Increasing Novice EFL Learners' Vocabulary based on Short Islamic Stories in an Islamic Higher Education

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Abstract:

Most EFL students lack adequate vocabulary knowledge and become frustrated when they cannot comprehend the meaning of key vocabulary terms in a passage. The study aims to determine whether short Islamic stories can improve the vocabulary acquisition of novice EFL learners. It uses quantitative research by applying a pre-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test. The study involves 30 novice EFL students enrolled in the Basic Translation course at the English Language Education department, Islamic State University of Sultan Aji Muhammad Idris Samarinda. To determine the significance of the short Islamic study to the student's vocabulary significance, the study applied a vocabulary test containing a matching test, a word meaning test, a vocabulary test, and a pronunciation and spelling test. The study's findings revealed a significant difference between the pre-test and post-tests due to the treatment. The study's results refuted the null hypothesis. It was determined that there was substantial evidence regarding the effect of Islamic short stories on vocabulary acquisition. Further studies related to this study are needed considering the data provided in this pre-experimental design is still limited to the number of treatment groups.

Keywords: *vocabulary, short Islamic story, language skill*

A. Introduction

Vocabulary is a component of language competence and builds a substantial foundation for how well language learners listen, speak, read, and write. The vocabulary of students influences their abilities. Additionally, vocabulary helps us comprehend what we read and hear and communicate effectively with others. Students frequently fall short of their potential without an extensive vocabulary and strategies for acquiring new words. Listening to music, native speakers, using phrases in various contexts, writing, or reading a book may discourage them from language study[1].

Without knowledge of speech, all thoughts and emotions cannot be expressed and communicated through the medium of language, making vocabulary a crucial component of language instruction and learning. Structures of language constitute the skeletal system of language. The vocabulary provides then the vital organs and the tissues[2]. It emphasizes the significance of vocabulary acquisition and asserts that very little can be expressed without grammar, whereas nothing can be communicated without vocabulary. Consequently, assisting students in acquiring a vast vocabulary seems indispensable for any language teaching program. Therefore, it is essential to prioritize the development of a method that is both systematic and practical for enhancing the vocabulary skills of students.

Most EFL students lack sufficient vocabulary knowledge and become frustrated when they do not understand the meaning of key vocabulary terms in a passage[3]. As a result, they find reading comprehension and other skills to be monotonous, arduous, and repetitive, and they soon abandon their studies[4]. In addition, the difficulty in pronouncing words and the difference in the grammatical form of the word, known as exaggeration, is one of the reasons why pupils have difficulty acquiring new words[5].

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[1] Anna C S Chang and Willy A Renandya, 'The Effect of Narrow Reading on L2 Learners' Vocabulary Acquisition', *RELC Journal*, 52.3 (2021), 493–508.

[2] Tony Wright, 'Second Language Teacher Education: Review of Recent Research on Practice', *Language Teaching*, 43.3 (2010), 259–96.

[3] Sardor Surmanov and Maftuna Azimova, 'Analysis of Difficulties in Vocabulary Acquisition', *The Journal of Legal Studies*, 6.1 (2020), 144–53; Elfrieda H Hiebert and others, 'An Analysis of the Features of Words That Influence Vocabulary Difficulty', *Education Sciences*, 9.1 (2019), 8.

[4] Sayuri Hayakawa and others, 'Language Difficulty and Prior Learning Influence Foreign Vocabulary Acquisition', *Languages*, 5.1 (2019), 2.

[5] Surmanov and Azimova.

It is essential to discover methods to improve their vocabulary to prevent the students from becoming frustrated quickly and to help them appreciate language-learning tasks. Using authentic materials, such as movies, word games, and short stories, allows students to increase their language, develop their skills, and become more independent[6].

The academics must discover methods to expand the students' vocabularies if they want learners to avoid frustration and appreciate language-learning activities. Using authentic materials, such as short stories, allows students to increase their vocabulary, develop their skills, and become more independent.

Literature plays a prominent role in developing language-learning theories, supplying media and reference learning materials. Literature plays a significant role in developing the language-learning process, as it is composed of language. Literature can be optimal for conveying a particular subject in all languages. Using literary works as an alternative method of teaching and learning vocabulary can aid language learners in acquiring numerous new words and enhancing their vocabulary.

Several previous studies discussing literary works specific to short stories improved students' language skills[7]. Islamic stories are classic stories passed down from generation to generation. The researcher selected short Islamic tales to improve students' word proficiency. In addition to improving language skills, it can also enhance religious knowledge for students in the form of English. The materials are well-presented, and exemplary grammar and vocabulary; this enables the learners to learn the level and moral values[8]. Arjmandi and Aladini[9]

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[6] Syahar Nurmala Sari and Dyah Aminatun, 'Students' Perception on the Use of English Movies to Improve Vocabulary Mastery', *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning*, 2.1 (2021), 16–22; Nugroho Habibi, 'The Use of Flashcards in Improving Vocabulary Mastery of Students with Disability', *Inklusi Journal Of Disability Studies*, 121 (2017); Hossein Vossoughi and Marzieh Zargar, 'Using Word-Search-Puzzle Games for Improving Vocabulary Knowledge of Iranian EFL Learners', 2009.

[7] Masoumeh Arjmandi and Farzaneh Aladini, 'Improving EFL Learners' Vocabulary Learning Through Short Story Oriented Strategy (SSOS)', *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 10.7 (2020), 833–41; Ismail Ismail, 'The Impact of Interactive Reading Using Local Folktales Stories in Supporting Students' Vocabulary Achievement in Indonesian EFL Learners', *Majesty Journal*, 1.2 (2019), 25–37; Pitriani Nazara, 'Learning Vocabularies Using Short Stories at Primary School: Students' Perception.', *Journal of English Teaching*, 5.3 (2019), 157–65.

[8] Indah Fajrotuz Zahro, 'Meningkatkan Perilaku Prososial Anak Dengan Teknik Islamic Storytelling Finger Doll', *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 1.1 (2018), 80–95.

[9] Arjmandi and Aladini.

researched strategies for expanding EFL learners' vocabulary through the Short Story Oriented Strategy (SSOS). They find that using SSOS as a tool to enhance learners' conceptual and comprehensible processes allows them to discover, predict, and comprehend the meaning of vocabulary and store and internalize it more effectively. In line with the study conducted by Arjmandi and Aladini[10], Bhatti et al. and Basri [11] employed experimental research using short stories as a learning innovation in increasing elementary school students' English vocabulary. According to the findings, most students discussed the value of short stories in vocabulary acquisition, their interest in reading short stories, and their approval of using short stories. The study suggests that English instructors in elementary schools should use short stories to expand their students' vocabularies.

Moreover, Ismail[12] carried out an investigation that focused on expanding students' vocabularies and communicating positive values that impacted the student's personal and emotional development. His research validated local folktales' effect on students' vocabulary performance. Folklore stories provide authentic reading resources, allowing students to identify emotionally with the text and become personally involved. In response, teachers and pupils continuously devise and seek methods to enhance reading and vocabulary instruction.

To reinforce the previously mentioned features, it appears critical for language academics and materials creators to provide learners with the most interesting redundant materials that challenge learners while visualizing them on a broader variety of words. Understanding religious principles is essential following the traits of a religious institution and strengthening language. Researchers must first develop novel methods and techniques to help our students communicate in a foreign language more effectively than other EFL learners. By considering this problem, the researchers were driven to conceal the issue and determine whether short Islamic stories could help students better their vocabulary learning. The present study's findings can help teachers recognize the significance of acquiring vocabulary, demonstrated in comprehending Islamic values. Because according to the most recent policies on religious moderation, every learning technique and

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[10] Arjmandi and Aladini.

[11] Muhammad Safdar Bhatti and others, 'Short Stories as an Innovative EFL Teaching Technique to Improve Pakistani Elementary Students' English Vocabulary', *Journal on English as a Foreign Language*, 12.2 (2022), 405–20; Muhammad Basri and Muhammad Azwar Paramma, 'EFL Students' Perspective on the Usefulness of ICT Based Learning in Indonesian Higher Education', *ELT Worldwide*, 6.2, 105–20.

[12] Ismail.

approach must include the significance of understanding the religion[13]. This study will be highly beneficial to both instructors and pupils. Our language training tools are designed to integrate more authentic sources into the program.

The study's objective is to determine whether short Islamic stories can improve the vocabulary acquisition of novice EFL learners. This study's level and learning methods differ from those of earlier studies. In contrast, the earlier study concentrated on high school students. This study focused on novice EFL students in Islamic higher education. Therefore, to assist educational curriculum designers and policymakers in taking the issue of Islamic short story use more seriously and incorporating them into educational programs.

B. Literature Review

1. The Importance of Short Stories in Vocabulary Development

Among the numerous methods and strategies for teaching and enhancing EFL learners' vocabulary, the significance of extensive reading in developing EFL learners' vocabulary is of the utmost importance[14]. In this regard, short stories can be the most effective means of achieving this objective. The reading method has huge benefits for EFL educators and their pupils. Students' reading comprehension methods will be simple, engaging, and enjoyable if they employ the proper method for boosting vocabulary[15].

Short stories can also help EFL learners improve their language. It is thought that the more student studies, the more diverse their vocabulary becomes[16]. To narrow the gap in vocabulary and understanding, it appears critical that students discover and extend their vocabulary and grammar through independent reading. When teachers use short stories to improve EFL students' vocabulary, they can teach vocabulary through contextualized resources. This leads learners to look for clues in the sentences that may disclose the term's meaning. Researchers have observed the effect of visual and vocal clues on context-based word

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[13] Ahmad Faozan, 'Moderasi Beragama Dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam Untuk Masyarakat Multikultur', *Hikmah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 16.2 (2020), 220–28.

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[16] C L Blachowicz and Peter Fisher, 'Building Vocabulary in Remedial Settings: Focus on Word Relatedness', *Perspectives*, 30.1 (2004), 1–21.

understanding. In this respect, Mofareh Alqahtani [17]claimed that pupils enrolled in an English language school who were taught methods for deriving the meanings of new vocabulary from contextual cues demonstrated better reading comprehension.

The researchers also discovered that having more influences with numerous things improved recall of those items. Students must be able to use their vocabulary in various circumstances, including reading, speaking, writing, and listening, to remember it[18]. Short tales allow students to mix vocabulary teaching with other language abilities. Furthermore, research has shown that contextual vocabulary teaching through short stories can enhance word utilization more than word list instruction[19]. Another advantage of short stories is the societal significance of storytelling. The degree to which language and culture are intertwined and the quantity of cultural information required to comprehend the importance of participating in action is called cultural load[20]. To grasp the meaning of words, EFL pupils must study them in context. Teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) may be able to accomplish this through the use of chosen short tales.

2. Method of Increasing Vocabulary in Language Learning

Many ELT instructors think that developing a lexicon entail remembering a list of terms and their definitions in their original language without any relevant exercise. As a result, in most EFL learning settings, language trainees must contend with new terminology. When pupils encounter a new term, they must look it up in a multilingual lexicon. Most of the time, pupils invent new terms without knowing how to apply them in real-world situations. This language learning technique is ineffective because most EFL students cannot comprehend and convey ideas effectively[21].

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[17] Mofareh Alqahtani, 'The Importance of Vocabulary in Language Learning and How to Be Taught', *International Journal of Teaching and Education*, 3.3 (2015), 21–34.

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Numerous studies have been conducted to convince students to remember new language terms. According to Webb & Nation[22], terms should not be memorized or acquired without comprehension. This is due to the fact that examining words in this manner leads to the disregard of language traits. This means that the student only knows how to use words in one form and is unaware of how those words are used in different settings and with varying meanings in real-world scenarios. According to Nation[23], acquiring new remarks is a continuous process in which word meanings are enhanced and enlarged through repetitive contact.

More significantly, instructors can help students enrich and expand their vocabulary by enhancing, encouraging, and broadening their autonomous reading experiences[24]. EFL instructors can persuade their students to discuss literature, pose questions, and offer recommendations. This approach can successfully support a learner's vocabulary by providing a language-rich environment that promotes vocabulary mastery[25]. This can be accomplished by offering high-quality texts that keep the English language student interested and motivated. In this instance, literary works such as short tales can considerably increase and enhance English trainees' vocabulary. Many ELT experts recommend using short stories to help EFL trainees improve their language skills[26]. They say short stories are efficient for EFL students to acquire vocabulary. They contend that by using short stories, instructors can create various contexts in which students must interact, trade information, and convey ideas. Similarly, Xuerong[27] discovered that learning through short tales can promote dialogue, improve self-esteem, drive, and creativity, and expand the learning lexicon. As a result, examining and studying whether EFL learners can acquire the language effectively through stories is critical.

44.4 (2007), 189–94; Alan Hunt and David Beglar, 'A Framework for Developing EFL Reading Vocabulary.', *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 17.1 (2005), 23–59.

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C. Research Method

1. Design

This study employs quantitative research. It focuses on the effect of short Islamic stories on students' vocabulary development. The design of the investigation was pre-experimental with pre-and post-testing.

2. Site and Participants

The participants were 30 novice EFL students enrolled in the Basic Translation course at the English Language Education department, Islamic State University of Sultan Aji Muhammad Idris Samarinda, in the first semester of 2022. The class containing 25 students was regarded as the experimental group.

3. Research Instrument

A pre-test and post-test involving a vocabulary test were conducted to acquire further about the students' vocabulary skills. There were 30 items on this test. It contains ten matching test questions, five full-sentence questions to assess word meaning, five vocabulary-building questions to assess word use, and ten oral test questions to assess word pronunciation and spelling.

The items in the Islamic story's substance were included to accommodate the learners' level of proficiency. The story's very difficult and simple terms were excluded from the item test. It should be noted that experts evaluated the test's validity.

The experimental and control groups received the usual reading materials during the session experiment. However, the experimental group was asked to read the following short stories from https://www.islamcan.com/increaseiman/: "Ibn Sina's Lamb Experiment," "Wisdom of Iyas Ibn Muawiyah," "Malik Bin Dinar and the Thief," and "And I Hurried to You, My Lord." Each story was covered in two sessions. They contained about 200-250 words which were at an intermediate level.

4. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS and paired sample T-tests to determine whether there was a significant increase in the student's vocabulary before and after treatment with short Islamic stories. There are a few stages involved in data analysis.

a. Scoring test

The test score used rank from 0-100 by counting the correct answer and applying the following formula:

$$Score : \frac{Students\ correct\ answer}{maximal\ score} \times 100$$

b. Score Classification

The result from the converted score is put in the score classification below:

Table: 1 Classification of the Scores

Classification	Score
Very Good	93-100
Good	84-92
Average	75-83
Poor	<75

Kemendikbud (2017)

c. Score Analysis

This study used the SPSS application to determine the mean score, standard deviation, and t-test. In addition, the percentage of the average frequency of student scores is calculated using the formula: % = f/N x 100.

D. Results

The result addresses the research question using statistical analysis, theories, and interpretation. The primary objective of this study would be to determine whether or not using short Islamic stories could enhance students' vocabulary.

1. Standard Deviation and Mean Score

The performance significance of the participants in the group was compared by giving a pre-test and post-test of vocabulary. The group's mean scores and standard deviation are presented in Table 2. The following Table shows a significant difference between their mean scores from the pre-test to the post-test.

Table: 2 Standard Deviation and the Mean Score

Paired Samples Statistics		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-Test	45.80	30	9.76033	2.13913
	Post-Test	77.91	30	7.34563	1.64207

Table 2 shows that 45.80 is the mean value of the pre-test score with a standard deviation of 9.76, and 77.91 is the average post-test value with a standard

deviation of 7.34. It shows that the post-test value is higher than the pre-test value, then the post-test standard deviation is lower than the pre-test standard deviation. The student's vocabulary can improve after treatment using short Islamic stories.

2. Frequency and Percentage

Frequency and percentage of pre-test and post-test scores of students sorted by score classification. They are then displayed in the table below:

Chart: 1 Frequency and Percentage of the Pre-test and Post-Test
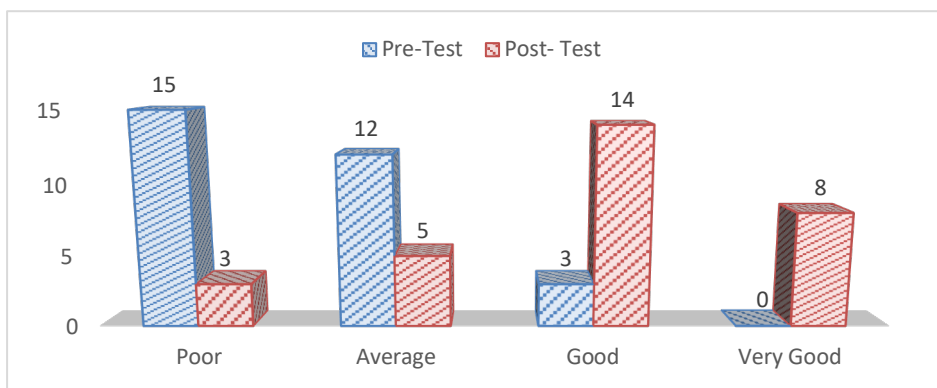

Chart 1 above shows that none of the students received exceptionally high or excellent grades in the pre-test. Of the 30 students, almost all of the places have "poor" and the "average" score (90%), while only three students have a "good" score (10%). In contrast with the pre-test result, the post-test showed a significant increase. From 30 participants, eight students (26.7%) placed on the "very good" score, while the "good" score dominated the overall place with 14 students (46.7%). The rest are at the "poor" score, with three students (10%). From the difference in scores between the pre-test and post-test, it can be concluded that learning English based on short Islamic stories can improve students' vocabulary.

Table: 3 The Mean Scores

Aspects	Max. Score	Pre-test Mean score	Post-test Mean score	Difference
Word Meaning	50	25.10	42.50	17.4
Word Function	25	13.23	22.74	9.51
Pronunciation	25	12.48	21.69	9.21

The researcher evaluated vocabulary-related aspects of the student's vocabulary test. Table 3 demonstrates that mean ratings have increased across the board. The

students' meaning improved significantly more than their pronunciation, which improved by only 9.21 points. Students can better their vocabulary through short Islamic stories, particularly meaning, function, and pronunciation.

E. Discussion

Data analysis revealed significant differences between the pre- and post-tests due to treatment. The study's findings refuted the null hypothesis. The influence of Islamic short stories on vocabulary acquisition was determined to be supported by substantial evidence.

This study's findings are consistent with those of previous studies conducted by researchers who investigated the impact of using short stories on various language skills, such as Vossoughi and Zargar[28], who investigated the use of word-search-puzzle games to improve the learner's vocabulary. The findings were consistent with those of Nazara[29] and Ismail[30], who investigated the effect of local short stories or folktales to support students' vocabulary achievement. The results are also consistent with the findings of Pellicer-Sánchez, Wei, and Zahro [31], which all corroborate the positive influence of short stories on the performance of EFL learners' indifferent language abilities.

F. Conclusion

The replies to the study's problems were discovered by comparing the vocabulary acquisition of the two groups before and after the evaluations. The purpose of the pre-test is to evaluate the subject's English vocabulary knowledge in order to verify the previous group. The post-test comparison, unlike the pre-test comparison, revealed a significant difference. This study provides sufficient evidence to conclude that the use of Islamic short stories positively influences the English vocabulary acquisition of language learners. Participants can acquire a greater vocabulary than those who do not use short stories.

Instructors believed that the problems in our education were not due to changes in the curriculum but rather the teachers themselves[32]. Although some curricula have changed due to challenges and certainly required competencies, the most recent changes have been caused by instructors who are unprepared to implement

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[28] Vossoughi and Zargar.

[29] Nazara.

[30] Ismail.

[31] Pellicer-Sánchez; Wei; Zahro.

[32] Muhammad Azwar Paramma, 'Teachers' Perspectives on Scientific Approach in Indonesian Educational Context', *Asian EFL Journal*, 20.5 (2018), 276–81.

the new curriculum[33]. It indicates that some instructors in Indonesia are poorly trained and of poor quality. Before changing the curriculum, the government was responsible for enhancing teachers' self-development and teaching quality through training.

Regarding previous research in the literature, the current investigation confirms that short Islamic stories have a higher vocabulary score. In their research on L2 vocabulary acquisition, Albaladejo, Coyle, and Larios[34] confirmed that reading short stories results in incidental vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, some believe reading short stories is sufficient for second-language learners to acquire vocabulary. For instance, Nagy and Scott[35] argue that teachers should encourage students to read short stories because they can develop substantially more vocabulary than explicit instruction. During the testing period, the group received assistance with reading comprehension and note-taking techniques to identify the difficult words. The precise implementation of short stories can enhance the teaching and learning of English vocabulary, according to the findings of this study. Given that the data provided in this pre-experimental design is still limited to the number of treatment groups, this study requires additional research.

G. Acknowledgement

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