



Exploring Short Story as Learning Media for Teaching Intensive Reading to 11th Grade English Students

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ABSTRACT

Purpose - This study aims to explore the use of short stories as a teaching and learning medium in an intensive reading class for eleventh-grade students at SMA Al Azhar 3, Bandar Lampung. The background of this study is the need for engaging reading materials that can improve students' comprehension, analytical skills, and motivation in intensive reading activities.

Methodology - The study employed a qualitative research design. The sample consisted of eleventh-grade students from SMA Al Azhar 3 in Bandar Lampung, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through classroom observations and questionnaires. The research procedure involved implementing short stories as instructional media in intensive reading lessons. The instruments used were observation sheets and student questionnaires, and the data were analyzed descriptively to identify patterns in students' engagement, comprehension, and responses.

Findings - The findings indicate a significant improvement in students' ability to engage with and comprehend intensive reading activities through the use of short stories. Students showed better understanding of storylines, enhanced analytical skills, and increased participation during lessons. However, the study did not measure the long-term effectiveness of short stories as a teaching tool.

Novelty - This research offers original insights into the use of short stories as an instructional medium for intensive reading at the senior high school level, highlighting students' cognitive and affective responses in a real classroom context.

Significance - The findings of this study are beneficial for English teachers, curriculum developers, and educational practitioners who seek effective and engaging strategies for teaching intensive reading.

Keywords: English language learning, Intensive reading, Learning media, Short story

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1. Introduction

Reading is a critical skill that plays a fundamental role in cognitive development and educational achievement, particularly by enabling individuals to access and engage with a vast array of knowledge (Duc & Lan, 2023). In educational curricula, language skills are categorized into listening, speaking, writing, and reading, with reading being essential for expanding students' intellectual capabilities (Lorena & Sadiku, 2015). More than simply decoding text, reading involves comprehending and interpreting the meaning conveyed by the author, which helps students integrate new information with their existing knowledge (Coiro, 2003). This cognitive process enhances their ability to think critically and apply what they have learned in broader contexts. Despite its importance, many students struggle with reading comprehension, particularly in identifying main ideas. This difficulty is more pronounced in contexts where English is a foreign language, such as Indonesia. As Safura & Helmanda (2020) assert, many students struggle with intensive reading, particularly in identifying main ideas and fully grasping the content. These challenges underscore the importance of developing effective strategies for reading comprehension, as mastering this skill is vital not only for academic success but also for lifelong learning and intellectual development.

To understand the texts, readers gather information from the printed material and apply their skills as they do so (Grabe, 2020; Hedgcock, 2009). Printed texts are not limited to those found in books, newspapers, magazines, or websites. In fact, there are numerous types of printed or written texts. Brown, cited in Deane (2020), asserts that the range of written text genres is significantly broader than that of spoken texts. In his analysis, Brown identifies twenty-five distinct genres of written texts. These include non-fiction, fiction, diaries, journals, newspaper language, academic writing, and many others. To construct meanings and infer the writers' messages, readers bring information, knowledge, emotion, experience, and culture to the printed words in order (Smagorinsky, 2001).

In practice, when implementing reading, many students struggle to identify the main idea of a given text. Furthermore, they often lack understanding of the defining characteristics of a main idea within a passage. As cited in Soesantari et al. (2023), UNESCO reports that reading interest among Indonesians is critically low, at just 0.1%. According to Zua (2021), Indonesia ranked 60th out of 61 countries in reading interest, falling below Thailand (59th) and just above Botswana (61st). These findings highlight students' low interest in reading and reflect a lack of effort or seriousness in developing the ability to identify the main idea in texts. Prior research (Dardjito et al., 2023) indicates that low reading engagement is linked to ineffective instructional strategies, suggesting the need for alternative methods, such as short stories. While previous studies (Ghafar & Zubaedah, 2023; Julia Sari & Nasution, 2023) highlight the benefits of

short stories in improving engagement, limited research has examined their effectiveness in teaching intensive reading strategies in the Indonesian EFL context.

In Indonesia, English is a foreign language rather than an official language, with instruction mandatory only at the junior and senior high school levels (Lauder, 2008). Recent policy changes have further diminished students' exposure to English by reducing lesson hours to merely 45 minutes per week, exacerbating the already limited opportunities for language acquisition. This reduction has contributed to a decline in students' reading engagement, a trend also observed during my teaching practicum at SMA Al-Azhar 3 Bandar Lampung. Here, students struggled with multiple aspects of reading, including comprehension, grammar, sentence structure, and vocabulary, which hindered their ability to effectively interpret texts. These linguistic barriers not only impede students' performance in English subjects but also highlight the broader challenges of language learning in an environment with limited instructional support (Abramova et al., 2020). Consequently, this phenomenon prompted the researcher to investigate the efficacy of intensive reading as a pedagogical approach, aiming to address these challenges and explore students' reading proficiency through targeted interventions.

The phenomenon outlined above prompted this research to analyze the use of short stories as a learning medium for intensive reading instruction in eleventh-grade students. Intensive reading instruction offers teachers an opportunity to introduce effective strategies that foster students' motivation and engagement in developing their reading skills (Anquoudi et al., 2023). By focusing on detailed, thorough reading, students are guided to identify the main ideas of texts, a skill critical to reading comprehension. The intensive reading approach requires students to actively engage with the text, promoting deeper understanding and encouraging sustained reading practice.

Thus, this study aims to explore the use of short stories as a medium for intensive reading instruction in eleventh-grade students at SMA Al-Azhar 3 Bandar Lampung. Specifically, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How effective is the use of short stories in teaching intensive reading to eleventh-grade students?
2. What are the students' perceptions of using short stories to improve their reading comprehension?

This study offers a novel perspective by shifting from traditional textbook-based approaches to more engaging and contextually relevant materials. Unlike previous research that primarily examines short stories as general reading materials, this study focuses on their role in enhancing intensive reading skills in an Indonesian EFL context. The findings will provide practical insights for teachers seeking to improve students' comprehension, vocabulary, and critical thinking while fostering a more enjoyable reading experience.

This research holds significant potential to transform English language teaching by introducing more dynamic and effective reading strategies. By examining the use of short stories as authentic materials in intensive reading, it encourages a move away from traditional textbook-based approaches towards more engaging and contextually relevant curricula. The study could equip teachers with practical methods for improving

students' comprehension, vocabulary, and critical thinking, while addressing the challenge of understanding complex ideas. Additionally, the research serves as a foundation for future studies on integrating authentic materials across different language skills, promoting a deeper link between linguistic competence and cultural awareness in language learning. The outcomes could lead to innovative, learner-focused approaches that enhance both language development and intercultural understanding in various educational environments.

2. Methods

This study employs a qualitative case study approach, using both observation and questionnaire assessments to understand students' perspectives on using short stories for intensive reading. The research involves eleventh-grade students from SMA Al Azhar 3 Bandar Lampung as the sample group, selected based on their English proficiency, including both high and low performers. Data collection is conducted through observational instruments and questionnaires. Thematic analysis is applied to the observational data, following Braun & Clark's (2021) three-step process: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. This structured approach allows for an in-depth analysis of students' experiences and attitudes towards the use of short stories in their reading practices. In the questionnaire findings, a Likert scale was used to find the percentage of each element of students' perspectives on the use of short stories as authentic learning media.

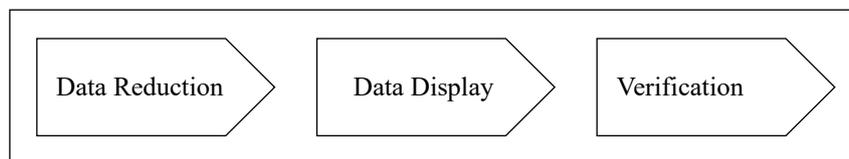


Figure 1. Data Analysis Process (Braun & Clark, 2021)

3. Results and Discussion

The observation was conducted in a classroom with 25 students, who served as the study's subjects. This research employs an intensive reading approach, emphasizing the comprehension of text structure, intransitive verbs, and the plot of the short story "Cinderella" (translated by Joesin). The story is derived from Mary Hoffman's "A First Book of Fairy Tales and Myths". The observational activity focuses solely on the overall classroom dynamics. The observation method is used to examine directly how short stories function as a language-learning medium in the classroom. Meanwhile, the questionnaire was used to explore students' experiences in learning through a short story. Thus, the aim of this study is to explore the use of the short story as a medium for language learning in the eleventh grade at SMA Al Azhar 3 Bandar Lampung. This objective focuses on students' comprehension of vocabulary, sentence structure, and meaning or context.

Observations were conducted 3 times to assess the progress in intensive reading skills of grade 11 students at SMA Al Azhar 3 Bandar Lampung. Based on the observations that have been made, the following overview is obtained:

Table 1 - Observation result

| Aspect Observed | Progress | Result |
|---|--|---|
| First Observation | | |
| Students were tasked with identifying transitive verbs in the short story. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18 students (AN, SN, NA, TS, AL, SM, VA, VR, WL, HA, MI, MF, DH, KA, FA, FA, NN, and SM) demonstrated focus, cooperative behavior, and comprehension. 7 students (AJ, MR, MR, MA, OF, SF, and VR) showed difficulty reading and identifying transitive verbs; they exhibited unfocused behavior. | The students identified some intransitive verbs and wrote them in their notebooks, even though they were unsure. |
| Second Observation | | |
| Students were tasked with identifying textual elements, focusing on verb and adverb usage within the story. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18 students (SN, NA, WL, DH, AL, KA, TS, MI, AN, FA, FR, MA, MF, NN, SM, SM, VA, and VR) demonstrated comprehension of plot and correct identification of verbs and adverbs. 7 students (MR, AJ, MR, YF, OF, SF, and HA) showed difficulty in identifying text structure and distinguishing between structure and tenses. | Most students completed the task of identifying verb and adverb sentences, though some struggled to comprehend text structure. |
| Third Observation | | |
| Students' ability to interpret the meaning of sentences and paragraphs in the reading text. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 students (VA, SM, TS, FA, NA, NA, AN, MA, and WL) were able to deduce meaning from the short story and participated in reading exercises. 17 students (VA, SM, TS, FA, NA, NA, AN, MA, and WL) struggled with comprehension, especially in relating characters to their own experiences, hindering understanding of the story's significance. | Short stories provided a more engaging and meaningful learning experience, helping students feel more interested in the material. |

After three observations, the students were given a questionnaire to explore their experiences with intensive reading using short stories as a medium. The statements were divided into three categories: experience, understanding, and benefits.

3.1.1 Students' Experience in Using Short Story as a Learning Medium

Table 2. Students' Experience in Using a Short Story

| Category | Statement | Percentage (%) |
|---|--|----------------|
| Students' Experience on Intensive Reading by Using Short Stories | I am interested in reading short stories as authentic material. | 16.61 |
| | I am more motivated to read when using short stories. | 17.24 |
| | I find it easier to understand grammar and sentence structures when using short stories as reading material. | 15.99 |
| | Reading short stories makes the English learning process more enjoyable. | 16.93 |
| | Reading short stories is an effective way to develop my reading skills. | 16.93 |
| | Intensive reading using short stories as authentic material is very effective. | 16.30 |
| TOTAL | | 100.00 |
| Students' Understanding of the Context of the Story | Reading short stories expands my knowledge of English-speaking cultures and lifestyles. | 33.65 |
| | Reading short stories helps me identify the author's point of view and the text's narration. | 32.69 |
| | Reading short stories helps me develop the skills to identify a text's purpose and theme. | 33.65 |
| TOTAL | | 100.00 |
| Students' Responses on the Benefits of Intensive Reading by Using Short Stories | Reading short stories helps me better understand English vocabulary. | 15.08 |
| | Reading short stories increases my interest in learning English. | 14.80 |
| | Reading short stories helps me improve my reading comprehension. | 15.08 |
| | Reading short stories helps me develop skills to respond creatively to texts in English. | 13.55 |
| | Reading short stories helps me develop summarizing skills in English. | 13.28 |
| | Reading short stories helps me develop skills to draw conclusions from English texts. | 13.97% |

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Reading short stories helps me develop skills to identify key information in English texts. | 14.25 |
| TOTAL | 100.00 |

This study explores the role of short stories as a medium for teaching intensive reading skills, focusing on students' experiences, comprehension, and perceived benefits. The integration of observational data and questionnaire results provides a comprehensive understanding of how short stories influence students' motivation, engagement, and cognitive processing. The findings reveal that short stories enhance not only linguistic skills but also higher-order thinking, cultural literacy, and analytical reading abilities. These results align with previous research, such as that of Sabir & Fazil (2022), which emphasizes the significance of authentic texts in improving both motivation and comprehension in second-language acquisition. Furthermore, Hossain (2024) argues that literature-based approaches, particularly short stories, provide an effective means of fostering critical reading skills by immersing students in contextualized language use.

3.1.2 Students' Experiences in Using Short Stories for Intensive Reading

Observational data highlighted a progressive shift in students' engagement when short stories were introduced. Initially, some students exhibited passive engagement, relying heavily on teacher support. However, over time, their willingness to participate in discussions and ask questions increased. The questionnaire results support this trend, with 17.24% of students reporting that they felt more motivated to read when using short stories and 16.93% reporting that the reading process was more enjoyable. These findings align with those of Permatasari & Wienanda (2023), who found that students exposed to short stories during reading activities demonstrated increased intrinsic motivation and improved reading fluency due to the material's narrative appeal. Additionally, 15.99% of students in this study stated that short stories helped them understand grammar and sentence structures more easily. This is further reinforced by the research of Pratama et al. (2024), who emphasize the importance of contextualized language exposure in fostering deeper syntactic awareness and comprehension skills.

3.1.3 Students' Understanding of the Context of the Story

One of the key objectives of intensive reading is to develop students' ability to comprehend texts beyond surface-level meaning. This study found that short stories played a significant role in helping students grasp cultural and contextual elements of English texts. The questionnaire results indicate that 33.65% of students reported an expansion of their knowledge of English-speaking cultures and lifestyles, while 32.69% stated that they could better identify the author's point of view and narrative techniques. These findings are consistent with Julia & Jeyanthi (2024), who argue that literature, particularly short fiction, serves as a bridge between linguistic competence and cultural literacy, allowing students to develop both language skills and intercultural awareness.

However, some students still struggled with inference and recognition of implicit meaning, suggesting that while short stories are effective tools for enhancing comprehension, additional scaffolding is necessary. This aligns with the findings of Benabbes & Taleb (2024), who stress that explicit strategy instruction, such as

questioning techniques and graphic organizers, can significantly enhance students' inferencing abilities in reading. Therefore, incorporating structured support mechanisms, such as guided discussions and thematic analysis, may further enhance students' interpretive skills.

3.1.4 Students' Perceived Benefits of Intensive Reading Using Short Stories

Beyond comprehension, short stories provided cognitive and linguistic benefits. Questionnaire responses showed that 15.08% of students found that reading short stories improved their vocabulary, while 15.08% believed their overall reading comprehension improved. These findings are consistent with the study by Elvriza & Ivan (2025), which demonstrates that exposure to narrative texts enhances vocabulary retention and reading fluency due to repeated exposure to words in meaningful contexts. Furthermore, 14.80% of students reported increased interest in learning English, reinforcing Wu's (2022) claim that motivation plays a crucial role in second-language development and is often heightened by engaging, story-driven materials. Additionally, 13.97% of students in this study acknowledged improvements in their ability to draw conclusions from texts, and 13.28% reported better summarization skills. However, the lower percentage of students who felt confident in responding creatively (13.55%) suggests that while short stories facilitate structured comprehension, additional instructional strategies may be needed to foster independent interpretation and creative expression.

3.1.5 Integrated Analysis and Implications for Teaching

From an instructional standpoint, the findings highlight the multi-dimensional benefits of using short stories in intensive reading instruction. Short stories provide an engaging platform that fosters motivation, grammatical awareness, and cultural understanding while simultaneously developing essential reading skills. However, this study also underscores the need for supplementary activities that address students' challenges in inferencing and creative expression. This aligns with the pedagogical recommendations of Ni'mah & Sholihah (2022), who suggest that intensive reading instruction should incorporate pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities to maximize comprehension and analytical thinking.

While the study confirms the effectiveness of short stories in improving vocabulary and reading comprehension, teacher intervention remains critical. Pre-reading activities, such as vocabulary previews and background knowledge activation, can aid comprehension, while post-reading discussions and reflection tasks can enhance interpretive skills. Future research should explore how multimodal adaptations of short stories, such as graphic novels or audio-visual storytelling, can further enhance engagement and reading proficiency. Additionally, a longitudinal approach could assess how sustained exposure to literary texts influences students' reading development over time. This study supports integrating short stories into intensive reading curricula as an effective tool for fostering linguistic, cognitive, and cultural competencies among English language learners.

4. Conclusions

This study highlights the effectiveness of short stories in intensive reading instruction, demonstrating their impact on student motivation, comprehension, and language acquisition. The findings reveal that short stories enhance engagement by providing authentic and enjoyable reading experiences and by making grammar and vocabulary more accessible. Additionally, they help students develop critical reading skills, such as identifying themes, understanding narration, and interpreting the author's intent. However, while comprehension improved, some students struggled with deeper inferential reasoning, suggesting a need for instructional strategies that foster analytical thinking. The study also indicates that although short stories aid vocabulary development and summarization, their potential to encourage creative responses remains underutilized, necessitating more interactive and interpretative learning activities.

Pedagogically, these findings emphasize that intensive reading with short stories should go beyond passive comprehension exercises and incorporate scaffolding techniques, metacognitive strategies, and interdisciplinary approaches to maximize student learning. Future research should examine how different narrative structures influence comprehension and engagement, and the role of multimedia adaptations in enhancing reading experiences. While short stories are a powerful tool for fostering both linguistic and cognitive development, their true value lies in their ability to cultivate critical thinking and creative expression. Therefore, educators should integrate structured and open-ended activities to ensure that students not only understand texts but also engage with them in meaningful, analytical ways.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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