

## **Psycholinguistic Ambiance of Short Stories in Enhancing Students' Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary Power**

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### **Abstract**

The present study was carried out to investigate the effect of short stories on students' reading comprehension, vocabulary power and attitude towards the skill and the new instructional materials. The participants of the study were 120 grade 9 students of Dilla Secondary and preparatory school. In order to gather data for the study, pre- and posttest of reading comprehension, pre and post test for vocabulary power and questionnaire were used. The students were placed in experimental and control conditions for the purpose of comparing the mean difference between the two groups. The study followed a quasi experimental design, i.e. pretest/posttest control group experimental design. The study employed statistical techniques to analyze the data obtained from reading comprehension tests and vocabulary tests. To this effect, a 2-tailed independent samples t-test and repeated measures t-test were used respectively to examine if the reading tests and vocabulary tests mean differences between and within groups were statistically significant. The findings revealed that teaching reading skills through short stories is more effective than teaching through the passages prepared at the Ministry, and has a positive impact on students' academic achievement in reading and vocabulary power.

**Key words:** Attitude, psycholinguistic process, reading comprehension, short stories, vocabulary power

### **Introduction**

Reading plays a very important role in our lives. It is so much a part of everyday living that one can hardly imagine a life without it. In the age of the Internet and information technologies, reading retains its importance as an essential skill for learners of any language (Alderson, 1984). Reading is amongst the most crucial determinants in developing an individual's vision that shapes his or her personality and that makes him or her become closer to other individuals. Reading makes individuals truly free and protects them from ignorance and false beliefs (Ünal, 2010). Moreover, skills in reading enable individuals to benefit from educational activities, and to participate fully in the social and economic activities in which they take part (N'Nambi, 2005).

Reading has been described in a variety of ways to explain the process of what happens when one reads and how one comprehends a text. According to Allen and Bruton (1998), reading as a complex process of making meaning from a text, for variety of purposes and in a wide range of contexts. Grabe and Stoller (2002) define reading as the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret the information appropriately. Reading is a psycholinguistic process in that it starts with a linguistic surface representation encoded by a writer and ends with meaning which the reader constructs; there is thus an essential interaction between language and thought in reading. In this sense, reading not only includes encoding the language or the written word, it also goes beyond the information in relation with the world (Freide & Macedo, 1998).

The common characteristics of definitions relating to reading are that it is an activity that is realized through comprehension. A large number of reading specialists view reading as an interactive process (Barnett, 1988). This means that the reader's mental processes occur at

different levels and he or she engages themselves in an interaction with the print to create meaning (Carrell, Devine & Eskey, 2000). Thus many applied linguists believe that literary materials facilitate the psycholinguistic process since they are rich in context, authentic and motivate the learners (Duff & Maley, 2007; Clandfield & Foord, 2006).

Recently, there has been a remarkable revival of interest in literature as one of the most motivating resources for language learning (Duff & Maley, 2007). In addition, the use of literature in ELT classrooms has attracted a great deal of interest among EFL teachers since 1980s (Clandfield & Foord, 2006). Because foreign language teachers must find new ways to motivate their students and because motivation is one of the most important aspects of the learning process, the use of literature in classes might be a good way to increase student motivation. Several studies addressed this issue focusing on motivating EFL students through literature (Brumfit & Carter, 1991; Collie & Slater, 1990; Benton & Fox, 1985). Researchers also have given recommendations that short stories are often an ideal way of introducing students to literature for motivation and improvement in their reading and writing skills in EFL classes.

Using literature in language teaching is very advantageous for it offers four benefits: authentic material, cultural enrichment, language advancement, and personal growth (Collie & Slater, 1991). This is in line with Erkaya (2005) who notes three benefits of using short stories to teach ESL/EFL, i.e. literary, cultural and higher-order thinking benefits. First of all, literary texts can be more beneficial than informational materials in stimulating the acquisition process as they provide authentic contexts for processing new language.

Short stories texts expose learners to fresh themes and unexpected language. In this sense, literary text is an authentic text, real language in context, to which we can respond directly (Brumfit & Carter, 1986). This quality appears to make literature suitable and valuable to language teaching in many contexts and cultures. Second, containing real examples of grammatical structures and vocabulary items, the literary texts raise learners' awareness of the range of the target language and advance their competence in all language skills. When compared to the language samples in the textbooks, the language is far richer and more varied. Many genuine features of the written language such as the formation and function of sentences, the variety of possible structures, and the different ways of connecting ideas are presented at many levels of difficulty (Collie & Slater, 1991). Third, using literature in language teaching has the advantage of providing cultural information about the target language. Literary texts increase foreign language learners' insight into the country and the people whose language is being learnt (Collie & Slater, 1991), which fosters learners' ability to interpret discourse in different social and cultural target language contexts (Savvidou, 2004).

In Ethiopia, English and particularly reading skill, has been taught for many years; however, the achievement is not satisfactory. Based on this researcher's teaching experiences, reading in English is considered as a difficult skill for most students. In the context of the school, many English teachers complain about students' poor vocabulary power, poor comprehensive ability and poor interest for reading. These problems might result from poor teaching strategy, and ineffective reading text and tasks. Besides, teachers believe that students' low progress might be due to lack of understanding reading texts and incapability to answer comprehension questions. Also, research findings in Ethiopian context confirm students' poor performance in reading skills (Gessesse, 1999; Taye, 1999; Ambachew, 2003). They attribute this poor performance to lack of reading culture, the reading passages which are not interesting and motivating, and lack of effective tasks to develop micro skills of reading.

Thus, the present study is an attempt to determine the effects of using short stories in advancing students' reading comprehension, vocabulary power and attitude towards the skill and the new instructional approach. The study is intended to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there any significant difference in reading achievement between the students who are taught reading through short stories and those who attend conventional classes?
2. Is there any significant difference in vocabulary power between the students who are taught reading through short stories and those who attend conventional classes?
3. Does the use of short stories help students develop positive attitudes toward reading skills?

## **Method**

### **Research design**

The mixed method design was used to conduct this research. Quantitative approach, particularly the pretest/posttest control group experimental design, and qualitative approach--specifically interviews and open-ended questionnaire were employed for the purposes of the study.

### **Participants of the study**

The participants of the study were grade nine students of Dilla preparatory and secondary school. From among 18 sections of grade 9 students, two sections; namely, 9D and 9M were selected through random sampling technique. 9D students were assigned as the control group and 9M students were assigned as the experimental group. The control group were taught through the conventional approach and the experimental group were taught reading skills by using short stories.

### **Data Gathering Instruments**

Since this study was mainly quantitative, tests were used to determine students' proficiency level of reading skills and vocabulary power. To this end pre-reading and pre-vocabulary tests were used before the intervention. After the intervention, posttests were administered to determine whether there were statistical significant achievement mean differences in the reading skills and vocabulary power. A questionnaire was also used as a data gathering instrument in order to substantiate the data obtained through tests. This instrument was used to generate data on the roles of short stories in improving students' reading skills, vocabulary power and students' attitude towards the new instructional approach. In addition to the questionnaire, interview was also done to generate data and triangulate the findings derived from the tests and the questionnaire.

### **Data analysis procedure**

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS window 20 to determine the change in students' achievement before and after the intervention. Accordingly, independent samples t-test was used to compare students' achievement in the control and experimental groups. Also, paired samples t-test was used to determine the significance level of achievement within the group. In addition to these techniques, Eta Square was used to determine the magnitude of the change.

## **Results**

The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of short stories on students' reading performance and vocabulary power. The first specific objective of the research was to determine

whether using short stories bring about statistically significant achievement in students' reading performance. To this end pre- and post-reading tests were used as data gathering instruments. Students' performances in the pre- and posttests were computed using independent and paired samples t-test. The effect size of the intervention was also calculated using eta squared.

**Table 1:** Independent t-test for reading comprehension pretest

Pretest	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Control	60	39.86	15.48	-.390	118	.698
Experimental	60	40.73	13.58			

Sig.  $p < 0.05^*$

As indicated in Table 1 above, there was no significant difference in scores for the experimental group ( $M=40.73$ ,  $SD= 13.58$ ) and the control group,  $M= 39.86$ ,  $SD= 15.46$ ;  $t (-.39)$ ,  $p= .698$  (two-tailed). The differences in the means (mean difference = 0.87) was very small (eta squared=0.001). This shows that the two groups were similar in terms of reading comprehension before the treatment.

After intervention for EG and CG, the post reading comprehension test was administered and the following results were obtained.

**Table 2:** Independent t-test for reading comprehension posttest

Pretest	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Control	60	42.00	13.58	11.61	118	.000*
Experimental	60	68.46	11.26			

Sig.  $p < 0.05^*$

The results of independent t-test for posttest in Table 2 indicate that there was a significant difference between the two groups in their final test ( $p < 0.05$ ). Accordingly, there was a significant difference in scores for the experimental group ( $M=68.46$ ,  $SD= 11.26$ ) and the control group,  $M= 42.00$ ,  $SD= 13.58$ ;  $t (11.61)$ ,  $p=.000$  (two-tailed). The difference in the means (mean difference =26.46) was very large (eta squared = .533). This implies that the experimental group considerably outperformed the control group in the reading achievement post test. In order to determine the mean gain or difference of students in the experimental and control groups, a repeated measure t-test or paired sample t-test was computed as presented below.

**Table 3:** paired samples test within group progress

	Groups	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Control group pretest-	39.86	15.48	-.860	59	.394
	Control group posttest	42.00	13.58			
Pair 2	Experimental group pretest-	40.73	11.51	-12.96	59	.000*
	Experimental group posttest	68.46	11.26			

Sig.  $p < 0.05^*$

As depicted in Table 3, the mean scores of the control group posttest and the pretest were 42.00 and 39.86 respectively. A 2-tailed paired samples t- test for mean difference showed that the mean gain between the post- and pretests mean scores was 2.14 ( $t=.860$ ,  $df=59$ ). This mean gain between the pre- and posttests mean scores of the control group was not statistically significant at 0.05 level of significance since  $p=0.394 > 0.05$ . On the other hand, the achievement

mean scores of the experimental group posttest and the pretest were 68.46 and 40.73 respectively. The achievement mean gain between experimental group pre- and posttests mean scores was 27.73. This clearly shows that using short stories to teach reading skills has a strong positive impact on students' achievement.

**Table 4:** The role of short stories in improving students' reading comprehension

No	Items	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%
1	Making us read different short stories, helps us to develop our reading skills.	47	78.3	13	21.66	0	0	0	0
2	I had no problem in reading short stories and answering question which are set from them.	28	46.67	22	36.67	5	8.33	5	8.33
5	learning reading skillss using short stories helped me to understand the text by myself	30	50	16	26	7	11.67	7	11.67
9	Learning reading skill using short stories is good because it builds our comprehension ability	34	56.66	21	35	5	8.33	0	0
12	Reading short stories help us to concentrate on the materials and answer the comprehension questions.	38	63.33	16	26.66	6	10	0	0

As to the data in Table 4, item no. 1 shows that 47 (78.3%) of the students strongly agreed that short stories develop their reading skills and 13 (21.66%) of the respondents agreed that short stories developed their reading skills. This shows that students are in favour of using short stories in reading lessons so as to develop reading skills. With regard to item no. 2, 28 (46.67%) and 22 (36.87%) of students strongly agreed that using short stories facilitated their reading compression and hence they easily answered the questions which were set from it. However, 5 (8.33%) students disagreed and the 5 (8.33%) others strongly disagreed that short stories facilitated their reading comprehension.

The data in the table for item no.5 showed that 30(50%) and 16 (26.6 %) of students rated strongly agreed and agreed respectively that short stories helped them to understand the text without the help of the teacher. On the other hand, 7 (11.67%) and 7 (11.67%) of the students rated disagreed and strongly disagreed that short stories can be understood without the help of somebody else. In item no.5, 76.6% of the students confirmed that short stories are easy to understand. As a result we can deduce that the use of short stories help students to be confident in developing independent learning.

The data for item 9 also indicates that 34(56.66 %) of the students strongly agreed that using short stories built their reading comprehension. In the same token, 21 (35%) of the students agreed that short stories helped them to build their comprehension. On the other hand, 5 (8.33%) of students disagree that short stories built their reading comprehension. The results revealed that 89.66 % of respondents believed that short stories helped them to build their reading comprehension.

It is also evident from the data in item no. 12 that 38 (63.33%) and 16 (26.66) of the students strongly agreed and agreed respectively that using short stories in reading lessons helped them to concentrate on the material and answer comprehension questions. On the other hand, 6 (10%) of students disagreed that short stories helped them to concentrate and answer comprehension questions. The data indicated that 90% of the respondents were in favour of using short stories. Thus, it can be concluded that when the materials help students to concentrate, comprehension is facilitated.

**Table 5:** Independent t-test for vocabulary pretest

Pretest	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Control	60	10.45	3.55	.122	118	.903
Experimental	60	10.58	3.53			

Sig.  $p < 0.05^*$

As indicated in Table 5 above, there was no significant difference in scores for the experimental group ( $M=10.58$ ,  $SD= 3.53$ ) and the control group,  $M= 10.45$ ,  $SD= 3.55$ ;  $t (.122)$ ,  $p= .903$  (two-tailed). The differences in the means (mean difference = 0.87) was very small (eta squared=0.001). This indicates that the two groups were similar in their vocabulary power before the treatment.

After treatment for EG and conventional approach to the CG, the posttest was administered and the following results were obtained.

**Table 6:** Independent t-test for vocabulary posttest

Pretest	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Control	60	12.37	3.43	2.144	118	0.037
Experimental	60	14.79	4.32			

The results of independent t-test for posttest in Table 2 indicate that there was a significant difference between the two groups in their final test ( $p < 0.05$ ). Accordingly, there was a significant difference in scores for the experimental group ( $M=14.79$ ,  $SD= 4.32$ ) and the control group,  $M= 12.37$ ,  $SD= 3.43$ ;  $t (2.144)$ ,  $p=.037$  (two-tailed). The difference in the means (mean difference = 2.42) was small (eta squared = .037). The finding implies that the experimental treatment has brought statistically significant positive change in vocabulary achievement over the control group.

In order to determine the mean difference of students between the experimental and control groups, a repeated measure t-test or paired samples t-test was computed as presented below:

**Table 7:** paired samples test within group progress

	Groups	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Control group pretest-	10.45	3.55	-11.31	59	.000*
	Control group posttest	12.37	3.43			
Pair 2	Experimental group pretest-	10.58	3.53	-16.48	59	.000*
	Experimental group posttest	14.79	4.32			

Sig.  $p < 0.05^*$

The achievement mean scores of the control group post- and pretest were 12.37 and 10.45 respectively. The achievement mean gain between control group pretest and posttest mean scores was 1.92. This mean gain as a paired samples t-test for mean difference was found to be statistically significant at 0.05 levels of significance. On the other hand, the achievement mean scores of the experimental group posttest and the pretest were 14.79 and 10.58 respectively. The achievement mean gain between experimental group pre- and posttests mean scores was 4.21. This mean gain, as a paired samples t- test for mean difference was found to be statistically significant at 0.05 level of significance ( $df=59, t= -16.48$ ) since  $p=0.000 < 0.05$  level of significance. Though the mean gain for both experimental and control groups were statistically significant, the experimental group made a considerably higher progress as compared to the control group. The experimental group overall achievement mean gain over the control group was found to be 2.29, i.e. significant at 0.05 level,  $p=0.000, p<0.05$  ( $df=59$ ).

**Table 8:** The role of short stories in developing vocabulary power

No.	Items	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%
3	Learning reading skills using short stories increase our vocabulary capacity	42	70	14	23.33	5	8.33	0	0
8	Learning reading skills using short stories helped us to understand meanings of words easily because of rich contextual clues	40	66.66	20	33.33	0	0	0	0
10	I like learning reading skills using short stories because it is easy to learn their meanings following the story line.	40	66.6	18	30	2	3.33	0	0
11	Learning reading skills using short stories helps us to encounter fresh words which we can use in our speech and writing.	49	81.66	8	13.33	3	5.17	0	0
15	Using short stories have increased the stock of my vocabulary	35	58.33	20	33.33	5	8.33	0	0

As the data in Table 8, item no. 3 indicate, 42 (70%) students strongly agreed that using short stories in reading lesson increase their vocabulary capacity. It was also indicated that 14(23.33%) students agreed that using short stories increase their vocabulary capacity where as 5(8.33%) students disagreed that short stories increase their vocabulary capacity. The results reveal that short stories helped students to improve their vocabulary capacity.

In the same table (Table 8) in item no. 8, 40 (66.66%) and 20 (33.33%) students reported that they strongly agreed and agreed respectively that learning reading skills through using short stories helped them to understand the meanings of words easily because of their rich contextual clues. Therefore, it can be concluded that short stories can be utilized to help students to develop their vocabulary. It is also evident from the data in Table 8, item no. 10 that using short stories in reading lessons facilitated the understanding of meanings of words following the story line since

40(66.66%) and 18 (30%) students strongly agreed and agreed respectively that story line facilitated their understanding of meanings.

Regarding Table 8, item no. 11, 49 (81.66%) and 8 (13.33%) students strongly agreed and agreed that learning reading skills using short stories helped them to encounter fresh words which they could use in their speech and writing. Similarly, in item no. 13, 35 (58.33%) and 20 (33.33 %) students strongly agreed and agreed that learning reading skills using short stories increased their stock of vocabulary. Therefore, we can conclude that short stories are decisive in helping students to improve their vocabulary power.

**Table 9:** The role of short stories in developing positive attitude

No.	Items	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%
4	Learning reading skills using short stories is interesting.	34	56.6	21	35	2	3.33	3	5
6	Learning reading skill using short stories made us not to waste much time since it engages us in discussion and argument among each other.	29	48.33	20	33.33	6	10	5	8.33
7	Learning reading skills using short stories helped me to develop an interest of reading different short stories outside the classroom.	38	63.33	20	33.33	2	3.33	0	0
13	If teachers frequently use short stories, I am sure that I will progress significantly in my achievement	34	56.66	26	43.66	0	0	0	0
14	Reading short stories is enjoyable and relaxing.	46	79.31	9	15.51	3	5.17	0	0
16	If I am given the chance of selecting reading passages, I will prefer short stories to the ones in our text.	38	63.33	20	33.33	2	3.33	0	0

As can be seen in Table 9, item no.4, 34 (56.6%) and 21 (35%) students strongly agreed and agreed respectively that learning reading skills through using short stories is interesting. In the same line of discussion, in item no. 14, 46 (79.31%) and 9 (15.51) students strongly agreed and agreed respectively that reading short stories were enjoyable and relaxing. However, 2 (3.33%) and 3(5%) disagreed and disagreed respectively that using short stories in reading lessons is interesting and 3 (5.17) students disagreed that reading short stories were enjoyable and relaxing. Thus, we can clearly see that 91.6% expressed that it was invaluable to use short stories in reading lessons and 94.82 % of students claimed that reading short stories was enjoyable and relaxing. Therefore, we can conclude that short stories help students to lower affective variables and increase intake to maximize their learning.

The data in Table 9, item no.6, also show that 29 (48.33%) and 20 (33.33%) of students strongly agreed and agreed respectively that learning reading skills through using short stories engaged them in discussions and arguments on the ideas and issues entertained. This indicates that short stories are valuable instruments to engage students in their learning and creatively



come up with individuals' interpretation of the issues which in turn help to develop students' cognition. On the other hand, only 2 (3.33%) students disagreed that short stories engaged them in discussion and argument.

The data in item no.7, reveal that 38 (63.33%) and 20 (33.33%) students strongly agreed and agreed respectively that learning reading skills using short stories helped them to develop interest in reading additional short stories outside the classroom, while only 2 (3.33%) students disagreed that short stories did not help them to develop interest to read them outside the classroom. The results clearly reveal that short stories can be used as a means to develop students' reading culture and hence they directly or indirectly improve their language skills.

The data in item no.13 also show that 34 (56.6%) and 26 (43.66%) students strongly agreed and agreed respectively that if their English language teacher uses short stories in reading lessons, they will significantly progress in their achievement. From this it can be deduced that short stories facilitate students' understanding of ideas and let them interpret the discourse being at is. Hence, it can be stated that short stories facilitate the psycholinguistic process of decoding and understanding the meaning of written materials.

Finally, the data in item no.16 reveal that 38 (63.33%) and 20 (33.33%) students strongly agreed and agreed respectively that if they are given choices to select, they will prefer short stories to the reading passages in the students' textbook; while only 2 (3.33%) students responded that they did not prefer short stories to reading passages in their textbook. This shows that students are not interested in the reading passages in their textbook, and this may in turn result in high affective variables which block the intake and cause the students to develop negative attitude towards the skill.

### **Discussion and conclusions**

The first objective of the present study was to check whether or not the use of short stories improves the students' reading comprehension. The results from reading comprehension tests and questionnaire clearly showed that using short stories to teach reading skills has a strong positive impact on students' achievement, and that they are more interesting for the students than those found in their textbook. This finding support the previous research findings such as those by Lao and Krashen (2000) who found statistically significant difference in reading achievement and vocabulary between students that read literary texts and a second group that read non-literary texts at a university in Hong Kong.

Moreover, a study by Oster (1989) has shown that high-intermediate and advanced students also profit from literary texts. What students read gives them the opportunity to come up with their own insights and helps them to speak the language in a more imaginative way. They become more creative since they are faced with their own point of view. According to him, this process leads to critical thinking, by confirming, "Focusing on point of view in literature enlarges students' vision and fosters critical thinking by dramatizing the various ways a situation can be seen" (p. 85). This could happen because when students read, they interact with the text. By interacting with the text, they interpret what they read. By interpreting what they read, they can work toward speaking English more creatively.

The results of the present study are also in line with other studies on the effect of reading comprehension on academic achievement. Reading comprehension is regarded as important for academic achievement (Bharuthram, 2012; Grimm, 2008; ) and deem to be a prerequisite for many academic skills (Guldenoglu, 2008). This is because many subjects are learned by reading, which means that one's reading comprehension skill should be of high

quality. A decrease in one's reading comprehension ability will inevitably lead to a decrease in the amount of learning from texts.

The second objective of the present study was to see whether the use of short stories improves students' vocabulary power. The results from vocabulary close test indicated that the experimental group made a significant improvement over the control group in vocabulary achievement posttest. This is in consonance with Lao and Krashen (2000). The results of their study which compared the reading and vocabulary achievement of a group of students who read literary texts and a second group who read non-literary texts at a university in Hong Kong revealed that the former made higher improvement in vocabulary and reading than the latter.

The questionnaire results also indicated that learning reading skills using short stories helped the students to increase their vocabulary capacity and understand the meanings of words easily because of their rich contextual clues and following story lines. Moreover, the short story made the meanings clear and helped them to increase their stock of vocabulary. These findings are in line with Van (2009) who believes studying literature in the EFL classroom is advantageous for a number of reasons: It supplies meaningful contexts; It engages a great deal of vocabulary, dialogues and prose; It calls for imagination and enhances creativity.

The third objective of the study was whether the use of short stories helps students develop positive attitude towards reading skills and the new instructional approach. The results of the questionnaire data revealed that short stories were interesting to read, students enjoyed reading them and they witnessed that they were relaxing. Students also expressed that if they were given choices to select, they would prefer short stories to the reading passages in the students' text. This implies that the reading passages in the text are not interesting and motivating. In turn, this may result in high affective variables which block the intake and cause students to develop negative attitude towards the skill. These results are in line with the research findings of Krashen and Terrell (1983). In their research they clearly explained that when the learning condition or atmosphere is relaxing and anxiety free students change the input into intake, and that literature can solve the problem of motivation and attitude for many learners, since it, by nature, is interesting and can motivate learners to go to the language (McKay, 1982).

Finally, the results revealed that using short stories in reading lessons help students to be engaged in discussion and argument. This indicates that short stories are valuable instruments to engage students in their learning and creatively come up with individuals' interpretation of the issues which in turn helps them to develop their cognition. This finding is in line with Oster (1989). He mentioned that when students read short stories, they interact with the text. By interacting with the text, they interpret what they read. By interpreting what they read, they can work toward speaking English more creatively. A study carried out by Masgoret & Gardner (2003), focusing on the relationship between second language achievement and five attitude/motivation variables, showed that the correlation between achievement and motivation and achievement and attitudes toward the learning situation is very high. The importance of attitude in learning a second language is clearly demonstrated in the results of this research.

Based on the results of the present study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Using short stories is more effective than the passages included in students' textbooks.
2. Using short stories in reading lessons bring about significant differences in students' vocabulary achievement.
3. The use of short stories in reading lessons help students to develop positive attitude towards reading skills.

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