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## **The Effectiveness of Using Short Stories on Developing Some Creative Reading Skills for University Students**

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**Abstract.** The present study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using short stories for developing creative reading skills for Zagazig University students, College of Education, Department of English. The current study used the quasi-experimental research design. The researchers divided the participants into two groups. The experimental group used short stories, while the control group did not receive any training except for the traditional approach. The main question raised in this research is ‘what is the effectiveness of using short stories on developing some creative reading skills among Zagazig University students?’ To this end, the researcher collected data through a creative reading skills test. Furthermore, a model of the teaching program, based on using short stories, was improved and tested with a group of students in Zagazig University in Egypt. The results of the present research showed that there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group students and those of the control group students in both creative reading skills and overall creative reading in favor of the experimental group. The results revealed that using short stories helped the experimental group students develop their creative reading skills and overall creative reading more effectively than those of the control group who were taught using the traditional way. The conclusion of the current research showed that the traditional way used in teaching reading skills in EFL classrooms should be developed to help students improve their reading skills.

**Keywords.** Creative Reading, Short Stories, Creative Reading Skills

### **Introduction**

Today, we are living in a world that is full of complicated challenges, conflicts and problems which require creative ideas and solutions in order to overcome them. The most important and effective way to fulfil this goal is through developing thinking skills in general and creative thinking in particular. One of the main ways to develop thinking skills especially creative thinking is through language. Smith (1992, P.109) stated that thought is always a part of language and that language cannot be separated from thought.

According to (Morreale & Bovee, 1998, P.15) creative thinking is a mix of flexible thinking and restructured understanding that enables people to generate new ideas. It helps you look at ideas in new and original ways. You can apply creative thinking when choosing your topic, finding and expressing the details that support the ideas, selecting the words you use,

creating the visual aids that illustrate your ideas and polishing your style of delivery. They also stated that creative thinking can also help you bring your topic to life.

Smith (1992, P.101) mentioned that creative thinkers can both generate a wide range of relevant alternatives and select among them for the most appropriate one. He also mentioned that generative and selective aspects of thought are in fact only regarded as creative if they are conducted by people categorized as artists, in certain "artistic" circumstances or surroundings, or with certain kinds of intention or motivation.

Language has four main skills (Reading, writing listening and speaking) but reading is the most important communication skill for students to get good education. Temple & Gillet (1989, P.172) stated that reading is a process of getting meaning from print, and getting meaning is comprehension we read to understand, to get information, to share the author's ideas and experiences.

Moorman & Ram (1994) mentioned that researchers from psychology, education, and artificial intelligence have studied the process of reading for decades; however, while many theories have been proposed, none explained the complete process. In particular, creative reading has been largely ignored. Holden (2004, P.15) stated that reading, though often perceived as passive and receptive, is a creative activity in itself, and frequently an important element in other creative processes. Young people need to be equipped with high-level reading skills to get the most out of cultural and social life and to meet the challenges of the twenty-first-century job market.

### **Creative Reading**

Harris & Smith (1980, P.265) indicated that many people believe that reading with expression is what creative reading entails. But creative reading falls into two major categories: the dramatic interpretation of reading, and the application of reading to some other situation, which does include an artistic representation, such as drawing or dancing.

Moorman & Ram (1994, P.2) mentioned that creative reading is the task of reading applied to texts containing concepts which are new to the reader. In order to read a text, the reader will need to perform creative understanding on the novel concepts. This is needed since the reader must understand the novel concepts and form a coherent interpretation of the text as a whole.

Harris & Smith (1980, P.282) stated that creative reading occurs when the reader tries to extend a passage beyond the limits provided by the author. The reader initiates fresh ideas, feelings or products that can be traced directly to reading; he can describe the relationship between the selection and the extension – or how his reading can be applied. They also mentioned that a typical extension of reading is to incorporate what has been read into some frame work of knowledge or experience. The reader tries to organize or to synthesize knowledge. By rearranging or filling in the gaps in a conceptual scheme the reader is using the reading selection to expand his view of the world. Or he may predict what will happen next in a story – another cognitive and creative activity.

Holden (2004, PP. 21-22) mentioned that reading itself is a creative process. No two people read the same text in the same way. Everyone brings their own set of expectations, experiences and viewpoints; what occurs is a dialogue between reader and writer, what emerges is a changed person. We take what a writer gives us and we make it our own. We don't only gain knowledge from reading; we acquire emotional depth and subtlety of response. Small & Arnone (2011) indicated that creative reading activities can provide enrichment opportunities

for readers, affording ways to them to read more or read higher- level materials about a topic of interest. To motivate and support their creative reading, students must have open access to a wide range and variety of reading materials both at school and at home.

Priyatni & Martutik (2020) stated that creative reading is a reading activity that involves creative thinking skills. Creative thinking also involves divergent thinking, a cognitive aspect that is characterized by fluency, flexibility, elaboration, and originality. Creative reading is strongly associated with imagination, innovation, originality, and excellence.

### **Stories and Learning**

Temple & Gillet (1989, PP. 93-94) pointed out that when you use storytelling in your class you involve your students directly and intimately with the story. Storytelling allows you to move around, use gestures and eye contact, and even involve your students as characters in the story. Story telling also helps learners become familiar with story language and story structures. Familiarity with these aspects helps them read stories themselves more easily and enjoy them more.

Rossiter (2002) stated that the use of stories is pervasive in adult education practice. Stories are widely employed as a powerful medium of teaching and learning. Stories are effective as educational tools because they are believable, rememberable, and entertaining. Stories educate as instruments of transformation, as well as information. Because stories lead from the familiar to the unfamiliar, they provide an entryway into personal growth and change.

Marshall (2019) indicated that in order to hold the learner's attention, a story must entertain as well as arouse curiosity. The stories should at the same relate to all aspects of his personality, thus promoting confidence in himself / herself. The tales can be used as a story telling session, reading a different tale everyday or as an assigned reading lesson to be completed at home and discussed in class.

Pardede (2011) mentioned that theoretically, using of literature in language teaching is very advantageous for it offers four benefits: authentic material, cultural enrichment, language advancement, and personal growth. He also stated that the incorporation of short stories in language skills classes will help learners achieve better mastery of language skills.

### **Short Stories and Creative Reading**

Many researchers used a number of methods, activities, strategies and programs for developing creative reading skills such as: Barrett (2001). In this dissertation the writer developed creative reading activities, many of which included the use of technology. Padgett (1997) the central chapter of his book "Creative Reading Techniques" suggests exercises that make reading an adventure, highly interactive and imaginative, using both classic and modern literature in ways that blend reading and writing.

Pathan (2012) in his study, he stated that the use of short-stories in ELT classroom has always been recommended by the pundits in the field for developing reading comprehension skill as stories offer infinite linguistic as well as personal, socio-cultural, cognitive and emotional benefits for the language learners. He also mentioned that Stories expose EFL learners to the functional, situational and idiomatic use of language and thus, help in understanding and mastering the intricacies and nuances of a foreign language like English.

Al-Mansour & Al-Shorman (2011) assessed the effect of the storytelling program on the reading comprehension of the Saudi elementary stage students. Results showed that the

experimental group outperformed the control group on the measure. This indicated that reading aloud by the teacher may have a significant positive effect on learners' reading comprehension.

Rahimi & Yadollahi (2017), the findings of their study mainly revealed that the process of online digital storytelling allows EFL learners to develop their language literacy and spend more time on working with technology for instructional purposes. Reading and writing were mainly promoted through digital storytelling especially with working collaboratively using an online platform.

Atta-Alla (2012) in his study, he stated that the suggested integrated instructional model of storytelling has been effective in enhancing the participants' language proficiency level. He also mentioned that storytelling is a very effective teaching technique that can be utilized in improving adult language learners' proficiency level and integrate their language skills.

Active learning provides opportunities for students to talk, listen, read, write and reflect as they approach course content through problem – solving exercises, case studies, role playing and other activities – all of which require students to apply what they are learning. Active learning is usually understood to stand in contrast to traditional classroom styles where teachers do most of the work and students remain passive (Passive Learning) (Abdel-Latif, 2011).

#### **Research Aims:**

The study seeks to investigate the effectiveness of using short stories in developing some creative reading skills among Zagazig University students, College of Education.

#### **Research questions:**

The present research attempted to answer the following main question:

What is the effectiveness of using short stories in developing some creative reading skills among Zagazig University students?

This question can be divided into the following sub– questions:

1. To what extent are short stories effective in developing fluency skill?
2. To what extent are short stories effective in developing flexibility skill?
3. To what extent are short stories effective in developing elaboration skill?
4. To what extent are short stories effective in developing originality skill?

#### **Research Hypotheses:**

1. There would be no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the control group students and those of the experimental group students in overall creative reading on the post – application of the creative reading skills test.

2. There would be no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the control group students and those of the experimental group students in creative reading skills on the post – application of the creative reading skills test.

#### **Research Design:**

The current research applied the quasi – Experimental method that is pre – post Control Experimental Design. The experimental group was taught through using short stories, whereas the control group was taught through using the conventional way.

**Research Variables:**

The independent variable: The use of short stories.

The dependent variable: Creative reading skills.

**Research sample and population:**

Sample was 70 second year students in College of Education, Zagazig University, Egypt. This was in the second semester, February, 2023. They were 35 students for the experimental group and 35 for the control group.

**Research Tools:**

The tools of the current study were:

1. A creative reading skills test.
2. Creative reading skills checklist.

**Research Program:**

The short stories program designed for the current study consisted of eleven sessions. The first session was devoted to the introduction of the application to the experimental group students. The remaining sessions were instructional. The program included some short stories given to the experimental group. At the beginning of each meeting, the researcher set the objectives of the session, the teacher's role, and the instructional materials. The teacher asked the students to perform creative reading tasks. At the end of each session, the teacher gave the students some tasks to achieve. The program lasted for eleven weeks: one session per week, and each session lasted for about 50 minutes.

**Instructional Aids:**

The researcher used the following instructional aids in implementing the program: white and smartboard, paper and pencil to allow students to take notes and interact with each other, and some short stories for developing creative reading skills.

**Reliability of the test:** The researcher used the following method for estimating the authenticity of the creative reading skills test:

**Inter-rater reliability:** Two raters evaluated the creative reading skills test. Both of them are English language teachers, PH D. holders, who are experts in the field. The researcher used the correlation coefficient between the scores of the first and the second rater by using Pearson

Formula. The reliability coefficient was 0.760 in the creative reading test which was statistically significant at 0.01 level hence; the test was reliable.

**Research Results:**

**Hypothesis one:**

The first hypothesis states that there would be no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the control group students and those of the experimental group students in creative reading skills on the post – application of the creative reading skills test. The data in the following two tables will show the differences between students' performance in overall creative reading on the creative reading skills test for both groups.

**Table (1) “T” pre-test scores of overall creative reading**

Groups	N	Mean	S.D	t-value	Sig.
Experimental	35	69.463	11.3399	-.113	.910
Control	35	69.582	9.3803		

Table (1) indicates that there are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group students and those of the control group students in overall creative reading on the creative reading skills pre- test according to the t-distribution table (2.683). It was evident that the mean score is not significant when the t-value is less than in the t-value distribution table; consequently, both groups are homogenous.

**Table (2) “T” post-test scores of overall creative reading**

Groups	N	Mean	S.D	t-value	Sig.
Experimental	35	134.883	13.86	5.884	0.01
Control	35	103.448	20.47		

Table (2) indicates that there are statistically significant differences at the (0.01) level between the mean scores of the experimental group students and those of the control group students in overall creative reading on the creative reading skills post- test in favor of the experimental group. Therefore, the first hypothesis was rejected.

**Hypothesis two:**

The second hypothesis states that there would be no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the control group students and those of the experimental group students in creative reading skills on the post – application of the creative reading skills test. The data in the following two tables will show the differences between students' performance in creative reading skills on the creative reading skills test for both groups.

**Table (3) “T” pre-test scores of creative reading skills**

Reading Skills	Group	N	Mean	S.D	t-value	Sig.
Fluency	Experimental	35	16.987	4.4432	-.085	.932
	Control	35	17.182	3.8156		



<b>Flexibility</b>	<b>Experimental</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>17.633</b>	<b>2.2739</b>	<b>-.243</b>	<b>.808</b>
	<b>Control</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>17.544</b>	<b>2.5579</b>		
<b>Elaboration</b>	<b>Experimental</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>16.864</b>	<b>2.6034</b>	<b>.184</b>	<b>.855</b>
	<b>Control</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>16.688</b>	<b>2.5242</b>		
<b>Originality</b>	<b>Experimental</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>17.979</b>	<b>3.1576</b>	<b>.225</b>	<b>.823</b>
	<b>Control</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>18.168</b>	<b>1.9494</b>		

Table (3) indicates that there are no significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group students and those of the control group students in creative reading skills on the creative reading skills pre- test. It is evident that both groups are homogenous and equivalent.

**Table (4) “T” post-test scores of creative reading skills**

<b>Reading Skills</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Fluency</b>	<b>Experimental</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>32.885</b>	<b>4.4432</b>	<b>6.15</b>	<b>0.01</b>
	<b>Control</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>25.263</b>	<b>5.8156</b>		
<b>Flexibility</b>	<b>Experimental</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>33.765</b>	<b>2.2739</b>	<b>4.48</b>	<b>.0.01</b>
	<b>Control</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>26.376</b>	<b>2.5579</b>		
<b>Elaboration</b>	<b>Experimental</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>33.574</b>	<b>2.6034</b>	<b>4.18</b>	<b>0.01</b>
	<b>Control</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>24.632</b>	<b>3.9015</b>		
<b>Originality</b>	<b>Experimental</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>34.659</b>	<b>2.71</b>	<b>4.28</b>	<b>0.01</b>
	<b>Control</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>27.177</b>	<b>3.94</b>		

Table (4) indicates that there are statistically significant differences at the (0.01) level between the mean scores of the experimental group students and those of the control group

students in creative reading skills on the creative reading skills post- test in favor of the experimental group. Therefore, the second hypothesis was rejected.

#### **Discussion of the Results:**

The results of the current study indicated that short stories were effective in improving creative reading skills and overall creative reading for the experimental group students. This improvement is due to the use of short stories compared with the traditional approach used in teaching the control group students. The results of the current study revealed also that short stories program had a practical and educational significance on improving creative reading skills and overall creative reading of the experimental group students.

#### **Conclusion:**

The present study provided evidence for the effectiveness of using short stories program in developing students' creative reading skills and overall creative reading. The current study provided also evidence for the effectiveness of using short stories program in arousing students' interests. The current study showed that the traditional way used in teaching reading skills in EFL classrooms should be developed to help students improve their reading skills.

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**Appendices:**

**Appendix (A): The Pre-Post Test**

**Read the following story then answer the questions:**

There was a couple who used to go to England every year to shop in the beautiful stores. This was their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. They both liked antiques and pottery and especially teacups. One day in this beautiful shop they saw a beautiful teacup. They said, "May we see that? We've never seen one quite so beautiful." As the lady handed it to them, suddenly the teacup spoke. "You don't understand," it said. "I haven't always been a teacup. There was a time when I was red and I was clay. My master took me and rolled me and patted me over and over and I yelled out, 'let me alone,' but he only smiled, 'Not yet'.

"Then I was placed on a spinning wheel," the teacup said, "and suddenly I was spun around and around and around. Stop it! I'm getting dizzy!" I screamed. But the master only nodded and said, 'Not yet.' Then he put me in the oven. I never felt such heat. I wondered why he wanted to burn me, and I yelled, and I knocked at the door. I could see him through the opening and I could read his lips, as he shook his head, 'Not yet.' Finally, the door opened, he put me on the shelf, and I began to cool. 'There, that's better,' I said. And he brushed and painted me all over. The fumes were horrible. I thought I would gag. 'Stop it, stop it!' I cried. He only nodded, 'Not yet.'

Then suddenly he put me back into the oven, not like the first one. This was twice as hot and I knew I would suffocate. I begged. I pleaded. I screamed. I cried. All the time I could see him through the opening nodding his head, saying, 'Not yet.' Then I knew there wasn't any hope. I would never make it. I was ready to give up. But the door opened and he took me out and placed me on the shelf. One hour later he handed me a mirror and said, "Look at yourself." And I did. I said, "That's not me; that couldn't be me. It's beautiful. I'm beautiful."

"I want you to remember, then," he said, "I know it hurt to be rolled and patted, but if I just left you, you'd have dried up. I know it made you dizzy to spin around on the wheel, but if I had stopped, you would have crumbled. I know it hurt and it was hot and disagreeable in the oven, but if I hadn't put you there, you would have cracked. I know the fumes were bad when I brushed and painted you all over, but if I hadn't done that, you never would have hardened. You would not have had any color in your life, and if I hadn't put you back in that second oven, you wouldn't survive for very long because the hardness would not have held. Now you are a finished product. You are what I had in mind when I first began with you."

**Part 1: Answer the following questions:**

1. Why did the couple use to go to London?

\_\_\_\_\_

—.

2. How many times have they been to London?

\_\_\_\_\_

—.

3. What happened when the lady handed the teacup to the couple?

\_\_\_\_\_.

4. What did the potter do with the piece of clay?

\_\_\_\_\_

—.

5. Why was the piece of clay placed on a spinning wheel?

\_\_\_\_\_

—.

6. How could the piece of clay see the potter from inside the oven?

\_\_\_\_\_

—.

7. Why did the potter put the teacup on the shelf?

\_\_\_\_\_

—.

8. What did the potter do with the teacup when it cooled down?

\_\_\_\_\_

—.

9. Why did the potter give the teacup a mirror?

\_\_\_\_\_

—.

10. What did the potter tell the teacup?

—.

**Part 2: Complete the following sentences:**

1. If the potter had left the piece of clay without rolling and patting.....
2. If the potter had stopped the spinning wheel.....
3. If the potter hadn't put the teacup in the oven.....
4. If the potter hadn't brushed and painted the teacup.....
5. If the potter hadn't put the teacup back in second oven.....

**Part 3: Read the text and mark true [ ] or false [ ]:**

1. The couple liked antiques and pottery and especially teapots. [ ]
2. The master stopped rolling the clay when it yelled out. [ ]
3. The oven was not hot. [ ]
4. The potter put the piece of clay in the oven to burn it. [ ]
5. The fumes were good. [ ]

**Source:** Atta-Alla, M. (2012), Integrating Language Skills through Storytelling. English Language Teaching, Vol. 5, No.12. ISSN 1916-4742. Published by Canadian Center of Science and Education. [www.ccsenet.org/elt](http://www.ccsenet.org/elt).

**Appendix (B): A Sample of the Activities used in the program**

**Activity 5**  
**A Long Walk Home**

**Objective:** reading for implied and inferred meanings

**Time:** 50 minutes

**Organization:** individuals, pairs

**Procedure:**

**Task 1:**

1. Look at the title 'A Long Walk Home' on the board and answer these questions.
2. Work with a partner and compare your thoughts.
3. Report the agreed upon thoughts to the instructor.
  - a) What does this title tell you?
  - b) Does the title suggest where the story takes place?
  - c) Who is it about?
  - d) What might happen?

**A Long Walk Home \***

**(by: Jason Bocarro)**

I grew up in the south of Spain in a little community called Estepona. I was 16 when one morning my father told me I could drive him into a remote village called Mijas, about 18 miles away, on the condition that I take the car in to be serviced at a nearby garage. Having just learned to drive and hardly ever having the opportunity to use the car, I readily accepted. I drove Dad into Mijas and promised to pick him up at 4 p.m., then drove to a nearby garage and dropped off the car. Because I had a few hours to spare, I decided to catch a couple of movies at a theatre near the garage. However, I became so immersed in the films that I completely lost track of time. When the last movie had finished, I looked down at my watch. It was six o'clock. I was two hours late.

I knew Dad would be angry if he found out I'd been watching movies. He'd never let me drive again. I decided to tell him that the car needed some repairs and that they had taken longer than had been expected. I drove up to the place where we had planned to meet and saw Dad waiting patiently on the corner. I apologized for being late and told him that I'd come as quickly as I could, but the car had needed some major repairs. I'll never forget the look he gave me.

"I'm disappointed that you feel you have to lie to me, Jackson." "What do you mean? I'm telling the truth." Dad looked at me again. "When you did not show up, I called the garage to ask if there were any problems, and they told me that you had not yet picked up the car. So you see, I know there were no problems with the car." A rush of guilt ran through me as I feebly confessed to my trip to the movie theater and the real reason for my tardiness. Dad listened intently as a sadness passed through him.

"I am angry, not with you but with myself. You see, I realize that I have failed as a father if after all these years you feel that you have to lie to me. I have failed because I have brought

up a son who cannot even tell the truth to his own father, I'm going to walk home now and contemplate where I have gone wrong all these years".

"But Dad, its 18 miles to home. It's dark. You can't walk home." My protests, my apologies and the rest of my utterances were useless. I had let my father down, and I was about to learn one of the most painful lessons of my life. Dad began walking along the dusty roads. I quickly jumped in the car and followed behind, hoping he would relent. I pleaded all the way, telling him how sorry I was, but he simply ignored me, continuing on silently, thoughtfully and painfully. For 18 miles I drove behind him, averaging about five miles per hour.

Seeing my father in so much physical and emotional pain was the most distressing and painful experience that I have ever faced. However, it was also the most successful lesson. I have never lied to him since.

**Task 2:**

1. Work with a partner.
2. Read the story of a Long Walk Home.
3. Think about the story and discuss the following questions.
4. When you finish give your answer(s) to the instructor.
5. Check your answer(s) in the light of the correct one(s) given by the instructor on the board.
  - a) Where did the son grow up?
  - b) How old was the son when he drove his father to Mijas?
  - c) What did the son watch at the theatre?
  - d) At what time did he finish watching?
  - e) What did the son do when he met his father?
  - f) Why did the son lie to his father? How do you feel about this?
  - g) Did the father believe his son? Why? What did the son feel?
  - h) Why was the father angry with himself?
  - i) What did the father decide to do? Do you agree with him? Why?
  - j) Did the father accept his son's protests and apologies?
  - k) Was it a happy or a painful experience for the son?
  - l) What lesson did the son learn from this experience?

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