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Fostering Intercultural Awareness Via Short Stories - Reconnoitering Student Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Understanding people from other cultures is crucial in today's globalised society since it can help to foster peace on the planet. The need to show respect for people from different origins is more important than ever with the emergence of the borderless world brought about by the usage of the internet and various social media. Teaching pertinent intercultural subjects in ESL classes is one strategy to enhance this intercultural awareness. Literature has also generally been seen as a source of wisdom and lessons for living that might help language learners. Hence, this paper presents the results of a preliminary investigation into the opinions of university students about the use of short stories to foster multicultural awareness in ESL classes. A survey using a questionnaire was used to get the students' opinions on learning about other cultures. The results are described in order to determine how these college students feel that reading short stories can improve intercultural understanding. Finally, appropriate conclusions and recommendations are made regarding the need for additional methods of promoting multicultural awareness in ESL classrooms.

Contribution/Originality: This study is important because it offers some insights into the student perspective on developing intercultural awareness through the study of English in a homogenous environment.

1. Introduction

In order to succeed in today's globalised society, students must be conscious of variety, demonstrate openness,and be accepting of others (Popescu & Iordachescu, 2015). This is

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crucial since social media use is predicted to increase in sophistication and spread in the future. As a result of the various communication patterns that exist between nations and continents, intercultural understanding is a factor that needs to be seriously taken into account. The goals of global and holistic education, according to Sinagatullin (2019), include preparing students to live, work, and cooperate with people from different socio-cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and racial backgrounds; developing a creative and reflective personality that can make responsible decisions in various multicultural settings; and fostering students' global competence so they can successfully function within the world.

Intercultural understanding can be promoted in language classes in various ways. In addition to linguistic competence and verbal communication skills, students are urged also urged to gain sociocultural awareness and intercultural skills. One of the ways to do this is by using literary works in the classrooms because they areimportant authentic materials, present cultural enrichment (Tular & Cubukcu, 2021), expediate language development, and amplify personal involvement (Collie & Slater, 1991). Similar to this, Moeller and Nugent (2014) claim that students will be most equipped to enter the global workforce when language proficiency and intercultural competency are linked in a language classroom. To guide students to managing intercultural communication effectively, teachers should place equal emphasis on raising and developing students' intercultural awareness as they do on linguistic knowledge and language abilities.

Different genres are available for reading literary works. Short stories are one of the genres that work well in ESL classrooms. One of the main reasons short stories are utilised so frequently in ESL classes is that they may be employed more easily than poetry, which is typically abstracted and filled with figurative language, connotative terms, and imageries. Other factors include the fact that short stories are typically written in everyday language, that they are significantly shorter than novels, have fewer characters, and can only be studied in a limited number of class sessions (Pardede, 2021). Furthermore, short stories are generally based on human experiences and most of them are concerned with ordinary life which allow students to familiarise themselves with the stories quite easily (Pardede, 2021).

It has been demonstrated that short stories convey culture, which includes the values, principles, morality, and common sense of certain societies. This is relevant to the suitability of utilising short stories to increase intercultural understanding. Therefore, the sociocultural benefits of using short stories are two-fold: first, students will learn crucial cultural aspects of the target language by using short stories written by native speakers; second, they will develop their ability to interpret discourse in a variety of social and cultural contextsin the target language (Pardede, 2021). In addition, even though the stories being used might not be written inthe native speakers' voices as in translated works, literature from ESL/EFL countries, or literature written by diasporic writers, the intercultural awareness components are still very important because they will give language learners access to a wider range of cultural influences.

The use of intercultural awareness in English language instruction has long been the subject of intense debates and discussions about both pedagogical and theoretical methods (Victoria & Sangiatchim, 2021). Reid (2015) as cited in Victoria & Sangiatchim, 2021) confirms, for instance, that teachers find it challenging to relate to and use intercultural aspects of the target language because there is a lack of clear instructions on how to teachintercultural knowledge and skills alongside the target language. As a result, questions over curriculum, materials, and approaches frequently come up among

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teachers, who are usually perplexed (Victoria & Sangiatchim, 2021). It should be mentioned that additional research needs to be done on the integration of cultural awareness into language acquisition before the pedagogical principles of teaching about culture can be properly articulated and applied to the production of materials and curricula.

As a result, there is a compelling need to examine actual classroom procedures so that the experiences of the students as gleaned from their views are recorded and used to inspire additional effective classroom interventions. For the purposes of this research, the study is restricted to looking at the perspectives of students whose backgrounds are homogenous at the university under investigation. This is because the government policy related to its operationalisation requires the concerned university to only admit students with a comparable racial background. On the other hand, homogeneity simply reinforces the necessity for increased exposure to multicultural components because students will eventually integrate into society and the intercultural knowledge acquired during their university years may be valuable in preparing them for the real working world. As a result, this study is important because it offers some insights into the student perspectiveon learning intercultural components through the study of English in a homogenous environment.

Concomitantly, this paper aims to investigate the viewpoint of students who have studied short stories as one of the English language components. In order to help the researchers find alternative effective and interestingEnglish language activities utilising short stories to increase intercultural awareness, this work is focused withexamining the viewpoint of university students as a preliminary study.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definitions of culture

“Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language” (Williams, 1981, p. 25). The quote by Williams shows the complexity of the concept of culture and trying to define it in one way onlyis simply not possible. Culture is understood as the visible and audible cultural products of a country (culture with a “Big C”, Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993). In the tradition of the German subject of Landeskunde or the French civilisation teaching culture thus consisted of conveying pieces of information on the target country’s works of art, literature, music, etc. Another perspective is from Hofstede (1991) who refers to culture as “software of the mind” with culture being the collective as opposed to the universal (largely biological) and individual (unique) mental programming.

Related to the concept of culture is “cultural awareness”. Tomalin and Stempleski (2013) defines the concept of cultural awareness as a development regarding the understanding of other people’s cultures and your own culture as well as growing positive interests in how cultures can both differ and connect. Cortazzi and Jin (1999) explain it as a concept about becoming aware of the members of other cultural groups, including their behaviours, expectations, perspectives and values. There are multiple ways of working with culture and culturalawareness in the classroom. In the Swedish curriculum for upper secondary school (Skolverket, 2011), the importance of using variations of methods in the classroom is emphasised and this can be essential in order forstudents to stay interested and attentive. Tools such as textbooks, literature, films and the internet are merely a

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selection of materials that can be used when approaching cultural awareness in the classroom.

The term “intercultural awareness” has become increasingly important in foreign and second language teaching. Corbett (2003) even sees the intercultural approach to language teaching as a necessary step forwardfrom the communicative approach. Since any communication takes place in a social and cultural context, it hasbecome evident that it cannot be enough to simply promote the four skills and the ability to communicate information. To negotiate meaning we also need to be aware of the social and cultural function of a particularcommunicative situation.

Intercultural awareness and competence thus mean much more than just knowing about (a) culture. It means realising that and knowing how people’s thinking and behaviour are largely ruled by their cultural makeup, and possessing strategies of successfully acting and reacting in intercultural contexts. Intercultural behaviour does not obtain, shape, nor change overnight. Garza’s (2008) experiment to promote intercultural behaviour through reading requires restructuring of students’ self-confidence and building trust among them. Stahl (1990)suggests that cultural reading is consistent with students’ own culture in classroom learning environment. Theidea of reading to promote intercultural behaviour is to develop cultural understanding and embrace cultural differences.

Hence, incorporating teaching of culture and to offer students the opportunity to develop cultural awareness ispresented as vital in the curriculum. Students nowadays have easy access to a world of information through the internet. However, there might still be a need to guide students through the process of discovery, which hopefully can lead to the development of a deeper understanding of one’s own place in the world.

2.2. Theoretical models of intercultural awareness

Language plays a pivotal role in ensuring that effective communication occurs (Mermoul & Trichine, 2020). In light of this, language can be a highly efficient medium to promote intercultural communicative competence.Byram (1997), one of the leading proponents in intercultural research posits intercultural communicative competence as a set of factors that a person possesses which can help her/him to communicate effectively withpeople who have different cultural backgrounds. Byram (1997) goes on further to characterise the phenomenonwhich he terms as 'critical cultural awareness' or CA to include an ability to evaluate critically and on the basisof explicit criteria, such as human rights, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries. More recently, the notion of intercultural awareness (ICA) has been expounded by Baker (2011, as cited in Baker, 2015) which develops on CA but carries a more dynamic intercultural perspective (Baker, 2015). While CA discerns the manner in which national conceptions of culture frame intercultural communication, ICA focuses on the INTER or TRANS cultural dimension where there is a blurrier language-culture- nation connection, particularly in global uses of English (Baker, 2015). In short, both CA and ICA at the core, share the conception of intercultural communication as knowledge of different communicative practices in diverse socio-cultural settings; the skills to be able to use this knowledge appropriately and flexibly;and attitudes towards communication that include the ability to de-centre and relativise one’s own values, beliefs and expectations (Baker, 2015). More current approaches to ICA have also highlighted the critical and political dimension, signifying those models of language teaching should encourage learners to surpass

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national-cultural associations and boundaries and aim towards an 'Intercultural', 'Transnational' or 'World' citizenship (Byram 2008).

As in the globalised world today and onwards, ICA is seen as more relevant since the ease of communication aided by various social media platforms also see more flux in interpersonal communication amongst differentcultures, nations and even language. The 21st century learners in the ESL classroom today are also digital natives in many areas of their lives since they are exposed very early to social media platforms inside as well as outside the classroom. Moreover, with the present Covid 19 pandemic sweeping the world, language learners, from the primary to the tertiary levels depend much on social media for formal and informal education. Hence, the ICA notions which emphasise the flexible and context specific nature of the knowledge, skills andattitudes needed as well presenting examples of how culture and language can be incorporated into ELT classrooms in a non-essentialist manner

2.3. Models in teaching literature

Discussing the models of teaching literature in the language classroom, Carter and Long (1991) have developedone of the most influential models meant to improve students' abilities in three distinct areas when learning literature which are the cultural model, the language model and the personal growth. Following this framework,literature teaching enables the understanding and the appreciation of the cultures that are different to the student's; she/he is enabled to manage the feelings, traditions of thought and the diverse artistic forms which, concurrently, make up the literary heritage of such cultures (Carter & Long, 1991). Carter and Long (1991) alsoobserve that since literature allows the students to comprehend and value other cultures, societies and ideologies different from their own, it fosters personal growth and intellectual development.

In Malaysia, all three areas of teaching literature as proposed by Carter and Long (1991) are catered for but invarying degrees according to the student levels. However, the most popular will be the language model since literature teaching in Malaysia is mainly seen as a vehicle to teach the main agenda which is the language. Thepersonal growth and the cultural growth are relegated to the periphery when translated in the language classroom, mainly due to language problems encountered by the ESL students and also teachers' lack of experience and exposure in teaching literature (Siti Norliana et al., 2009). The awareness of the potential literature has in promoting intercultural awareness should therefore be developed in teacher education, along with other issues.

2.4. Issues in raising intercultural awareness via literature teaching in Malaysia

Several issues could also be covered that are related to fiction for children. They include subversiveness, parody, the relationship between traditional oral literature (folklore) and authors' literature, the role of imagination, the idea of fantasy, intertextuality, etc. An understanding of some of those issues might help future second language teachers appreciate quality literature, choose texts appropriate for their classes, and design tasks to improve learners' literary competences and enhanced understanding of literature in general.

Future teachers need to understand the role literature may have in supporting various educational theories andin facilitating the accomplishments of several educational tasks. Students also need to understand which goalsof second language learning literature may

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facilitate, and which tasks can be accomplished through literature.They need to develop an awareness of the importance of literature for developing "below the-surface" skills, such as critical thinking, social and communicative skills, emotional intelligence, behaviour, citizenship, etc., which are fundamental for successful foreign language learning in general. Among them, interculturalawareness stands out. In this connection, students may find it helpful to get acquainted with main cultural theories, with various ways in which "culture" is interpreted, with methods that lend themselves to raise awareness of "self and other" in their future students and in ways of helping them to deal with whatever critical incident they may come across when exploring a foreign culture. They might also be interested in the ways inwhich literature can improve intercultural awareness in their future students. The respective methodological issues of second language teaching could then be addressed and discussed.

In addition, a prerequisite of using literature is choosing the appropriate piece of literature for a particular group of foreign/second language learners. Teachers should be able to apply criteria that include linguistic, literary, educational and cultural aspects in choosing a text for their class. They also need to be able to judge the historical and problematic or thematic relevance of a piece of literature for the immediate educational context. Moreover, teaching strategies based on literature and on designing creative second language activities may beparticularly interesting issues. Students might find it useful to understand the importance of the potential of literature as authentic language material, as well as the role literature may have in resolving certain individualproblems learners might encounter, such as being shy, or having foreign language anxiety, etc.

Other than the language problems and teachers' experience and exposure, unsuitable texts can also create distance between the text and the readers, especially culturally (Siti Norliana et al., 2009). Hence, when students come across unfamiliar cultural aspects, they have a tendency to interpret the meaning based on their own culture, which might cause unsuitable cultural representation. Furthermore, moreoften students are faced with a cultural reference that is totally unfamiliar to them, which has no parallel in their own culture. Similarly, students may also come across something familiar to them but then it represents something else in another culture, such as death which is denoted by the colour black in Western society but linked with white among Muslims (Siti Norliana et al., 2009). Other than that, understanding culture is made even more difficult as the values which shape and influence characters and their point of views are not explicitlyportrayed in literary texts. Moreover, the teachers' lack of cultural awareness, the lack of support material that address cultural issues and introductory classes that pay negligible attention to the cultural elements of the textsalso pose problems in enabling students to understand intercultural issues in literary texts (Siti Norliana et al.,2009).

In Malaysia, the need for intercultural awareness is also more significant to bridge the understanding between races in the country itself. Due to the divide and rule policy fostered by the colonisers, the legacy of prejudiceand segregated schools based on races have long since polarised the nation. There have been various studies highlighting the low level of integration between the Malay and Chinese communities in Malaysia due to the absence of social and cultural understanding (Fatin Najwa et al., 2016) and also the scarcity of intercultural study materials which assist intercultural knowledge in both tertiary and non- tertiary settings (Fatin Najwa et al., 2016). Due to this, promoting Malaysian multi-ethnic intercultural knowledge among students in the classrooms should also be the focus of the literature classes (Fatin Najwa et al., 2016).

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However, literature is only a small component in the Malaysian ESL classrooms at all levels of operationalisation. Only in situations where literature is core such as the English Literature paper at the SPM level or the Bachelor programmes in English Language Studies or TESL / TESOL, literature will only remain to be taught via the language approach, with the personal and cultural approaches appearing insignificantly onthe side-lines. Moreover, intercultural related issues in Malaysia are fixated on the phenomena principally in tertiary institutions owing to the ethnically diverse campus environment (Fatin Najwa et al., 2016).

All these issues faced in the Malaysian ESL classroom related to teaching literature only accentuates the importance of finding more relevant ways in teaching to ensure that students leave the literature classes with a more meaningful experience. This meaningful experience should be useful to them so that they can improve their cultural awareness when interacting with other ethnics in Malaysia and also other races in the bigger world. Hence, this paper is significant because it provides some input on how the students regarded intercultural awareness via their learning of short stories in homogenous surroundings.

3. Methodology

Three hundred and seventy-nine students participated in this study. These students were from two different codes or English subjects. They were categorised in accordance to their respective semesters which were ELC121 for part one students and ELC151 for part two students. These students were selected as both of the codes utilise short stories as a part of their assessment. Mermoul and Trichine (2020) devised the original questionnaire which had been adapted according to the needs of the study. The questionnaire consists of 16 closed-ended questions and 6 likert Scale Questions (3-4 options). The questionnaires were presented in a google form for respondents' convenience in answering the survey. Later in the discussion, the data is descriptively described and tabulated using charts and tables.

The results retrieved from the questionnaires were then categorised using an inductive approach as suggested by Gamble and Wilkin (2014) in which enables the researcher to categorise the data into several themes. This study applied the five steps for thematic analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2014) to deduce the themeswhich are;
familiarising yourself with your data

The three hundred and seventy-nine respondents were from different faculties. They took two different English Language classes ELC121 and ELC151. However, Part 1 subject (ELC121) focuses on the Listening skill whereas the Part 2 subject (ELC151) mainly focuses on Reading skill.

The adapted questionnaires deal with intercultural awareness in using short stories among these students with16 closed-ended questions. In detail, the questions are based on Yes or No questions (7 questions) and multiple- choice questions (9 questions). The succeeding section will explain in depth the findings of the questionnaires.

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4. Results

The questionnaire starts with the first question to identify students' interest with short stories. The result in Table 1 shows 97.9 % of the respondents were interested in the short stories andthe remaining shows the opposite (2.1%).

The next question in Table 1 contains a chained question which requires the students to choose between 3 optionsof answers. Majority of the respondents chose Yes which were presented in these three options. 42.2% chose "It provides authentic texts", 39.3% chose "It teaches about culture" and 18,5% chose "It is motivating".

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis

Questions	Percentage			
1	**Are you interested in learning language using short stories?**			
	Yes		No	
	97.9%		3.2%	
2	**Do you think that learning English using short stories is important? Yes / No. I Yes, why is it important?**			
	It provides authentic texts.	It teaches about culture.	It is motivating.	
	42.2%	39.3%	18.5%	
3	**What are difficulties you face in studying short stories?**			
	Difficulty of Language.	Critical thinking.	Knowledge of the target cultur	
	40.1%	31.1%	28.8%	
4	**Which of these do you think the teaching of short stories should focus on more**			
	Language abilities	Culture Awareness	Personal Growth	
	55.9%	28.8%	15.3%	
5	**Are you interested in knowing about your culture and other cultures?**			
	Yes		No	
	97.9%		2.1%	
6	**Do you think it is important to be aware of the differences between your culture and other cultures?**			
	Yes		No	
	98.2%		3.8%	
7	**What can cause misunderstanding between people of different cultures?**			
	Racism	Different views of the world	Prejudice	Language
	42.5%	32.5%	12.9%	12.1%
8	**Do you try to accept cultural differences when communicating with people wh have a different culture?**			
	Yes		No	
	98.4%		1.6%	
9	**Do you try to accept cultural differences when communicating with people wh have a different culture?**			
	Average	High	Low	
	72%	24.5%	3.5%	
10	**Which one of these did your lecturer focus more in teaching short stories?**			
	Language		Culture	
	72.3%		27.7%	
11	**In the English language Classroom, did you discuss the differences between cultures?**			
	Yes		No	
	71%		29%	
12	**If yes, how often did you do that?**			

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	Sometimes	Rarely	Often	
	79.9%	10.8%	9.3%	
13	**What are the intercultural difficulties that your understanding of the short stories helps you overcome, if at all.**			
	Feelings of superiority	Feelings of inferiority	Prejudice	
	41.4%	35.9%	22.7%	
14	**Does learning short stories help you respect the other and her/ his culture?**			
	Yes	No		
	97.9%	2.1%		
15	**Which of these attitudes do you develop in when you learn the short stories?**			
	My culture is the best culture ever.	The other culture are equal to only different than mine.		
	74.9%	25.1%		
16	**Does learning short stories help you improve your skills of communication across cultures?**			
	Yes	No		
	96.8%	3.2%		
17	**Do you consider using short stories as useful in developing intercultural awareness?**			
	Useful	More useful	Less useful	Not useful
	82.6 %	10.6%	6.1%	0.8%

Following Table 1 as shown in Question 3, the students chose 40.1 % which represents "Difficultyof the language", 31.1% represents "critical thinking" and the remaining chose "Knowledge of the targetculture" (28.8%).

For question 4 in Table 1, the respondents were asked to answer "Which of these do you think the teaching of short stories should focus on more?". The options given are "Language abilities", "Cultural Awareness" and"Personal Growth". "Language abilities" showed the highest percentage with 55.9% followed by 28.8%(Cultural Awareness) and the least percentage was "Personal Growth" with only 15.3%.

Moreover, as shown in Table 1 for Question 5, 97.9% presented as the highest option when the students were asked "Are you interested in knowing about your culture and other cultures?". However, the No answer shows2.1%.

Another sequence of questions in Table 1 requires the students to choose between Yes and No where 98.2% choseYes while the remaining chose No which is represented by 3.8% of the students.

Referring to Table 1, four options were given in Question 7. The students were required to choose between "Racism", "Different views of the world", "Prejudice" and "Language". It entails an answer based on this question "What can cause misunderstanding between people of different cultures". The least answer chosen by the respondents is "Language" with 12.1% and the majority chose "Racism" with 42.5%. Other options recorded 32.5% (Different views of the world) and 12.9% for "Prejudice".

In Table 1 for Question 8, most of the students chose "Yes" (98.4%) for this question "Do you try to accept culturaldifferences when communicating with people who have different cultures?". Meanwhile, 1.6% chose "No" as their response for the same question.

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In the following Question 9 referring to Table 1, the students were required to identify their level of acceptance of others and their cultures. Most of the students chose "Average" level (72%) followed by "High" level (24.5%)and the least is at "Low" level with 3.5%.

Another response is required in Table 1 for Question 10 where the respondents need to identify "Which items werefocused on more in teaching short stories". The respondents were given two options which are "Language" and "Culture". The former recorded 72.3% while the latter is 27.7%.

Referring to Table 1 for Question 11, students were asked to respond whether cultural differences were discussed during their English Classes. Most of the students answered "Yes" (71%) and the opposite showed 29% (No).

Next, Question 12 in Table 1 is a subsequent question for the previous Question 11. When they chose "Yes" for Question 11, they needed to identify the degree of cultural differences discussion in their English Language Class. These respondents chose "Sometimes" with 79.9% followed by Rarely (10.8%) and9.3% (Often).

In Table 1 for Question 13 required the students to choose the responses between "Feelings of superiority", "Feelings of inferiority" and "Prejudice". The highest percentage is represented by "Feelings of superiority" (41.4%), "Feelings of inferiority" (35.9%) and the least is "Prejudice" (22.7%).

The following question in Table 1, number 14, is a closed-ended question whereby the respondents were asked to choose between "Yes" and "No" options. The highest percentage goes to "Yes" (97.9%) and the latter is 2.1% (No).

For Question 15 in Table 1, the respondents were asked to choose between these options; "My culture is the best ever" and "The other cultures are equal to only different from mine". The responses show that 74.9%of the respondents chose the former while the latter option only involves 25.1%.

Then, another closed-ended question in Table 1 was asked in Question 16 to understand whether students believethat short stories improve their skills of communication across cultures. Majority of the respondents answered "Yes" (96.8%) and only 3.2% chose "No".

Last but not least, the last question in Table 1, number 17, "Do you consider using short stories as useful in developing intercultural awareness?" was posed to the students. There were 4 options to choose fromwhich were "Not Useful", "Less Useful", "Useful" and "More Useful". Majority of the students answered "Useful" (82.6%) followed by "More Useful" (10.6%), "Less Useful" (6.1%) and "Not Useful" represented by 0.8% of the respondents.

5. Discussion

This section addresses the importance of using short stories in language classrooms as well as the importanceof promoting intercultural awareness through these short stories from the students' perspective. The discussion is divided into two parts: students' perspectives on using short stories in language classrooms and students' perspectives on using short stories to promote intercultural awareness.

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5.1. Perspective Towards Using Short Stories

This section examines students' perspectives on language learning through the use of short stories. Students responded positively to the question by expressing an interest in using short stories in their language learning class as shown in Table 2. Martinez (2007) asserts that students' motivation and interest may increase because they enjoy listening to stories (as cited in Arjmandi & Aladini, 2020). According to the responses to the second question in Table 2, studentsagreed that using short stories provided authentic sources of the target language. In her study, Dulabaum (2011)states that cultural qualities, social and political standards relating to an individual's or a group's behaviour areall part of the intellectual gains from education. However, there are hurdles and impediments in language learning that affect students' learning process.

This is demonstrated in Table 2 Question 3, where the majority of respondents indicated that the difficulty of the language was one of the difficulties in language learning. As per methodology, the majority of the students were from the first semester, i.e. their first semester as a tertiary student. They may not experience much exposure to short stories in English during secondary school except as literature components in their English language subject, which affected their language learning. Finally, Question 4 in Table 2 revealed that when learning the short stories, students prioritised cultural understanding over language abilities and personal growth. In his research, Pardede (2021) stated that culture is full of ethics, norms, morality, and rational thinking, all of whichcan be found in short stories. As a result, it is clear that short stories have a strong influence on students' desireto learn about cultures.

Table 2: Frequency of Positive Feedbacks

Questions	Yes %	No %	Item 1 %	Item 2 %	Item 3 %
1	97.9	2.1			
2			42.2	39.9	18.5
3			40.1	31.1	28.8
4			55.9	28.8	15.9

This section discusses the results of the closed-ended questions and Likert Scale questions for Part A as portrayed in Table 3 and Table 4. However, the outcome will be classified into several themes derived from an inductive approach (Gamble & Wilkins, 2014). The themes were identified using Braun and Clarke's (2014) five stages of theme deduction.

While Pardede (2021) identified five benefits of using short stories in the classroom, they are linguistic, socio-cultural, personal and emotional, and cognitive. Another study (Gamble & Wilkins, 2014) used the following themes to categorise their data: usefulness, social interaction, difficulties, enjoyment, andothers. However, for this study, the themes of interest, usefulness, difficulties, culture, and linguistics will be used to categorise the items.

5.1. 1. Interest

Respondents agreed that short stories influence them to learn language and that reading short stories is important in language learning when they are asked these closed-ended questions. This result in Table 3 indicatesthat the use of short stories while learning target language received positive feedbacks.

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Table 3: Interest Closed-Ended Question

Questions	Yes %	No %
1	97.9	2.1
	Interested in learning language using short stories	Not interested in learning language using short stories
2	97.9	2.1
	I think learning language using short stories is important	I don't think learning language using short stories is important

Table 4: Interest Closed-Ended questions with options

Questions	High %	Average %	Low %
Why you think that learning English using short stories is important?			
2	It provides authentic texts	It teaches about culture	It is motivating
	42.2	39.3	18.5
What are the difficulties you face in studying short stories?			
3	Difficulty of the language	Critical thinking	Knowledge
	40.1	31.1	28.8
Which of these do you think the teaching of short stories should focus on more?			
4	Cultural Awareness	Language abilities	Personal growth
	55.9	28.8	15.3

Respondents responded to Question 2 in Table 4 by choosing "It provides an authentic text" as the main reasons for why they believe learning a language through short stories is important. An authentic text provides similar benefits to watching movies in terms of word choice, accent, grammar, how to pronounce certainwords, and the ability to expand one's vocabulary (Sari & Aminatun, 2021). As a result, authentic textsof short stories allow students to learn more about language. Both of these questions fall under the category of Interest. This theme is relevant to both questions because students found it interesting and important to use short stories in the English classroom. However, language learning is challenging anddifficult. Students agreed that "Difficulty of language" contributes to the problems they face when learning language as indicated in Table 4.

"Critical Thinking" is ranked second and "Knowledge" has the least amount of difficulty in the ranking.The students also believed that learning about culture should take precedence over language skills and personal growth when using short stories as shown in Table 4. This is because short stories are rich in cultural elements,

allowing students to experience culture through fictional characters. Each of these questions is classified as Interest, Difficulties, and Culture.

5.2. Perspective Towards Using Short Stories To Promote Intercultural Awareness

Part B includes five closed-ended questions as shown in Table 5, with the highest percentages reflecting students' interest ingaining intercultural awareness through short

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stories. As seen in the Part A in Table 4 results, culture is favoured when short stories are used in language learning classes.

Thus, using short stories in the classroom helped students gain the benefits of intercultural awareness. Surprisingly, students agreed (as shown by Question 11 in Table 5) that cultural differences were not discussed inthe English classroom. This implies that educators should improve their pedagogical approach in discussing intercultural elements in order to expose students to this issue. Based on the responses, thesequestions fit perfectly with Culture themes because they primarily involve cultural issues.

Table 5: Culture Closed-Ended questions

Questions	Yes %	No %
5	97.9 I am interested in knowing about your culture and other cultures	2.1 I am not interested in knowing about your culture and other cultures
6	98.2 I think it is important to be aware of the differences between your culture and other culture	1.8 I don't think it is important to be aware of the differences between your culture and other culture
8	98.4 I try to accept cultural differences when communicating with people who have a different culture	1.6 I do not try to accept cultural differences when communicating with people who have a different culture
11	71 I agree that the differences between cultures are discussed in the English classroom	29 I disagree that the differences between cultures are discussed in the English classroom
14	97.9 Learning short stories do help me respect the other and her/his culture	2.1 Learning short stories does not help me respect the other and her/his culture

There are four closed-ended questions in Table 6 on the Culture theme, each with a few options for respondents tochoose from. In response to Question 7 in Table 6, respondents believed that racism (42.5 percent), different worldviews (32.5 percent), prejudice (12.9 percent), and language (12.1 percent) caused misunderstanding between different cultures. As a result, learning about other cultures is critical to closing the cultural gap. Cultural depiction in short stories will help to bridge this gap by depicting various cultural representations. This acceptance of cultural portrayal is possible because respondents rated learning about other cultures as Average (72%) and High (24.5%) as indicated in Table 6.

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Table 6: Culture Closed-Ended questions with options

Question s	%	%	%	%
What can cause misunderstanding between people of different cultures? CHOOSE ONE				
7	42.5 Racism	32.5 Different views of the world	12.9 Prejudice	12.1 Language
How do you consider your level of accepting others and their cultures? CHOOSE ONE				
9	72 Average	24.5 High	3.4 Low	
If yes, how often did you do that? CHOOSE ONE				
12	79.9 Sometimes	10.8 Rarely	9.3 Often	
What are the intercultural difficulties that your understanding of the short stories helps you overcome, if at all?				
13	41.4 Feelings of superiority	35.9 Feelings of inferiority	22.7 Prejudice	

6. Conclusion

In summary, the results of this study highlight university students' interest in learning English through short stories. The study points out that the use of short stories is not only to improve language skills, but also to engage students with the intercultural elements presented in literary texts, especially short stories. Students demonstrate a positive attitude towards working with short stories and a strong interest in learning about their own culture and that of others. Their concerns are not only in improving language proficiency, but also recognizing the importance of cross-cultural competence, including respect, fairness, and an open mind to otherpeople's cultures.

Students found that using short stories in their English classes was motivating because they were using authentic materials. This approach helps students improve their intercultural communication skills and activelyembrace cultural differences. As Gomez and Fernando (2012) noted, providing students with authentic materials, especially when native speakers are not available, can help them develop the ability to communicate with people of different cultures. Facciol and Kjartansson (2003) also shared the same view, emphasising the rationality of including literary texts when direct access to native speakers is restricted. Broad access to selected short storiesis therefore an asset for both teachers and students in promoting language learning and cross-culturalawareness.

Conclusively, using short stories in language classes can help university students develop their linguistic and intercultural competencies. Therefore, it is recommended to integrate short stories as a major tool for promoting cross-cultural awareness and motivating university students in learning languages. However, there are some issues that need to be addressed before this approach can be put into practice in the classroom. First, the students' language skills and interpreting skills. Teachers must take into consideration the student's language skills and ability to understand the short stories used. Poor learners may find it more difficult to handle more complex literary works than good learners. This can make the text used difficult to understand and interpret. Hence, students might lose interest or at worst stop using short stories.

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Secondly, the correct choice of short story is also an important point to consider. This point is interrelated to the language ability of the students. As Pardede (2011) points out, the selection of short stories that work for students should be based on course objectives, learner profiles, and narrative content. It is important to note that reading short stories should initially be enjoyable for students as a stepping stone to increase intercultural awareness. Lecturers must carefully select literary texts that not only motivate students but are suitable for their language skills before confronting the cross-cultural elements presented in the text. In addition to the linguisticcomplexity of literary texts, thematic and cultural aspects of the text must also be taken into account. Subject-heavy literary works may contain sentiments or sensitive issues that are inappropriate for students at certain levels. Thus, it is recommended to stick to less complex texts, especially for the undergraduates.

Finally, students' openness to learning and accepting other people's cultures are vital predetermined aspects. Students need to understand that learning a foreign language requires embracing the diverse cultures it brings.However, students may have trouble understanding and accepting a culture that is novel to them. Here, the lecturer's role as a 'middleman' is brought into play to bridge the gap between the student's misunderstandingsand their acceptance of the cross-cultural aspects they discover in the literary texts. In this case, therefore, thebenefit of using short stories in the classroom is to create a supportive environment in which educators and students go deep into the cultural dimension, communicating, learning and embracing the diversity of cultures around the world.

This study has firmly highlighted the linguistic and intercultural competence gained through the use of short stories among university students. It is evident that short stories can be a powerful tool in ESL teaching aimedat developing students' language skills and creating positive perceptions of cultures around the world.

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