



Ain Shams University
Women's College for Arts , Science and Education
Department of Curricula & Instruction

**The Effectiveness of Literature Small Discussion Groups strategy
In Developing the Short Story Analysis Skills Of
University English Language Majors**

A thesis

*Submitted for the Master's Degree in Education
(Curricula and Methods of Teaching English as a Foreign
Language)*

By

Magda Atta Ahmed Soltan

Instructor of Teaching English as a Foreign Language

Supervised by

Dr . Aida Abd El Maksoud Zaher

*Professor of Curricula & Methods of Teaching English
as a Foreign Language Women's College , Ain Shams University*

Assistant Supervisor

Dr. Amira El Amir Khater

*Lecturer of Curricula & Methods of Teaching English
as a Foreign Language Women's College , Ain Shams University*

2010

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, **Dr. Aida Zaher**, whose expertise, understanding, and patience, added considerably to this work. It was through her understanding and kindness that I completed my thesis .

I would also like to acknowledge **Dr . Amira Khater** . She provided me with direction, and technical support .

Very special thanks go to the jury members for their professional advice, especially, **Dr. Zeniab El -Naggar , Dr. Manal Abdel Aziz ,** and the late **Dr . Kawther Abou Haggar** for taking time out from their busy schedule to validate my research tools .

The researcher would also like to thank the members of the English Department; particularly, professor **Dr . Wafaa Batran** , head of the English department , for her support and help . I am also deeply grateful to **Dr . Mona Wahsh , Dr. Aziza El Raai, Dr. Gihan El Margushi and Dr . Magda Mansour** for validating my research tools

Finally , I would like to thank my family for the support they provided me through my entire life and in this work particularly. I must acknowledge my dear father, **Dr. Atta Ahmed Soltan** and my dear mother , **Dr. Fatma Hassan** , without their love, encouragement and patience throughout the research , I would not have finished it.

The researcher .

Abstract

Researcher's Name : Magda Atta Ahmed Soltan

Research Title : The Effectiveness of Literature Small Discussion Groups strategy In Developing the Short Story Analysis Skills Of University English Language Majors

Degree: Master 's Degree in Education , Curricula and Methods of Teaching English

University: Ain Shams University, Women 's College , Department of Curricula and Instruction

Date: 2010

The present study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of literature small –discussion groups strategy in developing the short story analysis skills of a sample of First year English Language Majors at Women' s College , Ain Shams University To collect the data needed for testing the research hypotheses, two tools were designed ; namely, the short story analysis skills list , and the short story analysis pre-post test . The pre- post test quasi experimental design was used for conducting the experiment of this research. Research results supported the study hypotheses as they showed that there was a statistical significant difference at 0.01 level between the overall mean scores on the pre and post application of the achievement test that was designed to measure the experimental group' s literary analysis skills , in favour of the post application . It was concluded that : 1) the teaching strategy proved to be effective in developing the target analysis skills of the short story, namely; Character, theme, setting, plot, mood, inference, style, and point of view analysis skills . 2) There was an indication that integrating both reader response principles, and literature Circle activities and role tasks could improve and develop students' analysis skills of the short story as a whole.

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Chapter One

Background and Problem

Chapter One

Background and problem

Introduction

The current trend of education is to humanize and appreciate the learners' desires and interests without tension or stress. For this purpose, literature is seen as a natural way to promote humanistic values, and to provide readers with an important way of learning about the world. In addition, literature has further linguistic, cultural, emotional, and methodological characteristics.

At the humanistic level, Zhang (2006) states that literature allows EFL/ESL students to reflect on their lives, learning, and language. It can open horizons of possibility, allowing students to question, interpret, connect, and explore. It takes people beyond their limited experience of life to show them the lives of other people at other times and places.

Linguistically, a large number of specialists advocate the idea that literature plays an essential role in promoting language skills. Murdoch (2002) states that literature improves the four skills of language ; listening, speaking, reading and writing - that enable learners to communicate well , in addition to , exemplifying the grammatical structures and presenting new vocabulary . Duff and Maley (2007).

Culturally , Reese (2002) claims that literature can help learners to develop their understanding of other cultures, awareness of 'difference' and to develop tolerance and understanding. At the same time, literary texts can deal with universal themes such as love, war and loss that are not always covered in the sanitized world of course books.

Emotionally, El - Alami (2008) thinks that, when students learn how to understand fiction; drama; and poetry, they become emotionally engaged in characters' lives as well as the worlds authors create. Literature stimulates people intellectually and emotionally. Literary works help adult learners to use their imagination, enhance their empathy for others and lead them to develop their own creativity.

Methodologically, Hall (2007 , p 78) mentions that when teaching a course of literature; there are three points which need to be taken into consideration. Firstly, experience of literature is more important than information about literature. Secondly, our teaching of literature should lead to life-long reading of literature rather than life-long avoidance of literature. Thirdly, our teaching of literature should be about relations between texts and readers rather than between extracted meaning and readers.

According to Dawson (2007 , p 93) , a technique which may serve to keep the experience of the text present in the discussion is to begin the discussion with a text rendering. Another way to focus on the experience of the text is to make the reading of the text the object of study instead of the text itself. A third way is using a literature portfolio on selected texts. Fourthly, talk in the classroom should not be dominated by the teacher; students should listen to each other. Lastly, students should support each other rather than compete with each other ,

In the light of the requirements of teaching literature, **The British Council 30th Cambridge seminar on literature (2007)** includes the literary trends and issues of teaching literature in EFL / ESL contexts as follows:

- Literature in the foreign and second language classroom should be explored in the light of a learner-centered pedagogy.
- Teaching Literature is centered on the students' communicative needs, goals, aspirations, learning preferences. A new role and responsibilities for the teacher are established.
- The importance of providing students with a range of critical lenses for analyzing texts and interrogating the beliefs, attitudes, and ideological perspectives encountered in literature.
- Teachers of English language and literature have to be up-to-date with new trends in teaching literature and introduce them to an international network of like-minded people.
- Teachers of English language and literature should be familiarized with the current literary theories and methodologies to develop their confidence in dealing with literary texts.
- Teachers of English language and literature may use some meaningful activities within classroom including story telling, drama activities, role-playing, graphic organizers, discussion method, debates, and online activities , (<http://www.british council.org/arts-literature-activities.htm>) .

Furthermore, the Cambridge seminar on literature (2007) aimed at equipping EFL / ESL learner of literature with abilities to :

- Integrate between critical analysis of film and media texts and the study of literature.
- Read a variety of literary selections of authentic texts.
- Recognize the main aspects of both the literary verse, and narrative prose.
- Interpret the literary devices presented in the text including ; characterization , theme , plot , style , point of view , mood .
- Discuss the author's ideas conveyed in the text.

- Express the reader's attitude towards the literary texts.
- Respond to the text by reacting to; interpreting, or relating it to one's own experience.
- Develop the skills of critical analysis and appreciation.
- Evaluate and judge the literary elements included in the text ,
([http://www.Britishcouncil.org/arts literature- Cambridge _2007.htm](http://www.Britishcouncil.org/arts_literature-Cambridge_2007.htm)) .

More specifically, Chen (2006) believes that narrative is one of the two modes of our thinking. Whilst communicating with others, we can describe an incident as a way of explaining thoughts, or a part of an argument. Accordingly, narration can be regarded as an essential prose genre to be included in a university composition course for EFL/ESL learners.

Kroon (2006) assures that the short story is the best narrative that has a clear and concise literary elements ; characters , setting , theme , plot , mood , irony , and inference .

Moreover , Crum (2006) assures that using short stories can help students develop familiarity with a particular literary style and later unknowingly promote their literary development to guarantee successful analysis.

Duff and Maley (2007) as well , stress that the short story is motivating because it deals with situations and themes that the writer considered important to address and they point out that the motivational effect of the genuineness of literary texts is increased when the topics relate to the learner's personal experience. Besides , it enables learners to shift the focus of their attention beyond the more mechanical aspects of the foreign language system.