

The Use of Short Stories in Teaching Writing Strategies in ESL Classrooms

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Abstract

This paper presents a systematic review on related past studies on using short stories in teaching writing strategies. In total, 17 studies range from 2012 to 2022. This review aims to answer two research questions; a) How effective are short stories in the teaching of writing strategies? and b) What writing strategies should ESL students employ to enhance their writing? Findings indicated that using short stories is beneficial in language teaching and learning. Besides, it also encourages critical thinking skills among students. When short stories are used in an ESL classroom also, students' creative writing skills are enhanced. They are also able to develop their imaginations, thoughts, ideas and opinions as well as their literature and cultural knowledge. It could also be seen that the attitudes and the learning motivation changed and heightened positively from session to session of learning activities when short stories are integrated. Results also revealed that genre-based approach and process approach are predominant in teaching writing in the ten articles identified. On top of that, metacognitive strategies are also deemed to be no less of importance.

Keywords: Short Stories, Writing, Writing Approaches, Writing Strategies, English as a Second Language (ESL)

Introduction

One of the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 aims includes developing students who are skilled in English to optimise their employability skills in the global economy (Ministry of Education, 2013). Several researchers agreed that graduate employment is significantly dependent on English skills (Azmi et al., 2018; Zainuddin et al., 2019). After spending 11 years learning the English language, students should graduate with a B1 minimum; can "effectively express opinions and hold one's own in social discourse" (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 58). Many, however, did not achieve B1 level at the end of secondary school and had a weak command of the language instead.

Many researchers are concerned that the performances of students are below average and the situation is unjustifiable considering the fact that students have begun learning the language as early as 4 years old starting from their pre-schools. This is particularly evident in their writing (Ang & Tan, 2018). According to Azman (2016), Malaysian students perform unsatisfactorily in the English language examination, especially in the writing section. Cole and Feng (2015) also concurred that writing is one of the challenges ESL students experience. Among some problems students face include having minimal knowledge of grammar, using the correct lexical, organizing, using inaccurate writing mechanics and lastly, using inappropriate style of writing (Yunus & Chien, 2016). This poor proficiency has caused many of the students to struggle in their writing. Students find it hard to generate and organize ideas as well as express themselves clearly using grammatical correct sentences (Lim & Wong, 2015). Students often display weakness in their essays; in the form of structures and also in the ideas expressed (Mohtar et al., 2017). Creativity and originality are stunted and ideas are vague and not conveyed effectively.

Therefore, new instructional materials in activating students' ability to generate ideas needs to be identified. The right stimulus would facilitate students to develop suitable content for their writing. Short stories is an example of a good tool to arouse students' interest and attract their attention. Besides the motivational values short stories can offer, they can also lend themselves towards the reinforcement of the four language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing. Literature is able to help students write more creatively (Oster, 1989). In this sense, teachers can integrate a variety of writing activities to help students to develop their writing skills. In order to determine how effective short stories are in the teaching of writing skills, an analysis of a systematic literature review is in order to demonstrate a formulation of empirical data of using short stories in the teaching of writing skills in ESL classrooms.

Research Objectives

- A) To explore the effectiveness of short stories in the teaching of writing skills.
- B) To explore the writing strategies ESL students should employ to enhance their writing.

Research Questions

- A) How effective are short stories in teaching writing skills?
- B) What writing strategies should ESL students employ to enhance their writing?

Literature Review

What is Writing?

Nunan (2003, p. 89) defined writing as proof that the students have mastered a particular grammar rule. Correct spelling, punctuation, grammar and overall organization is the best evidence of mastery and ability. Meanwhile, Kirsznner and Mandell (2008, p. 209) stated that writing is a process with a few important steps such as planning, organizing, drafting and revising and editing. Other researchers like Elbow (1980, p. 53) pointed out that writing is the ability of the writer to create words, sentences and paragraphs to express their ideas, thoughts and their feelings. In addition, Tribble (1996, p. 130) stated that there are some components used in grading writing ability; content, organization, vocabulary, language, and mechanics. Fareed et al (2016) is in the opinion that teachers should guide the students' process of writing which includes process of brainstorming, drafting and preparing the final write-up. According to Harrison et al (2016), what determines a good piece of writing include

a few criteria namely whether it is cohesive, logical, interesting with good structures and organization with a multitude vocabulary and mastery of conventions in mechanics.

Writing Approaches

Raimes (1983) stated that there are many ways of teaching writing. Harmer (2001) agreed with this notion and he said that there is a variety of approaches when teaching writing. Lavelle and Bushrow (2007) defined writing approaches as the writing strategies based on the writers' belief about writing. In essence, it is everything related to the writing process; from the planning, drafting, revising and editing.

Writing approaches are integral in the teaching of writing. Prior to teaching writing, the teacher should first decide what approach they would adopt in order to achieve a positive outcome. Therefore, the teacher needs to set the objective of the lesson to select the right approach. Scott (1996) believed that writing approaches are vital to meet the goals of writing. Many theories and approaches have been designed and improvised over the years. They are process approach, product approach, genre approach and process genre approach (Hasan & Akhand, 2010).

Process Approach

Process-based writing approach is the process writers go through in their writing tasks from start to finish. The fundamental idea of this approach is to encourage students to view writing in order to learn meanings and ideas and not so much as grammar exercises. There are many variations to this approach such as from Tribble (1996) and others but they basically consist of similar steps in the writing process. Fundamentally, the steps are pre- writing, first draft composing, feedback, second draft composing/ revising, proofreading/ editing. The journey of the writing process does not follow the fixed sequence of writing steps linearly but instead in a recursive manner among different writing steps to generate better ideas.

Product Approach

Product based approach is a writing process which concentrates on the end product. In essence, students follow a model text closely and produce parallel writing. Teachers provide examples or model essays for the students and based on the models; students write a similar piece. According to Steele (2004), product-based approach consists of four steps;

1. Students read a model essay and pay attention to the distinctive features of the essay; the organization, language and writing mechanics
2. Students practise on the elements outlined in the model text
3. Students attempt to imitate the model essay
4. Students try to write using the skills, sentence structures and vocabulary they possess

What is good about this approach is that students, especially less able students, are able to identify a pattern in writing essays in a systematic way, especially in writing narrative descriptive and persuasive essays. Tangpermpoon (2008) supported this by saying that students are able to learn the correct vocabulary and various sentence patterns for these text types as well as heighten students' grammatical awareness. However, many argued that product-based approach is not concerned with the process of the writing but only the grammar structure and syntax. This is demotivating for students because the focus of the writing task is on language accuracy and hinders their creativity.

Genre based Approach

Writing is considered as mainly linguistic in the genre approach but it stresses more on the social context in which writing is produced. Therefore, according to Hyland (2003), writing pedagogic should explain to students how language functions in social contexts. Paltridge (2001) proposes a framework whereby students investigate texts, reflect on writing practices, exploit texts from different types of genres and lastly create a collection of mixed genres. Here, the interactive collaboration between the teacher and students is emphasized with the teacher first providing scaffolding to students as they move towards their potential level of performance. During scaffolding, students are given models and are asked to discuss and analyse their language and structure. As students' progress and gain autonomy, the teacher slowly let go and students independently produce a text similar to the model.

Process Genre Approach

Process genre approach combines both Process Based Approach and Genre Based Approach. Knowledge of context, the purpose of writing, certain text features from genre approach theories are integrated with process approach theories such as development of writing skills and responses of learners. Badger and White (2000) mentioned that there are six steps in Process Genre Approach; preparation, modeling, planning, join constructing, independent constructing and revising and editing.

1. Preparation. The teachers provide a situation in which students are asked to write within a specific genre. This activates the students' prior knowledge and they can anticipate the structural features of the genre.
2. Modeling. The teacher introduces a model of the genre and students think about the purpose of the text.
3. Planning. Students brainstorm, discuss and read to activate schemata.
4. Join constructing. At the beginning of writing a text, the teacher and students work together by brainstorming, drafting and revising. Students may work in groups too.
5. Independent construction. Students will have gone through features of model texts and have written a text in the genre together with the teacher or peers.
6. Revising and editing. The teacher checks the students' writing after which they will further revise and edit.

Importance of writing among ESL learners

Adam and Babiker (2015) has defined writing as being synchronous to putting down graphic symbols that present a language to convey meanings so that they are meaningful and that readers can understand what is being written. To produce a piece of writing, writers must go through a series of processes which involve pre- writing, actual writing, revising and editing. It is one of the main language skills and is vital in expressing opinions, ideas, thoughts, and attitudes. In Malaysia, learners as young as four or during their pre-school years, have already been exposed to some writing and this continues right up to their tertiary level. It is an important skill for university students to master in order to obtain better academic results and get better job opportunities (Raooft et al., 2017). Karki (2019) also supported this by stating that writing skill is important for the future academic and career path of the learners.

Problems in Writing among ESL Learners

All students need to master the writing skill in the Malaysian English Language curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2000). However, it is disheartening that many students are still far

from being proficient in the language and especially so in their writing skills. Chitravelu et al (2005) also pointed out that students are less proficient in writing skills. Numerous studies have been done to find out what areas students are weak in. Basturkmen and Lewis (2002) reported that ESL learners face difficulties when it comes to expressing themselves clearly, writing coherently according to sequence of ideas as well as enjoying the process of writing. Moreover, learners also lack the various components of writing which comprise of proper use of grammar, conventions, punctuation, capitalization as well as spelling (Ramasamy & Aziz, 2018). Likewise, in a study conducted by Mantra (2017), it was found that learners have problems expressing ideas in a written form because of their inability to find ideas to write. In addition, they were also found to have poor linguistic knowledge; sentence structure and grammar, spelling, punctuation marks and vocabulary. One of the main goals of ESL students is to learn to produce a well-thought-out piece of writing. Therefore, specific writing techniques, approaches or methods must be put in place to meet the needs of these learners.

Importance of Short Stories

Abrams (1970, p. 158) defined short stories as the “narrative that can be read at one sitting or from one-half hour to two hours, and that is limited to ‘a certain unique or single effect,’ to which every detail is subordinate”. Its ‘single effect’ with usually only one plot and a few characters nature allows students to follow the storyline easily makes it a suitable literary text to be used in ESL.

Advocates who make use of short stories to teach ESL identifies many benefits of short stories. They believe learners are exposed to distinctive opportunities for educational, motivational, intellectual, literary, cultural and linguistic development. Among some benefits pointed out by Ariogul (2001, pp. 11-18) that short stories make learners’ reading task easier because of the simplicity and briefness compared with the other literary genres, short stories motivate learners due to its authenticity and short stories allow for learners’ creativity as well as promoting critical thinking skills. In terms of cultural advantages, Ellis (2000) mentioned that short stories provide a rich, authentic and meaningful context for reading. This is supported by Pardede (2011) in his article that short stories allow learners to view the world through a different perspective, discover human values and experience a different lifestyle in different societies. Learners will also understand and become aware of the social, political, historical, cultural events happening in a certain society, hence deepening their cultural understanding. Learners’ motivation will also increase as suggested by Ceminin (2009), reading short stories enhance learners’ motivation and encourage more independent learning on their part. Short stories are a universal literary genre in all parts of the world. The benefits are manifold and teachers are waiting to discover to expose their students to this world of literary wonder.

Benefits of using short stories in ESL classrooms

Integration of short stories into the curriculum will help mould more holistic ESL learners. This is because, besides developing literary, cultural, intellectual and educational values, short stories also focus on the language skills necessary for communication in the second language. In an action research study by Haliem (2020), her findings revealed that integrating short stories in language teaching has promising effects. Besides motivating and promoting cultural awareness among students, they also enhance critical thinking skills as well as develop linguistic knowledge. The fact that short stories are simple and short enables them to be

exploited easily in the classrooms for integration of multiple skills besides creating interest among learners.

Many studies have in fact indicated that by incorporating short stories in ESL classes, many positive learning outcomes could be obtained. King (2001) opined that short story can be utilized as a powerful and motivating source to assist learners consolidate and practice language (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation). In a study in Indonesia by Pardede (2012), his results have shown that using short stories has indeed enhanced students' language skills. Furthermore, short stories are very beneficial in improving students' vocabulary, knowledge of grammar as well as the four language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing (Murdoch, 2002). In another study by Lao and Krashen (2000), they compared vocabulary and reading between two groups of students that read literary texts and another that read non-literary texts at a university in Hong Kong. Data showed that the group who read literary texts showed higher improvement in vocabulary and reading.

Using Short Stories in Teaching Writing Skills

ESL learners consider writing one of the most difficult skills to master. Students experience problems producing interesting and creative writing. Because of that, students find writing dull and they lack the motivation to write. Kirkgoz (2012), who conducted a study on how short stories can be integrated in the classrooms, found that learners' problems in writing can be solved by using short stories which provide a rich source of input. Besides, students are also presented with a purpose for writing when they reflect on their thoughts, opinions and feelings as well as background experiences. Kirkgoz (2012) also added that short stories introduce learners to different ideas, characters and subject matter, whereby they are transported to an imaginary world and "get to know" the characters. This is highly interesting and motivating for the learners.

Other researchers are also in the opinion that short stories can indeed facilitate writing. Pardede (2011) proposed that short stories being powerful and motivating, can serve as a model and give a context for creative writing to help ESL learners develop their writing skills. In a study by Truong et al (2020), they reported that respondents felt using short stories helped them write more effectively, upgrade their writing skills and could expand on their word choice to assist them in better writing.

Methodology

The methodology, which involves five phases as proposed by Khan et al (2003, p. 118), was adopted to conduct this systematic review. The five phases consist of: framing questions for the review, identifying relevant studies, assessing the quality of studies, summarizing the evidence and finally, interpreting the results. The first phase is formulating a clear, well-defined research question of my scope and defining some terminology. The next step is identifying relevant studies. I ran my searches in the databases such as Google Scholar, Researchgate, Academia, ScienceDirect, Springer e- Journals, JSTOR, Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC) and SAGE Research Methods to identify relevant research studies published between year 2012- 2022 (research that were carried out in the past ten years). In the following phase, I screened the title and abstract to remove studies that are not related to my topic. Some of the key words included: short stories, benefits of short stories, importance of writing, teaching writing skills. After that, I reviewed the selection of studies

again using a set of inclusion or exclusion criteria to screen the full-text of studies. The list was:

1. Study population could be from primary, secondary or tertiary level (regardless of their field of studies)
2. The studies must be conducted in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms.
3. The studies should focus on the use of short stories in teaching writing skills.
4. The studies could employ qualitative, quantitative, mixed- methods or action research designs.
5. The setting of the interventions may/ may not be school- based.

The fourth phase is extracting all relevant data from each included study and summarise using a table format for better and easier understanding. The final phase is interpreting findings and providing recommendations for practice and policy-making as well as future directions for research. A total of 17 articles were shortlisted.

Findings and Discussions

A total of 17 studies based on the writing approaches and benefits of using short stories from the year 2012- 2022 were chosen for the systematic review and the findings are as follows.

Table 1

Summary of past related studies in employing approaches in writing in ESL context

Article/ Study	No. of participants/ studies	Research Design	Type of intervention	Writing strategies targeted	Total hours intervention	Results
Mastura et al (2020)	52 second year students	Quasi experimental design		Genre based approach		i. Result revealed that there was significant effect of genre-based approach on students' writing ability of recount text. ii. Content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics showed distinct difference.

Ahn (2012)	Year 5 and 6 L2 primary school students	Action research	Scaffolding	Genre based approach	10-week term with two lessons per week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The results illustrated that the scaffolding processes by the teachers at the early stage benefited students. They are aware of the different ways texts are organised for different communicative purposes. ii. There is an increase in the level of students' confidence. iii. A positive attitude towards writing was also created.
Nordin & Mohammad(2017)		A review of literature		Process based approach/ Genre based approach.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The process/genre-based approach thus integrates the strength of the process approach and the genre-based approach. ii. Process approach and genre approach

						complement rather than oppose each other.
Al Azhar & Maolida (2019)	23 students of ten-grade and an English teacher	Qualitative research		Process Genre Approach	3 meetings from 13th February until 27th February 2019.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The teacher followed Badger and White (2000) six steps of process genre approach: preparation, modeling, planning, joint constructing, independent constructing, and revising and editing. ii. Students can follow the process of writing and at the same time learn the different types of text genres.
Din et al (2021)	30 undergraduates	Quantitative	Pre-, Post- and Delayed Post Intervention Essays	Process-oriented approach	14 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Process-oriented approach helps undergraduate ESL writers' in their writing skills.

Mastan et al (2017)	36 learners of upper secondary school level with intermediate proficiency level	Quasi-experimental	Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) approach	Metacognitive and cognitive writing strategies	8-12 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. SRSD writing strategy instruction helps to improve the writing skills of ESL learners of intermediate proficiency level. ii. Post test essays written were considerably longer with more meaningful sentences and correct usage of transition words.
Mistar et al (2014)	29 second year students of science departments	Quasi experimental design	pre-writing, whilst-writing and post writing phases	Metacognitive writing strategies	Two meetings of 90 minutes each	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The effect of metacognitive strategies training on students' writing skill was not very significant as compared to conventional-product oriented mode of teaching. ii. Students who received metacognitive strategies

						training wrote more quality essay compared to those who did not receive training.
Aripin & Rahmat (2021)	A male and a female writer	Qualitative		Metacognitive writing strategies	1 hour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The female writer made use of more strategies during the planning stage compared to the male writer. ii. Female writer is therefore a better planner during the planning or pre-writing stage compared to the male writer iii. Both writers apply similar strategies after completing their writing process.
Maarof & Murat (2013)	50 high-intermediate and low proficiency ESL upper secondary	Quantitative		Strategies in the pre-writing stage, while-writing stage and		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Writing strategies were moderately used by ESL students

	school students			revising stage		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. No great difference in the frequency of writing strategy uses between students of different proficiency levels. iii. English proficiency has affected the type of strategy use, rather than frequency of strategy use.
Aluemalai & Maniam (2020)	50 ESL undergraduate students	Quantitative		Three strategies in the writing process; pre-writing strategies, while writing strategies and revising strategies		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. ESL students preferred planning strategies compared to both while writing and revising strategies.

Table 2

Summary of past related studies in the benefits of using short stories in ESL context

Article/ Study	No. Of participants/ studies	Research Design	Type of intervention	Results
Kirkgoz (2012)	21 Turkish university students	Quantitative	A three-stage-model: presentation, exploration, and follow up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Short stories consolidate what students have learned for example grammar and vocabulary. ii. Short stories is a valuable source of input. They are given a “reason to communicate in a meaningful context”. iii. Most students had fun working with short stories.

Thiyagarajan (2014)	Tertiary level engineering students in the ESL classroom	Experimental study	Taught at regular intervals apart from their syllabus.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Language educators are able to teach the four skills easier through the use of short stories. ii. It allows the students to engage in different activities; group discussion, character role play, critical analysis and interpretation of the theme, content, organization, style and so on
Omar & Ghazali (2016)	27 technical students and 19 English language Lecturers from a technical College.	Experimental research design	3 sessions of treatments with 90 minutes each session.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The findings showed that incorporation of short stories had assisted students in generating ideas to write their reaction paper. ii. Lecturers and students alike were optimistic in incorporating literature in the English language course.
Haliem (2020)	65 students in an ESL classroom	Action research	15 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Students are more motivated and their critical thinking skills are enhanced. ii. Students' ability to develop and express their views as well as their text interpretations are more effective iii. Students' language competencies in their reading and writing improved.
Adam (2015)	60 English major students	Quantitative		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Teaching short stories develops students' narrative writing. ii. Reading short stories enhances writing skills. iii. Short stories are good tools that can be used as a remedy to eliminate the difficulty that students face through their writing process iv. Reading short stories develops understanding of the elements of the story. v. Reading fictional stories develops students' imaginative thinking. vi. Teaching and reading stories develop students' vocabulary.
El-Mahdy et al (2019)	60 first year secondary school students of Sinbellawein secondary school for girls	Quasi-experimental study		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The study showed that using short stories in developing creative writing skills (fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration) was effective. ii. Using short stories in teaching is very enjoyable for all students.
Mantra (2017)		Action research	8 interconnected teaching sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Teaching writing through folktales-based activities enhances students' creative writing skills, develops their

				imagination, thought, ideas, opinion and literature and cultural knowledge. ii. The attitudes and motivation level increased from session to session of learning activities.
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A total of 17 relevant studies were shortlisted using the five different phases. The studies ranged from different levels of ESL; from primary to tertiary levels, not limited to a specific field of study. Two studies employed a genre-based approach in the research. Both results yielded positive outcomes. Mastura et al (2020), in their study over 52 second year school students, found that using genre-based approach enhanced students’ writing ability of recount text. There were improvements in terms of the content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Meanwhile, Ahn (2012), in an action research conducted on Year 5 and 6 L2 Elementary students, discovered that genre-based approach employing the scaffolding writing instructions benefited students in that they were made aware of the different ways texts are organized for different communicative purposes. Students’ self-confidence also saw an improvement as well as having a more positive attitude to writing.

In another paper by Nordin and Mohammad (2017) in their proposal of a coherent theory of teaching writing by integrating two major approaches; the process approach and genre approach, they concluded that the process genre based approach integrates the strengths of both process approach and genre approach. Both approaches complement rather than oppose each other. In line with this, Al Azhar and Maolida (2019) did a qualitative research on 23 tenth grade students and an English teacher and they obtained two significant findings. The first finding was there were six steps following Badger and White (2000) steps of preparation, modeling, planning, join constructing, independent constructing, and revising and editing when applying process genre approach in teaching writing of narrative text. The second result indicated that students could write a text step by step and simultaneously learn about a genre of text in detail.

Besides genre approach and process genre approach, another important writing approach is process approach. Din et al. (2021) conducted a quantitative study over a period of 14 weeks. Students carried Pre-, Post- and Delayed Post Intervention Essays and results revealed that process-oriented approach aided the development of undergraduate ESL writers’ writing skills.

Metacognitive and cognitive writing strategies are also important as proven by (Mastan et al., 2017). They carried out a quasi- experimental study with 36 learners of upper secondary school level with intermediate proficiency level. The intervention period was about 8- 12 weeks whereby the instruction group was exposed to the Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) approach focusing on metacognitive and cognitive writing strategies. Results showed that with the SRSD writing strategy instruction, the writing performance of the ESL learners of intermediate proficiency level had improved. Moreover, post-test essays were written longer with more meaningful sentences with appropriate transition words taught in the writing strategy instruction. In another study to prove the effectiveness of metacognitive writing strategies of pre-writing, whilst-writing and post writing phases, Mistar et al (2014) carried out a quasi- experimental study. Participants were 29 second year

students from the science department at a university. The analysis of the effect of metacognitive strategies training on students' writing skill showed that the effect was no greater as compared to the conventional-product oriented mode of teaching. However, in terms of the quality of essays written, students who receive metacognitive strategies training performed much better than those who did not. ESL writers, based on gender, who used metacognitive writing strategies in their writing process, were also investigated. The study was carried out by Aripin and Rahmat (2021) with the Think-aloud protocol (TAP). It was proven that both genders employed these strategies when they write. That being said, however, there was a difference noted in the use of subcategories writing strategies. It was found that the female writer was more conscious of the subcategories present and used them more when she writes unlike the male writer.

Lastly, writing strategies involving the pre-writing stage, while-writing stage and revising stage were reviewed by two groups of different researchers, Maarof and Murat (2013) as well as (Aluemalai and Maniam, 2020). In the study conducted by the former, 50 high-intermediate and low proficiency ESL upper secondary school students were participants. In the quantitative study, result indicated that writing strategies were moderately used by ESL students. There was also no significant difference reported in the frequency of writing strategy used between students of different proficiency levels. Another conclusion made was, students' English proficiency affects the type of strategy use, rather than frequency of strategy use. In the case of the latter, they carried out a quantitative study with 50 ESL undergraduate students. Results revealed ESL students preferred planning strategies to writing and revising strategies.

Past related studies concerning the use of short stories in ESL classrooms were also reviewed. Seven articles were identified and in general, all papers were in agreement that using short stories are indeed beneficial in ESL teaching and learning. Kirkgoz (2012) conducted a quantitative study with 21 Turkish university students by using a three-stage-model: presentation, exploration, and follow up. She found that stories help students to consolidate their grammar and vocabulary besides providing a valuable resource by giving students a "reason to communicate in a meaningful context". Moreover, most students also had fun working with short stories.

Similarly, Thiyagarajan (2014), who conducted an experimental study on tertiary level engineering students in the ESL classroom, short stories enable teachers to teach the four skills easier at all levels of language proficiency. Students are able to engage themselves in different activities; group discussion, character role play, critical analysis and interpretation of the theme, content, organization, style and so on through short stories.

Omar and Ghazali (2016) also carried out an experimental study with 27 technical students and 19 English language Lecturers from a technical College. They had 3, 90 minutes per session, treatments. The findings showed that the use of the short story had assisted students in generating ideas to write their reaction paper. Both the students and lecturers were positive about incorporating literature in the English language course.

Haliem (2020) conducted a 15- week action research with 65 students in an ESL classroom. Students' critical thinking skills were enhanced and they were more motivated. The ability to

formulate and express their independent opinions as well as present their own interpretations to texts also improved. In terms of their language competencies, there is an improvement in their reading and writing. One major finding regarding the use of short stories in ESL is developing students' creative writing skills.

Adam (2015) as well as El-Mahdy et al (2019) together with Mantra (2017) all reported in their results that student's creative writing skills are enhanced. The participants in Adam (2015) study were 60 English major students and additional results included developing understanding of the elements of the story, students' imaginative thinking as well as their vocabulary. He also found that short stories are good tools that can be used as a remedy to eliminate the difficulty that students face through their writing process. Meanwhile, in El-Mahdy et al (2019), their participants were 60 first year secondary school students of Sinbellawein secondary school for girls. In their quasi-experimental study, besides developing creative writing skills in terms of fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration, short stories also proved to be enjoyable to students in all stages. Lastly, Mantra (2017) in her action research, found that story-based activities not only enhance students' creative writing skills but also develop their imagination, thought, ideas and opinion as well as their literature and culture knowledge.

Conclusion, Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

In the span of 10 years from 2012 to 2022, 17 studies were shortlisted in this systematic literature review analysis in identifying writing approaches as well as the benefits of using short stories in ESL classrooms. Studies chosen were based on all levels, primary to tertiary level in ESL context instructions, regardless of fields of studies. There are two studies for the category of genre-based approach. There is one study each integrating both process and genre approach, process genre approach and process approach. There are three studies on metacognitive and cognitive strategies. Lastly, there are two studies on pre, while, post writing strategies. There are also seven studies on the benefits of the use of short stories in the classrooms.

All the approaches employed in the studies pose some good and bad points. However, in order to ensure students fully benefit from the various approaches, teachers need to ascertain what works for them by determining the students' strengths and weaknesses, as well as the feasibility of the school and classroom. 'One size fits all' will not be applicable here. The teacher has to carry out various strategies to first expose to students the various strategies there are, and second, to allow them to explore which writing strategy would be to their utmost advantage. Allocating enough time is also another factor, as students need to try for themselves and undertake the writing process step-by-step in order to get used to a certain approach. All in all, going through the writing process via scaffolding and pre, while, post strategies seemed to be the most effective.

There are, in total, seven studies on the benefits of using short stories in the ESL classrooms. Overall consensus is that short stories in the classrooms are indeed beneficial. Besides enriching students culturally, students gain in terms of the authenticity of material and language. Other than that, students are highly motivated and interested when using literary text, especially short stories.

There are limitations, however, in the systematic literature review. There are many other strategies not included, for example product approach, free writing, paragraph pattern approach and communicative approach. There is also a limitation in the inclusion criteria. As this systematic literature review only concentrates in ESL classrooms many studies in EFL classrooms are not considered whereby the review could cover a wider range of writing approaches.

From the 17 studies identified, it was evident that employing writing strategies helps students write better. Besides, using short stories in the classrooms proved to be beneficial in aiding students in their writing. Therefore, it is imperative to conduct further studies with various research designs and larger sample size, preferably with more students from the Malaysian primary and secondary schools. It is hoped that this systematic review will provide empirical evidence for teachers to explore the integration of short stories in the teaching of writing skills strategies to improve students' writing skills.

Contributions

It is hoped that this study would be of interest to all relevant parties in the field of education whether at the level of the Ministry of Education Malaysia (policy- maker), schools and teachers as well as parents and students. Training can be held for in- service teachers to further improve their pedagogy and teaching methodologies in introducing the various writing strategies to cater for the different styles and abilities of students. Besides, the curriculum design and development center can change the focus on using existing literature in schools and to use them in the teaching of writing since the benefits are plentiful. As for the teachers, this study hopes to contribute to their teaching in using short stories as an unconventional strategy in the teaching of writing narratives in ESL classrooms. Stories, being fun and interesting, can offer many advantages. They are effective in helping to teach writing narratives through suitable techniques and teachers must be ready to make adaptations in their teaching styles. Moreover, this study can also contribute to teachers of other subjects on the effectiveness of this technique so there is a diversity in their teaching. One of the contributions which will benefit parents is to make them realize the significance of reading short stories in helping their children with their writing as well as other language skills. Through this parents are better convinced that reading habits must be inculcated at home. Lastly, students are the main beneficiary of this study as its findings may inspire them to challenge themselves in the various writing approaches to find one which suit them the best besides encouraging them to nurture the love for books and realise the advantages it brings.

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