

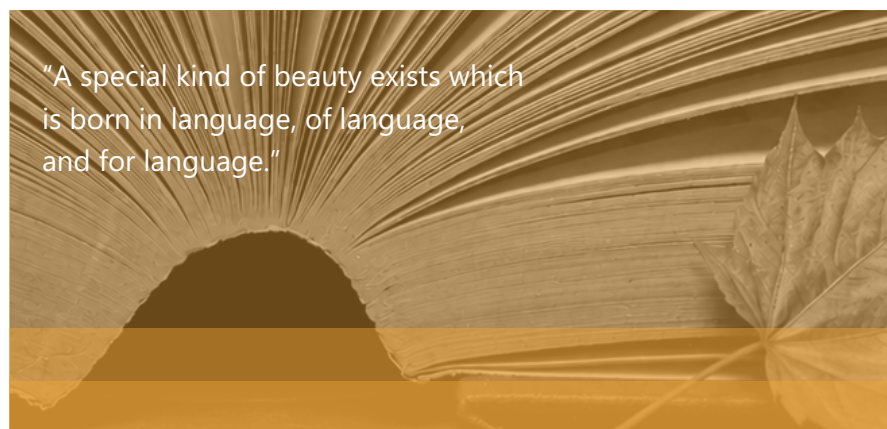


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"A special kind of beauty exists which  
is born in language, of language,  
and for language."



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|                            |                                                                                                                                                                   |            |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Yazdonova M.A.</b>      | Cognitive Metaphor in English Digital Discourse: Embodied Schemas in the Conceptualization of Online Activity                                                     | 163        |
| <b>Choriyeva A.A.</b>      | Morphographic and Semantic Integration of English-Derived Lexemes in Uzbek Online Media                                                                           | 172        |
| <b>Rahimjonova G.G'.</b>   | Structural Patterns in English and Uzbek Digital Communication Terminology                                                                                        | 181        |
| <b>Dzharkinova O.T.</b>    | Author – text – director – viewer: reception models and meaning-making strategies in the film discourse of little women                                           | 189        |
| <b>Xudayberdiyeva N.S.</b> | National world picture and its representation in different languages                                                                                              | 195        |
| <b>Kulmamatov O.A.</b>     | Presupposition and implicature as humor-generating mechanisms in discourse                                                                                        | 200        |
| <b>Xolmurodova Z.</b>      | Semantic reconfiguration of English technology terms in contemporary Uzbek online media                                                                           | 210        |
| <b>PEDAGOGY</b>            |                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>217</b> |
| <b>Nishonbekova S.O'.</b>  | Developing reflective and methodological competence in English language teacher education                                                                         | 218        |
| <b>Agzamkhodjaeva S.A.</b> | Inclusive Strategies for Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Students with Diverse Learning Needs in Higher Education                                       | 227        |
| <b>Damirova G.O'.</b>      | Developing prospective English teachers' written discourse competence in a digital learning environment                                                           | 234        |
| <b>Prenova G.B.</b>        | Linguodidactic foundations for developing communicative competence in pre-service English language teachers                                                       | 242        |
| <b>Amirova D.B.</b>        | Methodological conditions for developing students' critical thinking in English language classes                                                                  | 248        |
| <b>Zoyirova S.M.</b>       | The Role of Authentic Materials in English Language Teaching                                                                                                      | 254        |
| <b>Djabborova N.A.</b>     | The role of grammar and vocabulary in the development of oral speech                                                                                              | 260        |
| <b>Rustamova N.M.</b>      | Reading short stories as a gateway to creative writing: enhancing EFL learners' writing skills through literary input                                             | 267        |
| <b>Ibroximova L.I.</b>     | The Role of Information Technologies in Foreign Language Learning Process                                                                                         | 275        |
| <b>Kurbanova D.Sh.</b>     | Task-based teaching of genetic engineering-related vocabulary to medical students in ESP classes: a linguodidactic approach                                       | 282        |
| <b>Azadova M.B.</b>        | Sociolinguistic Factors Influencing English Language Acquisition Among Secondary School Learners: A Case Study of an IT-Specialized School in Urgench, Uzbekistan | 289        |
| <b>Karimova Sh.T.</b>      | From context to communication: using authentic texts to develop EFL learners' lexical competence                                                                  | 295        |

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## Reading short stories as a gateway to creative writing: enhancing EFL learners' writing skills through literary input

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**Annotation** *Developing writing skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) remains a complex and demanding process, requiring not only linguistic accuracy but also the ability to express ideas clearly and creatively. This article explores how reading short literary texts contributes to the improvement of writing skills in EFL contexts, with a particular focus on creative writing. The study adopts a qualitative, literature-based approach, synthesizing contemporary research on the use of short stories in language teaching. The findings highlight a strong connection between reading and writing, showing that learners exposed to literary texts tend to produce more coherent, expressive, and structurally developed writing. Moreover, these conclusions are supported by previous research emphasizing the effectiveness of literature-based instruction in enhancing writing performance. Overall, the study argues that integrating short stories into EFL writing instruction can be highly beneficial for bridging the gap between language proficiency and creative expression.*

**Keywords** *Short stories, EFL writing, creative writing, literary input, reading-writing connection, language teaching*

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## Qisqa hikoyalarni o'qish ijodiy yozuvga yo'l sifatida: adabiy material orqali EFL o'rganuvchilarining yozish ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirish

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**Annotatsiya** *Ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o'rganishda yozish ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirish murakkab va talabchan jarayon bo'lib qolmoqda. Bu jarayon nafaqat lingvistik aniqlikni, balki fikrlarni aniq va ijodiy ifodalash qobiliyatini ham talab qiladi. Ushbu maqolada qisqa adabiy matnlarni o'qish EFL kontekstlarida yozish ko'nikmalarini takomillashtirishga qanday hissa qo'shishi, xususan ijodiy yozuvga alohida e'tibor qaratilgan holda, o'rganiladi. Tadqiqot sifatli, adabiyotga asoslangan yondashuvni qo'llaydi va til o'qitishda qisqa hikoyalardan foydalanishga oid zamonaviy tadqiqotlarni umumlashtiradi. Natijalar o'qish va yozish o'rtasidagi kuchli bog'liqlikni ko'rsatadi hamda adabiy matnlar bilan tanishgan o'rganuvchilar ko'proq izchil, ifodali va tuzilma jihatidan rivojlangan yozma ishlar yaratishga moyil ekanini ta'kidlaydi. Ushbu xulosalar yozish samaradorligini oshirishda adabiyotga asoslangan ta'limning samaradorligini ko'rsatgan avvalgi tadqiqotlar bilan qo'llab-quvvatlanadi. Umuman olganda, tadqiqot qisqa hikoyalarni EFL yozuv darslariga integratsiya qilish til kompetensiyasi va ijodiy ifoda o'rtasidagi bo'shliqni bartaraf etishda juda foydali bo'lishi mumkinligini ta'kidlaydi.*

**Kalit so'zlar** Qisqa hikoyalar, EFL yozuvi, ijodiy yozuv, adabiy material, o'qish va yozish bog'liqligi, til o'qitish

## Чтение коротких рассказов как путь к творческому письму: развитие навыков письма у изучающих английский язык как иностранный посредством литературного материала

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**Аннотация** Развитие навыков письма на английском языке как иностранном остается сложным процессом, который требует не только языковой точности, но и способности ясно и творчески выражать идеи. В данной статье рассматривается то, как чтение коротких литературных текстов способствует совершенствованию навыков письма в контекстах EFL, с особым акцентом на творческое письмо. Исследование использует качественный, основанный на литературе подход, обобщая современные исследования по использованию коротких рассказов в преподавании языка. Полученные результаты подчеркивают тесную связь между чтением и письмом, показывая, что учащиеся, знакомящиеся с литературными текстами, склонны создавать более связные, выразительные и структурно развитые письменные работы. Эти выводы подтверждаются предыдущими исследованиями, подчеркивающими эффективность обучения на основе литературы в улучшении письменной деятельности. В целом, исследование утверждает, что интеграция коротких рассказов в обучении письму на английском языке, как иностранном, может быть весьма полезной для преодоления разрыва между языковой компетенцией и творческим самовыражением.

**Ключевые слова** Короткие рассказы, письмо в EFL, творческое письмо, литературный материал, связь чтения и письма, преподавание языка

### Introduction

The relationship between reading and writing has long occupied a central position in discussions of language development and literacy. In EFL context, writing is widely recognized as one of the most demanding language skills, requiring learners to integrate linguistic knowledge, cognitive processing, and communicative intent. However, many learners experience persistent difficulties in writing,

which are often rooted not only in writing itself but in underlying reading challenges. Research suggests that problems in students' written production can frequently be traced back to ineffective reading, particularly in the ability to identify, interpret, and use relevant information from texts (Hirvela, 2004). In academic settings, writing tasks typically require incorporating ideas from source materials such as summarizing, paraphrasing, and synthesizing

information, which makes reading a foundational skill for successful writing performance (Earnshaw, 2007; Grabe & Zhang, 2016).

At the same time, L2 learners often lack sufficient practice in both reading and writing processes. They require more explicit support in identifying main ideas, interpreting texts, and applying this understanding in writing tasks, yet such skills are frequently assumed rather than systematically taught in writing classrooms. Consequently, learners need sustained practice through integrated reading-writing activities, as well as consistent feedback, in order to develop fluency, confidence, and competence in writing (Grabe & Zhang, 2013).

Addonizo and Laux (1997) as cited in Earnshaw (2007) state that reading awareness is necessary for creative writing, thus the relationship between reading and writing is not merely supportive but deeply interconnected. As Carson and Leki (1993, as cited in Hirvela, 2004) argue, reading nearly always is the basis for writing, as students' ability to produce effective written texts is heavily dependent on their ability to comprehend and process input from reading materials. In this sense, reading functions as a primary source of linguistic and organizational input, equipping learners with the necessary tools to construct meaningful and coherent texts (Hirvela, 2004, Grabe & Zhang, 2016).

Moreover, this relationship is reciprocal: while reading supports writing development, writing also reinforces reading comprehension by encouraging deeper engagement with texts. However, contemporary concerns suggest that not all reading practices are equally beneficial. Baron (2015) as cited by Bland (2023) highlights that digital reading habits, characterized by skimming rather than deep engagement, may negatively affect writing precision and stamina, emphasizing the importance of sustained, meaningful reading experiences for developing strong writing abilities.

Beyond functional and academic writing, creative writing plays a crucial role in language

development by fostering imagination, expressive ability, and deeper engagement with language. Literature, in particular, provides rich input that supports both linguistic and creative growth. The development of both literary reading and creative writing skills depends on sufficient opportunities to engage in both practices, suggesting that these processes are mutually reinforcing (Lutzker, 2015, as cited in Bland, 2023).

Furthermore, engaging with literary texts allows learners to observe and experiment with stylistic and poetic techniques, which are essential for developing creativity. Noticing such techniques in mentor texts and applying them in one's own writing encourages learners to explore language more freely while simultaneously developing disciplined thinking, curiosity, and attention to detail. (Bland, 2023). Through this process, learners gain a deeper understanding of how meaning is constructed, and shaped by consciously and carefully connecting choices of words with a rhetorical objective.

### **Research Gap**

Despite the extensive research confirming the interconnected relationship between reading and writing, as well as the pedagogical value of literature in enhancing creative expression, several important gaps remain.

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that reading serves as a critical source of input for writing development and that literary texts can enrich learners' linguistic and imaginative capacities. However, much of this research has either focused on reading and writing as general, integrated skills or examined the effects of literature on creative writing without isolating specific literary forms. In particular, limited attention has been given to the distinct role of short stories as a targeted instructional tool in enhancing creative writing skills in EFL context.

Furthermore, while existing studies acknowledge the importance of combining reading input with writing practice, they often

overlook practical classroom constraints (Hirvela, 2004). For example, a limited instructional time, which significantly influences the selection of teaching materials. Although literature is widely recognized as beneficial, there is insufficient discussion regarding which forms of literature are most suitable for efficient integration into writing instruction under such constraints.

Consequently, the potential of reading short stories remains underexplored in relation to their effectiveness in supporting creative writing development within realistic classroom conditions.

Therefore, this study seeks to address these gaps by examining the role of short story reading as a focused and practical form of literary input in enhancing EFL learners' creative writing skills, particularly within contexts where both time limitations and pedagogical efficiency must be taken into account. This study aims to answer the following question: «How does short-story reading contribute to the development of creative writing skills in EFL context»?

### **Literary review**

Early theoretical perspectives, particularly those grounded in cognitive and linguistic research, suggest that writing is not merely a product of explicit instruction, but a complex skill shaped by accumulated experience and internalized knowledge. From this perspective, creative writing ability develops gradually through literary exposure, practice, and the internalization of linguistic patterns that are often difficult to articulate explicitly. Such knowledge may take the form of procedural memory – tacit, deeply internalized competence that emerges through repeated practice than direct teaching. (Roediger & Goff, 1999, as cited in Earnshaw, 2007)

Building on this foundation, one of the most influential frameworks explaining the development of writing ability is Krashen's Reading Hypothesis. According to this view, advanced writing competence is largely acquired through extensive reading,

particularly reading undertaken for meaning and engagement. Reading provides learners with a "feel" for language, its style, structure, and organization – thereby developing an intuitive sense of what constitutes effective writing (Krashen, 1982). Importantly, this hypothesis does not claim a simple causal relationship whereby more reading automatically leads to better writing. Rather, it posits that all proficient writers share a history of substantial reading exposure, while other factors such as creativity and experience also contribute to writing quality (Krashen, 1982).

At the same time, this perspective does not dismiss the role of writing practice and instruction. Instead, it suggests a complementary relationship: reading contributes primarily to the development of competence, the internalized knowledge of language while writing practice and instruction support performance, including planning, revising, and organizing ideas (Krashen, 1982). In this sense, effective writing development emerges from the interaction between input (reading) and output (writing), rather than from either in isolation.

While early theories laid the conceptual foundation, more recent empirical research has sought to confirm these assumptions in practical application in the context of EFL classroom. Studies on reading-writing relationships consistently demonstrate that reading serves as a primary source of input for writing, particularly in academic contexts where writing tasks depend heavily on engagement with source texts (Grabe & Zhang, 2013).

Literary texts function as rich linguistic input, providing learners with contextualized exposure to vocabulary, grammar, and discourse structures. As shown by Siham Bouzar Fodil-Cherif (2021), reading literature allows learners to internalize language patterns and observe how ideas are structured and expressed in authentic contexts. Expanding on this, Quang (2023) finds that short story reading has a measurable positive effect on grammatical accuracy and overall quality of

narrative writing, while also fostering more positive attitudes toward writing tasks. In this sense, literature does not merely supply language – it models it.

Research in the Uzbek EFL context points to broader methodological challenges in language teaching. Shokirov (2022) argues that traditional EFL approaches in Uzbekistan may not fully meet the communicative and professional needs of learners, particularly in light of evolving global demands. The study emphasizes the need to move toward more flexible, context-oriented, and communicative teaching strategies that better reflect real-world language use. This highlights the growing importance of adopting more effective and modern pedagogical approaches in language education.

Within this context, studies also reveal specific difficulties related to writing development. For instance, Arabova (2025) found that students experience challenges associated with insufficient writing ability and limited academic language competence. The study further emphasizes that traditional teaching approaches tend to prioritize grammatical knowledge over communicative and productive skills. These findings suggest a need for pedagogical approaches that support writing development through meaningful input and more interactive learning processes.

In response to these challenges, recent research highlights the potential of creative writing as an effective pedagogical tool. Ergasheva (2025) demonstrates that creative writing activities – such as storytelling, freewriting, and collaborative writing – significantly contribute to the development of students' linguistic competence, critical thinking, and motivation.

Taken together, these findings indicate that, within the Uzbek EFL context, existing research has primarily focused on general teaching practices, writing difficulties, and communicative competence, while the role of literary input in developing creative writing remains underexplored. Therefore, narrative-

based approaches to teaching writing, including the use of short stories, may play a crucial role in enhancing students' writing skills in EFL contexts.

Beyond linguistic development, literary texts – particularly short stories serve as powerful stimuli for creative expression. A systematic review by Aziz and Abdul (2022) concludes that short stories significantly enhance learners' creative thinking, cultural awareness, and motivation, while supporting writing development. Likewise, Adam and Babiker (2015) demonstrate that engagement with literary texts improves students' ability to produce creative writing, including the use of literary devices, figurative language, and imaginative narrative structures.

Engaging in creative writing as a response to literary texts allows learners to move from passive reception to active production. Janice Bland (2023) emphasizes that the use of mentor texts in creative writing instruction enhances learners' awareness of linguistic choices and rhetorical effects, while simultaneously strengthening their confidence as writers. This reciprocal relationship is also supported by Broekkamp et al. (2009), who identify a positive connection between literature reading and creative writing ability. Even more specifically, Igawa (2025) shows that working with short fiction dialogues helps learners develop sensitivity to tone, word choice, and interpersonal meaning – skills essential for nuanced written expression.

Taken together, contemporary research demonstrates a clear consensus: literary reading contributes not only to linguistic development but also to creative, cognitive, and affective dimensions of writing. It supports learners in acquiring language structures, expanding vocabulary, and developing the ability to express ideas with precision and originality.

However, despite this growing body of evidence, relatively limited attention has been paid to the specific role of short stories as a bridge between reading and creative writing in

EFL context, especially in relation to how they may systematically foster creative writing skills.

### **Methodology**

This study uses systematic literature review methodology to examine the role of short-story reading in the development of creative writing skills in EFL context. Rather than conducting an experimental investigation, the study synthesizes existing academic research to identify patterns, theoretical foundations, and pedagogical implications. The review process followed these steps:

**Search Strategy.** Relevant sources were retrieved from academic databases, including Google Scholar and ERIC. The search was conducted using key terms such as "teaching reading in EFL," "reading and writing connection," "creative writing development," "literature in language teaching," and "input-based learning." These keywords were combined to ensure coverage of both theoretical and pedagogical perspectives.

**Selection Criteria.** The selection focused on peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2000 and 2025 and academic books. However, foundational theoretical works outside this range (e.g., Krashen, 1982) were included due to their foundational relevance to the topic. Studies were included if they addressed the relationship between reading and writing, examined the use of literature in language teaching, or explored factors influencing creative writing development for EFL learners. Both theoretical and empirical studies were considered to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic. In addition, selected studies from the Uzbek EFL context were included to ensure local relevance. The collected sources were screened based on their relevance to the research focus. Studies that did not address English language teaching, writing skills development or involve literary input were excluded. As a result, a refined collection of 15 sources was identified for detailed analysis.

**Data Analysis.** The selected studies were synthesized and guided by key theoretical

frameworks, including input theory, reading-writing connection models, and practical creative writing pedagogical implementations. Recurring themes were identified, such as: the role of reading as linguistic and stylistic input, narrative structure awareness, vocabulary and expression development, and the influence of literary exposure on creativity. These themes were then interpreted in relation to the specific affordances of short stories as instructional material.

The methodology ensures transparency and replicability by clearly outlining the processes of source selection and analysis, while allowing a focused exploration of the research question within an existing academic data.

### **Results**

The analysis reveals several key mechanisms through which short-story reading supports the development of creative writing skills in EFL learners.

1. *Internalization of Style and Content:* By engaging with short stories, learners become familiar with the features of the genre and internalize qualities of literary content, style, and composition, which they then apply to their own work (Bouzar Fodil-Cherif, 2021). This exposure provides the "feel" for how sophisticated writing looks, as well as its texture and organization (Krashen, 1982). According to Adam and Babiker (2015), teaching literary styles is specifically noted by 90% of surveyed teachers to develop different writing techniques.
2. *Modeling and Scaffolding:* Short stories serve as "mentor texts" or literary models that provide a blueprint for the novice writer. This scaffolding effect reduces the "scope for failure" for the learner by highlighting specific poetic devices and language possibilities (Bland, 2023). These models provide a "blueprint," allowing students to imitate the content, theme, and style of experienced writers

- as they develop their own voices (Bland, 2023, Aziz & Abdul, 2022).
3. *Acquisition of "Mechanics"*: Reading allows writers to see how specific effects are achieved and how language parts are joined together. It helps them develop a rhetorical repertoire and "metalinguistic awareness" of language choices, such as sensory imagery, characterization, and stylistic cohesion. (Bland, 2023)
  4. *Discourse Synthesis*: Bouzar Fodil-Cherif (2021) describes writing as a method of purposeful selection and organization of expressions. Exposure to texts teaches writers the processes of organizing, selecting, and connecting relevant information, which are core sub-processes in integrated writing tasks.
  5. *Internalizing Grammar and Vocabulary*: Literature is identified as an authentic field where grammar rules and vocabulary can be observed "in use" rather than in isolation (Krashen, 1982). Extensive reading provides the comprehensible input necessary to acquire advanced skills in composition and improves grammatical accuracy through a focus on meaning rather than explicit rule-teaching.
  6. *Stimulating Imagination*: Bland (2023) and Earnshaw (2007) state that literature acts as a stimulator for learners' original thinking; creativity does not happen in a vacuum but is underpinned by the ideas and stories found in texts. By reading fiction, students explore the world of imaginary scenes and dilemmas, which provides the underpinning ideas for their original creative work (Adam & Babiker, 2015).
  7. *Overcoming Anxiety*: Integrating short stories into the curriculum is shown to be more motivating and enjoyable for students than traditional textbooks (Quang, 2023). Creative writing based on literature has been found to increase self-

confidence and self-esteem, helping learners overcome the worries and anxiety often associated with the writing process (Bouzar Fodil-Cherif, 2021, Quang, 2023). Aziz & Abdul (2022) noted that students' positive attitudes and motivation levels increased consistently from session to session when short stories were integrated into their learning

### **Discussion**

Despite the recognized value of literature in writing development, practical constraints within educational contexts must also be considered. Writing classrooms are often characterized by limited instructional time and dense curricula, leaving little room for extensive reading activities or the integration of longer literary works (Hirvela, 2004, Grabe & Zhang, 2016). This constraint necessitates the selection of literary materials that are both pedagogically effective and feasible within classroom conditions.

In this regard, short stories emerge as a particularly suitable form of literary input for writing instruction. Due to their brevity, structural completeness, and rich narrative content, short stories provide learners with accessible yet meaningful exposure to language and storytelling techniques. They allow students to engage with complete narratives within a limited timeframe, while still offering opportunities to observe and internalize key elements of effective writing, such as plot development, characterization, and stylistic expression. Consequently, short stories represent an optimal balance between depth and practicality, making them especially valuable for integration into creative writing classrooms.

Taken together, these theoretical and contemporary empirical perspectives confirm that reading – particularly literary reading – plays a foundational role in the development of writing ability, while writing practice refines this competence. Within this framework, short stories stand out as a pedagogically efficient and theoretically grounded resource for

enhancing creative writing, especially in  
contexts where time and instructional

constraints must be carefully and efficiently  
managed.

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