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## **Effects of Online Short Stories on Reading Attitudes and Transfer of Learning from Viewing Comprehension to Reading Comprehension**

**Dr. Abdullah M. Almelhi**

Faculty of Languages & Translation - King Khalid University  
K.S.A.

### **Abstract**

**This study examines the effects of the transfer of learning from viewing comprehension of short stories embedded in Blackboard YouTube mashups to reading short stories on Saudi Arabian college EFL seniors and their attitudes toward reading in English. The researcher employed an experimental pretest-posttest, control group design, recruiting 26 seniors to the experimental group who viewed a twelve-week online short story-based reading course after viewing them on YouTube and 25 seniors to a control group that studied the same course but without short stories. The control group was not engaged in any short story reading inside or outside the classroom. All participants were pretested using a Reading Attitude Survey and a reading comprehension test developed by the researcher. The pretest-posttest data analysis demonstrated that the experimental participants outperformed the control group on reading attitudes and reading comprehension at a significant level. The study ended with a discussion of the results in the context of pertinent literature and extrapolated relevant pedagogical implications and conclusions, and suggestions for further research.**

**Keywords:** Short stories, Reading comprehension, Viewing comprehension, Transfer of learning.

## Introduction

Using stories in EFL classrooms can be highly beneficial to language development (Cameron, 2001; Wright, 1997;1995), especially in reading, listening, writing, vocabulary and grammar acquisition (Erkaya, 2005; Khatib & Nasrollah, 2012; Petersen et al., 2020; Sell, 2005). According to one author, “Stories present holistic approaches to language teaching and learning that place a high premium on [learners’] involvement with rich, authentic uses of the foreign language” (Cameron, 2001: 159). To Garvie (1990), a story can be an intriguing technique for foreign language teaching and learning. Short stories can thus be exciting reading activities in the EFL classroom in various ways to bring about a change in teaching tasks and break boredom and tedium for students. If used effectively, short stories can engage teachers and learners in active foreign language education (Ahmad, 2012; Khatib & Nasrollahi, 2012; Grant, 2014).

Using short stories in teaching foreign languages is as old as using the Grammar Translation Method to acquire vocabulary and learn grammar rules (Erkaya, 2005; Khatib & Nasrollah, 2012; Sell, 2005). Short stories can be highly beneficial for overall language development for language learners of lower and upper intermediate proficiency levels as this technique can present a holistic approach to language teaching and learning by enriching students’ vocabulary and providing authentic uses of the target language, possibly through multimedia story-telling (Cameron, 2001; Wright, 1997; Zhou & Yadav, 2017).

Besides, the use of “multiple interrelated repertoires” such as integrating oral language, conceptual vocabulary knowledge, text structures and visual information as embedded in videos or aural information embedded in audio helps readers to process actively and ultimately construct meaning (Hitchcock, Prater & Dowrick, 2004; Petersen, Spencer, Konishi, Sellars, Foster and Robertson, 2020: 1097). In addition, EFL students’ oral skills, listening/viewing comprehension skills and reading skills should be researched in tandem and later phases of foreign language learning such as the college level (Babayigit & Shapiro, 2020).

In addition, previous studies showed that using digital stories could improve the quality and frequency of the language of short stories which can help in enhancing communication skills and upholstering vocabulary range (Kim, 2014; Korosidou & Griva, 2021; Robin & McNeil, 2012; Robin, 2016). Furthermore, online short stories could help in facilitating listening skills and reading comprehension skills as well as digital skills (Babayiğit & Shapiro, 2020; Hitchcock, et al., 2004; Lima, 2017; Petersen et al., 2020; Zhou, N., & Yadav, 2017). The overall conclusion from prior research indicates that digital short stories can help keep learners' interest and engagement in reading high as well as enable learners to develop positive attitudes towards reading in the target language (Green, 2013; Kaminski, 2019; McCormick-Huhn, K. & Shields, 2021).

### **Rationale of the study**

Short stories read out or listened to in classrooms can also be used to enhance speaking and listening skills where the use of these short stories is “a matter of reading writing, or writing to be read” (Sell, 2005: 87). Reading short stories provides a solid foundation for foreign language learners to develop higher-order skills. Therefore, foreign language learners should be empowered “to read challenging material, to analyze it closely, to learn from it, to reason from it, and to problem-solve” (Graves et al., 2001: 24). Using short stories helps these learners to gain an in-depth understanding, local and global, of texts by retaining information, thoroughly understanding topics, and actively using knowledge gained for higher-order cognitive processing (Graves et al., 2001; Perkins, 1992). According to the International Reading Association Commission on Adolescent Literacy, “adolescent readers deserve access to a wide variety of reading material that they can and want to read, including increasingly complex materials such as short stories” (Moore et al., 1999: 101). Short stories well integrated into language skills courses can help improve integrated language skills learning (i.e., reading, writing, listening and speaking, primarily by nurturing and enriching lexical, syntactic and phonological knowledge. Pedagogical activities based on short stories can stir interest in a closer reading of short stories, enhancing reading comprehension of written material and listening comprehension when short stories are read

out to the students. Short stories can provide models for speaking and pronunciation skills. They can also be used for tilting writing activities and tasks to develop specific writing skills. Besides, short stories in foreign language learning can improve cultural awareness (Chiang, 2007; Khatib & Nasrollahi, 2012; McKay, 2001; McWilliams, 1998; Sell, 2005; Stern, 2001).

### **The problem of the study**

While seniors in the English department are about to graduate, reading comprehension and listening comprehension grade histories reveal low-achieving levels in their reading performance, especially in reading literature they start learning in their fourth year. Given their low performance in reading comprehension, the researcher wanted to examine the transfer of viewing comprehension to reading comprehension upon reading digital short stories. In other words, the study examines the transfer of comprehension and learning skills from viewing/listening comprehension to reading comprehension as a relaxed way to improve the students' attitudes towards reading as well as to improve their reading skills required to do their English literature classes. Prior research showed that although digital short stories could lead to improvements in listening and reading skills, vocabulary gains and positive attitudes, the benefits of using multimedia technology in EFL learning contexts should be identified by foreign language educators who should design language programmes that integrate digital short stories (Green, 2013; Babayigit & Shapiro, 2020; Hitchcock, et al., 2004; Kaminski, 2019; Kim, 2014; Korosidou & Griva, 2021; Lima, 2017; McCormick-Huhn, K., & Shields, 2021; Robin & McNeil, 2012; Robin, 2016; Petersen et al., 2020; Turkyilmaz, 2018; Zhou, N. & Yadav, 2017).

### **Literature Review**

Reading is an essential skill valued for developing other language skills and social and economic development (Snow, Bums, & Griffin, 1998; Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw & Rycik, 1999). Consequently, reading should be considered a process rather than the "aggregate of a series of isolated sub-skills" (Valencia & Wixson, 2000: 921).

There is a plethora of research and discussion on the effects of story-telling and reading on comprehension and incidental vocabulary learning in first language research and second language learning, mostly with positive effects for story-rich classrooms (Elley, 1989; Grant, 2014; McWilliams, 1998; Trostle & Hicks, 1998; Uchiyama, 2011; Walter-Burnham, 1988, to mention just a few). Virtually, there is no single study on online short stories applications in learning English, particularly in EFL college settings. Nevertheless, the pedagogical use of stories has had only limited attention for students involved in foreign language learning in Saudi Arabia. There are differences in the cultural context and educational background from locations where most of this research was conducted, and the same results could not be obtained without verification.

The use of short stories embedded in reading activities can be exciting and motivating for students to learn. This use is productive when provided in a multisensory mode, like including short stories in YouTube mashups that integrate sound, picture, animation and video (Almelhi, 2014; Mekheimer, 2011; Potocki & Laval, 2019), let alone the pedagogical uses of videos in cultural familiarisation which also helps to enhance comprehension (Tudor, 1987). For instance, Potocki & Laval (2019) found that reading comprehension abilities are accessible and open for development across aural/oral modalities and linguistic formats (e.g., narratives versus idioms).

Trostle & Hicks (1998) examined the effects of story-telling and story reading on comprehension and vocabulary development on young learners acquiring English as a second language in a similar vein. Using two different approaches, reading-aloud and character imaging, the results indicated that integrating short stories in learning reading can improve vocabulary learning and better reading comprehension.

Several authors support the notion of using literature, especially short stories, in English language teaching as it provides valuable materials for improving reading skills, engaging students in learning tasks, and helping learners identify the particulars of the target culture in addition to elements of the target language in terms of structures, vocabulary and culture (Arthur,

1968; Ahmad, 2012; Hill, 1994; Collie & Slater, 1987). Garvie (1990) recommended using short stories as helpful language learning tools that can be efficiently integrated into the language skills courses to create excitement and change the routine of foreign language learning. Wright (2003) observed that “in using stories in language teaching, we are using something much bigger and more important than language teaching”. Arıođul (2001) noted that short stories could render reading comprehension activities much more effective and accessible to implement in the classroom than other literature genres and more adaptable to ELT pedagogy. Using short stories to teach reading comprehension skills can broaden learners’ worldview about the target culture, motivate them to read, use literary texts in abridged form, sharpen learners’ critical skills and enhance creativity. They can improve communication in the classroom and encourage students to derive underlying meanings and a more comprehensive understanding of texts. Using short stories in the EFL classroom can be exciting but is challenging to language instructors (Ahmad, 2012). Short stories adapted for classroom activities allow for vocabulary and grammar learning with ease and confidence in an atmosphere of compelling plot lines and intrigue (Harmer, 2001). Because of their conciseness, stories can be integrated into reading, writing and listening classes in a systematic teaching strategy. ELT educators recommend avoiding confusion activities based on short stories should not be overloaded by many different tasks, including presenting short stories in the bimodal environment of videos and reading texts. Additionally, they can be adapted to include pre-reading/viewing activities, silent reading, developing a story outline, eliciting global and local ideas, drawing comparisons and contrasts, writing personal responses and deducing themes and morale (Ahmad, 2012).

Another strategy proposed in the literature is the character imagery story-telling style in which the storyteller assumes the protagonist’s role while narrating the story. This strategy can effectively teach viewing comprehension and reading and was conducive to improving development in reading comprehension (McWilliams, 1998; Trostle and Hicks, 1998; Uchiyama, 2011).

Short stories can be read in the target language without any use of the students’ first language. Another alternative to reading stories is to present

them in video snapshots via YouTube or recorded YouTube mashups containing the target short stories. Using this strategy, language learners are trained to infer the meanings of new vocabulary through ‘deep processing’ (Cameron, 2001). Narrative imagery which requires high mental effort, can be created visually and aurally, verbally and non-verbally, to be later retained in the long-term memory through video presentations (Almelhi, 2014; Hulstijn, 1992). In this sense, Ahmad (2012) indicated that simplified and abridged stories, particularly those presented in graded vocabulary, could best be used as reading material. Adaptations of short stories for classroom practice should include linguistic and interactional adjustment (Cabrera and Martínez, 2001). In the former, an abridged version is extracted from the original text with short sentences and simple syntactic structures, while in the latter, adaptations include repetitions, questions, and comprehension checks during story-reading or story-telling. For creating more comprehensible input from short stories, especially to limited proficiency students, Huang (1991) suggested using a multisensory approach to enhance understanding. Abridgements of short stories were suggested within collaborative group work through contextualized story-telling, similar to character imagery story-telling by using videos that relate short stories. According to this strategy, collaborative learning groups listen to a story in a video or audio with animations before reading the story in an illustrated reading text format, followed by word recall exercises. YouTube mashups available via Blackboard® can offer this opportunity of contextualized short stories in videos manipulated for this purpose beforehand. This strategy can raise students’ understanding and responsiveness to language to promote understanding of storylines and cut down on the listeners’ affective filters (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).

Some researchers suggested assigning short stories for home reading at least a day before they are used in the classroom to provide students with sufficient time to develop their understanding of the story’s structural meaning since “understanding structural meaning is, of course, a prerequisite to penetrating any text” (Rivers and Temperley, 1978). Researchers indicated an intuitive consensus on the efficiency of YouTube mashups in the classroom which can influence language learning (Almelhi, 2014; Badal, 2008; Batra, 2008; Ehsani and Knodt, 1998; Huang, Chern & Lin, 2009; Kuo, 2009). Research-

ers suggested that web-based learning can offer a new learning approach for language learners to practice and comprehend aural/oral intake of the target language as through YouTube mashups and other facilities of online learning environments (Irons, Keel & Bielema, 2002; Lee, 1997, 2002; MacDonald and McAteer, 2003; Newsome, 2008; O'Toole and Absalom, 2003; Poole, 2006; Tallent-Runnels et al., 2006; Warschauer, 2000; Zhao, 2003).

In viewing comprehension and reading, too, YouTube makes available sufficient situational conversation exposure, immersion in a variety of native-speaker pronunciations, and various well-selected suitable aural/oral materials for intake (Kuo, 2009) whose skills can transfer from listening to reading. In this vein, using comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985; 1989) draws on four different types of input-speech, context, communication, and conversational structure. Thus, viewing material should be designed to present explicit content and understandable context cues when provided through aural/visual stimulation (Kuo, 2009). Planning such a design requires a combination of visual and aural clues and aids intended to promote listening input in order for it to become assimilated intake. This language intake can further be used to comprehend written language as suggested in prior studies, which regarded watching videos as highly beneficial to the EFL learners' aural/oral comprehension (Brinton, 2001; Kuo, 2009; Tudor, 1987; Mekheimer, 2011).

According to Abrams (1970), there are two categories of short stories; stories of incidents and characters' stories. Stories of incidents usually focus on the course and outcome of the events, whereas characters' stories focus on the character's motivations and thinking or reveal their moral strength. The first genre is more convenient for reading classes, as they are more exciting and motivating. An essential criterion for choosing short stories for the language class is selecting examples that trigger learners' curiosity. The short stories' language adapted for classroom activities should be devoid of slang, archaic language or farfetched figures of speech and historical narrations. This kind of adaptation implies that short stories with lengthy sentences or heavy structures should be avoided.

In this context, Hill (1994) suggested some essential criteria for selecting a short story for language teaching purposes to take into account

- The language learning needs, proficiency level and language abilities of the students.
- The linguistic and stylistic features of the text.
- The amount of background information required for a true appreciation of the material.

Short stories selected for language learning activities should also cater to the range of interests and styles appropriate for class level and students' ages to make a story appropriate for their proficiency level and their cognitive and affective maturity. Language learning activities should be pleasant and valuable (Ahmad, 2012; Arıoğul, 2001; Hall, 2005; Paran, 2008). Sage (1987) suggested that the qualities of short stories that make them appeal to language curriculum developers, educators and syllabus designers include being short in length and easier for reading and/or listening. Sage (1987) further noted that short stories and other forms of literature adapted for the language curriculum could contribute to learners' cognitive and emotional development.

Prior research also revealed that establishing online reading groups using literary narratives and short stories could be effective tools to develop the group's reading skills and the creation of readership communities; online reading of short stories helps create complex interactions between the readers at the contextual, motivational and behavioural levels inducing a sufficiently effective learning experience (Aceto, Dondi & Marzotto, 2010; Korosidou & Griva, 2021; McCormick-Huhn, & Shields, 2021). To clarify, Korosidou and Griva (2021) recommended that using online environments and related digital technologies can provide extended opportunities to promote cooperative learning of reading, speaking and listening as well as uphold interaction to enhance better vocabulary development; such a recommendation resonates with prior research findings that emphasise the effective role of using online short stories in promoting literacy skills in the EFL classroom (Green, 2013; Kaminski, 2019; Kim, 2014; Robin, 2016; Robine & McNeil, 2012). Such advantages warrant 'a re-evaluation of the role of literature in language teacher

education ... and the employment of alternative methodological approaches to the integration of technology-mediated communication, literature and language in educational contexts' (Lima, 2017: 139).

A further point of concern regarding language learning using short stories relates to attitudes. Attitudes towards reading were found to develop earlier in the first grade of primary school. According to McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995), attitudes toward reading develop earlier and result in indifference by the end of primary school. McKenna et al. (1995) determined that recreational and academic reading attitudes start at a positive extreme in the early primary school for readers in their native language, and these attitudes may affect students' reading abilities. They found that positive and negative attitudes influence reading ability. However, for recreational reading, students with positive attitudes can maintain reading regardless of ability, while poor attitudes can lead students to opt-out and not read as a recreational activity, resulting in a-literacy (Stanovich, 1992). Negative or low attitudes toward reading can negatively affect reading achievement, just as positive attitudes toward reading correlate with high achievement; (Brooks, 1996; Brown and Briggs, 1989). Positive attitudes towards reading can lead to students planning their own language learning goals and taking the initiative to develop literacy (Powell et al., 2006).

Several recent studies have identified factors that influence positive attitudes toward reading in secondary students (Bintz, 1993; Kubis, 1994; Walberg & Tsai, 1983). Walberg and Tsai (1983) recognised some elements that influence positive attitudes toward reading in college readers. These include a belief that reading is essential, enjoying reading, having a high self-concept as a reader, and having a rich environment where active language interaction occurs regularly in the classroom and at home. Brett (1996) also found that multimedia incorporating videos and audios and animations and texts can positively influence attitudes towards foreign language learning.

## Research Questions

This study was designed to assess whether online reading short stories in conjunction with EFL instruction made a significant difference to the

learners' attitudes to reading, comprehension in English for senior students in the College of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia. Performance changes were compared with results for a control group that undertook the same course but were not involved in short story activities to assess whether changes were due to the short story involvement. Significant differences between the groups favoring the experimental group could be attributed to short stories and related activities. The research questions to be answered in this research are below:

- 1 - Were there significant differences between the experimental and control groups in reading comprehension from pretesting to post-testing?
- 2 - Were there significant differences in the overall scores of students' attitudes in the experimental and control groups towards reading from pretesting to post-testing?

### **Sub-questions:**

- i - Were there significant differences in students' attitudes regarding the transfer of learning in the experimental and control groups towards reading from pretesting to post-testing?
- ii - Were there significant differences in students' attitudes regarding vocabulary and writing development in the experimental and control groups towards reading from pretesting to post-testing?
- iii - Were there significant differences in students' attitudes regarding enjoyment in the experimental and control groups towards reading from pretesting to post-testing?
- iv - Were there significant differences in students' attitudes regarding pastime and learning in the experimental and control groups towards reading from pretesting to post-testing?

### **Methodology**

**Participants:** Forty-nine EFL first-year college students in the age category of 19 and 21 were recruited from two homogeneous Reading-IV classes in the fourth year in the English department instructed by the same Reading-IV in-

structor who participated in the study and was assigned to the research groups. One group of 46 students was the experimental group using short stories, and the other group of 43 students was the control group which was not exposed to short stories. All the students had undertaken English classes at the secondary school level so had some initial foreign language ability.

To ensure homogeneity of the two groups, the researcher ascertained the socioeconomic level for each student in the study population, using the Kuppuswamy's socioeconomic status scale (the updated version of 2019), which considered information about the education and occupation of the students' the families based on family's income per month. Both groups were from the lower middle class (11-15 on the scale), and there were no significant differences between the groups on this scale. Comparability in English language proficiency was verified by pretests of reading attitude, reading comprehension and vocabulary size. The performance of the two groups on these tests was very similar, and there were no significant differences between them. Details are provided in Table 1 below.

**Procedures of the Study:** This study was conducted during the second semester of 2019-20. Pretests measuring participants' reading attitude, reading comprehension, and vocabulary were conducted in the first week of the study. The same instructor taught the two groups, and both groups received regular instruction for the 14-week semester following the same procedures using the textbook Well-Read IV. However, the experimental group received a supplementary extensive reading programme based on online short stories presented over Blackboard via YouTube mashups. The experimental group participants were presented 12 short stories, utilising the series Learn English via Stories available on YouTube. They were asked to watch the short stories on a data show projector (the stories were also available via Blackboard as a home resource). Then, they were given specific and global questions based on the stories. The stories were typed and presented as reading texts in the next exercise. They read the stories, and then they were asked to answer local and global questions and check their answers to the YouTube mashup questions. At the end of the study, participants in both groups were post-tested using another version of the reading comprehension test, the same reading attitude scale and a second version of the vocabulary test.

For selecting the short stories appropriate for the experimental group participants' reading level, the researcher classified texts available from Learn English via Stories on a difficulty index from the easiest to the most difficult using two criteria of authenticity and simplification (Day & Bamford, 1997; 1998; Nuttall, 1996). Consistent with the research conclusions about qualities of pedagogically compelling stories for language learners, attention was given to selecting stories about issues and events consistent with the students out of class experiences and interests.

Consistent with research relating to the use of strategies to reinforce learning in each class, the experimental participants were asked to complete activities and tasks based on the reading stories, including finding keywords or phrases in each story, guessing meanings from context, and relating the short story content to their own and other current or past real-world events and experiences.

In addition to the short stories used in class in the experimental group, participants were encouraged to select additional short stories from YouTube or other websites according to their interest after the pretest was conducted, including reading beyond their proficiency level if they wished to do so. They were asked to view or read for the short story's overall meaning at their reading rate and were encouraged to view and read as many stories as possible at home. The researcher recommended a minimum of two hours a week of leisure viewing/reading time for these students based on a suggestion by Robb and Susser (1989) in order for the students to achieve the benefits of extensive reading.

## **Tools and Instrumentation**

The instruments used in this study were a Reading/Viewing Attitudes Survey and a reading comprehension test. These were administered to both groups of the study as a pretest before the study was begun. The attitudes survey was administered together with two alternate versions of the reading tests appended at the end of the study.

## 1 - The Reading vs Viewing Attitude Survey

The Reading vs Viewing Attitude Survey (RVAS) was developed, validated and administered to both groups in the study at the beginning and end of the term to assess the participants' attitudes to reading before and after the study. The RVAS comprised twenty-four items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1); the construction of these items was based on a thorough review of research (e.g., Brett, 1996; Brooks, 1995; Chiang, 2007; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; McKenna et al., 1995; Martinez, Aricak & Jewell, 2008; Oskamp, 1991; Stokmans, 1999; Chotigham & Wongwanich, 2014; Seitz, 2010).

The survey items introspected the participants' reading attitudes in four dimensions, including Usefulness for transfer of Learning from viewing to reading comprehension (6 items), Usefulness in vocabulary development and overall language comprehension and writing (6 items), Enjoyment of Reading Short stories (6 items) and Usefulness in pastime and learning (6 items). The test reliability index was calculated using Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , 0.78, 0.8, 0.87 and 0.82 for the four constructs, respectively. These values verified that the reading attitudes survey had high reliability.

## 2 - The Reading Comprehension Test

Two versions of an English reading comprehension test were used for the study. To assess reading ability progress, they were administered to determine participants' reading comprehension levels at the beginning and end of the semester. The two versions of the reading comprehension test each consisted of 20 multiple-choice questions.

The reading comprehension test was based on relevant research and a review of the instruments used in prior research as well as the objectives and vision of the present study (Huang et al., 2009; Seitz, 2010; Stokmans, 1999; Turkyilmaz, 2018; Walberg & Tsai, 1985). To determine the reading tests' internal validity, a Cronbach alpha was calculated on a sample of EFL learner population (N=400), using SPSS (alpha = 0.971 and 0.973 respectively for the two versions).

## Data Analysis

To answer the three research questions, independent and paired samples t-tests were calculated using SPSS-Version 20 to determine any differences before and after the experiment in students' English reading attitude, reading comprehension and the difference between the groups on changes between pretesting and post-testing.

### Comparability of Groups on Pretesting

Table (1) shows the mean scores for the experimental and control groups on the overall score for reading attitudes and reading comprehension and the total score for vocabulary at the beginning of the semester.

**Table 1**

*Group Comparison for Confirming Homogeneity on the Pretest in Reading Attitudes and Reading Comprehension*

Pretest	Ex. group (N = 46)		Control group (N = 43)		t	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Reading attitudes	13.4	462.	13.24	3.81	0.62	0.54
Reading comprehension	36.07	12.61	37.81	12.84	0.87	0.62

The two groups' scores were very similar on the attitudes assessment and reading comprehension tests, with slight differences. Pretest scores on the reading attitudes scale and the reading comprehension test confirm that both groups were homogeneous before administering the intervention to the experimental group.

### Responding to Research Question # 1

The first research question asked, "Were there significant differences between the experimental and control groups in reading comprehension from pretesting to post-testing?", and to answer this question, the online short stories intervention was provided to the experimental group while the control group participants studied Well-Read IV in the conventional method of in-

struction. Having ensured the homogeneity of both groups on pretesting, post testing scores were collected and compared for both groups from pretesting to post testing using t-tests.

Table 2 below shows the experimental and control groups' pretest and post-test mean scores on the reading comprehension tests. Although both groups improved, the change was much more significant for the experimental group ( $t=11.67$ ,  $\alpha=.003$ ).

**Table 2**

*Between Group Pretest and Posttest Comprehension Scores on Reading Comprehension*

	Mean on Pretesting	Mean on Post-testing	Difference	SD	t- value	Sign.
Ex. Group	36.07	55.78	19.71	23.88	11.67	.003
Ctrl. Group	37.01	43.81	6.80	14.21	4.23	.047

The pretest scores of the two groups were very similar, but there was a difference of 11.97 in the post-test scores, indicating that the different interventions for the experimental group involving online short stories had a much more significant impact on the students than the conventional course in which online short stories were not used.

A t-test was run in SPSS-V 20 to investigate the between-group differences in changes in scores on the reading comprehension post-test. Statistically significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) were found between the posttest scores of the experimental group ( $M = 55.78$ ,  $SD = 23.88$ ) and the control group ( $M = 43.81$ ,  $SD = 14.21$ ).

The experimental group's mean score increased by 19.71 from 36.07 to 55.78 and for the control group by 6.8 from 37.01 to 43.81. The difference in the improvement of scores was significant ( $p < .01$ ). Therefore, the scores positively responded to the first research question that statistically significant differences were identified between the experimental and control groups from pretesting to post-testing on their reading comprehension abilities.

## Response to Research Question # 2

The second research question underpinning this study asked, “Were there significant differences in the overall scores of students’ attitudes in the experimental and control groups towards reading from pretesting to post-testing?”; using mean scores and computing changes from pretesting to post testing showed the effects of the intervention on the experimental participants as compared with their counterparts in the control group. The second research question enquired whether there were significant differences in attitudes between the experimental and control groups towards reading from pretesting to post-testing. The pretest and post-test scores for the experimental group on each of the attitude dimensions and the overall attitude scores are shown in Table 3 below. There was an improvement in the experimental participants with an average difference of 2.75 to the good of post testing. A difference of 3.15 was also there between the experimental group average scores and the control group average scores to the good of the experimental group. The second research question provides base for the following sub-questions:

- i - Were there significant differences in students’ attitudes regarding the transfer of learning in the experimental and control groups towards reading from pretesting to post-testing?
- ii - Were there significant differences in students’ attitudes regarding vocabulary and writing development in the experimental and control groups towards reading from pretesting to post-testing?
- iii - Were there significant differences in students’ attitudes regarding enjoyment in the experimental and control groups towards reading from pretesting to post-testing?
- iv - Were there significant differences in students’ attitudes regarding pastime and learning in the experimental and control groups towards reading from pretesting to post-testing?

Table 3 below details the mean scores of the students’ responses on each dimension of the attitudes scale.

**Table 3**

*Pretest and Posttest Scores for Experimental and Control Groups on Attitudes' Dimensions*

Dimension	Experimental Group			Control Group		
	Pretest Score	Posttest Score	Change	Pretest Score	Posttest Score	Change
Transfer of learning	3.36	4.05	.69*	3.62	3.68	.06
Vocabulary & writing development	3.91	4.77	.86*	3.59	3.56	-.03
Enjoyment	3.65	4.71	1.06*	3.35	3.17	-.18
Pastime & learning	2.49	2.61	.12	2.68	2.60	-.08
Overall Score	13.41	16.16	.69*	13.24	13.01	-.23

These figures show higher attitude scores for the experimental group on three of the four dimensions and the overall score with all significant ( $<.05$ ) levels. The attitudes on this group's pastime and learning dimension were almost the same on pre-post-tests for the experimental group (with a change of  $-.08$ ), indicating that this particular dimension was not affected by reading online short stories. The control group receiving no short stories instruction during the study did not improve their scores. Instead, they showed a slight decline. The significant improvements on most dimensions for the experimental group and the slight negative changes for the control group confirmed that the use of short stories positively affected experimental participants. These findings confirm that viewing and reading short stories by the experimental group during the study positively influenced the students' overall attitudes toward reading in English and provided a positive answer to the third research question that there are statistically significant differences in attitudes between the experimental and control groups toward reading from pretesting to post-testing. Notably, the difference between the two groups' changes was significant ( $p<.05$ ) for all the dimensions except for pastime and learning dimensions. These findings confirm that reading short stories after viewing them by the experimental group during the study positively influenced the students' overall attitudes toward reading in English, but not noticeably for the control participants.

## Discussion

The post-test scores' differences indicate that the different programmes for the experimental group involving short stories had a much more significant impact than the conventional programme in which short stories were not used. One possible interpretation could be attributed to the transfer of learning from listening/viewing comprehension to reading comprehension due to a multisensory, multimodal presentation method like YouTube channels. The use of YouTube mashups could have supported learning the reading skills of the students. As prior research suggested, teaching language skills by integration could lead to differential improvements in these skills (Kuo, 2009; Tudor, 1987; Mekheimer, 2011). The scores give a positive response to the second research question. The improvement in the experimental group's reading comprehension scores compared with the control group was consistent with findings reported in previous studies (Elley, 1989; Graves et al., 2001; Moore et al., 1999; Perkins, 1992; Trostle and Hicks, 1998). Krashen (1985) stated that language acquisition would occur given comprehensible input and a lack of affective barriers.

These results were consistent with those reported in some previous studies (Bintz, 1993; Brooks, 1996; Brown and Briggs, 1989; Kubis, 1994; Powell et al., 2006; Seitz, 2010; Walberg & Tsai, 1983), which found that reading short stories had positive effects on EFL learners' reading attitudes. Still, Day and Bamford (1998) research indicated that reading experiences in the foreign language environment could positively or negatively impact learners' attitudes toward reading in the foreign language. These experiences were pleasurable and considered helpful for foreign language learners; they could be motivated to read extensively in the target language. However, if the stories were not enjoyed or considered beneficial, they could have the opposite effect. This finding suggests that in this study, providing for the readers' self-selection of some stories and carefully planning others dealing with topics of general interest and appropriate for the students reading proficiency would have provided a motivating environment for reading. Prior research also indicated that using narrative text structures as in audios or videos could transfer learning from viewing comprehension to independent reading in first

language situations (MacWilliarn, 1986). This finding is due to the assumption that narrative stories, including those presented visually in videos, have consistent, structured elements known as story grammars, or rules that govern the temporal and spatial settings in which a story takes place and the elements of logical relationships between story elements (Guthrie, 1977; Montague, Maddux & Dereshiwsy, 1990). In this study, the short story reading programme provided the experimental group with comprehensible input in a low anxiety environment associated with the target language's unconscious acquisition. It also offered opportunities for presenting story grammars better in video mode than in reading texts, which could have enhanced the comprehension of the reading materials.

## Conclusion

This study was intended to confirm applying conclusions from prior research in other locations about the use of short stories in foreign language classrooms when applied to students in a different cultural context in Saudi Arabia and through a multisensory mode of videos and texts. Results indicate that the general conclusions from research in other countries about reading short stories apply to language development in EFL learners in Saudi Arabia, with more differential improvements on the experimental group's side, which studied online short stories in video and written modes. The benefits also include observed improvements in attitudes toward reading in a foreign language, reading comprehension and vocabulary growth, possibly due to the integration of listening/viewing comprehension and reading comprehension. General conclusions from prior research were that short stories can lead to positive results, but their effectiveness depends on some factors. These factors included selecting online stories with an appropriate level of difficulty for the students involved, selecting appropriate YouTube short stories that involve issues and events of interest to the students, consistent with their out of the class experience, in a way that triggers their curiosity. Factors involved also included using online short stories that avoid slang expressions or lengthy or complex sentence structures integrated with verbatim scripts of these stories to integrate listening/viewing comprehension and reading comprehension. Factors also considered using selected stories in the target language in a range

of class activities, including YouTube stories, reading aloud, group activities, reviewing words used, discussions, and other activities based on the stories. Also, active encouragement of additional out of class reading was considered using self-selected material of particular interest to individuals and following up that reading within class activities. In this research, these factors were carefully incorporated for the experimental group using stories, and short stories were not used with the control group. The testing results confirmed that when these factors are incorporated, the short stories' use had positive results. There were significant improvements in attitudes to reading, reading comprehension, and vocabulary for the experimental group. While some benefits were achieved for the control group in a parallel class not involved with short stories, the results were significantly better for the experimental group. The effects of short stories on attitude and comprehension should be considered to be interactive. For example, improvement in comprehension would have been due to a combination of positive attitudes and improved confidence and ability to infer meaning and vocabulary improvements. Similarly, improvements in attitude would have been due not only to enjoyment of the material read or awareness of its value of improving language ability but also to increasing confidence from improving comprehension and mastery of vocabulary

There has been controversy on the pros and cons of using short stories in foreign language education classrooms. Several scholars have supported short stories in teaching specific language skills, particularly reading (Sell, 2005). However, consideration should be given to how they are used if positive results are to be achieved. Curriculum designers and language educators believe that short stories should be well-planned and effectively integrated into the language curriculum and strategically used in the language classroom with long-term objectives and a clear-cut role of the language teacher (Khatib & Nasrollahi, 2012; Sell, 2005). This study's results are consistent with those conclusions and suggest that language teachers should be familiar with the reading strategies employed when integrating short stories in the language curriculum.

Some recommendations can be made following the present study. These include ensuring that stories selected for use in classrooms are of in-

terest to the learners and appropriate to their language ability, encouraging self-selection and private reading of stories that are of interest to them, and incorporating classroom activities such as oral reading, language exercises based on the stories, and integrating these activities into other activities in the language classroom. These steps are important in language research conducted elsewhere and have been proven effective in the Saudi Arabian context in the present study.

Considering the present study limitations, a programme of online short stories versus a conventional book of printed short stories could be used with an experimental group and a control group respectively could help confirm the results of the present study where comparison could only be on the same content and material with differences being only in the medium of instruction. Prospective research could also be launched to examine similarities and differences between traditional and online short stories in EFL college students.

# أثر القصص القصيرة على الإنترنت في الاتجاه نحو القراءة وانتقال أثر التعلم من فهم المشاهدة إلى فهم المقروء

د. عبد الله مفرح آل ملهي

كلية اللغات والترجمة - جامعة الملك خالد بأبها  
المملكة العربية السعودية

## الملخص

بحثت هذه الدراسة في انتقال أثر التعلم من الفهم بالمشاهدة للقصص القصيرة المضمنة في مزيج يوتيوب YouTube في بيئة بلاكبودر للتعلم الإلكتروني إلى الفهم القرائي للقصص القصيرة لدى دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المستوى الثامن من الدراسة الجامعية بالمملكة العربية السعودية، وعلى اتجاهاتهم نحو القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية. استخدم الباحث تصميماً تجريبياً من نوع اختبار قبلي وأخر بعدي، ومجموعة ضابطة، باختيار 26 طالباً في المستوى الثامن في المجموعة التجريبية الذين شاهدوا مقرر قراءة القصص القصيرة عبر الإنترنت على مدار اثني عشر أسبوعاً، و25 طالباً للمجموعة الضابطة درست نفس المقرر، لكن بدون قصص قصيرة، كما لم تشارك المجموعة الضابطة في أي قراءة للقصص القصيرة داخل الفصل الدراسي أو خارجه. وتم اختبار جميع المشاركين مسبقاً باستخدام مقياس الاتجاه نحو القراءة واختبار الفهم القرائي الذي أعده الباحث. أظهر تحليل بيانات الاختبار القبلي والبعدي أن المشاركين في التجربة تفوقوا في أدائهم على المجموعة الضابطة من حيث تحسن اتجاهاتهم نحو القراءة وفهم المقروء بمستوى كبير. وقد انتهت الدراسة بمناقشة النتائج في سياق الأدبيات ذات الصلة، واستقراء الآثار التربوية ذات الصلة ووضعت الاستنتاجات والاقتراحات لمزيد من البحوث المستقبلية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القصص القصيرة، فهم المقروء، فهم المشاهدة، انتقال أثر التعلم.

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