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Date : 24 April 2008
A STUDY ON SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS’ PERCEPTION OF USING SHORT STORY IN LEARNING ENGLISH

NOOR AZMA BINTI ABU BAKAR

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Science and Education (TESL)

Faculty of Education
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

APRIL 2008
"I declare that this thesis entitled "A Study On Second Language Learners’ Perception Of Using Short Story in Learning English" is the result of my own research except as cited in the references. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not currently submitted in candidature of any other degree".

Signature : ................................
Name : Noor Azma Binti Abu Bakar
Date : 24 April 2008
To my beloved father and mother,

this is the why and wherefore me not being home,

to my dearest Hafiz,

you are a truly inspiring friend of mine,

keeping me fresh and going through the sleepless nights.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Completing this study has been a very enriching and meaningful process. There were so many people who have left indelible marks on my life.

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Next, to my beloved mother and father, thank you for all the moral and financial support that you have given me and you were the reason, I am still struggling to achieve my goals in life. To my dearest supporter Hafiz, thank you so much for always being there with me through the hard times, being a good listener to all my problems and giving me the courage all the way in discovering my true self. You have refreshed me, comforted me and been by my side, all the way.

To all my friends, thank you for your friendship and giving me the lifetime experience in making me a wise person. Last but not least, to everyone who participated and contributed directly or indirectly in completing this study, thank you.
ABSTRACT

This study generally attempts to investigate second language learners’ perception on the use of short stories in learning the English language. The study also attempts to determine students’ level of interest in reading short stories, the problems faced by the students and also the possible solution to problems faced by students when short stories are used in the English language classroom. Questionnaires were distributed to second language learners taking Reading for Specific Purposes elective course in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Skudai, Johor. All the ninety two respondents were from three different sections from three different faculties and were from the engineering field. The methodologies used for this study were questionnaire and interview. The interview results were used to support the findings. Observations were also used in this study for designing questionnaire and also to determine the respondents for interview sessions. The findings showed positive patterns which indicated that the respondents have positive perception towards the use of short stories to learn English language and the students are interested in the lessons that used short stories. In addition, the problems faced by the students, the strategies used by the students to deal with the problems and also the possible suggestions addressed to solve problems faced by the students were also identified. One of the major finding was students were interested to read short stories according to the theme that they preferred. Another major finding was that the main problem faced by the students was the problem of participation where they did not participate actively in the lessons that used short stories. This was due to low proficiency level and the theme of the short stories did not suit students’ interest. The students also suggested that short story should be assigned to be read before coming to class. In a conclusion, short stories should be used to learn English language as it enhances students’ language proficiency. The instructor should choose short stories that suits students’ interest in order to make the students participate in the lessons that used short stories.
Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidik persepsi pelajar bahasa kedua terhadap penggunaan cerita pendek untuk belajar Bahasa Inggeris. Kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk menentukan aras minat pelajar dalam membaca cerita pendek, masalah yang dihadapi oleh pelajar dan juga penyelesaian yang mungkin berkenaan dengan masalah yang dihadapi oleh pelajar ketika cerita pendek digunakan dalam kelas Bahasa Inggeris. Soal selidik telah diaghikan kepada pelajar bahasa kedua yang mengambil matapelajaran “Reading for Specific Purposes” di Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. Kesemua sembilan puluh dua responden adalah dari tiga kelas berlainan dari tiga fakulti berlainan dan adalah dari bidang kejuruteraan. Metodologi yang diadakan bagi kajian ini ialah soal selidik dan temubual. Dapatan dari temubual digunakan bagi menyokong dapatan kajian. Pemerhatian juga telah digunakan dalam kajian ini bagi merancang soal selidik dan juga bagi menentukan calon temubual. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan maklum balas positif yang menunjukkan responden mempunyai persepsi yang positif terhadap penggunaan cerita pendek untuk belajar Bahasa Inggeris dan pelajar berminat dengan pembelajaran yang menggunakan cerita pendek. Sebagai penambahan, masalah yang dihadapi oleh pelajar, strategi yang digunakan oleh pelajar untuk menyelesaikan masalah dan cadangan yang mungkin bagi masalah yang dihadapi oleh pelajar juga telah dikenalpasti. Salah satu dapatan penting ialah pelajar berminat untuk membaca cerita pendek berdasarkan tema yang diminati. Dapatan penting yang lain ialah masalah utama yang dihadapi oleh pelajar adalah masalah penglibatan di mana mereka tidak terlibat dengan aktif bagi pembelajaran yang menggunakan cerita pendek. Ini adalah disebabkan oleh tahap penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris yang rendah and tema cerita pendek yang digunakan tidak menepati minat pelajar. Pelajar juga mencadangkan agar tugasan membaca cerita pendek diberikan sebelum datang ke kelas. Sebagai kesimpulan, cerita pendek perlu digunakan bagi pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris kerana ia dapat meningkatkan tahap penguasaan pelajar. Guru perlu memilih cerita pendek yang menepati citarasa pelajar bagi membolehkan pelajar terlibat di dalam pembelajaran yang menggunakan cerita pendek.
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<td>ESL</td>
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<td>UTP</td>
<td>Universiti Teknologi Petronas</td>
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<td>KBSM</td>
<td>New Integrated Secondary School Curriculum</td>
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<td>ELRP</td>
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of the introduction, background of the study, statement of the problems, purposes of the study and the objectives of the study. This is followed by the research questions, the significance of the study, scope of the study, limitations of the study and definition of terms.

1.1 Introduction

There are a lot of languages in this world and every language is important. When two people who speak two different languages want to interact with each other, they will certainly need to use one language that both of them can understand. Then, there is a need to have a language that can be used by all people around the world. English has become the lingua franca of the world where English is used in most situations. Everybody is urged to learn the language. This statement is being supported by Sundaram (2006) who states that English is the most popular language compared to other languages and it is one of the common languages that many people can understand.
There are various ways to learn English and one of the ways is through literature. According to Collie & Slater (1987), there are four main reasons why a teacher should use literary text to teach English. The first reason is that literary text is a valuable authentic material that students need to cope with in the target language and this makes them become more familiar with the different linguistic uses and forms. The second reason stated by Collie & Slater (1987) is literary text is good for cultural enrichment as students can explore the culture of the target language by being engaged with the text. Thirdly, literary text exposes students to language enrichment. Students need to work with the language when a literary text is being used. The last reason is that literary texts foster personal involvement.

Hines (2005) states that it is better to use literature rather than a communicative textbook as it can change the learning approach from focusing on grammar to creative thinking. He believes that literature-based programs focus on the interpretation of the language and this allows students to experiment with the language. It can be assumed that literature allows the students to be creative in their thinking and also gives the students a platform to use the language. In addition, Rosli Talif (1995:15) states that “…language is inseparable from literature and vice versa.” We cannot run away from learning the language when literary text is used. Students learn the language unconsciously when they read literary text. Rosli Talif (1995:17) also believes that “language is the material of literature as stone or bronze is of sculpture, paints of pictures, or sounds of music”. To make a literary piece, the writer will need to use the language. Literature cannot be made by itself; there is the material known as language that makes it known as literature. Therefore, it can be concluded that literature and language cannot be separated.

Subramaniam & Vethamani (2003:vii) claimed that “the use of literary materials as a major feature in English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum especially in the second and foreign language contexts has been significant over the last two decades.” Literary materials have been used for such a long time and it is still being used for the teaching of English. Literary materials help students to improve their English language and this is supported by Lazar (1993:17) who
believes that the use of literary materials “serve to accelerate the students’
acquisition of language” besides developing students’ critical thinking and personal
response.

1.2 Background Of The Study

First of all, this section will discuss the advantages of adapting literary
materials into language classroom and will further discuss issues in using literary
materials.

There are many reasons for using literature to teach a language. For example,
literature can be used as a motivating material (Subramaniam, 2006 in Nair-
Venugopal et al. (Eds), Thirumalai, 2002, Canagarajah ,1999 in Fakrul Alam, 2002,
literature, they will be able to experience aesthetic reading. This would enable them
to interact with the text and would assist them in developing the ability to create
personal meaning of the texts (Rosenblatt, 1978 in Pike, 2004). Literary materials
can also motivate students to read in English. Teachers need to choose literary
materials suitable for their students. This is important as it would encourage them to
enjoy reading the texts rather than making them memorizes the elements found in the
texts.

Using literature also helps students to acquire the language unconsciously as
students are required to have a lot of group discussions and group work (Mingsheng,
1998, Lazar, 1993 and Subramaniam, 2006 in Nair-Venugopal et al. (Eds)). Students
are being provided with meaningful context for processing and interpreting new
language and therefore they are given more time and place to use the target language.
According to Thakur (2003) and Delanoy (1997), when a person enjoys reading
literary texts, they unconsciously develop a feel for the language and acquire the language unconsciously. They can experience the language because they are emotionally engaged and intellectually stimulated. Chitravelu, Sithamparam & Teh (2005) claim that literature can also be used as a stimulus where literary texts can be used to encourage students to respond to it which in turn would encourage them to use the language. Literary materials can be a platform for encouraging the students to use the language. This is important as it may lead to language acquisition.

Savvidou (2004), Saraceni (2003), Thirumalai (2002), Mingsheng (1998), Palardy (1997) in Yuh-Mei (2006), Lazar (1993), Sage (1987) and McKay (1982) agree on the fact that the use of literature provides an access to the culture of the target language where it helps the students understand and appreciate cultures of their own and of others. Students are encouraged to be more aware of the social, political and historical events in the literary material and thus will learn the culture and would accept different cultures. Caldwell (___) claims that reading literary texts also enables the students to see the rootedness of societies including their own society. Adding to this is Root (1971) in Yuh-Mei (2006) who states that by using literature, readers can understand themselves better, the world and also the aesthetic value of the text.

Literature can be a valuable source in providing language input as being quoted by Nuttall (1982:168) in Yuh-Mei (2006), “the best way to improve your knowledge of a foreign language is to go and live among its speakers….the next best way is to read extensively in it”. This means that, in order to learn another language, one need to read a lot in the target language to get the input. Literature is rich in language input where students can extract the input for future use.

Using literary texts could also make the learners become more aware of the language (Subramaniam, 2006 in Nair-Venugopal et al. (Eds)). The key notion is literature is conversions since it offers “illustrative of different genres, text-types, register, narrative structures, point of view, patterning of words and sounds” (Chan,
1999:40 in Saraceni, 2003:14). Lazar (1993) also supports working with literary materials as these help to expand students’ language awareness and become more exposed to the rules of syntax, collocation and even cohesion. Savvidou (2004) and McKay (1982) also support the use of literature since it offers opportunities for the students to analyze and interpret the language used in context and will be able to justify how language is manipulated and the reason for it.

Another reason for using literary materials in language class is to develop students’ interpretative abilities. According to Subramaniam (2006) in Nair-Venugopal et al. (Eds), Saraceni (2003), Mingsheng (1998) and Lazar (1993), literary materials are good sources in helping the students to develop interpretative skills where they will be able to infer meaning and make interpretation based on what they learn. Delanoy (1997) adds that language learning through literature helps the acquisition of particular language skills. Povey (1972:187) in McKay (1982) highlights that “literature will increase all language skills because literature will extend linguistic knowledge by giving evidence of extensive and subtle vocabulary usage, and complex and exact syntax.” By using literary materials, all the four language skills namely the speaking, listening, reading and writing are emphasised.

Chitavelu, Sithamparam & Teh (2005), Saraceni (2003), Fakrul Alam (2002), Lazar (1993) and Sage (1987) state that adapting literary materials in the classroom helps to educate the person as a whole where it helps to stimulate the imagination of the students, develop their critical abilities and increase their emotional awareness. Students will also enjoy the lesson. Enjoying the lesson is important as students will improve their language.

Literature can be used to bring language development in students by using it as a “specimens of real language use” (Fakrul Alam, 2002:129). According to Subramaniam (2006) in Nair-Venugopal et al. (Eds), Chitavelu, Sithamparam & Teh (2005), Savvidou (2004), Thirumalai (2002) and Thakur (2003), the literary piece can show students a sample of how the vocabulary, grammar and patterns of literary
texts can be used in order to give the reader a message and make them respond to it. Thakur (2003) maintains that literature provides students with examples on the use of cohesiveness and coherence. When students are engaged emotionally and imaginatively with the literary text, they will be involved in the literary text spontaneously and they will remember the input for a longer period compared to non-literary texts. Thirumalai (2002) adds that by carefully selecting the literary materials, the learning of English can be improved.

Using literary materials in a language classroom can also help students to achieve their occupational goals as students can use the words and phrases from the literary texts and apply them when they write or speak. McKay (1982) highlights that literature increases reading proficiency and this will contribute to the issue of promoting students academic and occupational goals. Reading is vital in everything that a person does. Through reading, a person can learn tons of new things. Using literary materials to make students love the language is one way to promote reading habit.

Literature can also be used as a context for language based activity where “through language-based tasks, you can get students to explore, understand, evaluate, respond to and perform pieces of literature” (Chitravelu, Sithamparam & Teh, 2005:260). Fakrul Alam (2002) highlights that students are given the chance to explore the language and enjoy the literary pieces at the same time and this will allow individual exploration. Caldwell (___) adds that when reading literary texts, readers are invited to see the world from a different perspective. Savvidou (2004) and Byrne (2000) state that when using literature in EFL classroom, students are provided with the opportunities for personal expression. In addition, Savvidou (2004) maintains that the use of literature offers language learners the opportunity to develop linguistic and communicative skills.

Based on evidence of research findings that favours the use of literature in ELT, generally literature can be used for “pleasure, fostering good reading habits,
developing perception and interpretation skills, offering challenges hence achievements, providing genuine communication of ideas, offering linguistic models meaningfully, developing comprehension and motivation, balancing receptive and productive skills, providing rich and diverse exposure to language, improving concentration, encouraging reflection, allowing contact with native speaker’s world, improving vocabulary, syntax and structures, allowing learning from what is not taught, increasing exposure to language in a limited time and leading to language acquisition.” (Subramaniam, 2006:36-37 in Nair-Venugopal et al. (Eds))

Even though there are many reasons why literature should be used to teach the English language, there are also controversies or issues for using it in a language classroom. For example, Lazar (1993) points out that in terms of comprehension, students face problems mainly in following the plot, understanding the characters of the short story, understanding the vocabulary and also the role of the narrator.

Another problem highlighted by Delanoy (1997) and Lazar (1993) is students lack the confidence and feel unmotivated when they are not sure whether what they think is correct or when the content of the short story might not be interesting to them. For example, when the text used is too simple and predictable, learners will not feel the challenge in learning and thus make them unmotivated to learn and use the literary text for language learning.

Students also think that short stories are not relevant for them to pass examinations as the curriculum is exam-oriented. Rosenblatt (1982) in Nair (__) mentions that literature can lose its aesthetic capacity when readers cannot handle their personal responses. Learners are only focusing on getting the information needed for examination purposes. Adding to this is McKay (1982) who states that the study of literature also does not contribute anything in helping the students to meet academic or occupational goals.
Lazar (1993) also claims that students also find it difficult to cope with the ambiguity found in the text and are not confident to make interpretations. When reading short stories, students tend to focus on every word rather than the meaning of the story. Students should be allowed to interpret the text differently since the meaning of a literary text can never be fixed.

Some students would find difficulty in understanding the cultural background of the story (McKay, 1982). Another problem related to cultural background is most students would interpret literary texts based on their cultural background and their own personal values or judgments. This will hinder the understanding of different values practiced in other cultures. Literature also reflects on cultural perspectives and on conceptual level and this sometimes may be difficult for the students to understand.

Another problem is on appreciating the stylistic features used in the literary text. For example, different short stories have different ways of writing and some students do not know how to appreciate the style (Lazar, 1993). Some students cannot feel the message in that literary text because they cannot understand the style. A person might think that the literary piece that he or she reads is not interesting because the style used by the writer does not suit that particular reader.

Delanoy (1997) mentions that literature is usually taught in isolation to the component of language learning and by the end, students will not be able to use the language in their real life situation. This means that literary materials are not taught in context where literature is being isolated from language learning. This is a problem where the students are exposed to literature but they are not taught on applying what they have learned into their language learning. For example, when teacher teaches a short story in the class but does not highlight the important points like the grammar and sentence structure, students will not be able to use what they have learned and will not be able to apply it for language learning purposes.
When literary texts are used to teach the mechanical form of a language, it usually does not involve the students or if there is involvement, there is usually too little space for them (Delanoy, 1997). This can be seen in most literature classes in the Malaysian secondary schools where the classes are dominated by teachers and the class is teacher-centred. Students usually just receive information and they are not given sufficient opportunities to express their opinion. Students just receive the input without putting the effort to gain the input. For example, a teacher teaches grammar where the teacher usually does the explanation and points to examples from the text and the students will just take notes. Students are not given enough space to express their opinion because the teacher is too focusing on making the students understand the mechanical form of the language or what is being taught.

Reading in a foreign language requires more mental effort and language learners sometimes find it difficult to keep up with the language level of the literary text. Lazar (1993:53) states that students “might not be able to cope with the language of the text because it departs strikingly from the usual norms of language use; it includes a great many archaisms, rhetorical devices and metaphors; or it makes use of the dialect or register of a highly specialized field (such as law)”’. The language used in literature is distinctive where literature involves a special and unusual use of the language. Therefore, it will be hard for the students to understand the text. One example is a study done in China where according to Mingsheng (1998), students lack the ability to understand the literary meaning of the literary materials used. Sometimes, even the students are exposed to the literature for many years; they still do not achieve the minimum requirement.

Byrne (2000) mentions that even the advanced learners have difficulty in comprehending literary texts as they will need to use knowledge that is not provided within the language used in order to reconstruct the meaning. Sometimes, students need extra knowledge in order to understand the real meaning of the figurative language used in the text. For example, non-native speakers will find difficulties especially in the use of figurative language where it is hard to understand the meaning embedded in the literary text. Another problem is that the figurative
language is culturally bound. For example, in an English-speaking culture, blue means vulgarity and red means anger (Byrne, 2000).

Another issue highlighted by Lazar (1993:11) is the “literary competence and the language classroom”. If the aim is to study literature, then students should develop literary competence. Literary competence is having “an implicit understanding of and familiarity with certain conventions which allow them to take the words on the page of a play or other literary work and convert them into literary meanings” (Culler, 1975 in Lazar, 1993:12). On the other hand, if literature is only a resource, it is not crucial for the students to have literary competence but they will acquire it through the process of learning using literary texts. The problem here is the teacher will need to determine whether their students need to have literary competence or not before continuing with the lesson that involves literary materials. If the lesson requires the students to have literary competence, the teacher will need to teach literary competence to the students first.

Another problem is the structure of language in literary texts. McKay (1982) states that some literary materials have complex structure and the language being used is too unique that it does not really help in teaching the grammar of the language. The structure can sometimes be too complex that the students do not understand it and therefore, will not learn the grammar. The language used can sometimes be too unique that it is hard to be used again in other context.

Mingsheng (1998) states that the problem in teaching English literature in China is insufficient qualified teachers. If a person can speak English, it does not mean that they can teach literature and even if a person studies literature, it does not necessarily means him or her can teach literature for language learning. To use literature in a language class, the teacher should be able to describe and answer any question asked by students about the literary text. A qualified teacher will definitely know what he or she is teaching and will be able to make their students understand the lesson. Some teachers can teach English language but they might not be able to
teach literature as they themselves do not really understand what is the literary material is all about. For example, they did not know what does the figurative sentences in the text means and will not be able to explain it to their students. Unqualified teacher will not be able to use literary materials for language learning.

Teachers’ interference with students’ reading process of the literary text can be bad but sometimes, students cannot communicate with a literary text unless they are taught by the teacher (Delanoy, 1997). A teacher should be aware of their responsibility and should determine which is the right time to interfere and when is the right time to be silent and just facilitate the learning process. Teacher should encourage students to read the text as to develop the love for reading.

Byrne (2000) states that literature is often rejected by teachers and students because it is too difficult and the teachers’ burden will increase in terms of preparatory work. Some materials will not fit the exercises in most course book and when literary text is used, the teacher needs to plan more imaginative activities to make sure the students are involved. Teachers’ responsibility will increase and this sometimes can burden them.

In a conclusion, there are a lot of pros and cons of using literary texts and a careful selection of texts can enhance students’ language proficiency. A teacher needs to consider few things before using literary texts in a language classroom. Some of the areas that should be taken into account when selecting a literary text are the type of course that is taught, the type of the students and the certain factors connected with the text like the culture introduced and the language of the text (Lazar, 1993).
1.3 Statement Of The Problem

There have been a number of studies to investigate the use of literary texts in learning the English language and most of them focused on secondary school students and the actual happening in schools. Apart from research conducted, there have been very little studies that focused on the use of literature at tertiary level.

One of the few studies that looked at the perception of the use of literary texts in learning the English language was carried out by Sidhu (2003). The study involved 30 form two students in an urban girls’ secondary school in Petaling Jaya, Selangor in Malaysia. One of the area for the study was “students’ perception of literary text” (Sidhu, 2003:96). The students were divided into three groups namely the advanced, intermediated and elementary and this was according to their language proficiency level. Each group had ten students. All of them were asked to read the assigned literary text. From the study, all ten students of the advanced group found the literary text easy and were below their language proficiency level. Five students from the intermediated group felt that the text was easy and the rest were satisfied with the text. Two students from beginners group were satisfied with the text while the other eight students found it challenging. The results of this study shows that the literary texts used in language classroom should be suitable for the target learner.

Another example of a study was on young adults’ response to nine young adult storybooks by Too (2004). Too (2004) in Too (2006:13) in Too & Vethamani (Eds.) states that “the most frequent reason for young adult readers to enjoy reading these nine stories was that the stories were all about young adults”. The other reason was that the language used in story is interesting and uses real life expressions. However, there were few students who didn’t enjoy the story as they thought that it was not interesting, the setting of the story is unfamiliar to them and there is no message in the story.
For the studies conducted at tertiary level, one example is a study by Sivapalan (2006) in Too & Vethamani (Eds.) where the respondents for the study were students taking engineering and technology courses in Universiti Teknologi Petronas (UTP). This study focused on reactions of students towards the inclusion of multicultural young adult literature to facilitate comprehension of literature and the perceptions of students of the addition of multicultural input in the literature learning experience. This study used three short stories. The activities carried out were based on readers’ response as to encourage the students to communicate in English. Literature circle, role play and group discussions were among the activities carried out. From this study, it can be seen that “students are able to empathize, sympathize and provide rational and logical judgments on the issues faced by the characters in the short stories” (Sivapalan, 2006:93 in Too & Vethamani (Eds.)). Another important outcome of the study was “the inclusion of multicultural input promoted understanding about cultures in addition to improving one’s concept of self” (Sivapalan, 2006:96 in Too & Vethamani (Eds.)).

Another example of a study conducted at tertiary level was by Rogers (2006) in a university classroom. She taught a course on adolescent literature and she used a classic adult novel. She used multiple approaches with her students and she explores three sites of imaginative and critical engagement with young adult literature. She begin by exploring the novel in the inside where the students were asked to analyze the story from different aspects like the language used, the characters feelings and the students response to the novel. The second approach was using the critical interpretive stance. Rogers (2006:52) states that “I begin our theme of constructing gender and identity in young adult literature with an activity that asks students to write a personal ad about themselves in which they also describe their idealized partner.” This helped to explore gender construction in the society and the students are able to give their opinion based on gender. The last approach used was to make the students discuss or write “the relationship of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, culture, and youth culture to the identity of the protagonist in their novel” (Rogers, 2006:53).
In short, there have been limited studies conducted on the use of literature to teach English language involving tertiary education. Although literature has been introduced at school level but when they get to tertiary level they are no longer expected to read literature. Students are not exposed to literature like they used to during their school days. Obeidat (1997) states that when he observes his students in United Arab Emirates University, he can see that literature helps the students to acquire competence in English including expressing ideas, learning the English features, the linguistic system used and they are able to apply it in their real life. The students are more proficient, critical and creative in using the language. From this observation, it can be said that literature can help to critical and creative thinking and not language grammar alone. Therefore, literary materials should also be used to teach English language at tertiary level and it should not end at the school level. There should be continuity in the use of the literary materials so that students will be able to appreciate and use it to learn the language.

Carroli (2002:113) states that “there is a need for qualitative studies, focused on learners, to explore the relationship between literature, language and students”. This is important for the students to acquire the language. Students need to enjoy learning the language as when there is “a mental block, caused by affective factors ... that prevents input from reaching the language acquisition device” (Krashen, 1985:100), students will not receive the input fully and the learning process cannot be optimized. It is important to see what are the students’ perception rather than focusing on the teachers or instructors alone. Therefore, this research attempts to explore the perception of second language learners on the use of short stories in learning English at tertiary level.

There have been studies conducted on the use of literature to teach English language and most of them are studies outside Malaysia and only few studies done in Malaysia. Therefore, this study will focus on the actual happening in the classrooms and on the use of short stories rather than other genres in literature and will be looking at the local context. This study focuses only on the use of short stories.
because according to Erkaya (2005), the use of short story in a language classroom could improve students’ vocabulary and reading habits.

This study will also look at the problems faced by the students and how does short stories help students in learning the English language. Erkaya (2005) adds that when using short stories, teachers can teach higher order thinking because short stories promote the use of all the four skills namely the listening, speaking, reading and writing and short stories are embedded with motivational benefits. When using short stories, the students will learn all the four skills at the same time. All these skills are needed for language learning and it is important for them to learn the skills.

1.4 Purpose Of The Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perception of second language learners on the use of short story in learning the English language.

1.5 Objectives Of The Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

(i) To investigate second language learners’ perception on the use of short stories in their English language classroom.
(ii) To determine students’ level of interest in reading short stories.
(iii) To identify the possible problems faced by the students when reading short stories used in classroom.
To determine the possible solution to the problems faced by the students when short stories are used in the English language classroom.

1.6 Research Questions

These are the research questions that this study seeks to answer:

(i) What is the second language learners’ perception on the use of short stories in their English language classroom?
(ii) Are the students interested in reading short stories?
(iii) What are the possible problems that students face when reading short stories?
(iv) How do students deal with the problems faced when reading short stories in the English language classroom?
(v) What possible suggestions can be made to address the problems faced by these students?