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## JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTIC STUDIES

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ISSN: 1305-578X

*Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(Special Issue 1), 327-345; 2021

### Harnessing literature in EFL teaching: A case in point<sup>1</sup>

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#### APA Citation:

Baytar, İ., & Timuçin, M. (2021). Harnessing literature in EFL teaching: A case in point. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(Special Issue 1), 327-345.

Submission Date: 15/09/2020

Acceptance Date: 04/12/2020

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#### Abstract

Foreign language teaching is a very challenging process and the materials chosen for teaching have of vital importance. In this sense, English teachers' need for alternative materials to textbooks has been increasing day by day but deciding on the right material to use is a demanding job. Teachers are in a continuous search for alternative authentic materials which might enable the learners to see the language in real contexts. It is argued in this study that literary texts, especially short stories, as products of language, can be counted among the alternative teaching sources as they provide both the teachers and the learners with abundant source of effective teaching materials on the grounds that literary texts have the potential of reflecting real life events and these texts are likely to increase students' language and cultural awareness unlike the pseudo narratives. Therefore, this study aims to show how literary text, especially short story genre, can be integrated as a language teaching material in English language teaching classes and to find out the attitudes of the students towards the use of short story in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting.

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*Keywords:* EFL setting; foreign language teaching; literary texts; literature; short story genre

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## 1. Introduction

It is a widely known fact that the use of literature and literary texts is an important part of foreign language teaching and integration of literary texts in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting dates back to old times. Thus, the main goals of this study are to investigate the ways how literary texts especially short story genre as a product of literature can be integrated in EFL classes and to find out the perceptions of the learners about the integration of short story genre into language teaching process. Moreover, it aims to assist the students to improve their critical and hypothetical thinking skills and it also tries to prove the effectiveness of the short story genre in terms of increasing learners' motivation, making them to be aware of different life styles and cultural elements of the societies where the target language is spoken.

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### 1.1. Literature review

The use of literature in EFL setting dates back to Grammar Translation Method with the aim of understanding the classics. However, with the emergence of Structuralism and Audio-Lingual method, literature has lost its significance in foreign language (FL) teaching practice (Soliman, 2012). Similarly, Sarıçoban (2013) also believes that the integration of literary works has been disregarded in EFL setting. Therefore, the use of literature in language courses has turned into a matter of debate and in 1960s and 1970s and there was a strict opposition to the use of literary texts in EFL context (Hill, 1986), on the grounds that, as Collie and Slater (1987: 2) explicate;

Literature was thought of as embodying a static, convoluted kind of language, far removed from the utterances of daily communication. Because of this it was sometimes tarred with an “elitist” brush and reserved for the most advanced level of study.

However, in 1980s, the perspective of people on the use of literary texts changed mainly because traditional teaching materials were insufficient and literary texts could propose supplementary and motivating material for learners (Ghosn, 2002). Hill (1986: 7) summarizes this change as; “...now the pendulum has swung the other way and there is a renewed interest in literature teaching”. Moreover, since the aim of language teaching is to aid the learners to express themselves clearly in the target language, teachers also began to look for the new ways of using literary texts in EFL setting (Sarıçoban and Küçüköğlü, 2011). As a result, the integration of literature in EFL settings has started to come into prominence again for the following reasons. First of all, it provides the learners with authentic material, increases language awareness of the learners and it also helps the learners to take an active part in the language learning process (Hişmanoğlu, 2005; Lazar, 1993; Sivasubramaniam, 2006). McKay (1982: 531) also believes that literature has some benefits for foreign language learners as it helps to develop linguistic competence and to increase students “motivation” and their “reading proficiency”. In addition, Collie and Slater (1987: 2) elaborate on the thoughts of teachers as; “...literature, which speaks to the heart as much as to the mind, provides material with some emotional colour, that make fuller contact with the learner’s own life can thus counterbalance the more fragmented effect of many collections of texts used in the classroom”. Besides, on the use of literature, Aghagolzadeh and Tajabadi (2012) indicate that incorporating literature in EFL context provides the students with a number of opportunities such as “cultural awareness, development of critical thinking, analytical skills and language skills” (p. 209).

Moreover, there is an intense bond between language and literature. As Elyıldırım (1993) posits, since language is an inseparable part of literature, they cannot be thought as separate items, therefore, literature can well play a crucial role in ELT (English Language Teaching) syllabus. Hall (2005) indicates that language employed in literary texts is useful as it helps the learners to understand the concept of language and its use. In addition to being closely related to each other, literature helps students to see the language use in actual context. Türker (1991) supports the idea by stating that the use of literature can be rewarding since literary texts indicate how language operates in contexts. In addition, Carter (1982:12) explains that literature is a sample of both “language in use” and “a context for language use”. Moreover, literary texts are about real-life events and they care about the exact language use hence they should not be thought as useless (Keshavarzi, 2012). Ghosn (2002) underlines the importance of short story genre as an example of literary texts since it enables the learners with optimum resource for language acquisition. Besides, Traore and Blankson (2011) emphasize that integrating literary texts into language teaching process gives ample opportunities to students to learn new vocabulary items. In line with the belief above, Brumfit (1986: 185) notes that literature is a prolific resource for linguistic skills such as reading, writing. Collie and Slater (1987: 3-5), after having argued on the relevance of the use of literature in the language classroom, articulate the benefits of using literature as;

*Valuable authentic material:* Literature provides the learners with genuine authentic materials. Authentic or learner contextualized materials can be defined as “print materials used in ways that they would be used in the lives of learners outside of their adult education classes” (Jacobson et al. 2003:1). Peacock (1997) points out that authentic materials are a way of motivating the students since, when compared to non-authentic ones, they are more enjoyable and inspiring. Besides, authentic materials make the learners feel the sense of real language use thus they can see the target language as it is spoken in the community of the target language (Guariento and Morley, 2001).

*Cultural Enrichment:* Besides its value as authentic material, literature is also an optimal medium for demonstrating the real language use and presenting the cultural elements (McKay, 1982). Collie and Slater (1987) put forward that the world or the lives in short stories, plays, novels are usually not real, but although the depictions are usually not real life events, they depict the places, characters and lives in vivid contexts, thus a reader can explore the customs, traditions, life styles, opinions of the people existing in literary texts. Lastly, Tso Wing-Bo (2014) believes that if the literary texts are used in an effective way, they can be useful both for language teaching and increasing learners’ literacy of culture.

*Language Enrichment:* Literature, in addition to helping the students to be involved individually in the language learning process, it also helps the students to improve their receptive and productive language skills. Povey (1967) underlines that literature presents a vast use of new vocabulary items and improves the students in linguistic sense, thus it helps the learners to develop their language skills. Accordingly, it is asserted that literary works especially short stories are useful for teaching new vocabulary since in short stories, words can be seen in a real and meaningful context (Tarakçioğlu and Tunçarslan, 2014). Since the students are exposed to new lexical items and structures in real contexts, it is easier for them to keep all these newly learned items in mind (Collie and Slater, 1987).

*Personal Involvement:* Literature is a useful source of material because of the “personal involvement it fosters in readers” (Collie and Slater 1987:5). As Llach (2007) puts forward learners are affected by the subject matter and they can establish a connection with their lives through literary texts fostering the feeling of personal experience. Furthermore, deciphering the plots of literary texts requires individual replies and it supports the learners to appeal to their life experiences therefore the learners are involved in the language learning process individually (Lazar, 1996).

According to the given the relevant arguments stated above, this study tries to investigate the use of short story genre as a product of literature in EFL teaching context for the following reasons.

First of all, short stories do not have a very complicated plot structure, so many characters and they are limited to one setting unlike novels and as they keep away from the old and archaic forms of language, they are easy to comprehend hence most of the times, they can be easy to deal with for the learners (Kaya, 2004). Eren (2004) underlines that short story is the most convenient one among the other literary genres because there are so many figures of speech and symbolism in poems and the novels are too long to handle within the limited time and in crowded classes.

Akyel and Yalçın (1990) reveal that teachers have the chance of choosing different texts with different themes and subject matters so short stories can appeal to all of the learners in the classroom and teachers can easily draw students’ attention.

Moreover, by means of short stories, students can have an idea about the cultural aspects and life styles of the countries where the target language is spoken (Martinez, 2007).

In addition, the message is not conveyed explicitly in short stories and learners are made to read between the lines in order to decipher the meaning, hence, short stories are a good way of helping the learners to improve their thinking abilities (Ghasemi and Hajizadeh, 2011). Accordingly, Erkaya (2005) asserts that short stories are very beneficial in terms of increasing learners’ motivation, raising their cultural awareness and helping them to develop their thinking abilities.

## 1.2. Research questions

Through the integration of short story genre into language teaching process, this study tries to find answers to the following questions;

1. What are the perceptions of the participants towards the use of short story genre as a language teaching material?
2. Do participants have positive or negative stance towards the use of short story genre after the application of the short story?

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants and setting

This study included 50 university students (31 of them were males and 19 of them were females) and they were selected randomly. Moreover, the students' ages ranged from 18 to 22. They have graduated from high school and their department was Tourism and Hotel Management. However, as they were first year students, they were attending English Language Preparatory Program which was compulsory for them and it lasted for a year. As regards the setting, the study was conducted at one of the state universities' prep classes within the context of English Language Preparatory Program.

### 2.2. Data collection and analysis

Before the application process, in order to decide on the short story text to be chosen a questionnaire for text selection was conducted to the learn students' interests and choices. According to the results of the questionnaire, which will be discussed in detail under the following heading, a short story titled *Desiree's Baby* written by Kate Chopin was chosen. The application lasted four weeks in total and at the beginning of the application, handouts including the extracts chosen from the short story and some of the activities related to the short story were distributed. In addition to the handouts, at the beginning of the treatment, a power point presentation consisting of pictures, activities and extracts was prepared in order to help the learners to follow the activities easily and to provoke their interest. In this study, both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used and at the end of the application process, in order to decide on the students' perceptions about the use of short story, 12 item questionnaire that was adapted from the ones developed by Kaya (2004) and Kırkgöz (2012) were conducted and interviews were carried out. In the questionnaire, five-point Likert Scale was preferred. As regards the interviews, semi- structured interview method was applied. The data collected through questionnaires were analyzed by the help of Statistical Package for The Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 and descriptive statistics were used. As for the interview data, it was recorded and transcribed then analyzed qualitatively.

#### 2.2.1. Justification of the Text Selection

As mentioned above, before the text selection, a questionnaire that has 10 items was conducted in order to decide on the students' interests, opinions and choices. Table 1 shows the results of the statements 2, 4, 5, 6 that exist in the text selection questionnaire and these statements are related to the criteria for the content of the short story to be chosen.

**Table 1.** The Results of Participants' Answers to the Statements 2, 4, 5, 6

Item	Statements	Descriptive Statistics (DS)	1 <sup>a</sup>	2 <sup>b</sup>	3 <sup>c</sup>	4 <sup>d</sup>	5 <sup>e</sup>	Total
2	The short story to be chosen should be related to my life experiences and feelings.	f	4	8	9	10	19	50
		%	8%	16%	18%	20%	38%	100%
4	There should be some universal themes in it such as love, marriage, death, poverty and motherhood.	f	4	8	9	10	19	50
		%	8%	16%	18%	20%	38%	100%
5	It should reflect real life events rather than supernatural ones.	f	2	3	6	17	22	50
		%	4%	6%	12%	34%	44%	100%
6	It should include the cultural elements of the countries where the target language is spoken.	f	3	4	8	17	18	50
		%	6%	8%	16%	34%	36%	100%

Note: <sup>a</sup> Strongly Disagree, <sup>b</sup> Disagree, <sup>c</sup> Neutral, <sup>d</sup> Agree, <sup>e</sup> Strongly Agree

According to the results of the questionnaire (statements 2, 4, 5, 6), more than half of the students (58% = Strongly Agree: 38% and Agree: 20%) indicate that they want to read a short story which is about their life experiences and feelings. In terms of the themes of the short story to be chosen, it is interesting that the result of item 4 is equal to the result of the item 1 and in the same way, 58% (Strongly Agree: 38% and Agree: 20%) of the students want to read a short story in which some universal themes such as love, marriage, death, poverty, motherhood exist. Among all the participants, 78% (Strongly Agree: 44% and Agree: 34%) of the respondents believe that the short story to be chosen should reflect the real-life events rather than supernatural ones. As regards the item 6 which is “*It should include the cultural elements of the countries where the target language is spoken*”, most of the participants (Strongly Agree: 36% and Agree: 34%) want to read a short story that includes the cultural elements of the countries where the target language is spoken.

Table 2 given below shows the results of the statements 1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10 which are related to the linguistic elements of the short story to be chosen.

**Table 2.** The Results of Participants' Answers to the Statements 1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10

Item	Statements	Descriptive Statistics (DS)	1 <sup>a</sup>	2 <sup>b</sup>	3 <sup>c</sup>	4 <sup>d</sup>	5 <sup>e</sup>	Total
1	The short story to be chosen should not include so many obscure words or grammatical structures.	f	0	4	6	7	33	50
		%	0%	8%	12%	14%	66%	100%

3	There should be ambiguous words in the text.	f	13	13	9	8	7	50
		%	26%	26%	18%	16%	14%	100%
7	The language of the text should be simple and plain.	f	0	4	5	14	27	50
		%	0%	8%	10%	28%	54%	100%
8	It should not include so many figures of speech such as metaphor, simile.	f	2	7	7	19	15	50
		%	4%	14%	14%	38%	30%	100%
9	A short story with so many slang and archaic words should be avoided.	f	3	4	8	12	23	50
		%	6%	8%	16%	24%	46%	100%
10	The language of the text should be appropriate for my language level.	f	1	0	1	12	36	50
		%	2%	0%	2%	24%	72%	100%

Note: <sup>a</sup> Strongly Disagree, <sup>b</sup> Disagree, <sup>c</sup> Neutral, <sup>d</sup> Agree, <sup>e</sup> Strongly Agree

The findings of Table 2 show that 80% of the participants (Strongly Agree: 66% and Agree: 14%) do not want to read a short story that includes so many obscure words or structures. According to the results of the item 3 which is one of the negative items, it can be said that more than half of the students (52%: Strongly Disagree: 26% and Disagree: 26%) believe that short story to be chosen should not include ambiguous words in it. As regards the results of the item 7 which is about the language characteristics of the short story, 82% (Strongly Agree: 54% and Agree: 28%) of the participants think that the language of the short story should be simple. Moreover, among all the respondents, more than half of them (Strongly Agree: 30% and Agree: 38%) believe that the short story should not include a lot of figures of speech. In addition, 35 (70%) of the participants do not want to read a short story that includes so many slang and archaic words in it. Moreover, nearly all of the students (96%: Strongly Agree: 72% and Agree: 24%) think that the short story to be chosen should suit their language level.

In conclusion, when the findings of the text selection questionnaire are taken into consideration, the short story titled *Desiree's Baby* written by Kate Chopin is found suitable to be used in the classroom due to some reasons. First of all, when the content of the short story is taken into consideration, it does not consist of any supernatural elements instead it reflects the real-life situations. Moreover, it presents some universal themes such as love, marriage, racism, motherhood. Therefore, participants can have the chance of building an analogy between their life experiences and the events taking place in the short story. As regards the plot, it is not very complex as there are not any flashbacks and difficult structures in it, thus it is easy to understand for the students. In addition, when we pay attention to the linguistic elements of the short story, it can be said that there are not so many unknown and ambiguous words in it on the contrary the short story can be regarded as quite simple since there are not so many figures of speech in it such as metaphors, similes etc. and it does not include so many slang or archaic words thus

it can be concluded that the short story titled *Desiree's Baby* suits the language level of the students by and large.

### 2.2.2. Actual teaching of a short story: *Desiree's Baby*

#### 2.2.2.1. Content of the short story

The chosen short story titled *Desiree's Baby* was written by Kate Chopin in 1892 and it was published in 1893. It is a short story about a young woman called Desiree. When she is a baby, she is found lying on the ground in the garden and adopted by Madame Valmonde who is a very wealthy woman but it is a known fact that Desiree has no real name and her root is not known. One day Desiree meets a man called Armand who is very wealthy and has a well-known name. Although Armand is warned that she has an unknown root, he ignores all these warnings and falls in love with her and then marries to her. Then they have a baby but there is a problem because the baby has black skin. Armand accuses Desiree for the baby's skin color and he claims that this is because of her unknown root. He behaves badly against her and the baby and he does not love them anymore. As a result Desiree returns to Madame Valmonde's home with her baby and Armand wants to get rid of all the things that belong to her thus he tries to burn all of her belongings but while doing this, he finds a letter which is written by his mother for his father and in this letter it is written that Armand's mother is in fact belongs to the race of black and it is revealed that it is not Desiree who belongs to the black race but it is Armand that belongs to black race.

#### 2.2.2.2. Pre-reading activities

The Pre-reading stage can be regarded as a kind of preparation stage before reading the text and this stage helps to make the learners be motivated and to draw their attention to the text (Kaya, 2004). With this in mind, Shang and Tsai (2011) offer that in this stage, teachers should try to help the students to make connection between their experiences, background knowledge and the content of the text and this stage also aims to arouse interest, to give background knowledge and to teach unknown lexical items to make the students guess the subject matter of the text. This stage is important as it enables the learners with background knowledge and the key words existing in the texts (Soliman, 2012). Consequently, Lazar (1993) lists the aims of pre-reading activities as providing the students with cultural information, drawing their attention to the short story and teaching the unknown words.

Sample pre-reading activities are presented below.

Activity 1: The teacher gives some information about the author's life.

The Rationale: The aim of this activity is to introduce the author to the students.

Activity 2: Oral Discussion

- Are you a prejudiced person? If yes, in what ways?
- What do you think about physical appearance? Is it important for you?

The Rationale: The reasons behind this activity are to draw the learners' attention to the subject matter of the short story by asking them questions related to their lives and to draw a parallel between the subject matter and students' life experiences.

#### 2.2.2.3. While-reading activities

In this stage, students interact with the text and by means of while-reading activities; they have the chance of discovering the meaning lying behind the text (Gajdusek, 1988). Moreover, while-reading activities are designed to make the learners to be aware of the subject matter of the short story and they can help the students to improve their reading and listening skills and by means of while-reading activities, students can also have the opportunity of comparing their thoughts with their predictions (Shang and Tsai, 2011).

In the following part, the extracts taken from the short story and the activities related to these extracts are given below.

#### Extract 1

It was no wonder, when she stood one day against the stone pillar in whose shadow, she had lain asleep, eighteen years before, that Armand Aubigny riding by and seeing her there, had fallen in love with her. That was the way all the Aubigny fell in love, as if struck by a pistol shot. The wonder was that he had not loved her before; for he had known her since his father brought him home from Paris, a boy of eight, after his mother died there. The passion that awoke in him that day, when he saw her at the gate, swept along like an avalanche, or like a prairie fire, or like anything that drives headlong over all obstacles.

#### Activity 1

- What is the most repeated word here? (like)
- Is "*like*" used as a preposition or a verb here? What is the function of "*like*" here?

The Rationale: The aims of the activity above are to make the students be aware of the different uses of the word "like" both as a preposition or a verb and to make them be aware of figures of speech which is simile.

#### Extract 2

Monsieur Valmonde grew practical and wanted things well considered: that is, the girl's obscure origin. Armand looked into her eyes and did not care. He was reminded that she was nameless. What did it matter about a name when he could give her one of the oldest and proudest in Louisiana? He ordered the corbeille from Paris, and contained himself with what patience he could until it arrived; then they were married.

#### Activity 2

- Find out the superlative forms of the adjectives in the extract and by taking these adjectives into consideration what can you say about the social status of Armand and his family?

The Rationale: The reasons behind this activity are to teach some grammatical structures and to make the students comment on the status of the characters through these structures.

#### Activity 3

- Write a suitable title for this extract.

Some answers of the students are given below;

- Interesting Love Story, Love at First Sight, Worry, Snobbish Man, The End of Patience, Marriage, Love, Waiting...

The Rationale: The aims of this activity are to help the students to make deductions about the subject matter of the extract given above and to make them use their imagination.

#### Activity 4

Please rewrite the sentences below in present simple tense.

- Monsieur Valmonde grew practical and wanted things well considered.....
- Armand looked into her eyes and did not care.....
- He was reminded that she was nameless.....
- He ordered the corbeille from Paris, and contained himself with what patience he could until it arrived; then they were married.....

The Rationale: The reason behind this activity is to teach the students one of the functions of Present Simple Tense which is narrating a story.

Extract 3

When the baby was about three months old, Desiree awoke one day to the conviction that there was something in the air menacing her peace. It was at first too subtle to grasp. It had only been a disquieting suggestion; an air of mystery among the blacks; unexpected visits from far-off neighbors who could hardly account for their coming. Then a strange, an awful change in her husband's manner, which she dared not ask him to explain. When he spoke to her, it was with averted eyes, from which the old love-light seemed to have gone out. He absented himself from home; and when there, avoided her presence and that of her child, without excuse. And the very spirit of Satan seemed suddenly to take hold of him in his dealings with the slaves. Desiree was miserable enough to die.

Activity 5

- How do we look when we look with “*averted eyes*”?

The Rationale: The aim of this activity is to teach new vocabulary items.

Activity 6

- Write a few sentences about the possible reasons for Desiree’s being unhappy.

The Rationale: The reason behind this activity is to improve students’ writing and critical thinking skills.

Activity 7

Please put the sentences in the correct order

- looked / into / her / eyes/ Armand/ care/ and / didn’t.....
- is / the/ Armand/ proudest/ in the /father/ parish.....
- she/ nameless/ reminded/ was/ that/ Armand / was.....
- was / Desiree/ enough/ miserable / to die.....
- suffused / that/ with / was / a glow/ itself / happiness/ became/ Desiree’s face.....

The Rationale: The reason behind this activity is to make the students be aware of the syntactic structures of the target language.

Extract 4

"Armand," she panted once more, clutching his arm, "look at our child. What does it mean? Tell me." "Tell me what it means!" she cried despairingly. "It means," he answered lightly, "that the child is not.....; it means that you are not.....«It is a lie; it is not true, I am.....! Look at my hair, it is brown; and my eyes are gray, Armand, you know they are gray. And my skin is fair," seizing his wrist. "Look at my hand; ..... than yours, Armand," she laughed hysterically. "As..... as La Blanche's," he returned cruelly; and went away leaving her alone with their child. When she could hold a pen in her hand, she sent a despairing letter to Madame Valmonde."My mother, they tell me I am not ..... Armand has told me I am not ..... For God's sake tell them it is not true. You must know it is not true. I shall die. I must die. I cannot be so unhappy, and live."

Activity 8

- Listen to the extract and fill in the gaps with a suitable word.

The Rationale: The aim of this activity is to improve students’ listening skill.

Activity 9

- What can you say about Armand’s reaction to Desiree’s being not.....? If you were in his shoes how would you react?

The Rationale: The reason behind this activity is to improve students’ hypothetical thinking skill.

Activity 10

- What can Desiree’s mother’s answer be? Write a few sentences.

The Rationale: The aim of this activity is to improve students’ productive skills.

## Extract 5

The answer that came was brief: "My own Desiree: Come home to Valmonde; back to your mother who loves you. Come with your child." When the letter reached Desiree, she went with it to her husband's study, and laid it open upon the desk before which he sat. She was like a stone image: silent, white, motionless after she placed it there.

## Activity 11

- Will Desiree go or not? What would you do if you were in her shoes? Tell me your ideas.

The Rationale: The reason behind this activity is to improve students' hypothetical thinking and speaking skills.

## Activity 12

Complete the sentences given with comparative or superlative forms of the adjectives

- It seemed but yesterday that Desiree was little.....(much) than a baby.
- Armand believed that he could give her one of ..... (old) name in Louisiana.
- Armand is.....(proud) father in the parish.
- Look at my hand, ..... (white) than yours.

The Rationale: The reason behind this activity is to help the students to understand the difference between the uses of two grammatical structures which are comparative and superlative forms of adjectives.

## 2.2.2.4. Post-reading activities

Post-reading activities are the ones that are dealt with after reading the text and through these activities; learners are asked to think critically and to comment on the text (Lazar, 1993). Moreover, through post-reading activities, the teachers aim to help the learners to improve their speaking and writing skills. This stage also encourages the learners to present their own feelings and experiences about the story (Kaya, 2004). Besides, Kırkgöz (2012) underlines that this stage includes writing activities and students can be asked to write an essay related to the content of the short story and through this, it is aimed to help the learners to improve their writing skills and to make connection between their life experiences and the short story, also they can also have the chance of practicing new grammatical structures and use new lexical items.

Sample post- reading activities are given below.

## Activity 1

- Which advice can you give to Armand by using the structure "should". Take the points into consideration given below, share your ideas with your friends:
  - What should Armand do to make Desiree forgive him?
  - How should Armand persuade Desiree to come back?

The Rationale: The reasons behind this activity are to make the students be aware of the function of "should" that is giving advice and to improve their speaking and critical thinking skill.

## Activity 2

- Write a letter to Desiree on behalf of Armand and its subject matter will be regret.

The Rationale: The reasons behind this activity are to make students use their creativity and to improve their writing skill.

Some samples of letters chosen from the ones written by the students can be seen below;

S23: "Desiree, I am very sorry and I love you too much. Please, forgive me!"

S31: "My dear, have mercy on me! I made a mistake so I am so sorry. I love you; I love you very much. Please come back, come back!"

S4: "I am very sorry and I love you. I missed you and our baby so please come back."

S14: “Desiree, I am so sorry. I shall die, I must die and I can’t be so unhappy. Come back because I love you. I can do anything for you.”

**Activity 3: Assignment**

Work in groups of four or five people and design a cover for this short story. You can either design it on computer or you can draw it by yourself. The students were given two weeks to submit their cover designs.

The Rationale: The reasons behind this activity are to make the students use their imagination and to check if they understand the subject matter and the message of the short story or not.

**3. Results and Discussion**

*3.1. The results of students’ questionnaires*

The data were analyzed by means of descriptive statistics and percentages; mean scores and standard deviation of the answers for each item were calculated and analyzed in order to determine the students’ perceptions about the integration of short story genre in language teaching process. The findings are indicated in tables given below. First of all, Table 3 shows the results of the students’ perceptions about the use of short story and it consists of statements 1, 2, 4, 5 which are related to the contribution of short story to grammar and vocabulary knowledge.

**Table 3.** Students’ attitudes towards the use of short story in terms of its contribution to grammar and vocabulary items

Item	Statements	Descriptive Statistics (Ds)	1 <sup>a</sup>	2 <sup>b</sup>	3 <sup>c</sup>	4 <sup>d</sup>	5 <sup>e</sup>	Total
1	I had the chance to revise some grammatical structures by means of this short story.	f	1	3	8	20	18	50
		%	2%	6%	16%	40%	36%	100%
2	I have learnt different language structures by means of this short story.	f	0	3	16	18	13	50
		%	0%	6%	32%	36%	26%	100%
4	I have learnt new lexical items that are different from the ones I have seen in the course book.	f	1	0	0	6	43	50
		%	2%	0%	0%	12%	86%	100%
5	I could keep in mind the new words easily as I made use of them in a meaningful context.	f	0	1	10	16	23	50
		%	0%	2%	20%	32%	46%	100%

Note: <sup>a</sup> Strongly Disagree, <sup>b</sup> Disagree, <sup>c</sup> Neutral, <sup>d</sup> Agree, <sup>e</sup> Strongly Agree

According to the findings of the questionnaire (statements 1, 2, 4, 5), it can be said that 76% (Strongly agree: 36% and Agree: 40%) of the participants think that by means of short story, they could revise the grammatical structures. Moreover, as shown in Table 3, more than half of the participants (62% = Strongly Agree: 26% and Agree: 36%) are of the opinion that at the end of the application, they had the chance of learning different language structures. As regards the statement 4 which is “*I have learnt new lexical items that are different from the ones I have seen in the course book*”, it is seen that nearly all of the students (98% = Strongly Agree: 86% and Agree: 12%) agree with this statement and they believe that they learnt new words that are different from the ones they saw in their course books. Moreover, it

can be concluded that 78 % (Strongly Agree: 46% and Agree: 32%) of the participants could keep the new words in mind easily as they met them in a meaningful context.

Moreover, Table 4 shows the results of the statements 3, 6, 7, 8 which are about the contribution of short story to language skills.

**Table 4.** Students' attitudes towards the use of short story in terms of its contribution to language skills

Item	Statements	Descriptive Statistics (DS)	1 <sup>a</sup>	2 <sup>b</sup>	3 <sup>c</sup>	4 <sup>d</sup>	5 <sup>e</sup>	Total
3	I have had the opportunity to improve my language skills which are reading, writing, listening, speaking.	f	0	1	7	14	28	50
		%	0%	2%	14%	28%	56%	100%
6	This short story enabled me to use my creativity.	f	0	1	2	14	33	50
		%	0%	2%	4%	28%	66%	100%
7	I could express my feelings and life experience by the help of this short story.	f	0	4	9	18	19	50
		%	0%	8%	18%	36%	38%	100%
8	I had the chance to read about the experiences of people which are similar to those of mine.	f	2	4	9	15	20	50
		%	4%	8%	18%	30%	40%	100%

Note: <sup>a</sup> Strongly Disagree, <sup>b</sup> Disagree, <sup>c</sup> Neutral, <sup>d</sup> Agree, <sup>e</sup> Strongly Agree.

According to the results of Table 4, 84% (Strongly Agree: 56% and Agree: 28%) of the respondents had the chance of improving their language skills that reading, writing, listening, speaking. In addition, as it is seen, 94% (Strongly Agree: 66% and Agree: 28%) of the participants believe that short story helped them to use their creativity. The results of statement 7 which is “*I could express my feelings and life experience by the help of this short story*” indicate that 74% (Strongly agree: 38% and Agree: 36%) of the students agreed with this statement. Moreover, 70% (Strongly agree: 40% and Agree: 30%) of the students are of the opinion that they had the opportunity of reading about the experiences of the people that are similar to their own experiences.

The results of statements 9, 10, 11, 12 which are about the general attitudes of the students towards the use of short story are depicted in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Students' general attitudes towards the use of short story

Item	Statement	Descriptive Statistics (DS)	1 <sup>a</sup>	2 <sup>b</sup>	3 <sup>c</sup>	4 <sup>d</sup>	5 <sup>e</sup>	Total
9	I enjoyed myself more during the lesson.	f	1	1	3	6	39	50
		%	2%	2%	6%	12%	78%	100%

10	I want to read more short stories like this in the future.	f	0	1	2	19	28	50
		%	0%	2%	4%	38%	54%	100%
11	I have had the opportunity to study in an entertaining and comfortable atmosphere.	f	1	0	6	11	32	50
		%	2%	0%	12%	22%	64%	100%
12	It enhanced my interest and motivation towards learning English.	f	1	1	2	13	33	50
		%	2%	2%	4%	26%	66%	100%

Note: <sup>a</sup> Strongly Disagree, <sup>b</sup> Disagree, <sup>c</sup> Neutral, <sup>d</sup> Agree, <sup>e</sup> Strongly Agree.

According to the results of statement 9, it can be said that most of the participants (Strongly Agree: 78% and Agree: 12%) believe that they enjoyed themselves very much during the lesson. Moreover, it is indicated in Table 5, nearly all of the students (92%: Strongly Agree: 54% and Agree: 38%) want to continue reading more short stories in the future. As regards the results of statement 11, it can be said that 86 (Strongly Agree: 64% and Agree: 22%) of the respondents are of the opinion that they had the opportunity of studying in an entertaining and comfortable setting through the use of short story. Furthermore, almost all of the participants (92% = Strongly Agree: 66% and Agree: 26%) believe that the use of short story increased their interest and motivation towards learning English.

Table 6 given below shows the mean scores and standard deviation of all items.

**Table 6.** Descriptive statistics of all items in the questionnaire

Item	Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	I had the chance to revise some grammatical structures by means of this short story.	50	4,02	,979
2	I have learnt different language structures by means of this short story.	50	3,82	,896
3	I have had the opportunity to improve my language skills which are reading, writing, listening, speaking.	50	4,38	,805
4	I have learnt new lexical items that are different from the ones I have seen in the course book.	50	4,80	,639
5	I could keep in mind the new words easily as I made use of them in a meaningful context.	50	4,22	,840
6	This short story enabled me to use my creativity.	50	4,58	,673
7	I could express my feelings and life experience by the help of this short story.	50	4,04	,947
8	I had the chance to read about the experiences of people which are similar to those of mine.	50	3,94	1,132
9	I enjoyed myself more during the lesson.	50	4,62	,885
10	I want to read more short stories like this in the future.	50	4,48	,677

11	I have had the opportunity to study in an entertaining and comfortable atmosphere.	50	4,46	,862
12	It enhanced my interest and motivation towards learning English.	50	4,52	,839

Table 6 given above shows the mean scores and standard deviation of all the items. According to the findings, it is seen that item 4 which is “*I have learnt new lexical items that are different from the ones I have seen in the course book.*” has the highest mean value (4, 80) and according to the results it can be said that participants think positively about the use of short story in terms of its contribution to teaching new vocabulary items in other words participants think that they learnt new words different from the ones they have seen in their course books before. On the other hand, as it is indicated in Table 6, item two which is “*I have learnt different language structures by means of this short story.*” has the lowest mean value of 3, 82 thus it can be concluded that not a lot of participants are of the opinion that they learnt different language structures through short story.

### 3.2. The results of students’ interviews

In order to find out the students’ perceptions about the use of short story genre, five interview questions were asked and learners were interviewed, the questions are; What do you think about the use of short story in the classroom? Did you like it? Did you enjoy yourself during the lesson? Do you want to read short stories like these again in the future? Which parts of the lesson didn’t you like?

The interviews were made in researchers’ office and they were recorded by means of a voice recorder. Interviews took about an hour in total and they were made in Turkish in order to help the students to feel themselves relaxed, to express their thoughts clearly and to prevent any misunderstanding.

First of all, when they were asked about their thoughts on the use of short story in the classroom some of them indicated that it enhanced their participation in classroom activities and some of the responses of the students can be seen in the following;

S7: “I think it was very good and it increased the participation of my friends. We had the opportunity of exchanging our ideas with the class and discussing on a subject matter was very effective in terms of comprehending the new words.”

S20: “Reading short story was very enjoyable thus it enabled us to participate in the class activities and we could understand the subject very easily.”

S31: “In my opinion, the choice of the short story was successful because participation was much more than before and it was very enjoyable”.

Moreover, some of the participants believe that lessons were more enjoyable when compared to the ones before the application of the short story and some of the responses of participants on this issue are given in the following part;

S18: “The use of short story was entertaining and it made us feel comfortable... When we use our course books, we can’t concentrate on the subject matter throughout the lesson but when we read short story, we had the opportunity of commenting on it and making discussion about it thus we could stay focused on it for a long time.”

S34: “I think this application was perfect and if we do this kind of things all the time, we can convert the ordinary lesson into an enjoyable one.”

S5: “As it converts the activities and subject matter into an entertaining thing, it made us stay focused and it turned the learning into an enjoyable activity.”

According to the interviews, some of the participants indicated that by means of short story, they could learn and keep the new words in mind easily. Some responses of the learners are given below;

S9: “This kind of activity drew my attention and I learnt new words. It was both enjoyable and useful for me.”

S12: “I think it was perfect and we learnt so many new words. It was so enjoyable that we lost track of time.”

S17: “We learnt different and new words. We put forward new ideas thus I could better know my friends. The lesson was very enjoyable and everybody made comments thus it was very effective for me.”

S24: “I think it was good. We had the chance of learning new words and grammatical structures and as the content of the short story is similar to Turkish culture, it drew our attention easily and increased the participation.”

Furthermore, some participants believe that by means of short story, they could use their imagination and creativity and some of the responses of the students are presented below;

S6: “I think it was excellent. It made me think and use my imagination...”

S15: “It helped me to develop and to use my creativity and I learnt so many new grammatical structures.”

Besides, when the learners were asked if they liked the short story or not, most of them answered positively and they indicated that they liked it very much. Some of the answers of the participants are shown below;

S18: “I liked it very much.”

S38: “It was very enjoyable that I did not get bored.”

S24: “Yes, I liked it very much as different learning styles always draw my attention.”

S46: “It affected me as it was both romantic and tragic.”

Participants were also asked whether they enjoyed themselves during the lesson or not and most of them put forward that they enjoyed themselves during the lesson and some of the responses can be seen in the following;

S7: “I enjoyed myself very much by participating in the classroom activities.”

S34: “I liked it very much and for the first time I did not sleep during the lesson.”

S41: “I have enjoyed very much and I lost track of time.”

S10: “We did not get bored and the activities were very enjoyable thus it helped to improve our creativity.”

The students were also asked to express their ideas about whether they want to read this kind of short stories in the future or not and most of them indicated that they want to deal with short stories from time to time and in the following some of the responses of the participants are indicated;

S3: “Of course I want to read as it was very pleasurable and more enjoyable than the course books and we could comprehend the subject more easily.”

S18: “Yes, we must read this sort of short stories as much as we can, may be two times a month.”

S41: “Yes, we should read since we learnt so many new words and we had the opportunity of expressing ourselves clearly.”

S47: “Of course I want. It helped us both to use our imagination and to express our emotions.”

When the participants were asked about whether there is any part or activity that they did not like during the lesson, most of them expressed that in general they liked it and there was not anything bad that they can complain about and below some of the answers of the students are presented;

S46: “There was not any part that I did not like as I have learnt different things in each part of the application.”

S19: “I think there was not any as it was very enjoyable.”

S40: “I liked all the activities as it helped us to use our creativity and to practice our speaking skills.”

S23: “I think activities were suitable and I think there was not anything boring and unnecessary.”

On the other hand, some students expressed their negative thoughts as the following;

S3: “...only the writing activities made me get bored. The other parts were effective and good.”

S6: “There were a lot of unknown words so it could be a bit easier but we learnt so many new words.”

S48: “There was not anything wrong about it but the subject matter should be a bit scientific for the next time.”

To sum up, according to the students’ responses it can be concluded that they have positive attitudes towards the use of short story genre as they indicated that they had enjoyed themselves very much, learnt new vocabulary items, new grammatical structures and they could keep them in mind easily during the lesson. Moreover, students expressed that the use of short story gave them the chance of participating the classroom activities and using their imagination and creativity.

#### 4. Conclusions

Language and literature are deeply interlinked to each other because literature can be regarded as a product of language and it is an important medium that shows how language operates in real life situations. Within this context, this study aimed to show the perceptions of the learners about the use of literary texts especially short story genre, to demonstrate the effectiveness of the use short story in language teaching process and to investigate the ways how short story can be integrated as a teaching material in EFL setting. To serve this purpose, a short story titled *Desiree’s Baby* written by an American short story writer Kate Chopin was chosen and it was exploited with various language-based approaches. At the end of the process, short story perception questionnaire adapted from the ones belonging to Kaya (2004) and Kırkgöz (2012) was conducted and the findings of the study can be summarized as follows. First of all, the results of findings show that most of the participants had positive stance towards the use of short story and they believed that they could revise the grammatical structures and learnt different language structures. Secondly, students indicated that by means of short story, they had the chance of learning new lexical items and keeping them in mind easily. They have also thought that they improved their linguistic skills. Moreover, they had the chance of using their creativity and improving their critical and hypothetical thinking skills. Lastly, they indicated that using short story helped them to express their experiences, to be familiar with different cultures and to be aware of various life styles. The findings also showed that participants enjoyed themselves at the end of the application and the use of literature increased their motivation towards learning English.

Furthermore, the findings of the study propose some pedagogical implications. First of all, literature can provide both the learners and the teachers with fruitful source of materials, thus it can be recommended that most of the teachers should integrate literary texts in their classes because through literature students can have the chance of learning different uses of language in real situations as literature is a kind of

mirror reflecting the language in real use and they can also have the chance of improving their language proficiency.

In conclusion, the exposure of the students to literary texts does not only help them to enjoy themselves, to learn new vocabulary items or to develop their linguistic proficiency but also it helps them to gain a different perspective and worldview. Therefore, by means of literary texts especially short stories, teachers can turn their classes into colorful places and they can intensify the learners' will of foreign language learning by using different materials that can help them to use the language in real contexts instead of only mastering the grammar rules and not being capable of using English as a medium of communication.

## 5. Ethics Committee Approval

The authors confirm that this article has been produced from the Master's thesis and there is no ethics commission approval for the study since the ethics commission approval was not required at the institution where the study was conducted at the time of writing (Date of Confirmation: August, 31, 2020).

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## EFL öğretiminde edebiyatın kullanılması: Bir örneklem

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### Öz

Yabancı dil öğretimi oldukça zorlu bir süreç olup öğretimi için seçilen kaynak ve materyaller de büyük öneme sahiptir. Bu bağlamda, İngilizce öğretmenlerinin ders kitaplarına alternatif kaynaklara olan ihtiyacı gün geçtikçe artmaktadır, ancak kullanılacak etkili kaynaklara karar vermek emek isteyen bir iştir. Öğretmenler, öğrencilerin dili gerçek bağlamda görmelerini sağlayabilen alternatif otantik kaynak arayışındadırlar. Bu çalışmada, edebi eserlerin özellikle de bir dil ürünü olarak kısa öykülerin, sözde anlatıların aksine, gerçeği olduğu gibi yansıtma potansiyeline sahip olmaları ve öğrencilerde dil, kültür farkındalığı uyandırmaları gerekçesiyle, hem öğretmenlere hem de öğrencilere bir çok etkili öğretim materyali sağlamaları açısından alternatif öğretim kaynakları arasında sayılabilecekleri tartışılmaktadır. Bu yüzden, bu çalışma, edebi eserlerin özellikle kısa öykü türünün İngilizce'nin yabancı dil olarak öğretildiği sınıflara bir öğretim materyali olarak nasıl dahil edilebileceğini göstermeyi ve uygulama sonunda öğrencilerin kısa öykü kullanımına karşı tutumlarını ortaya koymayı hedeflemektedir.

*Anahtar sözcükler:* edebiyat; edebi eserler; İngilizcenin yabancı dil olarak öğretildiği ortamlar; kısa öykü türü; yabancı dil öğretimi

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