



Regular Article

**Transferring Comprehension Skills from Listening to Reading: Effects of
Listening to Online Flash Fiction on Attitudes, Reading Comprehension and
Vocabulary Size**

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Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of incorporating online flash fiction as a pre-reading strategy to enhance reading comprehension and attitudes among college-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Using a pretest-posttest control group design, 51 junior-level EFL students were randomly assigned to either an experimental group (n=26) or a control group (n=25). The experimental group engaged in a semester-long online listening comprehension course that was *preceded by a structured viewing experience of online flash fiction on YouTube*. Both groups completed the same listening comprehension course, but the control group did not engage with online flash fiction. A Reading Attitude Survey and a researcher-developed reading comprehension test were administered as pre-tests and post-tests. *Independent samples t-tests and paired-samples t-tests* were used to analyze the data. Findings revealed that the experimental group demonstrated significantly greater improvement in both reading comprehension and reading attitudes compared to the control group. The paper discusses these results in relation to existing literature, explores potential pedagogical implications, and suggests areas for further research.

Keywords: *Online Flash Fiction; EFL Reading Comprehension; Transfer of Comprehension Skills (Viewing to Reading); Reading Attitudes (College Students); Online Learning Platforms (YouTube); EFL Pedagogy.*

Introduction

The power of storytelling in education is undeniable. Stories have the ability to transport learners to different worlds, ignite their imaginations, and make learning a more engaging and memorable experience. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), stories offer a particularly effective tool for developing language skills, fostering a deeper understanding of the language and culture, and promoting a more positive attitude towards learning.

Stories offer a powerful tool for developing various language skills in EFL learners, including reading, listening, writing, vocabulary acquisition, and grammar (Alshumaimeri & Al-Tamimi, 2019; Richards, 2017; Sembiring, 2022). This holistic approach prioritizes learner engagement with authentic language use, fostering deeper understanding and real-world application (Glisan & Humphries, 2023). Research suggests stories can serve as an "intriguing technique" (Garvie, 1990, p. 112) to enhance foreign language learning. By incorporating short stories into EFL lessons, teachers can create engaging activities that break the monotony of traditional methods and foster a more dynamic learning environment (Arias Rodríguez, 2017; Ghafar, 2024; Ghahremani & Ghahremani, 2022). Effective use of stories ultimately benefits both teachers and students, promoting a more engaging and successful foreign language learning experience (Benabbes & Abu Taleb, 2024; Ghafar, 2024; Yu & Yang, 2021).

A substantial body of research explores the positive effects of storytelling and reading on comprehension and incidental vocabulary acquisition in both first and second language learning environments (Al-Seghayer & Bataineh, 2016; Elley, 1989; McWilliams, 1998; Trostle & Hicks, 1998; Uchiyama, 2011; Walter-Burnham, 1988; Yildiz, 2018; Yildiz & Koçyiğit, 2018). However, research specifically examining the use of online short stories for English language learning, particularly in EFL college settings, is scarce (Alshumaimeri & Al-Tamimi, 2019; Mansoor et al., 2022; Pardede, 2021). While the pedagogical benefits of stories in EFL classrooms are well-documented (Manour et al., 2023; Richards, 2017), limited research focuses on their application within the specific cultural and educational context of Egyptian universities (Abdel Haliem, 2018). Further investigation is necessary to determine the effectiveness of online short stories within this unique EFL learning environment.

This gap is particularly relevant considering the potential of online short stories to enhance EFL learning. Studies suggest that extensive reading of online materials can improve reading comprehension and motivation (Chen, 2018; Yu, 2020). Furthermore, integrating technology into language learning environments can be a powerful tool (Warschauer & Meskill, 2000). However,

the effectiveness of online short stories within the unique cultural and educational context of Egyptian universities remains unexplored. Further investigation is necessary to determine if and how online short stories can be utilized to enhance EFL learning experiences for Egyptian college students.

The integration of short stories in foreign language instruction has a long-standing tradition, dating back to the Grammar Translation Method, where they were primarily utilized for vocabulary acquisition and grammar rule reinforcement (Erkaya, 2005; Khatib & Nasrollah, 2012; Sell, 2005). However, contemporary pedagogical approaches recognize the broader potential of short stories in fostering holistic language development. For learners at lower and upper intermediate proficiency levels, short stories provide a valuable resource for enriching vocabulary, enhancing grammatical understanding, and promoting exposure to authentic language use (Cameron, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2016; McDonough & Mackey, 2016; Nation, 2003; Wright, 1997).

Short stories, especially when presented in a multimedia format, can significantly enhance the engagement and motivation of language learners (Potocki & Laval, 2019). The integration of sound, pictures, animation, and video through platforms like YouTube mashups creates a dynamic and interactive learning experience. Furthermore, incorporating video into reading activities extends beyond entertainment, serving as a valuable tool for cultural familiarization, which in turn, can improve comprehension (Pérez-Mira de la Fuente & del Campo, 2021). Studies have demonstrated that reading comprehension can be fostered not only through traditional aural/oral methods but also through diverse linguistic formats such as narratives and videos (Potocki & Laval, 2019).

Short stories serve as a versatile tool for developing a range of language skills in EFL learners, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Alshumaimeri & Al-Tamimi, 2019; Pardede, 2021). Research suggests that short stories can enrich vocabulary, enhance grammatical understanding, and improve pronunciation (Alshumaimeri & Al-Tamimi, 2019). Pedagogical activities based on short stories can encourage closer reading, improve listening comprehension through audio recordings, and provide models for speaking and writing development (Petersen et al., 2020). Moreover, short stories can contribute to learners' cultural awareness within language learning environments (Byram, 1997).

Despite the potential of short stories in EFL instruction, research specifically examining the use of online short stories and the transfer of comprehension skills from viewing to reading in the context of EFL college students remains limited (Alshumaimeri & Al-Tamimi, 2019). This gap in research is particularly concerning considering the documented challenges that some college students face in reading comprehension, especially when encountering literary texts (Bintz, 1993; Brooks, 1996; Brown and Briggs, 1989; Kubis, 1994). Studies consistently highlight these difficulties, indicating that complex vocabulary, unfamiliar cultural references, and dense writing styles can hinder comprehension (McLaughlin & Nation,

2019). This underscores the need for further exploration of instructional approaches that effectively support college students in navigating the complexities of literary texts.

This study focuses on a group of English majors in their third year of a College of Education program who demonstrate low reading comprehension, particularly when encountering literary texts in their senior year. Given these challenges, this research investigates the potential of a pre-reading strategy involving viewing online short stories followed by reading them to facilitate the transfer of comprehension skills and improve reading abilities. The goal is to not only enhance their reading skills but also foster a more positive attitude towards reading, which is a crucial skill for their future success.

This study investigates the impact of incorporating online flash fiction as a pre-reading strategy on the reading attitudes, reading comprehension, and vocabulary size of junior students in the Faculty of Education at Beni Suf University. A pre-test/post-test control group design will be employed to isolate the effect of the online flash fiction intervention.

Research Questions:

1. To what extent does a pre-reading strategy involving viewing online flash fiction impact the reading attitudes of EFL learners compared to a control group?
2. Does a pre-reading strategy involving viewing online flash fiction lead to significant improvements in reading comprehension scores among EFL learners compared to a control group?
3. Does a pre-reading strategy involving viewing online flash fiction have a significant impact on the vocabulary size of EFL learners compared to a control group?

Literature Review

Reading is a fundamental skill, underpinning the development of other language abilities and contributing significantly to social and economic progress (OECD, 2020). It goes beyond a collection of sub-skills; it is a complex process of constructing meaning from written text, requiring a dynamic interplay of cognitive and socio-emotional factors (McKeown & Beck, 2016).

Engaging with short stories provides a solid foundation for developing higher-order thinking skills among EFL learners. Effective reading comprehension involves not only understanding the surface level of the text but also critically analyzing it, drawing inferences, and applying the acquired knowledge to solve problems (Anderson & Pearson, 2014; Yu & Lei, 2023). Short stories, with their manageable length and engaging narratives, are well-suited for fostering these deeper comprehension skills (Liu & Guo, 2020). The International Reading Association emphasizes the

importance of providing adolescent readers with a diverse range of reading materials, including more challenging texts like short stories (International Reading Association, 2016).

Benefits of Short Stories in EFL Instruction

While extensive research exists on the use of short stories in ESL contexts to improve reading comprehension and vocabulary development, the application of this technique in EFL settings has received less attention (Alshumaimeri & Al-Tamimi, 2019). Studies have demonstrated that listening to short stories can enhance incidental vocabulary acquisition, where learners acquire new words without explicit instruction (Elley, 1989). Similarly, incorporating storytelling and story reading into EFL instruction has proven to improve vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension in young learners (Trestle & Hicks, 1998).

Several scholars advocate for the integration of literature, particularly short stories, into language teaching (Arias Rodríguez, 2017; Ghahremani & Ghahremani, 2022; Pardede, 2021; Sembiring, 2022). Literature provides valuable resources for:

- Enhancing reading skills (Liu & Guo, 2020)
- Engaging students in active learning (Gu, 2003)
- Developing cultural awareness (Byram, 1997)
- Exposing students to language structures and vocabulary (McKay, 2001)

According to Garvie (1990), short stories are particularly well-suited for language learning due to their engaging narratives and manageable length. They can be easily integrated into various language skills classes to add variety and stimulate interest (Harmer, 2001). Wright (2003) argues that using stories in language learning goes beyond simply teaching language; it fosters critical thinking and creativity.

The Allure of Flash Fiction for EFL Learners

For EFL learners, navigating the complexities of traditional literature can be challenging. However, recent research suggests that a different genre – online flash fiction – offers a compelling and effective alternative for language acquisition. Flash fiction, characterized by its brevity and focus on a single plot point, presents several advantages for EFL learners (Yu, 2020).

Firstly, the condensed nature of these stories allows learners to encounter a complete narrative arc within a manageable timeframe, boosting their sense of accomplishment and motivation (Yu, 2020). Secondly, flash fiction often utilizes simpler language structures and

vocabulary, making the content more accessible to learners at various proficiency levels (Larsen-Freeman, 2016).

This focus on comprehensibility is further enhanced by the presence of graded vocabulary options on many online platforms, allowing learners to select stories that align with their current abilities (McDonough & Mackey, 2016). These graded approaches can promote a sense of progress and confidence as learners gradually tackle more challenging stories with increasing vocabulary demands. Ultimately, the engaging nature of flash fiction, coupled with its manageable length and focus on accessible language, positions it as a valuable tool for EFL learners to develop their language skills and foster a love for reading in English.

Adapting Online Flash Fiction for Classroom Use

While online flash fiction holds immense potential for EFL learners, successful classroom integration requires careful adaptation (Yu, 2020). This involves both linguistic and interactional adjustments. Linguistic adjustments focus on accessibility. Instructors can simplify vocabulary and sentence structures (Larsen-Freeman, 2016) or leverage graded versions offered by online platforms (McDonough & Mackey, 2016) to cater to diverse proficiency levels. This fosters a sense of accomplishment and builds confidence as learners progress.

Interactional adjustments enhance engagement and comprehension. Pre-reading activities like brainstorming vocabulary or discussing visuals prime students for the content (Yu, 2020). Regular comprehension checks using questioning techniques ensure understanding (Nation, 2003). Finally, collaborative learning activities like group discussions or role-playing deepen engagement with the material (McCredie, 2018).

Research findings support the applicability of online flash fiction as a powerful tool for language acquisition in the EFL classroom. Prior research (e.g., Yu, 2020) demonstrates its effectiveness in promoting both vocabulary development and reading comprehension. McCredie (2018) further highlights the benefits of multimedia in language learning, which aligns with the use of online flash fiction that often incorporates visual or audio elements.

The Character Imagery Storytelling Technique

The character imagery storytelling technique in online flash fiction, where the instructor portrays a character while recounting the story, offers a promising approach for enhancing language

learning. Research suggests that this technique can improve comprehension of both visual and written text (Zheng, 2019; Mayer, 2014; Allwright, 1984). This is because character portrayal can:

- **Increase Engagement:** By embodying a character, the instructor creates a more dynamic and engaging learning experience, potentially boosting student motivation and focus (Zheng, 2019).
- **Enhance Visualization:** The instructor's portrayal can act as a visual cue, helping students visualize the characters and the story setting, which can improve comprehension (Mayer, 2014).
- **Clarify Emotions:** Through facial expressions and vocal intonations, the instructor can convey emotions more effectively than written text alone, fostering a deeper understanding of the characters' feelings and motivations (Allwright, 1984).

Further research is needed to fully explore the effectiveness of this technique, but its potential to enhance comprehension and engagement within the EFL classroom is promising. To optimize learning for EFL students, educators should avoid information overload (Ahmad, 2012). Presenting stories through both videos and text concurrently can be overwhelming. Effective activities, however, can be scaffolded for success.

Studies by Gu (2003) and Yu (2020) recommend incorporating pre-reading/viewing exercises to activate prior knowledge, followed by individual reading or viewing time. Activities like creating story outlines or analyzing themes can deepen comprehension (McDonough & Mackey, 2016), while writing personal responses encourage learners to reflect on the material and personalize their learning experience (Nation, 2003). By implementing a structured approach and avoiding information overload, educators can design engaging and effective activities that leverage online flash fiction to promote language acquisition.

Deepening Comprehension Through Pre-Exposure and Multimedia

Research by scholars like Shih (2019) and McCredie (2018) highlights the effectiveness of a multimodal approach in enhancing comprehension for EFL learners. This approach leverages the power of multimedia by incorporating various elements like visuals, audio, and text-based activities (Liu & Guo, 2020). Here's how it works:

- **Pre-exposure and Building Anticipation:** Students engage in collaborative learning activities that involve a multimedia experience, such as watching a video clip or listening to an audio

recording with animations. This pre-exposure activates students' background knowledge and builds anticipation for the story's content (Yu, 2020). Studies by Zhang (2019) further suggest that this pre-teaching can significantly improve comprehension outcomes.

- **Engaging with the Text:** Following the multimedia experience, students delve into the story itself, often presented in an illustrated text format. This combination of visuals and text caters to diverse learning styles and can enhance engagement (Mayer, 2014).
- **Solidifying Understanding:** Comprehension checks or exercises that test vocabulary recall and story elements are crucial to solidify understanding (Nation, 2003). This allows instructors to identify areas where students might need additional support.

The benefits of this approach go beyond comprehension and language receptivity. By providing multiple entry points to the story, multimedia elements can foster a deeper grasp of narratives (McDonough & Mackey, 2016). Additionally, research by Mayer (2014) suggests that multimedia elements can reduce emotional barriers associated with reading or listening difficulties, creating a more positive learning experience for EFL students.

EFL Reading Strategies: Pre-Reading, Media, and Attitude

Pre-Reading Activities

Research emphasizes the importance of pre-reading activities in boosting comprehension (Yu, 2020). Assigning short stories for home reading, even a day before class, allows students to grasp the story structure – a crucial element for understanding any text (Liu & Guo, 2020). This pre-reading familiarizes students with vocabulary and narrative flow, making in-class analysis more focused and productive (Gu, 2003).

The Multimedia Advantage

Studies consistently report the effectiveness of multimedia tools like YouTube mashups for language acquisition (McCredie, 2018). These platforms provide access to authentic spoken language through engaging multimedia resources (Benson & Reinders, 2019). Furthermore, research by Benson & Reinders (2019) highlights the benefits of online videos for EFL learners. Short, captioned videos with clear audio and visuals enhance vocabulary acquisition and listening comprehension. Similarly, extant research (e.g., Lin, et al., 2013) demonstrates the effectiveness of online resources like YouTube mashups in developing listening and speaking skills.

YouTube offers a wealth of resources for improving comprehension in both viewing and reading. Learners can immerse themselves in authentic conversations with various accents, enhancing listening skills. YouTube's curated audio and oral materials further benefit language acquisition (McDonough & Mackey, 2016).

The concept of comprehensible input, proposed by Krashen (1985, 1994), emphasizes the importance of clear content and context cues. YouTube videos, particularly those with captions, effectively deliver these elements through aural/visual stimulation (Benson & Reinders, 2019). By incorporating both visual and auditory cues, educators can enhance listening comprehension and facilitate its transfer to reading comprehension (Lin et al., 2013).

The Power of Positive Attitudes

Student attitudes significantly impact language acquisition through short stories. Reading attitudes form early, potentially by first grade (Gu, 2003). Positive reading attitudes in a student's native language correlate with a positive attitude towards recreational and academic reading later (Wigfield & Guthrie, 2000). These positive attitudes can have a cascading effect on reading skill development (Yu, 2020).

Recent research (e.g., Wang & Cheng, 2013; Yang et al., 2020) highlights the link between positive attitudes and self-efficacy in reading. Students with positive attitudes are more likely to persevere through challenges and ultimately develop stronger reading skills (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1995). Conversely, negative attitudes can hinder progress (Gu, 2003). Recent studies (e.g., Akintunde & Adepoju, 2018; Yu & Yang, 2021) have explored factors influencing positive reading attitudes in secondary students. These studies identified key factors that contribute to positive reading attitudes among college students.

Method

This study employed a pre-test/post-test control group design to investigate the impact of incorporating online flash fiction as a pre-reading strategy on the reading attitudes, reading comprehension, and vocabulary size of EFL learners. The research was conducted at Beni Suef University in Egypt.

Participants

A total of 51 junior-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students enrolled in a Listening Comprehension course were recruited for this study. All participants had prior English

language exposure from secondary school education, ensuring a baseline level of proficiency. The students were randomly assigned to either an experimental group (n=26) or a control group (n=25).

To ensure group homogeneity, the researcher assessed participants' socioeconomic background, educational level, and English language proficiency. Both groups exhibited similar characteristics, with homogenous socioeconomic backgrounds, educational levels, and English proficiency levels ranging from lower-intermediate to upper-intermediate. Pretest results revealed no statistically significant differences between the groups on any of these measures. Detailed data on participant characteristics can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Characteristics at Baseline

Measure	Ex. Group (n=26)	Ctrl Group (n=25)	MD	p-value
Socioeconomic Background	Similar	Similar	/A	/A
Educational Level	Similar	Similar	/A	/A
English Proficiency Level	Lower-Intermediate to Upper-Intermediate	Lower-Intermediate to Upper-Intermediate	/A	/A
Reading Attitude Pretest Score	3.67 (0.89)	3.54 (0.92)	.13	.34
Reading Comprehension Pretest Score	36.07 (13.57)	35.99 (13.11)	.08	.87
Vocabulary Size Pretest Score	Average 4,200 words (SD=250)	Average 4,150 words (SD=200)	0 words	.62

Instrumentation

Three primary instruments were used to assess participants' reading and viewing abilities:

1. **Reading Comprehension Test:** A two-version English reading comprehension test (20 multiple-choice questions each) was employed to assess participants' reading ability at the beginning and end of the semester (pre-test and post-test). The internal validity of the tests was established through Cronbach's alpha calculations on a separate sample of 400 EFL learners ($\alpha = 0.971$ and 0.973 for the two versions), indicating high reliability.
2. **EFL Vocabulary Size Test:** The EFL Vocabulary Size Test (Pre-Test/Post-Test) is a multiple-choice test designed to assess learners' English vocabulary knowledge. It uses a multiple-choice format with three sections: matching, fill-in-the-blank, and synonyms. The test prioritizes reliability and validity, with a high Kuder-Richardson coefficient ($K-R = 0.8$) value indicating strong internal consistency. Validity was assessed for appropriate content through a panel of experts (5 instructors/reviewers) to check the test's format targeting vocabulary comprehension; suggested language edits were done on the primary version of the test. The difficulty level of vocabulary words was analyzed to align with the test-takers' intended learning level.
3. **Reading/Viewing Attitude Survey (RVAS):** This 24-item, 5-point Likert scale survey (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) measures attitudes across four dimensions: Transfer of Learning (viewing to reading comprehension); Vocabulary and Language Development; Enjoyment of Reading Short Stories; and Usefulness for Leisure and Learning. The survey demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.78$ for all four constructs).

Procedure

The study was conducted during the second semester of the 2022-2023 academic year. All participants completed pre-tests in the first week, assessing their reading attitude, reading comprehension, and vocabulary size. Both groups were taught by the same instructor, using the same textbook ("Juniors' Conversation") and instructional procedures throughout the semester.

Intervention for the Experimental Group

The experimental group received an additional extensive reading program focused on online short stories, designed to enhance their reading comprehension and attitudes. These stories were carefully selected from the "Learn English via Stories" YouTube channel and presented in class

through YouTube mashups displayed on a projector, with CD-ROM copies also available for home use.

Selection of Online Flash Fiction

The program utilized 24 carefully chosen flash fiction stories, prioritizing authenticity, readability, and relevance to the students' interests.

- **Readability:** Readability formulas, such as the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level or Dale-Chall Readability Formula, were used to ensure that the stories were challenging yet accessible for the junior EFL students. These formulas provided a score indicating the reading level required for junior EFL students, ensuring they were challenged but not overwhelmed by the material.
- **Authenticity:** The focus was on prioritizing authentic content from high-quality sources. While resources like "Learn English via Stories" provided a starting point, the goal was to select stories as close to authentic English as possible, with minor simplifications made only when necessary to aid comprehension without sacrificing the original style.
- **Relevance:** Themes were chosen based on student interests and real-life experiences, reflecting young adult life or everyday situations. This approach aligns with best practices, aiming to bridge the gap between learning and the students' world by sparking their interest through relatable content.

Comprehension Activities

Following each YouTube mashup presentation, students engaged in several comprehension activities designed to deepen their understanding of the stories:

- **Question-and-answer:** Students answered both specific and general questions related to the story content, encouraging them to actively process the information presented.
- **Reading comprehension:** Typed versions of the stories were provided, allowing students to reread and answer additional local and global comprehension questions. This included checking their answers from the YouTube mashup, reinforcing their understanding and promoting self-reflection.

Encouraging Extensive Reading

To further enhance their language learning, students in the experimental group were encouraged to explore and read additional short stories online, including content beyond their current proficiency level if desired. They were instructed to prioritize overall comprehension over speed-reading and to aim for a minimum of two hours of weekly leisure viewing/reading, as suggested by Susser and Robb (1990), to maximize the benefits of extensive reading.

Post-tests

At the end of the study, both groups completed posttests using alternate versions of the reading comprehension test, the same reading attitude scale, and a new vocabulary test.

Data Analysis

Independent-samples t-tests were employed for pre-test and post-test comparisons within each group (English reading attitude, reading comprehension, vocabulary size). Paired-samples t-tests were used to analyze the change scores (difference between pre-test and post-test) between the groups.

Results

Having established the positive impact of online flash fiction on EFL learners' reading attitudes, comprehension, and vocabulary development, the following sections will delve deeper into the specific findings related to each of these areas. First, the researcher examines the individual dimensions of reading attitudes as measured by the Reading/Viewing Attitude Survey (RVAS), focusing on the significant improvements observed in the experimental group. Next, the substantial gains in reading comprehension demonstrated by the experimental group are explored, highlighting the potential mechanisms behind this improvement. Finally, the researcher analyzes the significant increase in vocabulary size among the experimental group, exploring how online flash fiction might contribute to this growth.

Effects of the Intervention on Reading Attitudes and Skills

Table 2 presents the pre-test and post-test scores on the Reading/Viewing Attitude Survey (RVAS) for both the experimental and control groups. The table displays scores across four dimensions: Transfer of Learning (Listening/Viewing to Reading Comprehension), Vocabulary and Language Development, Enjoyment of Reading Short Stories, and Usefulness for Leisure and Learning.

Table 2*Pre/Post RVAS Scores: Experimental and Control Groups*

Dimension	Ex. Group (Mean \pm SD)	Control Group (Mean \pm SD)	Change (Exp. Group)	Change (Control Group)	<i>p</i> -value
Transfer of Learning (Listening/Viewing to Reading Comprehension)	3.67 (0.89)	3.54 (0.92)	1.22	0.10	0.012
Vocabulary and Language Development	3.10 (0.87)	3.00 (0.89)	1.11	0.88	0.038
Enjoyment of Reading Short Stories	3.77 (0.78)	3.66 (0.82)	1.02	0.30	0.047
Usefulness for Leisure and Learning	2.17 (0.91)	2.61 (0.85)	0.60	0.02	0.104 (marginally non- significant)
Overall Score	12.79 (3.21)	12.30 (2.98)	3.95	1.30	0.003

Analysis of Reading Attitudes and Skills (Research Question 1)

The experimental group exhibited significantly greater improvements in three out of the four dimensions measured on the RVAS compared to the control group, supporting the hypothesis that online flash fiction positively impacts EFL learners' reading attitudes and skills:

- **Transfer of Learning:** The experimental group showed a significantly greater increase in scores (1.22) compared to the control group (0.10) ($p = 0.012$), indicating that the online flash fiction intervention effectively facilitated the transfer of listening/viewing comprehension skills to reading comprehension.

- **Vocabulary and Language Development:** The experimental group displayed a statistically significant improvement (1.11) compared to the control group's change (0.88) ($p = 0.038$), suggesting that online flash fiction contributed to enhanced vocabulary and language development.
- **Enjoyment of Reading Short Stories:** The experimental group experienced a significant increase in enjoyment (1.02) compared to the control group's smaller change (0.30) ($p = 0.047$), demonstrating that online flash fiction fosters a more positive attitude towards reading among EFL learners.

However, the "Usefulness for Leisure and Learning" dimension did not show statistically significant improvements in the experimental group (0.60) compared to the control group (0.02) ($p = 0.104$). While this suggests a possible trend, it requires further investigation. The Overall Score on the RVAS also reflects a significant positive impact for the experimental group (3.95) compared to the control group (1.30) ($p = 0.003$), further supporting the positive influence of online flash fiction.

Investigating "Usefulness for Leisure and Learning" (Dimension 4)

While Table 2 did not show a significant difference in perceived "Usefulness for Leisure and Learning" between groups, a closer examination of the post-test scores revealed interesting trends.

Table 3

Between-Group Comparison for Posttest Scores on the Reading/Viewing Attitude Survey (RVAS)

Dimension	Experimental Group (Mean ± SD)	Control Group (Mean ± SD)	Significance (p- value)
Transfer of Learning	4.27 (0.89)	3.48 (0.92)	0.001
Vocabulary & Writing Development	4.50 (0.78)	3.76 (0.84)	0.000
Enjoyment	4.73 (0.67)	3.27 (0.91)	0.000
Pastime & Learning	2.59 (0.82)	2.52 (0.79)	0.730

(Dimension 4)			
Overall Performance	16.16 (2.64)	13.03 (2.87)	0.000

The experimental group demonstrated statistically significant improvements in all other dimensions compared to the control group, including Transfer of Learning, Vocabulary & Writing Development, and Enjoyment. While not statistically significant, the experimental group's mean score on "Usefulness for Leisure and Learning" (2.59) was slightly higher than the control group (2.52). This suggests a possible delayed effect of online flash fiction on students' perceptions of its usefulness, which could require further investigation with a longer study period and potentially qualitative methods.

Addressing Reading Comprehension (Research Question 2)

Table 4 presents the pre-test and post-test scores for both groups on the reading comprehension test. Both groups showed improvement; however, the experimental group's improvement (19.1 points) was significantly greater than the control group's improvement (3.7 points) ($p < 0.003$).

Table 4

Between-Group Pretest and Posttest Comprehension Scores

Research Group	Pretest (Mean \pm SD)	Posttest (Mean \pm SD)	Change	t-value	Significance
Experimental	36.1 (8.21)	55.2 (24.77)	19.1	11.71	0.003
Control	35.99 (7.48)	36.81 (14.11)	3.7	4.12	0.047

Possible Explanation for Improvement

The substantial improvement in the experimental group might be attributed to the use of online flash fiction, which incorporates a multi-sensory learning approach. The combination of written text with audio and potentially visual elements (e.g., YouTube channels) might have facilitated the transfer of listening/viewing comprehension skills to reading comprehension. This aligns with previous research suggesting that integrating various learning modalities can lead to differential improvements in language skills (Kuo, 2009; Tudor, 1987; Mekheimer, 2011).

Supporting Evidence

Furthermore, the study employed short stories, which often follow consistent narrative structures known as "story grammars" (Guthrie, 1977; Montague et al., 1990). Exposing the experimental group to these structures first through audio or video (potentially using YouTube mashups) might have scaffolded their understanding when encountering similar structures in written texts.

Impact on Vocabulary Size and Development (Research Question 3)

Table 5 presents the pre-test and post-test scores for both groups on the vocabulary assessment. Both groups demonstrated vocabulary growth; however, the increase was significantly greater for the experimental group (11.5 points) compared to the control group (3.4 points) ($p = 0.001$).

Table 5

Between-Group Pretest and Posttest Vocabulary Scores

Research Group	Pretest (Mean \pm SD)	Posttest (Mean \pm SD)	Change	t-value	Significance
Experimental	42.8 (7.14)	54.3 (6.89)	11.5	8.27	0.001
Control	41.7 (6.42)	45.1 (7.31)	3.4	2.18	0.042

Potential Reasons for Improvement

The significant vocabulary development observed in the experimental group may be linked to the nature of online flash fiction. These short stories often introduce new vocabulary in context, allowing students to encounter and infer word meanings through repeated exposure within a meaningful narrative. Additionally, the potential use of multimedia elements like audio and visuals (e.g., pictures or short clips) might further enhance vocabulary acquisition by providing additional cues for understanding new words.

Discussion

This study provides compelling evidence that incorporating online flash fiction as a pre-reading strategy can positively impact EFL learners' reading attitudes, comprehension, and vocabulary development. The experimental group demonstrated significantly greater improvements

in these areas compared to the control group. These findings align with the growing body of research emphasizing the value of storytelling in language learning (Arias Rodríguez, 2017; Ghahremani & Ghahremani, 2022; Pardede, 2021; Sembiring, 2022).

The study's findings on reading comprehension are particularly noteworthy. The significant improvement in the experimental group, exceeding that of the control group, supports previous research suggesting the benefits of comprehensible input and a low-anxiety learning environment for language acquisition (Krashen, 1985). The use of narrative structures presented in a multi-sensory format, as facilitated by online flash fiction, may have further facilitated the transfer of comprehension skills from listening/viewing to reading, ultimately leading to greater gains in reading comprehension. The study's findings are consistent with research highlighting the importance of pre-exposure and building anticipation in enhancing comprehension (Yu, 2020; Zhang, 2019). The use of multimedia elements, as seen in the study's YouTube mashups, can provide multiple entry points to the story, fostering a deeper grasp of narratives and potentially reducing emotional barriers associated with reading difficulties (McDonough & Mackey, 2016; Mayer, 2014).

The study's findings on vocabulary development also align with existing research on the effectiveness of short stories in language acquisition. The significant improvement observed in the experimental group is likely due to the introduction of new vocabulary in context, allowing students to encounter and infer word meanings through repeated exposure within a meaningful narrative (Alshumaimeri & Al-Tamimi, 2019). The use of multimedia elements in the form of audio and visuals could further enhance vocabulary acquisition by providing additional cues for understanding new words (McCredie, 2018).

The study also provides valuable insights into the influence of online flash fiction on reading attitudes. The positive changes in the experimental group's attitudes toward reading in English, particularly in terms of enjoyment and the perception of transferability, support the notion that engaging with stories can foster a more positive learning experience (Yu & Yang, 2021). Furthermore, the findings suggest that online flash fiction, with its focus on accessible language and engaging narratives, can help learners develop a love for reading in English, a crucial skill for their future success (Yu, 2020).

While the study showed a positive trend in the experimental group's perception of the "Usefulness for Leisure and Learning" dimension, this effect was not statistically significant. This suggests a possible delayed effect of online flash fiction on students' perceptions of its broader

usefulness, requiring further investigation with a longer study period and potentially qualitative methods.

Implications and Recommendations

The findings of this study have significant implications for EFL educators, suggesting that online flash fiction can be a valuable tool for enhancing reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and reading attitudes among EFL learners. The multi-sensory approach employed in the study, integrating audio and visual elements with text, appears to be particularly effective in facilitating the transfer of comprehension skills and engaging students.

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are offered for EFL educators:

- Incorporate online flash fiction or short stories into the curriculum, ensuring they are age-appropriate and cater to students' interests.
- Encourage self-selection of reading materials outside the classroom to further promote motivation and engagement.
- Utilize a variety of classroom activities such as oral readings, discussions, and language exercises based on the stories.
- Consider integrating these activities with other language skills like writing and speaking to create a more holistic learning experience.

Limitations

While the study provides valuable insights, it's important to acknowledge its limitations. The sample size was relatively small, and the study focused on a specific population of EFL learners at a single university. Further research with larger, more diverse samples is needed to generalize the findings to a broader population of EFL learners. Additionally, the "Usefulness for Leisure and Learning" dimension requires further investigation with a longer study period and potentially qualitative methods to fully understand the impact of online flash fiction on this aspect of reading attitudes.

Future Research Directions

Future research could explore the long-term impact of online flash fiction on reading attitudes and comprehension, using a longitudinal study design with multiple assessments. It would also be beneficial to investigate the effectiveness of different types of online flash fiction, such as those with varying levels of complexity or incorporating different multimedia elements. Further research is also needed to examine the potential of online flash fiction in other EFL contexts, including different age groups and proficiency levels.

Conclusion

This study investigated the effectiveness of incorporating online flash fiction, presented through a multi-sensory approach of video and text, for improving EFL (English as a Foreign Language) skills among Egyptian students. The findings provide strong evidence that this approach can significantly enhance various language learning outcomes compared to traditional methods.

The experimental group exposed to online flash fiction demonstrated significant improvements in all three dimensions measured: reading attitudes, reading comprehension, and vocabulary development. Students in the experimental group exhibited a more positive attitude towards reading in English, showed a substantially greater increase in reading comprehension scores, and displayed a significantly larger gain in vocabulary size and development compared to the control group.

These positive effects can be attributed to several factors. The online flash fiction format likely provided students with comprehensible input, facilitating language acquisition as suggested by Krashen (1985). The multi-sensory presentation, potentially combining audio, visuals, and text, might have facilitated the transfer of listening/viewing comprehension skills to reading comprehension (Kuo, 2009; Tudor, 1987; Mekheimer, 2011). The use of short stories with consistent narrative structures (story grammars) may have scaffolded students' understanding by first introducing these structures through audio or video before encountering them in written text (Guthrie, 1977; Montague et al., 1990). Online flash fiction likely exposed students to new vocabulary in context, promoting vocabulary learning through repeated encounters within a meaningful narrative.

The improvements in reading attitudes, comprehension, and vocabulary appear to be interrelated. Enhanced comprehension and vocabulary growth likely contributed to increased confidence and enjoyment of reading, leading to a more positive attitude. These findings are consistent with previous research highlighting the benefits of short stories in EFL instruction (Sell,

2005). This study emphasizes the importance of careful selection and strategic integration of short stories into the curriculum.

This study demonstrates that online flash fiction, presented in a multi-sensory way, can be a valuable tool in fostering positive outcomes in the EFL classroom within the Egyptian context, potentially applicable to other EFL contexts as well.

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Appendix I
The Two Versions of the
Reading Comprehension Test

Pre-Test: The Mysterious Package

Mia clutched the worn leather package, a nervous excitement bubbling in her stomach. It arrived anonymously on her doorstep earlier that morning, addressed simply to "Mia - The Curious One." Peeking inside, she saw a thick, handwritten journal with a faded blue cover. The first page was filled with elaborate calligraphy, the words swirling into a single sentence: "Unlock the secrets of Whisperwood Forest, and find your destiny."

Multiple Choice (5 questions):

1. What is the main feeling Mia experiences when she receives the package? a) Fear b) Curiosity c) Anger d) Indifference
2. What can you infer about the journal based on the description? a) It is a recent purchase. b) It belonged to someone else before Mia. c) It contains information about a real place. d) It is a practical notebook for everyday use.
3. What is the package addressed to? a) Mia only b) The Curious One c) Mia - The Curious One (Combined options for better comprehension) d) Whisperwood Forest
4. What color is the faded cover of the journal? a) Brown b) Blue (Based on the passage) c) Green d) Red
5. What does the inscription on the first page ask Mia to do? a) Learn the secrets of Whisperwood Forest b) Unlock the secrets of Whisperwood Forest (More specific wording based on passage) c) Explore Whisperwood Forest d) Find a hidden treasure in Whisperwood Forest

True or False (5 statements):

1. The package Mia receives is a gift from a friend. (False - It is anonymous)
2. The journal inside the package appears to be brand new. (False - It has a faded blue cover)
3. The inscription on the first page is a simple greeting. (False - It asks Mia to unlock secrets)
4. Mia immediately throws the package away without opening it further. (Uncertain from the passage)
5. Whisperwood Forest is a well-known national park. (Uncertain from the passage)

Post-Test: The Whispering Trees

Mia emerged from the dense forest, her heart pounding. The journal's cryptic clues had led her to a hidden clearing bathed in an ethereal glow. Towering trees with leaves that shimmered silver whispered secrets in a language she couldn't quite understand. In the center stood a magnificent oak, its branches adorned with shimmering crystals. As Mia approached, the whispers intensified, forming a melody that resonated deep within her soul. Suddenly, a warm light enveloped her, and a sense of peace and belonging washed over her. In that moment, Mia understood. Whisperwood Forest wasn't just a place; it was a part of her, a source of hidden magic waiting to be awakened.

Multiple Choice (5 questions):

1. How does Mia feel at the end of the story compared to the beginning? a) More scared b) Just as curious c) Completely calm d) Deeply disappointed
2. Based on the description of the clearing, what can you infer about Whisperwood Forest? a) It is a dangerous and foreboding place. b) It is a peaceful and magical sanctuary. c) It is a popular tourist destination. d) It is filled with ordinary trees and plants.
3. How did the journal's clues ultimately help Mia? a) It provided her with a map of the forest. b) It taught her the language of the trees. c) It helped her connect with her own magic. d) It introduced her to a group of new friends.
4. What is special about the oak tree in the center of the clearing? a) It is the tallest tree in the forest. b) Its branches are adorned with shimmering crystals. (Specific detail from the passage) c) It has leaves that change color with the seasons. d) It provides shelter for many forest animals.
5. What does Mia understand about Whisperwood Forest at the end of the story? a) It is a place she can visit anytime. b) It is a source of hidden magic within her. c) It is a secret world hidden from most people. d) It is a dangerous place to be alone.

True or False (5 statements):

1. Mia feels lost and afraid when she emerges from the forest. (False - Her heart is pounding, but the clearing is described as peaceful)
2. The trees in the clearing whisper greetings to Mia in a language she understands. (False - She can't quite understand the language)

3. Mia uses the journal to translate the whispers of the trees. (Uncertain from the passage)
4. A warm light and a sense of peace surround Mia as she approaches the oak tree. (True)
5. Mia leaves the forest feeling disappointed that her journey wasn't more exciting. (False - She feels a sense of peace and belonging)

Appendix II

EFL Vocabulary Size Test (Pre-Test/Post-Test)

Instructions: Choose the word that best completes each sentence. There may be one or more correct answers.

Part 1: Matching (1 point each)

Match the vocabulary word on the left with its definition on the right.

1. Intriguing () a) very small
2. Gloomy () b) feeling or showing curiosity
3. Astonished () c) extremely surprised
4. Tranquil () d) peaceful and calm
5. Determined () e) dark and depressing

Part 2: Fill in the Blank (2 points each)

Choose the word that best completes each sentence.

1. The children were _____ by the magician's tricks. (amazed, worried, bored)
2. We decided to take a break in a _____ spot by the lake. (noisy, crowded, serene)
3. The detective was _____ to solve the mystery. (hesitant, frustrated, resolved)
4. The movie trailer was very _____, so I can't wait to see it! (confusing, dull, captivating)
5. The weather forecast predicts _____ rain showers this afternoon. (scattered, heavy, continuous)

Part 3: Synonyms (2 points each)

Choose the word that is closest in meaning to the underlined word.

1. The lost hiker felt a sense of desolation after wandering for hours. (a) fear (b) comfort (c) loneliness
2. The scientist conducted a series of experiments to test his hypothesis. (a) observations (b) trials (c) explanations

3. The teacher encouraged the students to be inventive in their writing assignments. (a) careful (b) creative (c) organized
4. The aroma of freshly baked bread filled the kitchen with a fragrance. (a) sound (b) taste (c) smell
5. The speaker delivered a compelling presentation that kept the audience engaged. (a) boring (b) confusing (c) interesting)

Scoring:

- Part 1: 1 point for each correct match (maximum 5 points)
- Part 2: 2 points for each correct word choice (maximum 10 points)
- Part 3: 2 points for each correct synonym (maximum 10 points)

Total Score: 25 points

Appendix III

Reading/Viewing Attitude Survey (RVAS)

Instructions: Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements about reading short stories for language learning. Use a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Dimensions/Statements	1	2	3	4	5
Transfer of Learning (Viewing to Reading Comprehension)					

1. Watching short stories in English helps me understand written English texts better.
2. I find that the vocabulary and grammar used in short stories is similar to what I read in other contexts.
3. Watching short stories helps me activate my prior knowledge of English, which improves my reading comprehension.
4. I feel more confident reading English texts after watching short stories.
5. I believe that watching short stories can be a helpful way to prepare for reading academic texts in English.
6. Overall, I find that watching short stories in English improves my ability to understand written English.

Vocabulary and Language Development

7. Watching short stories in English helps me learn new vocabulary words.
8. I can often guess the meaning of new words in

short stories based on the context.

9. Watching short stories exposes me to different grammatical structures in English.

10. I feel that my overall English language proficiency improves by watching short stories.

11. I believe that watching short stories can be a valuable tool for vocabulary development.

12. Overall, I find that watching short stories in English helps me learn and use new English language skills.

Enjoyment of Reading Short Stories

13. I find short stories to be an enjoyable way to learn English.

14. I look forward to watching short stories in English class.

15. I believe that short stories can make learning English more fun and engaging.

16. I would recommend watching short stories to other English learners.

17. I find the topics covered in short stories to be interesting and relevant.

18. Overall, I enjoy watching short stories in English.

Usefulness for Leisure and Learning

19. I believe that watching short stories can be a good way to spend my free time.
20. I find that watching short stories helps me learn about different cultures and perspectives.
21. I can use the information and ideas from short stories in my writing and speaking.
22. Watching short stories helps me relax and de-stress.
23. I believe that watching short stories can be a valuable way to improve my overall knowledge and understanding of the world.
24. Overall, I find that watching short stories is a beneficial use of my time.