answered by 55 students. The 22 scale questions dealt mainly with the way the teacher supported students in class, and the choice and the impact of the short stories on motivation. A large number of questions were concerned with the theme of motivation and doing extra readings, exploring new ideas, and re-reading the short stories to understand difficult concepts and master the language. Thirty-three students (60%) responded in some way that reading short stories enhances motivation. Another group of questions looked at critical thinking. Here, 28 students (50.9%) suggested in their responses that the reading of short stories also helps in the development of critical thinking skills.

The two open-ended questions further enforced the idea of the role of short stories in enhancing motivation. A large number of students stated that reading short stories helped them

improve as it "motivated" them to "read more," "encouraged" them to "do extra work," and "persuaded" them that "reading is fun" and "made" them "inspired."

Third questionnaire.

Descriptive statistics related to student responses to the third questionnaire are listed below. The clearest results are that students felt reading short stories significantly enhanced their imaginations and motivated them to read more.

*Figure 1:
Questionnaire three results*

	Not at all	Somewhat true	Very true
1) Reading the assigned short stories enhanced your imagination.	10	10	45
2) Reading the assigned short stories make the learning process interesting.	12	10	43
3) Reading the assigned short stories enhanced your creativity.	9	20	23
4) Reading the assigned short stories motivate you to reflect upon your views.	9	18	38
5) Reading the assigned short stories make the learning process interesting.	8	18	39

Interviews.

Eight students agreed to be interviewed after the end of the course. Six students were males and two were females. All names of participant students have been changed to maintain participants' anonymity. Six out of eight answered that they liked adding short stories to the curriculum as it opened up their minds that language can reflect their culture (through the text written by Arab writers). Adding short stories to the curriculum made them learn that people around the world face the same challenges. It also added to their vocabulary range. Two students,

Manar and Yara, did not like it and said, “It is not practical and training on standardized tests would be more beneficial.”

As for reading short stories and personal reflections five out of the eight said the questions that followed the short stories helped them think. Mohammed said, “The questions of opinion made me think and try to put thought on paper. At first, I thought it would be difficult and my teacher would not accept my views but I learned that all opinions are acceptable as long as they are supported by reasons and evidence.”

Abdel stated, “Reading short stories made me think and understand that any writer may include many ideas in one piece of writing. Also, discussing with my classmates made me get the idea that different people understand the idea differently. I liked the idea of commenting on the short stories as it made me think about them.”

Three students noted that reading short stories did not improve their reflection. Yasser stated, “Even though the teacher asked us to comment and reflect on the stories we read I feel it was not worthwhile. I think reflection is on one’s interests, one’s experiences and not on short stories.”

As for the question related to cultural understanding five out of eight noted that reading short stories increased their cultural understanding especially those texts about American life.

The fifth question related to reading and motivation, and four out of eight noted that reading short stories was motivating. Mounir said, “Reading short stories made me understand that there are interesting texts that make me have fun, learn and improve. I will read on self-help topics. The Internet is full of resources that are free and interesting and I think self-help topics include many tips and practices.” Full interview questions and sample student responses are included as Appendix B.

Discussion

The present action research showed that reading short stories motivated students and enhanced critical thinking skills. The students' responses to the questionnaires indicate that when short stories were integrated in the general English classroom it motivated students and fostered critical thinking. Students reported that after reading the short stories and doing the activities assigned, they were able to formulate and express their independent opinions as well as present their own interpretations to texts more effectively. Additionally, results from the take-home assignments indicate that students had improved their language competencies in the area of reading and writing. Adding short stories to the curriculum was not only a vehicle for showing language use and cultural differences, but also a vehicle for enhancing self-expression. Practicing this approach showed that the most suitable kind of literature to be added to the general English curriculum is the short story since some students expressed their disinterest for poetic texts on the one hand, while other students who like to act in drama found it time consuming.

From observing the students, when a variety of topics were introduced through short stories, students seemed more engaged and interested in their class activities. Based on these findings, it seems more practical that teacher practitioners of ESL should try to add short stories to the curriculum as it really motivates students and enhances students' cultural awareness and critical thinking. However, the caveat is that teachers' success in integrating short stories will depend on text selection. A text should be selected based on its facility to allow students to play a role in it. Texts should not be above students' linguistic level but should still be challenging enough to achieve learning. Exercises that enhance self-expression can be summarizing, commenting, and comparing between two short stories. Exercises that enhance critical thinking have open-ended questions and discussion.

While using short stories, the focus is not only on providing an authentic model of language use but also the literary and cultural elements. The use of a single short story varies from one classroom to another and from one teacher to another. In addition, it can be used to provide different activities like reading, listening (in case of audio-stories), vocabulary development (vocabulary exercises and vocabulary journals), writing (summaries and commentary), and speaking (discussion activities). Using open-ended questions, discussion and commenting on the short stories read enhances critical thinking and interpretative skills as students understand that each one of them has a different point of view and there is no single way of representing one's viewpoint.

As such, using short stories will in turn promote motivation and instil self-confidence among second language learners. Therefore, the action research has important implications for English teachers and ESL/EFL learners. Teachers should be aware of the effectiveness of adding short stories to their curriculum, and they can integrate sessions dedicated to studying short stories. Teachers can also extend the learning beyond the walls of the classroom by giving students assignments on short stories and opening up reading clubs. Discussing short stories offers learners a chance to articulate their opinions and find their voice. Discussion also promotes collaboration between classmates and makes students become involved in the learning process.

Conclusion

Using literature and namely short stories in the English classroom is an old practice that came back as a trend. The benefits of adding short stories to the curriculum comprises enhancing students' language skills, increasing students' motivation, and enriching their cultural and

linguistic background. Adding short stories to the curriculum is also beneficial as it allows students to question, interpret, connect, and explore. It also creates a highly motivating, amusing, lively curriculum that helps create proficient, culturally competent, and active critical thinkers. This study has important implications for English teachers and ESL/EFL learners. Teachers can be aware of the effectiveness of integrating short stories in the curriculum and thus can add short stories to the syllabus by studying them in class or by assigning them as homework. Studying short stories offers a chance for learners to articulate their opinion and find their voice. Researchers could look at the impact of studying short stories in coordination with young adult literature and autobiographical texts on ESL students' motivation and proficiency.

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Appendix A

Questionnaires and interview questions used to collect data from students

First paper-based student questionnaire:

Answer the following questions. Feel free to write as much as you like to fully explain your answer.

- 1) Would you like to add short stories to our curriculum? Why? Why not?
- 2) Would you like to read short stories written by Arab writers in English or translated short stories written by famous Arab writers? Why? Why not?
- 3) Do you think reading short stories would be interesting? Why?
- 4) What themes (ideas) would you like to read about?
- 5) Would you like the short stories to be paper-based or electronic?

Mid-course student questionnaire:

This survey is anonymous. Your teacher will not see your individual response.

1. Adding short stories to the curriculum helped me enjoy the curriculum.

1	2	3
Not at all true	Somewhat true	Very true
2. When we read the short stories together, the teacher encourages us to express ourselves, explain our view point and share ideas and opinions with one another in class.

1	2	3
Not at all true	Somewhat true	Very true
3. The teacher tries to help when I am struggling to express my opinion.

1	2	3
Not at all true	Somewhat true	Very true
4. The short stories help us understand the cultural aspect of the language.

1	2	3
Not at all true	Somewhat true	Very true
5. Discussing the short stories help me improve in the language.

1	2	3
Not at all true	Somewhat true	Very true
6. My teacher asks me to criticize the short story, explain and give reasons for what I think.

1	2	3
Not at all true	Somewhat true	Very true
7. I can engage in all the learning activities related to the criticizing the short stories in class and out of class.

1	2	3
Not at all true	Somewhat true	Very true
8. My classmates and teacher listens to my opinion when discussing the short stories.

1	2	3
Not at all true	Somewhat true	Very true
9. The assignments push me to think hard about what we are studying.

1	2	3
Not at all true	Somewhat true	Very true

10. Reading short stories encourages us to build on and extend other people's ideas.
- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Not at all true | Somewhat true | Very true |
11. My classmates and teacher respect my opinion and encourages my ideas.
- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Not at all true | Somewhat true | Very true |
12. I can understand, explain, and master the ideas I learn through the short stories.
- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Not at all true | Somewhat true | Very true |
13. Reading short stories at home gives me the opportunity to really explore and understand new ideas, learn vocabulary and new expressions.
- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Not at all true | Somewhat true | Very true |
14. The teacher encourages us to read different stories than the one assigned and discuss them with our classmates.
- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Not at all true | Somewhat true | Very true |
15. My teacher does not let me relate the stories to my life.
- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Not at all true | Somewhat true | Very true |
16. My teacher does not allow students to comment on other students' ideas in class.
- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Not at all true | Somewhat true | Very true |
17. My teacher makes sure that students don't say anything negative about each other in class.
- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Not at all true | Somewhat true | Very true |
18. My teacher lets us ask other students when we need help with our work.
- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Not at all true | Somewhat true | Very true |
19. Even if the ideas expressed in the short stories are difficult and hard to understand, I can learn them.
- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Not at all true | Somewhat true | Very true |
20. My teacher really wants us to enjoy learning new things.
- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Not at all true | Somewhat true | Very true |
21. I'm certain I can figure out how to do the most challenging assignments.
- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Not at all true | Somewhat true | Very true |
22. My teacher encourages us to work on our own, try hard and take chances.
- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Not at all true | Somewhat true | Very true |

Answer the following questions. Feel free to write as much as you like to fully explain your answer.

23. Do you think adding short stories to the curriculum help you improve? Why?
 24. What ideas should the range of short stories cover? Why?

Student Reflection and Final Questionnaire:

Write your opinion about the stories you read?

Answer the following and give reasons for your rating:

- 1) Reading the assigned short stories enhanced your imagination.
- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Not at all true | Somewhat true | Very true |
- 2) Reading the assigned short stories make the learning process interesting.
- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Not at all true | Somewhat true | Very true |
- 3) Reading the assigned short stories enhance creativity.
- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Not at all true | Somewhat true | Very true |
- 4) Reading the assigned short stories motivate you to reflect upon your views.
- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Not at all true | Somewhat true | Very true |
- 5) Reading the assigned short stories make the learning process interesting.
- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Not at all true | Somewhat true | Very true |

Interview Questions:

Answer the following questions feel free to write as much as you like to explain your answers after discussing with your teacher:

1. Did you like adding short stories to the curriculum? Why?
2. Did reading short stories develop your language skills? How?
3. Did it improve your personal reflection?
4. Did reading short stories increase your cultural understanding/ tolerance? How?
5. Did reading short stories motivate you to read on your own?

Appendix B

Two students' reflective opinions

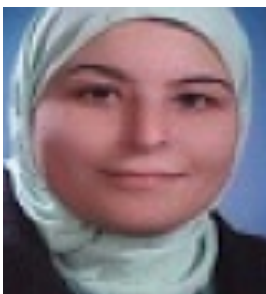
Students' names are changed to maintain anonymity:

Osama:

I think that the idea of adding short stories to the course was really beneficial. It added up to my vocabulary and improved my reading skills. It helped me understand that the meaning of words differ according to context, words should be substituted by others in order to make the writing style more interesting [substitution]. It helped me understand that each writer has a certain idea in mind that he tries to reflect via writing his short story. I believe we should add more short stories as an optional reading activity. Especially those written by Egyptian and Arab writers translated into English. It made me feel proud that other cultures are interested knowing more about us through reading our literature. Reading the short stories also shattered my idea that literature is useless. The short stories we read helped me understand that literature is interesting, informative, edifying, and helpful as science. They also helped me understand that there are hidden messages behind the lines and that I should not take what I read as it is but I should think about anything I read. I also learned that people have different opinions about the same topic they read and different ways of expressing different opinions.

Nada:

I like the idea of adding short stories to our classes. I also liked the idea of giving reading assignments at home. When we did the readings in class, I liked the chain reading, the re-enactment, the role playing and the discussion. This helped improve my reading ability, reading skills and speaking skills. It helped me develop the summarizing skill. I also learned to understand that a text has an explicit idea and an implicit one. Reading short stories also helped my pronunciation and fluency a lot as the teacher corrected our pronunciation and made us discuss the short stories. This made believe that I have opinions and that I had the ability to discuss them. I like the stories which are written by Arab writers in English and the translated Arabic texts into English. I think we can contribute to the syllabus by bringing in texts we choose and also by trying to translate interesting Arabic short in English. I also liked reading about other cultures in English. I learned about America, China, and Morocco. This was not only interesting but also impressive.



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