

# Extent of Using Fiction Short Stories in Teaching English and their Effect on Primary Stage Students' Communicative Competence

Awatif Abu Al-Sha'r

Al-al-Bayt University/ Faculty of Educational Sciences, PO Box 130040, Postal Code  
25113, Mafraq, Jordan

Tel: 962-795-406-648 E-mail: awatifabualshar@yahoo.com

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## Abstract

This paper attempted to trace the effectiveness of teaching fiction short stories on EFL learners' communicative competence in English at the primary stage at school level. More specifically, this study aimed to determine whether teaching fiction stories has any effect on EFL sixth grade learners' communicative competence or not. It also tried to investigate if language productive skills (speaking and writing) are improved due to discussing the elements of fiction stories orally or in writing. Furthermore, the study tended to identify which elements of fiction stories (character, setting, plot, conflict or theme) the learners focused on more in their communicative sessions as a result of reading fiction stories. The sample of the study consisted of 54 EFL learners at a private school in the primary stage who were already divided into two sections A and B (27 learners in each); and were assigned as control (A) and experimental (B) groups. A pre-post test was administered for both groups to test their communicative competency of oral and written skills. The findings revealed that using discussion sessions and activities about fiction stories has a positive impact on the learners' communicative competence. Participants who attended the communicative sessions performed better on certain elements of fiction stories than those in the control group. It was recommended that teaching fiction stories should be included in the curriculum for all stages at schools.

**Keywords:** Fiction short stories, Primary stage, Communicative competence.

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, learners' main concern is geared toward exchanging exciting information about amazing events. They are seeking relevant expressive wordings that give the right scenarios of their imagination and feeling which may enable them to communicate their experiences to the others. Social networks have obviously invaded almost all aspects of learning. It can be said that these networks have boosted learning contemporary English by all ages. Furthermore, this Internet generation seeks more exciting and attractive internet sites as they are interested in exploring new applications, creative activities and challenging innovations.

Since ages frequent factors have affected English language teaching approaches, the teaching learning environment, teachers' practices, and the teaching materials so as to upgrade EFL learners' communicative competence. Apparently, the last three decades have witnessed emphasis on utilizing authentic materials in teaching English. Although authentic language activities have been the core of teaching in the classrooms as focus is now on student-centered approach, students are anxiously and attentively looking forward to dealing with challenging material as the Internet has opened unrestricted long term horizons of imagination and science fiction scenes. Actually, accessing active websites has geared the learners' interests toward watching Y-Tubes and applications that may either positively or negatively fulfill their prospects. Nevertheless, this generation continuously insists on surfing the net as a habit. They firmly declare that going to school without permitting the use of their mobiles, eye-phones, lab-tops or eye-pads is unfair. They show that the net is their main source of communication and knowledge. To tell the truth, they became internet café' addicts and school non-addicts. So, parents should not be surprised when their kids gain knowledge from this source more than their expectations.

Furthermore, the Internet generations are automatically becoming computerized as they easily get used to utilizing time and effort in connecting the world for moving beyond reality. The websites have transferred them to the world of fantasy and imagination. Whenever they have time they seek watching amazing and exciting events. they tend to watch Y-tube scenes as they are too reluctant of holding paper books. Meanwhile, they implicitly develop their macro and micro skills. More specifically, the target group of this study may relatively and unintentionally improve their reading skills, their creativity and their critical thinking. It could be predicted that this group may develop their communicative competence in English due to their consistent exploration of what is up and what is going on in the world of reality and fiction.

## 2. Background of the Study

It is crystal clear that kids prefer to listen to fiction short stories as mothers are used to telling them such stories at bedtime; however, those kids miss these stories at the primary stage because the school curriculum does not include any course of English stories for them in Jordan. The textbooks at schools concentrate on using functional, situational language through using the topic-based approach. As it is apparently agreed that teaching literature in English starts at the university level.

During an interview published in 'The Saturday Evening Post' in 1929, Einstein claims that "Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world." This indicates that imagination opens up boundless horizons for those who seek creativity; and because imagination is the finest expressionist way of thinking that surrounds the world. Egan and Judson (2016: 5 ) confirm that imagination is "the source of invention, novelty, and generatively; it is not distinct from rationality but is rather a capacity that greatly enriches rational thinking; and it has an equal role in successfully learning academic subjects as engaging in arts activities". Accordingly, there is always a place for short stories on imagination and fantasy in schools for developing language competences since language and literature are interrelated.

In this regard, three magazines in Great Britain published in 2009 findings of three literary studies (Macleod, 2008; Clark, 2009 and Norman, 2009) which revealed that most young people never pick up a book. This does not mean that the young stopped reading; instead, they browse social networks much more frequently than reading paper-books. These studies concluded that the young read and write via using the internet; and they are becoming more confident and independent.

Therefore, the researcher reckoned that foreign language teachers, instructors, curricula and textbook writers should look for some other different techniques that enhance learners to use the language broadly and effectively in an appropriate environment. To keep up with the tremendous technological revolution, it could be hypothesized that the current interests of this generation should be involved in the process of learning English. Instantly, the learners may communicate and comment on what they hear or what videos and Y-tubes they watch; hence, their communicative competences will surely proceed. Moreover, to make teaching more interesting, relevant accidental events and imaginative inquiries should be regarded during the process of teaching the language. To go further, Ogunnaike 's study (2002) states that a good account of the importance of teaching literature aids language development and competence. Therefore, this paper focuses on investigating the effect of this type of fiction output on EFL learners' communicative competence.

### **3. Significance of the Study**

Reading fiction short stories might lead English language learners to communicate what they have acquired in English language classes. Teaching short stories might be officially adopted and included in the teaching process in schools on a narrow scale and at universities at a wider scale. This study is expected to be of a great value to the Ministry of Education for EFL learners' various competences if flash fiction and fiction short stories are included in the syllabus. The results of this study might lead English language learners to read and watch more and more fiction short stories so as to communicate what they acquire to their peers, which will result in developing their communicative competence.

Answers to a pilot questionnaire of 16 items, distributed to the seventh grade students at a private school said that they prefer to communicate to their peers thrilling films, amazing short stories, fiction stories, mysteries and fantasy events. They also add that the first scene of any short story 'hooks' us. Thus, the researcher observed that there is always a place for

fictional and critical studies in language teaching and learning as language is the crucible of expression and communication. In the absence of challenge, creativity and expressing opinions in language learning, learners will inevitably be incompetent and will suffer from lack of communication with other people.

#### **4. Fiction Short Stories and the Communicative Competence**

Fiction is a made-up story. Fiction short stories are imaginative works which address a broad audience. The imaginative work goes beyond expectations in almost all types of literature. There are two main types of fiction stories: literary and commercial. In addition, some other written works are fictional such as; mystery, romance, women fiction, science fiction, fantasy, suspense, thriller and flash fiction. The length of fiction stories determines three categories : short stories, novella and short story. The shortest type of fiction is the short story. Bortolussi and Dixon (2003) viewed literary fiction as conversation in which we make inferences about other people. Its secret is that, as compared with some types of popular fiction that are explicit in what the reader is expected to think and feel; it comes closer to conversation, an activity we enjoy and spend an enormous amount of time in. The inferences of conversation are everyday means by which we come to know the minds of others.

The elements of the narratives of fiction stories should leave a sense of what happened which arouses the reader's suspicion and opens the doors for discussion. This means exchanging suggestions and expectations. Such activities lead the readers to express their feelings and ideas unintentionally. Hence, their communicative oral competence will definitely improve. What is more than that, the readers try to communicate the most exciting events to the others. The elements of the fiction may be revealed through the readers' implication or suggestion. These elements of short story fiction could be: A character is a person, or sometimes even an animal, who takes part in the action of a short story or other literary work. The setting of a short story is the time and place in which it happens. Authors often use descriptions of landscape, scenery, buildings, seasons or weather to provide a strong sense of setting. A plot is a series of events and character actions that relate to the central conflict. The conflict is a struggle between two people or things in a short story. The main character is usually on one side of the central conflict. On the other side, the main character may struggle against another important character, against the forces of nature, against society, or even against something inside himself or herself (feelings, emotions, illness). The theme is the central idea or belief in a short story. All these benefits are the basic for developing communicative competency.

However, teachers should ask themselves whether they are affording students enough time daily to practice crucial communication skills or not. Actually, an appreciation of the relationship between language and literature gives a different flavor for language learners. The craft of watching or reading fiction short stories opens the door for a consideration of how both language and fiction influence reader's life perceptions. It does not matter if the source of information is the Internet or paper books, what matters is speed, time and efforts in getting the audio-video or virtual information. Those readers are in a bad need for others to listen to their comments; therefore, it is time to let them convey their feelings and opinions to their peers. Teaching through imagination and reading literary fiction short stories may give a

surprising power for the readers. It can provide self-confidence, mental activation and exploration of the complexities of life since fiction and imagination lead the readers to long for the unexpected and ambiguous endings. Kidds & Castano (2013) considered 9 benefits of reading fiction: Empathy, disengagement, improving relationships, memory, inclusivity, vocabulary, pleasure and creativity.

## 5. Review of Related Literature

To investigate the effect of fiction short stories for enhancing language communicative competence, it is necessary to review some of the studies on teaching literature at both the university and at the school levels. It is apparent that teaching literature at the university level has received much attention compared with studies conducted on teaching literature, mainly teaching fiction short stories at the school level. Recent trends in EFL teaching confirmed the necessity of integrating short stories in teaching due to their richness of authenticity of language use for developing students' micro and macro language skills. However, previous studies revealed that a number of researchers (Djikic, Oatley, & Carland, 2012; Djikic, Oatley, & Peterson, 2012; Djikic, Oatley, Zoeterman, & Peterson, 2009a ) have focused on the influence of teaching short stories on the reader's personality from psychological aspects regardless of the effect of fiction stories on developing communicative language skills.

Some other studies concentrated on the effect of teaching short stories on the basic language skills, mainly, the learners' reading and writing skills (Murdoch, 2002; Thiyagarajan , 2014; and Özgür \_en Bartan, 2017). These studies gave a shallow weight to the effect of improving the learners' oral or written communicative competence. Furthermore, Arioğul ( 2001) examined the role of reading short stories at the university level for teaching vocabulary and grammar. The participants in this study were 9 students who were given an authentic and natural context for the teaching of vocabulary and grammar. The findings of the study proved that they were motivated to read more and more as reading fiction short stories appealed to their imagination. It also broadened their knowledge about language. It was recommended that short story reading should be given priority in the EFL/ESL classroom. The researcher stated some benefits of reading short fiction stories in the ESL / EFL, of which the most prominent ones are: giving students the chance to use their creativity, promoting their critical thinking skills, helping them communicate with others and improving their reading skills. The researcher (Arioğul 2001: 17 ) confirmed that reading fiction short stories "offers a world of wonders and a world of mystery,".

Hişmanoğlu , (2005) emphasized the use of literature as a popular technique for teaching both basic language skills and language areas..He stated some persuasive reasons for using literary texts in foreign language classroom. He also focused on the importance of selecting suitable literary texts for achieving that purpose. Additionally, the researcher stated the benefits of the genres of language teaching . The most important part of this study was tackling some of the difficulties that language teachers may encounter due to certain pedagogical reasons. It was recommended that through reading short stories and novels the students' intercultural communicative competence will be developed, in addition to possessing critical thinking abilities and language skills.

Van (2009: 8 ) also stated that “the use of literature facilitates language learning because, when it is properly introduced, students enjoy literary style,”. The researchers’ observations of students’ attitudes in Narrative experimental group suggest that the majority of students found reading short stories more delightful and enjoyable than the other texts of reading.

Pardede’s study (2011) at Christian University of Indonesia was an echo to Van's (2009) study which revealed that the majority of English teachers' training students basically found that short stories are interesting to use both materials for self-enjoyment and teaching language skills. The findings of this study denoted that only 0.37% of the responses for using short stories for teaching language skills went into “Disagree” criterion; and 18.4% were into “Neutral”, whereas the other 81.5% went into the criteria of “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” for enhancing teaching language skills.

A more akin study to the goal of this paper was conducted by Thiyagarajan (2014 : 6) which concentrated on improving learners' communicative competence. He stated that “Reading short stories motivates the students not only to develop their reading skill, but also their imaginative thinking skill.” He added that reading skill enables learners “to speak the language in a more imaginative way and to discuss everyone’s perspectives.” According to him, “reading of short stories not only mirrors and illuminates human lives but also improves the learners’ communicative competences.”

In the same domain of promoting EFL university students' communicative competence in the UAE, Alalami (2014) introduced a literature-based course: LEARN AND GAIN. This course assumed to improve both learners' reading and writing competences. The participants of the study (34) were divided into two groups: experimental and control. A re-post test was administered to measure the learners' communicative critical reading competence and their communicative critical writing competence in English. The findings revealed that the experimental group students’ achievement on the communicative critical reading competence pre-posttest and the communicative critical writing competence pre-posttest was significantly better than that of the control group students.

Morales & Perez. (2015) investigated the relation between reading short stories and learners’ centeredness, self-confidence, and positive attitudes towards reading in EFL oral communication courses. Twenty two students participated in a reading project where the communicative activities were based on the content of short stories. The study undertook various instruments to collect the data. The results revealed that there was progress attained by the participants in terms of their views, attitudes and habits towards reading short stories. The authors concluded that reading short stories should be recommended for oral communication in EFL courses.

Krishna & Sandhaya (2015) argued that EFL teachers should cater for developing the students’ communicative competence through learning vocabulary. This came as a suggestion not as a result of experimentation in their article on the impact of short stories on teaching English language.

Apparently, all the above mentioned studies dealt with the effect of teaching literature to students at the university level. To the best knowledge of the researcher few studies have been conducted on the effect of reading fiction on EFL learners' communicative competence of Jordanian primary stage students. Besides, teaching fiction stories at the school level in both primary and secondary stages is almost nonexistent.

To conclude here, it seems that there is a very big crack and a disconnection between the literature that the kids used to hear at the bedtime and what the school Syllabi include.

## **6. Statement of the Problem**

The problem of this study stemmed from the widened gap between EFL learners' interests and the teaching materials of the textbooks at schools. Actually, this internet generation takes the track of surfing the internet searching for images, videos and topics that fulfill their interests. They find the break between the classes a good chance to communicate these ideas with their peers in school. They miss opportunities to speak in the classroom about their interests, prospects and about their reactions. In addition, teachers are not aware of the learners' imagination and critical thinking. Curricula designers neglect the learners abilities of negotiation and incentive discussion. The learners are hanged up by the instructions and the method of teaching. They hate repetition and memorization of the material. They are anxious to engage in dialogues on what is going on around them. Hence this paper attempts to prove that the proper integration of fiction into the syllabus is expected to bridge the gap by giving the learners chance for creating portraits, giving opinions, asking and answering questions and producing projects. The learners will evidently feel that they hold the floor and will inevitably acquire all the four skills for effective communication.

## **7. Purposes of the Study**

This study attempted to trace the effectiveness of teaching fiction short stories on EFL learners' communicative competence in English at the school level. More specifically, this study aimed to determine whether teaching fiction short stories has any effect on EFL sixth grade learners' communicative competence or not. It also tried to investigate if language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are improved due to teaching fiction short stories.

## **8. Research Questions and Hypotheses**

This study is an attempt to answer the following two questions:

1. Are there any significant differences in the scores of the experimental group and the control group due to the teaching method (Using fiction short stories vs. teaching textbook material) in students' communicative competence?
2. Are there any significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in the language productive skills (speaking and writing) due to using fiction short stories?

3. Which element of fiction short story (character, setting, plot, conflict or theme) do the experimental group students focus on in their communication more as a result of using fiction?

The study hypothesized that there will not be any statistically significant differences between the main scores of the experimental and control groups due to the instruction material, on the communicative competence of sixth grade EFL learners at  $p. \leq 0.05$ . The study also hypothesized that there will not be any statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in the language productive skills (speaking and writing) due to using fiction short stories. The third hypothesis assumes that there will not be any statistically significant differences in the main scores of the experimental group's mastery of each element of short story fiction (character, setting, plot, conflict and theme).

## 9. Methods and Procedures of the Study

### 9.1 Participants

Fifty four female students were the participants of this study. They were all six grade students who studied English for 6 years at the Latin Patriarch Private school in Mafraq Directorate. They were already of two sections (A & B) 27 students were in each section. Section 1 was assigned as the control group (A), while section (2) was assigned as the experimental group. Both groups were taught English by the same teacher.

### 9.2 Instructional Material

The teaching material utilized is the textbook taught in the private Latin schools in Jordan (English World 6) of Macmillan Education, first published in 2010 which is an internationally acclaimed English language learning series for the primary stage. The components of this series are: the pupil's book & CD-Rom, workbook, grammar practice book and a dictionary. During the second semester of the scholastic year 2016/2017, both groups studied three units (Unit 9,10 and 11 pages: 94-112). The themes of these units are respectively: Medicine: Doctors then and now; Medicine: Forest plants and trees; and Extreme sports: Find out about sports. The experimental group was exposed to an extra fiction story entitled '*Found*' which was taken from the Internet. This story '*Found*' by Haddix was purposefully chosen to develop the learners' communicative competence. It is one of the missing series which Haddix tapped into a common childhood fantasy. The events are deliberately chosen for motivating the students to discuss and to exchange opinions: '*One night a plane appeared out of nowhere, the only passengers aboard: thirty-six babies. As soon as they were taken off the plane, it vanished. Now, thirteen years later, two of those children are receiving sinister messages, and they begin to investigate their past. Their quest to discover where they really came from leads them to a conspiracy that reaches from the far past to the distant future—and will take them hurtling through time*'. Then, this mystery which began thirteen years ago continues with the arrival of a mysterious letter to two of the babies who started to find where they came from.

### 9.3 Procedures of the Study

Tracing the effectiveness of teaching fiction short stories on EFL learners' communicative competence in English at the school level required some logistic arrangements with the headmistress of the school. All in all, it was agreed that both sections are to attend their classes as it was scheduled. Additionally it was agreed to meet with the experimental group three times a week (50 minutes for each session) in the school video room in the presence of the school teacher and the researcher to act the co-activities for research purposes, and without causing any extra effort for any participant. The procedures were as follows:

1. An oral and a written test that focuses on the communicative competence was prepared, mainly testing the five characteristics of a communicative test suggested by Brown (2005:21)" meaningful communication, authentic situation, unpredictable language input, creative language output, and integrated language skills.
2. The participants were already in two sections: Group A was assigned as the control group ; and group B was assigned as the experimental group.
3. The pre-test was administered for both groups at the same time and under the same conditions before starting the experiment to ensure that there were no differences among the participants' communicative competence. It was conducted at the beginning of the second semester of the scholastic year 2016/2017.
4. The students were taught six classes a week for two months by the same teacher according to their daily timetable.
5. Additionally, the experimental group students were asked to read the fiction short story '*Found*' at home and were also asked to watch the video of this story.
6. The experimental group students were asked to write down inquires, notes, comments and questions on the events that arouse their feelings.
7. The other day they were asked to meet together for one hour in the presence of their English language teacher and the researcher in the video room to orally discuss the points that include suspension, unexpected events and strange findings.
8. To make sure that all the 27 students participated in telling and expressing their views about the fiction story, captions of the story events were displayed, then questions were asked about their expectations.
10. Finally, they were asked to write their comments on the activity at the third session of every week during the two months of the experiment.
11. The teacher's role was to enhance the participants' argumentation and to ask more questions to communicate their expectations to the others.
12. The coming session they were asked to read aloud what they have written about the fiction story, and they were asked to defend their opinions.

13. A post questionnaire of 15 items were answered by the experimental group. Answers were classified according to five categories: Strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree. Students were asked to choose the appropriate answer for each item.

14. The participants' results of the post test were statistically analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

#### *9.4 Design of the Study*

A pre/post-test technique in this quasi-experimental study was used to find out the extent of the effect of fiction short stories on primary stage students' communicative competence. Both groups were taught the same suggested material on the same days of the weeks. The school teacher taught both the control and the experimental groups the three units (9,10 and 11) from the textbook (English World 6); whereas the experimental group was exposed to oral and written activities implemented in three extra sessions weekly built on the events of the fiction short story '*Found*', in the presence of the researcher. In addition, they were given the same pre and post test after the experiment to measure differences (if any) in the students' communicative competence; more specifically in their productive skills performance. Then, the experimental group students were asked to give comments, predict further expectations and suggest further imaginative comments freely. The control group were not exposed to any activity on fiction short stories.

The test was constructed by the researcher. It included a number of oral and written relevant and effective activities that motivate the students to think about, talk about, read about and write about freely and on their own. The ultimate goal of this test is to check the extent of the effect of talking about fiction short stories improve their productive communicative skills. The test covered the productive skills (speaking and writing) in addition to the communicative competence aspects of the element of fiction story ( character, setting, plot, conflict and theme). The test was refereed by a team of experts to ensure its validity in terms of fairness, accuracy, clarity and appropriateness.

#### *9.5 Instrument of the Study*

A pre-test was administered to the participants of the study,(54) who were already divided into two sections of twenty seven students in each, male and female, in the school; and were assigned as a control and experimental groups. The test was of two parts: writing and speaking. Both parts questions were based on a short fable (The bear and the two travelers) taken from their textbook (English World 6, unit 4, page 48 ) that the participants have studied as a reading passage in the first semester 2016/2017.

#### *9.6 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument*

Validation is the process of assessing the accuracy of an instrument. A pre-post test procedures were administered to assess the validity and reliability of this quantitative test .Content validity was also checked by a team of three EFL experts so as to ensure the appropriateness of the content of the instrument to achieve the goal of the study. In other words, this test was an achievement test that aimed to measure the progress of the students'

performance, mainly in the productive skills of their communicative competence. It is obvious that "The more a test simulates the dimension of observable performance, the more likely it is to have content. ..validity", (Weir, 1990:24). Concerning reliability, it is not possible to calculate the test reliability; however, test-retest reliability and the parallel forms reliability could confirm the consistency of the test over time.

### *9.7 Variables of the Study*

Using fiction short stories in discussion sessions and activities in learning and teaching English is the independent variable in this study. The dependent variable is students scores in both the experimental and the control groups' responses in both the oral and the written skills that measures their progress of their communicative competence.

### *9.8 Limitations of the Study*

As there is no perfect work, several limitations should be mentioned here:

1. The sample of the study is sixth grade students studying at Latin Private School in Mafeaq Directorate of Private Education, since it is really hard to include a larger sample. Additionally, these Latin schools are the only ones who use the textbook of English World.
2. The content covers only three units from sixth grade students' reading textbook.
3. The study tended to measure the effect of discussing the events of a fiction story( Found), on the EFL learner's communicative competence through focusing on their productive skills (speaking and writing).
4. The elements of fiction which the study dealt with were five : character, setting, plot, conflict and theme.
5. Discussion classes and activities were held three times a week, out of the class hours in the video room and in the presence of the researcher and the school teacher.
6. The study was conducted in a private school not a government one; where different textbooks are used.

### *9.9 Statistical Analysis*

To analyze the results of the participants' scores, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used. Mean and standard deviations were calculated . A T-test and One Way ANOVA were also used to find the differences, if there were any, that may arise as a result of the experiment. To determine the difference in the means of the scores between the two groups, a pre- post test was conducted. The pre-test was carried out at the beginning of the second semester of the academic year 2016-2017 to determine the actual level of the students before starting the experiment.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of the experimental and control groups on the pre-test of the productive skills and communicative competence.

Productive Skill / group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T value	Sig.
<b>Control</b> : speaking		3.7489			
Writing	27	4.2366	1.71339	.173	.864
Total		7.9855			
<b>Experimental:</b> speaking		3.9600			
Writing	27	4.2100	1.74034		
Total		8.1700			
mastering elements of communicative competence	27	19.5714	6.60669	.090	.929
<b>Control group Experimental group</b>	27	19.4000	4.50029		

Table 1 above shows the absence of statistical significant differences at the level of ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) for the productive language skills (speaking and writing) for a pre-assessment equivalence due to groups. It is also showed that there is no statistical significance differences due to communicatively mastering any of the fiction short story elements, where the total means for both groups are equivalent. The findings showed that students' scores for both groups were almost equivalent for each variable in the pre-test before applying the experiment.

#### 4. Findings of the Study

##### 4.1 Findings Related to the First Question

To answer the first question of this study " Are there any significant differences in the scores of the experimental group and the control group due to the teaching method (Using fiction short stories vs. teaching textbook material) in students' communicative competence? ", means and standard deviations for method of teaching were calculated as stated and shown in Table 2 below. After administering the post test that aimed to measure the learners' communicative competence in communicating events of fiction short story elements (character, setting, plot, conflict and theme), it was found out that there is a significant difference in the learners' communicative competence in the post-test in favor of the experimental group. It is apparent from Table 2 that the mean scores of the experimental group in the post-test were higher than those of the control group. The differences may be attributed to the method of using short story fiction activities in teaching.

Table 2. Post test results of both experimental & control group's scores in discussing the elements of fiction short story.

Elements of fiction short story	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Character	Control group	27	5.2143	1.12171
	Experimental group	27	8.4500	.75915

Setting	Control group	27	5.1429	1.23146
	Experimental group	27	7.9500	1.50350
Plot	Control group	27	4.7857	1.62569
	Experimental group	27	6.8500	1.22582
Conflict	Control group	27	4.6429	1.59842
	Experimental group	27	6.8500	1.59852
Theme	Control group	27	4.2857	1.13873
	Experimental group	27	6.2000	1.00525

Table 2 indicates that the learners' competence in communicating the element of character using short story fiction was the highest, followed by the setting, then the plot, the conflict and finally the theme, in the post-test in favor of the experimental group. The progress in the mean scores of the experimental group in the post-test was higher than that of the control group. The differences in this finding may be attributed to using discussion activities.

Table 3. Totals of means and standard deviations of communicative competence of the experimental and control groups on the post-test.

Competence	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig.
Communicative competence	Control group	27	25.0114	5.44455	6.820	.000
	Experimental group	27	35.3000	4.56647		

Table 3 shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the competences of the two groups. This difference indicates that teaching fiction short stories in English to EFL learners of sixth grade has a positive effect on their communicative competence, where the total mean score for the experimental group was 35.30 whereas, it was 25.01 for the control group. It could be proposed that the experimental group students felt more relax and confident during the discussion sessions that were held as co-curriculum activities. This could be attributed to the fact that they were asked to meet for oral and written communication classes to exchange thoughts and utter comments on each element of the story. In addition, they were told that there were no scores records for such sessions. The sessions were implemented for enhancing their English through suggesting imaginative conditions relevant to fiction story events.

Table 4 below calculates the progress of the experimental group in using English communicatively. It shows that the total mean scores of the experimental group in the pre-test was 19.4000; in contrast, after the experiment, the total of the mean scores became 35.3000. This indicates that within the two months of training on discussing the activities of fiction short stories, the students were active enough to communicate their opinions about the events of the fiction stories.

Table 4. Means and Standard Deviations of communicative competence of the Experimental Group Students on the Pre and Post-Tests.

Skill	Test	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig.
Communicative competence	Pre test	27	19.4000	4.50029	11.788	0.000
	Post test	27	35.3000	4.56647		

It is evident that the experimental group performed much better on the post-test than on the pre-test as shown above as indicated in **Table 4**. This difference in the mean scores on the pre- and post-test was statistically measured by using T-test of both groups.

Table 5. Means, Standard Deviations and T-Test values of communicative competence of both Groups in the Pre and Post-Tests

Test	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T value	Sig
Pre	Control	27	19.5714	6.60669	.090	.929
	Experimental	27	19.4000	4.50029		
Post	Control	27	25.0114	5.44455	6.820	.000
	Experimental	27	35.3000	4.56647		

T test shows a significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group on the pre-test and post-test as a result of the effect of using short story on discussion activities. **Table 5** above indicates the amount of progress that each group had achieved during the period of the study where the mean scores and standard deviations of the two groups were calculated. **Table 5** shows the amount of progress each group had achieved. The experimental group got an increase of 35.30 scores in their mean of scores on the post-test compared with the mean scores on the pre-test. On the other hand, the control group got an increase to 25.01 scores only in their mean scores on the post-test compared with their mean scores on the pre-test. In addition, the results indicate that there is a statistical impact of the short stories in communicative competence, in which the experimental group got higher scores than the control group which equals 10.186. This progress in the mean scores of the experimental group students could be attributed to the effect of the extra curriculum activities held outside class time.

#### 4.2 Findings Related to the Second Question

Question 2 inquires if there are any significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups students in the language productive skills (speaking and writing) due to using fiction short stories? To answer this question, T value of both groups was calculated on the tests (speaking, and writing) for the pre/post test. **Table 6** sheds light on the results of the analysis.

Table 6. Results of the T-Test values of the Post-test results of both groups in language productive Skills.

Skill	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	sig.
Speaking	Control group	27	5.1429	1.16732	-3.204	.003
	Experimental group	27	6.6000	1.39170		
Writing	Control group	27	5.5000	1.22474	-4.186	.000
	Experimental group	27	7.4000	1.35336		
Total	Control group	27	10.6429	3.36331	-5.557	.000
	Experimental group	27	14.0000	2.54631		

Table 6 shows that there were statistical significant differences for the experimental groups' performance in the language productive skills (speaking and writing) in the post test, in favor of the experimental group; where the total mean of the scores of the experimental group in speaking and writing was 14.0000 compared with the total of the control group 10.6429 after implementing the experiment of using fiction story discussion activities. It could be concluded that this result may be attributed to practicing language in the activities sessions.

#### 4.3 Findings Related to the Third Question

The third question asks 'Which element of fiction (character, setting, plot, conflict or theme) do the experimental group students focus on more in their communication as a result of using fiction? To answer this question, One-way ANOVA was applied to measure which element of fiction aroused the participants' interest more. Tables 7 shows that below. One way ANOVA was used to test if there are any significant differences between the control group and experimental the group students scores in their oral and written performance that communicates their answers concerning the five elements of fiction story( character, setting, plot, conflict and theme) , as shown in Table 7 below:

Table 7. One Way ANOVA of students' post test scores of groups of elements of fiction story in communicative competency

Elements of short story fiction	Source	Sum Squares	of Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Character	Between Groups	86.222	1	86.222	101.040	.000
	Within Groups	27.307	32	.853		
	Total	113.529	33			
Setting	Between Groups	30.178	1	30.178	26.783	.000
	Within Groups	36.057	32	1.127		
	Total	66.235	33			
Plot	Between Groups	35.093	1	35.093	17.851	.000

	Within Groups	62.907	32	1.966		
	Total	98.000	33			
Conflict	Between Groups	40.118	1	40.118	15.701	.000
	Within Groups	81.764	32	2.555		
	Total	121.882	33			
Theme	Between Groups	64.895	1	64.895	33.139	.000
	Within Groups	62.664	32	1.958		
	Total	127.559	33			

The previous table reveals that there are variations in the means of the elements of fiction story in communication. **Table 7** indicates that there were significant differences in the experimental groups' performance of the communicative competence (character, setting, plot, conflict, theme), where all the values of *F* on the posttest are statistically significant in favor of the experimental group students' communicative competence.

## 5. Discussion

According to the results, it was obvious that scores of the experimental group were better than those of the control group, and the level of the experimental group on the communicative competence of language has progressed after using discussion sessions and activities on the elements of the fiction story. Therefore, reading fiction stories has a positive effect on the learners' communicative performance. The scores the participants of the experimental group achieved on the post test were statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis that says that there will not be any statistically significant differences between the main scores of the experimental and control groups due to the instruction material, on the communicative competence of sixth grade EFL learners at  $p. \leq 0.05$ . is rejected. The study also hypothesized that there will not be any statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in the language productive skills (speaking and writing) due to using fiction short stories. However, the results showed that the participants of the experimental group gained higher scores than those in the control group. Actually, they were anxious to participate and express their challenging ideas concerning what events may occur to those babies of the fiction story, " *Found*". The findings also indicate that the students of the experimental group were interested in discussing the future of the characters of the fiction story. They were eager to follow what other stories and videos have been produced relevant to the events of this fiction story. Amazingly they were able to find what happened to two babies after thirteen years. Those two boys were trying to find where they came from, who their families, and where they lived; in addition to a lot of questions that needed answers. This means that the learners' anticipation has led them to exceed the events and participate in the craft of writing fiction stories. So, the third hypothesis that assumed that there will not be any statistically significant differences in the

main scores of the experimental group's mastery of each element of short story fiction (character, setting, plot, conflict and theme) is rejected.

The surprising moments occurred when those learners started to communicate what they have traced to the others using expressions and sentences they have naturally acquired due to their engagement and involvement in the events of the fiction story. Therefore, the assumption that Fulcher and Davidson (2007) claimed about the 'communicative language testing system tests which are devoted to testing not only learners' knowledge of a language and how to use it (competence) but also to what extent learners apply their knowledge to meaningful communicative situations (performance)'. This ensures that the learners experience has been extended more than expectations. It could be stated here that technology and individuality in surpassing reality may affect this generations' prospects to lead teaching courses towards changing the dull routine at schools. Additionally the results of this study are in line with the advantages and recommendations of teaching short stories and literature at the school level that(Arıoğul 2001:11-18) listed in his thesis.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The analysis of the results of this study proved that discussing fiction short story events accompanied with performing oral and written activities offered sixth grade students self confidence that enhanced them to participate and defend their views towards the events of the story. In addition they were able to anticipate and imagine unpredicted and unexpected answers to some inquiries raised during the discussion sessions. So exposure to events of fiction stories has affected and developed their abilities to produce language communicatively. The experimental group participants' comments revealed that they vitally absorbed the language. It could be concluded that chatting about fiction story elements may enrich the participants' productive skills, open their scope of imagination and motivate their critical thinking.

Moreover, , it is demonstrated through this study how fiction can be utilized in the language classroom. The students proved that the fiction story "*Found*" is a new experience for their personal development. This experience is really another world of learning how to express and communicate their own thoughts. It is evident that the learners feel proud of their creative ideas and their communicative abilities. They showed that they were able to go further than the teachers' expectations.

The myth of not teaching short stories, fiction, literary or science fiction stories should be dismissed at schools' authorities. It should be recommended that all types of literature should be included in the teaching learning processes. Nowadays , with the technological innovations, the availability of authentic, literary and fictional literature is easy to handle and go over by all motivated learners. Hence, why are fiction books excluded in the teaching material courses for all stages! Is it enough to include a short fiction passage and another shorter literary passage in the pupil's textbook to teach the students how to discuss and express their thoughts? The researcher reckons that even at the primary stage the kids are eager to learn more and more about imaginative events. This could be considered as an extension to the fables and tales they used to hear from their grandmas. Although kids admire

listening to the same story repeatedly, different types of discussions and updating the activities that follow each class can bring a joyful and authentic environments for both the learners and the teachers. This may lead to improving all the different types of communicative competences that are stated by Canale (1983).

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### **P.S:**

The extra instructional fiction short story was: *The Missing Series-Haddix* by Margaret Peterson Haddix, for ages: 8 – 12 years. A mystery which began thirteen years ago continues with the arrival of a mysterious letter. Margaret Peterson Haddix Found (*The Missing*, Book 1) ISBN 13: 9781416954217 (Paper book and video).

### **Autobiography**

Awatif M. Abu Al-Sha'r is an associate professor of EFL. A female, has been teaching English as a foreign language at Al-albaysat University as a full time since 1996. She was the Dean of the Faculty of Educational sciences from 2009-2014. In addition to teaching English at the English Language Department and the Department of Curricula and Instruction, she was appointed in various position in the University. She teaches

BA, MA and courses at the University and at Amman Arab University. She has been a supervisor of PhD and MA students at different universities.

She has studies in TEFL, Literature and Translation.

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