



The Comparative Effect of Using Original Short Stories and Local Short Stories as Two Types of Cultural Sources on Indonesian EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension

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Abstract

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This research intended to compare the impacts of using original and local short stories as two types of cultural sources on enhancing Indonesian EFL learners' reading comprehension. To achieve this goal, 50 intermediate Indonesian participants were chosen by the administration of the Oxford Quick Placement Test. Then, they were assigned to the local group and the original groups. After that, the participants of the two groups took the reading pre-test. After the pre-testing process, one group was trained by the original short storybooks, and the other group was instructed by the local short storybooks. In five sessions, five reading passages were taught to each group. After teaching the passages, a reading post-test was administered to the groups to measure the impacts of the original and the local short storybooks on their reading development. The results indicated that both groups had an improvement on their reading post-tests, but the original group outflanked the local group on the reading post-test. The results can have some implications for English teachers and learners.

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1. Introduction

Stories preserve culture and convey cultural knowledge from a generation to another. As a matter of fact, stories have the capacity to maintain cultures alive. Stories present a timeless connection to ancient legends, archetypes, traditions, and myths. The definition of short story distinguishes this type of literature from other types. In general, short stories are told to stories that can be longer than stories. A short story is like a window or windows that deals with the life of a character or characters, opens for a short time, and allows the reader to see what is happening through these windows to look at the moment. The character in the short story only shows himself and develops less (Surip et al., 2021; Tural & Cubukcu, 2021).

Short stories are considered as useful teaching resources since they expose the learners to the literature of English (Butler, 2002). In fact, true short stories are authentic materials. Wong, Kwok, and Choi (1995) stated that the time and the location authenticity distinguish authentic material from non-authentic material; these components are manifested in literature. True stories are real content because they show authentic incidents and pass on the real beliefs of the target culture or situation. Therefore, there are many real inputs in the literature (Ghosn, 1998). These inputs can be more effective and purposeful to the pupils than the other inputs obtained from other types of passages. Learners' interaction with authentic incidents and people can persuade them to keep on reading and make a purposeful situation for novel learning.

The theory that short stories are highly effective in teaching English is advocated by Pardede's (2010) study results on the interests, perspectives, and needs of the pupils in the Christian University of Indonesia towards the integration of the short stories in English language classrooms. The study indicated that most of the participants fundamentally discovered that short stories are useful and attractive to be used as authentic resources for language contexts. The majority of the participants were in agreement with the integration of short stories in language classrooms and believed that short stories could assist students in reaching better command of English language competencies. They also stated that English instructors needed

to learn how to apply short stories in their teaching process (Pardede, 2011). Moreover, the results of the research indicated that there was a positive and significant relationship between the perceptions and the interests of the students (Pardede, 2011).

Short stories are greatly beneficial in developing the learners' word knowledge and reading ability. The outcomes of the research conducted by Lao and Krashen (2000) that compared the effects of the literature-based passages with the non-literature-based passages on developing vocabulary and reading skills of a group of students indicated that those students who were trained by the literature-based passages outperformed those students who received the treatment by non-literature-based passages.

Applying short stories in the EFL classes can subject the students to valuable opportunities for educational, intellectual, cultural, and linguistic enhancement. The short story is regarded as one of the literal materials that can be employed in the EFL classes to develop language skills, activate learners, and boost their cultural knowledge and tolerance (Luby, 2019). Bouache (2010) states that because the main purpose of the short stories is to amuse and inform, they maintain interest alive in the classes and activate pupils with authentic and cultural values. They produce a pleasant atmosphere and a good and enjoyable context. King (2001) says that short stories can be used as engines and a strong and activating resource for helping students integrate and learn the language.

Collie and Slater (1991) mention four merits for applying short stories for English instructors. First, short stories are convenient because they are long enough to be told in one or two lessons. Second, short stories are not complex for learners. Third, short stories possess different options for diverse tastes and interests. Fourth, they can be applied to all ages, classes, and proficiency levels.

Short stories can be applied to help EFL students enhance their reading apprehension (Wernicke, 2020). Pressley (2000) defines reading comprehension as the capability to extract meanings from what is read. Reading comprehension entails various reading skills such as the recognition of the word, fluency,

word knowledge, and background knowledge to be applied quickly so that the readers gain knowledge from the passage. Based on Block (2004), reading apprehension is a complex procedure in which readers possess a primary part in understanding the meanings from the passage by using the existing skills. Tompkins (2011) asserts that reading apprehension is the level of understating a text. He says that comprehension is an innovative process based on four skills, including semantics, syntax, phonology, and pragmatics. In general, apprehension is considered a state of mind where a person doesn't completely understand the meaning of an idea or message presented to him. In contrast, comprehension is a state of mind where he can entirely understand the meaning of the idea or message presented to him.

Even though teaching/learning reading has a vital effect on learning English as either a second or foreign language, Day and Bamford (1998) assert that L2 learners are often reluctant to read since they consider reading as an unpleasant and painful process to the extent that the lack of reading results in the scarcity of word that is a serious difficulty for L2 learners. One reason for poor reading performance may be a lack of interest in reading passages.

Reading is related to academic accomplishment, as pupils who want to read routinely conduct better than the learners who do not read routinely (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2016; Konyratbayeva et al., 2021). Therefore, reading is a vital skill that needs to be focused on. Being a proficient reader makes it simpler for the students to gain sufficient exposure to the target language, which in turn facilitates the improvement of the other language skills required to be language users. Those who are living in a foreign language situation have minimal opportunities to listen to meaningful inputs. Therefore, reading is an effective method to help the improvement of learners' language competencies. Nonetheless, Mahrooqi (2012) discovered that reading is not a developed skill among EFL learners. Thus, Indonesian instructors must search for nice and attractive passages to guarantee learners' involvement; an appropriate literary passage can be adequate for this goal.

2. Theoretical Framework

Pathan (2012) declared that incorporating short stories into English language teaching can boost learners' language competencies more effectively. Investigations have verified that reading can influence the learners' academic achievement positively since reading fosters other skills of the language (Al-Mahrooqi, 2012). Short stories have some advantages. Firstly, they can increase the pupils' motivations since they are naturally more attractive (Peacock, 1997). Appropriate true short stories capture the pupils' heed ascertaining that they do the tasks. True short stories familiarize the pupils with the elements of the target cultures (Goldberg, 2006). They can introduce the values, traditions, and standards of other cultures that persuade EFL learners to keep on reading to get more familiar with the target cultures. According to Fawkes (2001), authentic resources such as short stories can underline the differences and the similarities in the traditions and the lives of different cultures; thus, pupils obtain a factual knowledge of the globe by finding real resources.

Secondly, Pathan (2012) verified the significant effects of applying short stories in enhancing the reading competency of EFL students. Employing true short stories in teaching English can persuade the learners to read more even when they are not present in the school context. Short stories are commonly useful for extensive reading, and they give the learners the opportunities to infer the meanings from the reading texts (Khatib, Rezaei, & Derakhshan, 2011). When the students are exposed to such practices, their reading abilities can develop. Usually, short stories have simple structures, and the sequences of incidents cause it even simpler to comprehend the presented passages.

Thirdly, real materials or contents enable learners to understand how vocabularies are utilized in authentic situations, which permits students to reach a comprehension of how word functions in authentic contexts (Friedman, 2011). Therefore, students reach an appropriate chance to understand the novel vocabularies applied in an authentic situation and to use the vocabulary items they already learned. Siahaan (2012) stated that the features of short stories such as the incidents and the actions of the involved figures could help the students to

make the meanings from the contexts. This aids the learners to learn the novel vocabularies indirectly by the context. Siahaan (2012) stated that learners' word knowledge boosts after reading a story three times without the teachers' instruction. Rashid, Vethamani, and Abdul Rahman (2010) argued that literature is full of different vocabularies and structures. Hence, story reading gets the learners familiar with the collocations of the target vocabularies and their spellings. Generally, short stories suggest an adequate chance for learning and teaching new vocabularies.

Fourthly, reading storybooks can help the learners learn how the sentences are formed and function. In addition, reading storybooks can aid the students how to link different ideas in a text (Rashid et al., 2010). Because of constant exposure to the literature, different structures would be unintentionally inserted in pupils' writing pieces that would empower their writing capabilities. Butler (2002) showed that literature contains real styles that assist learners in figuring out how diverse sentences and vocabularies are naturally used. These styles can contribute learners in producing normal use of different vocabularies and sentences to gain an adequate proficiency in the target language. Good writers are usually good readers, and the texts that are based on the literature are good models of a good writing piece.

Fifthly, the learners' interaction with the literature supplies a suitable chance to improve their communicative competencies (Butler, 2002). Reading storybooks can raise some topics for argumentations or customs for comparisons that persuade the learners to speak and show their attitudes. These argumentations happen in a relaxed context since they are open to subjectivity. Storybooks have original conversations, subjecting pupils to daily English, that the pupils finally use in their routine life (Pathan, 2012). Because storybooks are simple for memorizing and remembering, various parts of these books are simply kept in the mind of the learners and will be reminded in the next communications.

Soleimani and Akbari (2013) investigated the effects of storytelling on Iranian preschool students' word learning in English. To this end, 31 pupils from two diverse preschools with similar language education and similar English proficiency level were chosen. The age of the

participants was 6, and they started to learn English as a foreign language. A quasi-experimental design including one pre-test and one post-test was applied in this research; each test contained 30 items that were designed based on the pictures related to the storybook. To analyze the gathered data, a paired t-test was applied, and the results demonstrated that telling stories developed Iranian preschool students' word learning.

Karabacaka and Erdema (2014) conducted an empirical investigation on fifth-grade pupils to show the effects of English short stories on the students' success in learning the English language. Two groups of participants were selected to do this study in İstanbul province, Turkey. The data taken from the experimental and the control groups were analyzed by using SPSS by applying a t-test to compare the mean scores of the participants. It was indicated that applying short stories of English enhanced language learning in comparison with the conventional strategies and methods.

Khalili and Rezvani (2015) inspected the impacts of reading online and paper-based (traditional) storybooks on Iranian EFL students' reading skills. Sixty subjects were assigned to two homogeneous groups to do this study. Then, both groups were administered a pre-test. After that, 20 short stories were chosen and administered to the students in the experimental group in a language lab from ESL Fast website. The participants in the other group read similar texts in a print-based format. Eventually, when the treatment ended, the respondents took the post-test of reading. The outcomes indicated that reading online storybooks affected the students' reading comprehension performance positively and significantly. In addition, it was discovered that the experimental group outflanked the print-based reading group.

Al Siyabi (2017) intended to examine the learners' perspectives of reading true short stories and their advantages. The data of the research were gathered by observing 19 level D learners from Oman country. The research outcomes showed that applying storybooks in English classes was attractive and had high power as an instrument to enhance English language abilities. The purposeful situation produced by the true short stories caused it

much simpler for the teachers to manage and control the classrooms.

Ompusunggu (2018) inspected the effects of short stories on boosting the students' speaking skill. To fulfill the goal, two groups of experimental ($n=30$) and conventional ($n=30$) were chosen out of 160 students from Jakarta and were given a pre-test and post-test. The experimental group was instructed speaking applying short stories, but the conventional participants were instructed to speak in a traditional fashion. The results of his study indicated that using short stories developed the participants' speaking skills significantly.

After reviewing the literature, this research aimed to highlight the significance of short stories in Indonesian educational contexts in general. Particularly, this research intended to compare the impacts of the original short stories and the local short stories on enhancing the reading comprehension of Indonesian EFL students.

Regarding this objective, this research aimed to answer the question posed below:

RQ. Are there any significant differences between the original and the local short stories regarding their effectiveness on Indonesian EFL learners' reading comprehension?

According to the question raised above, the following null hypothesis was recommended:

H01. There are not any significant differences between the original and the local short stories regarding their effectiveness on Indonesian EFL learners' reading comprehension.

3. Methodology

3.1. Design of the Study

The research followed a quasi-experimental study with a quantitative method in the data collection procedure. The design of this study was based on a quasi-experimental method (pre-test- treatment- post-test). This study consisted of two experimental groups while focusing on the variable of the original short storybooks and the local short storybooks as the independent variables, and reading comprehension as the dependent variable. The control variables of the study were the age and proficiency level of the participants.

3.2. Participants

After deciding to do the present study, the researchers selected some students to carry out the treatment on them. The participants of this study included the intermediate EFL learners in Indonesia. This research was conducted with the participation of 50 Indonesian EFL students. The researchers chose the available EFL learners in two private language institutes in Indonesia. The respondents got homogeneous by the administration of an Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT). Both female and male EFL learners were included in this study (29 males and 21 females). The participants were aged 21 to 27. The researchers assigned the selected respondents to two equal groups, one of them was trained by the original short storybooks, and the other group was taught by the local short storybooks. Meanwhile, the sample was based on convenience.

3.3. Instruments

The first tool that was applied in the current research to homogenize the respondents was the OQPT. It was employed to assist the researchers in choosing homogeneous participants. This instrument contained 60 multiple-choice items, and according to its results, the students who scored between 40 and 47 were intermediate and were chosen as the subjects of the research.

The second tool employed in the present research was a researcher-designed reading comprehension pre-test which included 20 objective items (true/false, short answer, and multiple-choice). The researchers calculated the reliability of the pre-test by using KR-21 ($r=.88$). In addition, the validity of the reading pre-test was verified by a group of English instructors. This test was administered to assess the reading comprehension of the respondents before carrying out the instruction.

The last instrument applied in this research was a reading post-test that was prepared by the researchers. Similar to the pre-test, the post-test included 20 objective items (true/false, short answer, and multiple-choice). The reliability of the reading post-test was computed by using KR-21 ($r=.85$). Its validity was confirmed by a panel of English experienced professors. This test was administered to the respondents to assess the effectiveness of the instruction on their reading comprehension.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

To conduct the present research, the researchers attended the two English institutes of Indonesia and gave the OQPT to 81 Indonesian learners to measure their proficiency level in English. Then, they chose 50 intermediate learners and assigned them randomly to two groups. After that, the two groups took the reading pre-test. After pre-testing, one group was trained by the original short storybooks, and the other group was instructed by the local storybooks. The original short storybooks included reading texts related to the English culture, but the local short storybooks contained reading passages related to the Indonesian culture. In five sessions, five reading texts were taught to each group. After teaching the text, a reading post-test was carried out in order to compare the impacts of the original short storybooks and the local short storybooks on the participants' reading improvement. After conducting the post-test, the scores of the pre-test and the post-test received statistical analyses.

3.5. Data Analysis

For finding a logical answer to the research question, the analyses of the data were performed by applying Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 22. First, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test was used for checking the data normality. Second, descriptive statistics such as standard deviation and mean scores were computed. Eventually, to investigate the effects of the instruction on Indonesian EFL students' reading improvement, the researchers used a paired samples t-test and an independent samples t-test. The paired samples t-test was applied for comparing the pre and post-tests of each group, and the independent samples t-test was used for comparing the two group's pre and post-tests with each other.

4. Results

This section reports the analyses of the data gathered through the process of the data collection. Both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used to analyze the collected data. The details are presented below.

Table 1
One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test (Groups' Reading Pre and Post-tests)

| | | Original pre | Local Pre | Local Post | Original post |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|------------------|
| | N | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 |
| Normal Parameters ^{a,b} | Mean | 14.18 | 14.40 | 16.18 | 18.14 |
| | Std. Deviation | 2.89 | 2.79 | 1.85 | 1.51 |
| Most Extreme Differences | Absolute | .19 | .19 | .20 | .15 |
| | Positive | .15 | .17 | .20 | .15 |
| | Negative | -.18 | -.18 | -.11 | -.09 |
| Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z | | .88 | .91 | 1.01 | .70 |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | | .49 | .30 | .56 | .89 |

a. Test distribution is Normal.
b. Calculated from data.

According to the findings of the KS test in the above table, the distribution of the scores is normal as the results of the parametric statistics

such as independent samples t-test and paired samples t-test were applied to gain the findings.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics of Reading Pre-test of Both Groups

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|----------|----|-------|----------------|-----------------|
| Local | 25 | 14.40 | 2.19 | .87 |
| Original | 25 | 14.18 | 2.19 | .85 |

As shown in the above table, the mean score of the local group is 14.40, and the mean score of

the original group is 14.18 in the reading pre-test. Their mean scores seem almost equal.

Table 3

Inferential Statistics of Reading Pre-test of Both Groups

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|-------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|-------|
| | F | Sig. | T | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Equal variances assumed | .04 | .80 | .56 | 48 | .54 | .48 | .70 | -2.13 | 3.09 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | .59 | 47.94 | .54 | .48 | .70 | -2.13 | 3.09 |

According to the results of the independent samples t-test in the above table, we can say that both groups had the same reading proficiency

in the pre-test since Sig (.54) is greater than 0.05.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of Reading Post-test of Both Groups

| | | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|----------|----------|----|-------|----------------|-----------------|
| Posttest | Local | 25 | 16.18 | 2.62 | .32 |
| | Original | 25 | 18.14 | 2.50 | .35 |

As displayed in Table 4, the mean score of the local group is 16.18, and the mean score of the original group is 18.14 in the reading post-test.

It seems that the groups did differently in the reading post-test.

Table 5

Inferential Statistics of Reading Post-test of Both Groups

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|-------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|-------|
| | F | Sig. | T | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Equal variances assumed | 1.12 | .29 | -8.62 | 48 | .00 | -4.17 | .57 | -5.12 | -3.11 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | -8.62 | 46.13 | .00 | -4.17 | .57 | -5.12 | -3.11 |

According to the outcomes presented in Table 5, we can claim that the original group did

better than the local group on the reading post-test because Sig (.00) is less than .05.

Table 6
Paired Samples Descriptive Statistics of Pre and Post-tests of Both Groups

| | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---------------|-------|----|----------------|-----------------|
| Local Pre | 14.40 | 25 | 2.37 | .27 |
| Local Post | 16.18 | 25 | 1.62 | .12 |
| Original Pre | 14.18 | 25 | 2.81 | .76 |
| Original Post | 18.14 | 25 | 1.57 | .65 |

Based on the above table, the mean scores of the local group on the pre and post-tests are 14.40 and 16.18, respectively, and the mean

scores of the original group on the pre and post-tests are 14.18 and 18.14, respectively.

Table 7
Paired Samples Inferential Statistics of Pre and Post-tests of Both Groups

| | Paired Differences | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|---|-------|-------|----|-----------------|
| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| Local Pre Local Post | 1.00 | 3.04 | .16 | -.20 | 3.20 | 1.54 | 24 | .03 |
| Original Pre Original Post | -3.64 | 1.57 | .59 | -3.26 | -3.94 | -1.54 | 24 | .00 |

In order to figure out if the local group had any improvement in their post-test, a paired samples t-test was used, and its outcomes indicate that there is a difference between the performances of this group before and after the treatment. We can say that this group had an improvement in their reading post-test. The outcomes of the second paired samples t-test in the above table show that the original group had an enhancement in their reading post-test since Sig (.00) is less than 0.05.

In a nutshell, the results show that the treatment (the original and the local short stories) developed the reading comprehension of both groups. The results demonstrate that the original short story was more effective on reading comprehension than the local short story.

5. Discussion

Having collected the data, the researchers analyzed them so as to answer the research question. The findings showed both groups (the local and the original groups) had an improvement on their reading post-tests, but the original group outflanked the local group. Consequently, the null hypothesis of the research, "There are not any significant differences

between the original and the local short stories regarding their effectiveness on Indonesian EFL learners' reading comprehension" is rejected. Indeed, the original group obtained better scores in their reading post-test. This can be ascribed to the attractive features that the original short stories possess.

The original short stories can likely have a much greater effect on the intermediate proficiency level because they contain more authentic materials and contents about the English language, e.g., pragmatic components, idiomatic expressions, etc. Short stories can persuade and encourage EFL learners and make a lively and enjoyable learning situation. Since the contents and the structures of the original English short stories are more natural than the local English short stories, the students in the original group outflanked the learners in the local group.

The results of our research are in agreement with Ompusunggu (2018), who inspected the effects of short stories on boosting EFL students' speaking ability. His study's findings revealed that using short stories could produce a remarkable effect on the EFL students' speaking skill improvement. In addition, our

research is supported by Karabacaka and Erdema (2014), who examined the influences of applying English short stories on the students' English language achievement. Their results indicated that the application of English storybooks in English classes enhanced the students' English achievement when compared with the conventional techniques. Furthermore, this study is advocated by the idea of Pardede (2011), who claimed that the storybooks and the activities related to the storybooks could be applied as highly productive and fruitful techniques to teach vocabulary to EFL students successfully.

The results of the current research have some implications for instructors, students, and material designers. The findings of this research can heighten the importance of using short stories for English teachers. Through using short stories, the English teachers can familiarize their pupils with the target cultural themes. The outcomes of this research can encourage EFL learners to expose themselves to cultural materials. The students can develop all four skills by reading English short stories. The findings of our research can encourage the material developers to incorporate storybooks into the lesson syllabuses.

In conclusion, this study indicated that using both local and original short stories can develop EFL learners' reading comprehension, but the original short stories are more effective than the local ones. Here, it can be claimed that receiving instruction through applying short stories as the sources of cultural materials can facilitate English learning. Considering the usefulness and the importance of the short stories, they are highly offered to be used in instructional contexts. The use of short stories must be regarded based on specific classifications such as the students' proficiency and preference and the length of the short story. For some places in which local culture is greatly valued, the local short stories can be used as an alternative in supplying English materials so that the learners can be more familiar and be more motivated to learn English. In other places that the target culture is more appreciated, the original short stories are good tools for enhancing the students' English language.

This study suffers from some limitations. One limitation is that the research worked just on 50 subjects. So, the results cannot be generalized

to a large number of EFL learners. The next studies are offered to work on more participants to increase the generalizability of their results. Furthermore, only a pre-test and a post-test were applied for collecting the data; future researchers are recommended to use other instruments, including questionnaires, interviews, and checklist to get more valid data. This study examined the effects of using the local and the original short stories on reading comprehension; the upcoming investigations are suggested to examine the effects of the local and the original short stories on other skills and sub-skills. The treatment of this study lasted only five sessions; the next researchers are recommended to extend the session numbers to get more reliable data.

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