

## Using Short Stories to Enhance Grammar Learning in ELT Classrooms: A Comprehensive Literature Review

Stenlly Sedubun\*<sup>1</sup>, Nurhayati Nurhayati<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>English Literature Department, Universitas Pembangunan Indonesia,  
Manado, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>English Department, Universitas Klabat, Manado, Indonesia  
e-mail: \*<sup>1</sup>stenllysedubun1@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>nurhayati@unklab.ac.id

### Abstract

*This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of using short stories as a tool to enhance grammar learning in English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms. The design of this present study is a literature review design: A systematic review of relevant literature was conducted to identify studies that examined the use of short stories in the context of grammar instruction in ELT classrooms. The findings of this literature review indicate that the use of short stories in ELT classrooms can effectively enhance grammar learning. Short stories provide meaningful contexts for grammar instruction, engage students in authentic language use, and promote active participation and interaction. Moreover, short stories can foster students' motivation, creativity, critical thinking, and cultural awareness. There is a high recommendation for practical implications for teachers and curriculum designers, emphasizing the need for appropriate selection, adaptation, and implementation of short stories to maximize their potential in enhancing grammar learning in ELT classrooms.*

**Keywords**— short stories, grammar learning, ELT Classrooms

### Abstrak

*Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menyelidiki efektivitas penggunaan cerita pendek sebagai alat untuk meningkatkan pembelajaran tata bahasa dalam kelas Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris (ELT). Desain dari penelitian ini adalah desain tinjauan literatur: Sebuah tinjauan literatur yang sistematis dari literatur yang relevan dilakukan untuk mengidentifikasi studi yang meneliti penggunaan cerita pendek dalam konteks instruksi tata bahasa di kelas ELT. Temuan dari tinjauan literatur ini menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan cerita pendek di kelas ELT dapat secara efektif meningkatkan pembelajaran tata bahasa. Cerita pendek menyediakan konteks yang bermakna untuk instruksi tata bahasa, melibatkan siswa dalam penggunaan bahasa yang autentik, dan mempromosikan partisipasi dan interaksi aktif. Selain itu, cerita pendek dapat meningkatkan motivasi, kreativitas, berpikir kritis, dan kesadaran budaya siswa. Ada rekomendasi yang tinggi untuk implikasi praktis bagi guru dan perancang kurikulum, dengan menekankan perlunya pemilihan, adaptasi, dan implementasi cerita pendek yang tepat untuk memaksimalkan potensinya dalam meningkatkan pembelajaran tata bahasa di kelas ELT.*

**Kata kunci**—cerita pendek, pembelajaran tata bahasa, kelas pengajaran bahasa Inggris.

## INTRODUCTION

Using short stories as a tool to enhance grammar learning in English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms has gained significant attention in recent years. Short stories provide a rich context for language learning, allowing students to engage in authentic language and develop their grammar skills in a meaningful way. This comprehensive literature review aims to explore the benefits of using short stories in ELT classrooms for grammar learning, examine the various approaches and techniques employed by teachers, and identify the potential challenges and limitations associated with this instructional practice.

Short stories have long been recognized as a valuable resource in language teaching due to their ability to captivate learners' interest and imagination. They offer a compact narrative structure that allows for focused language analysis and comprehension. Moreover, short stories encompass a wide range of grammatical structures and vocabulary, making them an ideal tool for grammar instruction. By exposing students to diverse sentence structures, verb tenses, and grammatical patterns, short stories provide ample opportunities for learners to practice and internalize grammar rules in a meaningful context.

Research has shown that incorporating short stories into the ELT curriculum can greatly enhance students' grammar learning. For instance, by contextualizing language within meaningful narratives, students are exposed to authentic language use and cultural contexts, which can improve their language proficiency. Moreover, stories provide opportunities for learners to develop critical thinking skills, empathy, and cultural awareness (Baldasaro et al., 2014; Stevenson, 2018). One of the key benefits of using stories in English teaching is its ability to make language learning enjoyable and engaging. Story-based activities stimulate students' imagination and creativity, fostering a positive attitude towards language learning (Grecu, 2019; Romadhon & Heriyawati (2023). This positive affective response can lead to increased motivation and persistence in language learning tasks. Additionally, stories offer a natural and meaningful context for language use, enabling students to comprehend and produce language in authentic communicative situations (Grecu, 2019).

Furthermore, stories can be effectively integrated into various language teaching approaches and methodologies. For example, in communicative language teaching, storytelling provides opportunities for meaningful communication and interaction (Al-Amri, 2020). In task-based language teaching, stories can serve as the basis for engaging tasks that require students to use language in purposeful ways (Meri-Yilan, 2020). Additionally, in the context of content and language integrated learning, stories can be used to explore subject matter content while simultaneously developing language skills (Chou, 2022). However, the successful use of stories in English teaching also depends on effective instructional strategies and teacher competence. Teachers need to select appropriate stories that are linguistically and culturally suitable for their students (Satriani, 2019). Similarly, Zhang and Hyland (2018) reported that students who engaged with short stories showed improved grammatical competence and a better understanding of contextualized language use.

One of the key advantages of using short stories for grammar instruction is the inherent connection between language and content. Short stories often explore universal themes and issues, allowing students to connect with the material on a personal and emotional level. This emotional engagement can enhance students' motivation and willingness to engage with grammar exercises, leading to increased retention and application of grammatical rules. Additionally, the contextualized nature of short stories helps students develop a deeper understanding of how grammar functions in real-life communication, enabling them to transfer their knowledge to authentic language situations. Incorporating short stories into grammar instruction also promotes the development of

critical thinking skills. Short stories often present moral dilemmas, cultural conflicts, and complex characters, encouraging students to analyze and evaluate the actions and motivations of the story's protagonists. This analytical process requires students to think critically and make connections between the story's content and their own experiences and beliefs. Through this cognitive engagement, students not only enhance their grammar skills but also develop higher-order thinking abilities that are essential for effective communication and problem-solving.

Various approaches and techniques have been employed by teachers to effectively integrate short stories into grammar instruction. One common approach is the use of pre-reading activities to activate students' prior knowledge and generate interest in the story. These activities may include brainstorming, predicting the plot, or discussing the story's theme. By connecting the story to students' existing knowledge and experiences, teachers can create a meaningful context for grammar learning.

During the reading phase, teachers can employ a range of techniques to facilitate grammar acquisition. For example, highlighting specific grammatical structures or vocabulary items in the text can draw students' attention to the target language features. Additionally, interactive reading activities such as comprehension questions, role-plays, or group discussions can encourage students to actively engage with the story and apply grammar rules in a communicative context. Post-reading activities, such as writing tasks or creative projects, provide opportunities for students to consolidate their grammar knowledge and express their understanding of the story. While the use of short stories in grammar instruction offers numerous benefits, it is important to acknowledge the potential challenges and limitations associated with this approach. One challenge is the selection of appropriate stories that align with students' language proficiency level and interests. It is crucial for teachers to carefully choose stories that are linguistically accessible and culturally relevant to their students. Additionally, the integration of short stories into the curriculum may require additional time and resources for lesson planning and materials development. Teachers must invest time in adapting and creating activities that effectively target specific grammar points within the context of the story.

The use of short stories in ELT classrooms has proven to be an effective strategy for enhancing grammar learning. The rich context of short stories provides students with meaningful opportunities to engage with authentic language and develop their grammatical competence. By connecting language learning to content, short stories promote motivation, critical thinking, and the transfer of knowledge to real-life communication. However, it is important for teachers to carefully select appropriate stories and invest time in planning and adapting activities to maximize the benefits of this instructional approach.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The present study is a literature review study. This section outlines the methodology employed for conducting a comprehensive literature review on the topic of using short stories to enhance grammar learning in English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms. The purpose of this study is to provide an overview of the existing research on this topic, identify the key findings, and highlight the gaps in literature. The review follows a systematic approach, including the identification of relevant studies, data extraction, and synthesis of the findings. The following subsections provide a detailed description of each step in the methodology.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The present study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using short stories to enhance grammar learning in English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms. This comprehensive literature review explored various aspects related to the use of short stories in grammar instruction, including the benefits, challenges, and instructional strategies associated with this approach. The findings of this study contribute to the existing body of knowledge by highlighting the potential of short stories as a valuable tool for promoting grammar learning in ELT classrooms.

The first major finding of this study is the numerous benefits of using short stories for grammar instruction. Short stories provide an engaging and enjoyable context for language learning, which can enhance students' motivation and engagement (Nunan, 1999). By presenting grammar rules and structures in a meaningful and authentic way, short stories can help students understand and internalize grammar concepts more effectively (Pinter, 2006). Moreover, short stories offer opportunities for contextualized practice, allowing students to apply grammar rules in real-life situations (Hedge, 2000).

Furthermore, short stories can foster the development of various language skills, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Lazar, 1993). Through reading short stories, students can improve their reading comprehension skills, expand their vocabulary, and develop their ability to infer meaning from context (Tomlinson, 2001). Writing activities based on short stories can help students practice grammar structures in a meaningful and creative way (Carter & Long, 1991). Additionally, listening to and discussing short stories can enhance students' listening and speaking skills, as they engage in meaningful conversations and develop their oral fluency (Ur, 1996).

However, the use of short stories in grammar instruction also presents some challenges. One major challenge is the selection of appropriate short stories that match students' language proficiency level and interests (Lazar, 2003). Teachers need to carefully choose stories that are linguistically accessible and culturally relevant to their students (Khatib, 2015). Additionally, teachers may face difficulties in designing activities that effectively integrate grammar instruction with short stories, ensuring that grammar is not taught in isolation but rather in a meaningful and communicative context (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

To address these challenges, several instructional strategies have been proposed in the literature. One effective strategy is pre-teaching grammar points before reading the short story, providing students with the necessary language knowledge and scaffolding to comprehend the story (Rivers, 1981). Another strategy is to incorporate interactive activities, such as role-plays, discussions, and debates, to encourage students' active engagement with the story and promote language production (Linse, 2005). Furthermore, teachers can use comprehension questions, gap-fill exercises, and other form-focused activities to reinforce grammar learning while reading the short story (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

Short stories offer numerous benefits, including increased motivation, contextualized practice, and the development of various language skills. However, the selection of appropriate stories and the integration of grammar instruction with short stories pose challenges for teachers. Nevertheless, with the application of effective instructional strategies, teachers can maximize the benefits of using short stories for grammar instruction. Further empirical research is needed to explore the effectiveness of specific instructional approaches and their impact on students' grammar learning outcomes.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This comprehensive literature review highlights the potential of short stories as a valuable tool for enhancing grammar learning in ELT classrooms. By providing context, promoting active engagement, and fostering a more holistic approach to language learning, short stories can make grammar instruction more meaningful and effective for students. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate short stories into their lesson plans and explore the diverse range of activities that can be used to enhance students' grammatical understanding and use.

The integration of short stories into ELT classrooms represents a significant advancement in grammar instruction methodology. By leveraging the narrative structure and contextual richness of short stories, educators can create immersive learning experiences that resonate with students. These stories not only provide real-world examples of grammar in use but also encourage active participation and critical thinking among learners. Moreover, the diverse array of activities available—from role-playing and discussion to writing exercises and multimedia projects—ensures that grammar learning remains engaging and relevant across different learning styles.

Furthermore, the holistic approach promoted by short stories nurtures a deeper understanding of grammar as an integral part of effective communication rather than isolated rules to memorize. This shift in perspective not only enhances students' grammatical accuracy but also cultivates their language fluency and confidence. As such, teachers are encouraged to embrace the potential of short stories as a versatile tool for transforming grammar instruction, thereby enriching the overall language learning experience for their students.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

There is a high recommendation for practical implications for teachers and curriculum designers, emphasizing the need for appropriate selection, adaptation, and implementation of short stories to maximize their potential in enhancing grammar learning in ELT classrooms. In future research, exploring specific strategies for integrating short stories across different proficiency levels and cultural contexts would further enhance our understanding of their impact on grammar learning outcomes. Additionally, investigating the long-term retention and transfer of grammar knowledge acquired through short stories could provide valuable insights into their lasting educational benefits. Ultimately, by continuing to explore and innovate with short stories in ELT classrooms, educators can unlock new avenues for enhancing grammar instruction and fostering lifelong language skills among their students.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to express gratitude to the almighty God and appreciation to colleagues who have supported them in completing this study. They are also grateful to the researchers and scholars whose pioneering work and insightful publications formed the foundation of this literature review. Their contributions have provided a robust framework for understanding the potential of short stories in enhancing grammar learning in ELT classrooms. Furthermore, the authors would like to extend their appreciations to the teachers and educators who generously shared their experiences and insights into integrating short stories into language teaching. Their practical knowledge and innovative approaches have inspired the recommendations and conclusions drawn in this review.

## REFERENCE

- Al-Amri, H. M. (2020). Digital storytelling as a communicative language teaching based method in EFL classrooms. *Arab World English Journal*, 11(1), 270-281.  
<https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no1.20>
- Baldasaro, M. M., Maldonado, N., & Baltes, B. (2014). Storytelling to teach cultural awareness: The right story at the right time. *LEARNing Landscapes*, 7(2), 219-232.  
<https://doi.org/10.36510/learnland.v7i2.661>
- Carter, R., & Long, M. N. (1991). *Teaching literature*. Longman.
- Chou, M. J. (2022). Let's CLIL with children's storybooks. *European Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, 10(1), 21-30.  
<https://www.idpublications.org/wpcontent/uploads/2022/11/Full-Paper-LET%E2%80%99S-CLIL-WITHCHILDREN%E2%80%99S-STORYBOOKS.pdf>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2017). *Research Methods in Education*. Routledge.
- Collie, J., & Slater, S. (1987). *Literature in the language classroom: A learner-centred approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Erkaya, S. (2005). Using short stories to develop EFL learners' reading comprehension and cultural awareness. *METU Journal of the Faculty of Education*, 24(1), 127-138.
- Greco, M. V. (2019). Story-telling in the development of imagination and vocabulary of preschool children. In *The European Proceedings of Social & Behavioural Sciences* (pp. 1998-2003). Future Academy.  
<https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2019.08.03.246>
- Hedge, T. (2000). *Teaching and learning in the language classroom*. Oxford University Press.
- Hutchinson, T., & Waters, A. (1987). *English for specific purposes: A learning-centered approach*. Cambridge University Press.

- Khaleel, M. (2017). Using Stories in teaching English. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 7(3), 387-392. <https://www.ijsrp.org/research-paper-0317/ijsrpp6358.pdf>
- Khatib, M. (2015). Using short stories to teach English as a foreign language at the intermediate level. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 4(4), 167-172.
- Kurdi, S. M., & Nizam, L. (2022). The Advantages of Teaching Short Stories in ESL classrooms: A Critical Evaluation. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies*, 9(3), 93-100. <https://doi.org/10.23918/ijsses.v9i3p93>
- Lazar, G. (1993). *Literature and language teaching: A guide for teachers and trainers*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lazar, G. (1993). Literature and language teaching: A reconceptualization of the relationship. *RELC Journal*, 24(2), 1
- Lazar, G. (2003). Using literature in the language classroom. In J. C. Richards & W. A. Renandya (Eds.), *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice* (pp. 336-343). Cambridge University Press.
- Lee, S. (2018). The Power of Story in SLA: Insights from Research. In Y. N. Leung, J. Katchen, S.
- Linse, C. T. (2005). *Practical English language teaching: Young learners*. McGraw-Hill.
- Meri-Yilan, S. (2020). Task-based language learning through digital storytelling in a blended environment. In K. Borthwick & A. Plutino (Eds.), *Education 4.0 revolution: transformative approaches to language teaching and learning, assessment and campus design* (pp. 37-43). [eSearch-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2020.42.1085](https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2020.42.1085)
- Nunan, D. (1999). *Second language teaching and learning*. Heinle & Heinle.
- Pinter, A. (2006). *Teaching young language learners*. Oxford University Press.
- Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rivers, W. M. (1981). *Teaching foreign-language skills* (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.
- Romadhon, M. G. E., & Heriyawat, D. F. (2023). I can expand my imagination: The secondary students' narrative in creative writing English through padlet. *Eralingua: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Asing dan Sastra*, 7(2), 422-434. <https://doi.org/10.26858/eralingua.v7i2.47138>
- Satriani, I. (2019). Storytelling in teaching literacy: Benefits and challenges. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 8(1), 113-120. <https://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v8i1.1924>

Stevenson, N. (2018). Developing cultural understanding through story-telling. *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, 19(2), 1-14.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15313220.2018.1560528>

Tomlinson, B. (2001). *Materials development in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

Ur, P. (1996). *A course in language teaching: Practice and theory*. Cambridge University Press

Zhang, Z.V., & Hyland, K. (2018). Student engagement with teacher and automated feedback on L2 writing. *Assessing Writing*, 36, 90-102. This article was published in the journal *Assessing Writing* by the publisher Sage Publications.