

## INTEGRATING SHORT STORIES IN ENGLISH CLASSES FOR INDONESIAN STUDENTS: A CRITICAL REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

The integration of short stories in English language teaching has emerged as a compelling approach, offering multifaceted benefits for Indonesian students. While previous studies have explored the use of short stories in EFL contexts, this review synthesizes findings to offer actionable strategies tailored to Indonesian classrooms. Drawing on a systematic review of 15 studies from 2020 to 2024 using PRISMA methodology, this research examines the benefits, challenges, and strategies associated with using short stories in English language teaching. The findings highlight that short stories effectively enhance reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and critical thinking through strategies such as think-pair-share, collaborative learning, and the 3-2-1 reading comprehension method. These approaches foster active engagement and align well with Indonesia's collectivist culture and educational needs. However, key challenges persist, including students' low interest in reading, limited teaching resources, and inadequate teacher training. In order to address these issues, this review emphasizes the importance of increasing support for teacher development and resource accessibility. By offering practical insights and culturally relevant strategies, this study contributes to the growing discourse on literature-based teaching and its potential to transform EFL education in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** *Short Stories, Critical Review, and English Classes.*

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### INTRODUCTION

The integration of literary texts, especially short stories, into English language teaching has proven to be an effective pedagogical approach. Short stories, with their concise narratives and rich linguistic features, provide a valuable resource for improving reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and critical thinking (Mansoor et al., 2023). Furthermore, Şentürk & Kahraman (2020) stated that short stories can boost the students' learning on grammar.

In Indonesia, short stories have already been used for English language education by employing it in the textbook. It is widely used for enhancing students' vocabularies (Rahmawati, 2020; Sembiring, 2022), reading comprehension (Franchisca, 2021), and listening skills (Rahmawati & Rakhmawati, 2022). Several studies conducted about the use of short story in teaching English in Indonesia. It is found that short story is effective for grammar learning (Khudriyah et al., 2024),

improve vocabulary achievement (Irmawati et al., 2024; Putri & Megawati, 2024; Rahmawati, 2020), improve listening skill (Yunita & Machdarifah, 2019), and effective for reading skill (Jamilah & Sutikno, 2024). Moreover, incorporating literary works in the English language curriculum is a creative way to meet the needs of modern education. Additionally, including literary texts into secondary school English language instruction has the potential to promote the growth of important language proficiency. Furthermore, including literature into language lessons allows students to develop a strong connection with the language and its cultural quirks while also acting as a genuine and inspiring tool (Rohmana, 2023).

However, due to a lack of planning, unclear objectives, and poorly made materials, many Indonesian EFL teachers are reluctant to use short stories in the classroom. This prevents the stories from being implemented effectively (Pardede, 2021). Moreover, short stories in Indonesian classroom are underutilized as they typically feature only one learning indicator per story, restricts their educational potential and failing to fully convey the moral, social, cultural and religious values intended for student comprehension and character development (Saragih et al., 2022). Hima and Gusdian (2018) argues that the lack of teachers' skill in order to integrate short stories effectively making the integration of short stories in English education in Indonesia is limited.

Furthermore, the position of literature is considered less important by teachers in Indonesia since the society is currently focused to industrialized society (Izza et al., 2024). This is due to several problems in implementing literature in high school such as the difficulty of attracting students' interest, lack of teachers' skills in integrating it, and limited school support (Yuliani, 2024). It is also stated that the education of literature problem is because of the inconsistency between the concept and implementation of literature education (Febriani et al., 2023). In order to solve this problematic, young people with the communication skills in verbal and non-verbal, have creativity, critical thinking, able to communicate and collaboration, and also innovative (Misriani et al., 2022).

Short story is potential to be used as a source material for students but it is underused since only using one learning indicator per story. While the use of short story in EFL situations has been studied in the past, but this study summarizes research to provide practical tips for Indonesian classrooms. Therefore, the objective of this research is to investigate the challenges of integrating short stories, strategies for using short stories in English classes, and benefits of using short stories in English classes. Thus, to the research questions as follows:

- a. What are the challenges encountered by both students and teachers of using short stories for English classes?
- b. What are the strategies for using short stories in English classes?
- c. What are the benefits of using short stories in English classes?

Literature refers to written or spoken works that hold artistic or intellectual significance. Regardless of whether they are fictional or non-fictional, all literary works are rooted in language. These texts, regardless of their length, are created using one of many language systems. As a result, literature can be understood as a system of symbolic signs, independent of specific variable meanings (Sutrisno et al., 2023; Rakhmyta et al., 2024). This unique quality gives literature a vital role in

educating individuals on how to perceive the world and understand its place within it. It can help students grasp complex concepts and phenomena (Kheladi, 2019). Within the reading-as-engagement framework, literary texts can serve as valuable educational tools in the classroom, fostering positive shifts in students' perspectives (Makri et al., 2021; Ansari et al., 2023).

Literary works are beneficial for English learning in EFL nations in a variety of ways. It is thought that using literary works as real resources improved students' critical thinking, artistic appreciation, and communication abilities in English lessons (Qassem, 2020). The four language abilities and language components, particularly grammar and vocabulary, may also be taught via literary works. They can also assist pupils develop their imagination and creativity and increase their awareness of different cultures. Moreover, one of the best ways to improve students' language proficiency is to incorporate literary texts in the teaching and learning process (Manurung et al., 2024). Therefore, those literary texts are frequently found in ELT textbooks in the country where EFL is taught.

Teachers are looking for contemporary methods that help students learn the English language. One method that may help them accomplish this goal is through short stories, which broadens students' perspectives and thinking by delving into stories and their meanings. Additionally, it tempers the literary aspect of studying other cultures (Kliger, 2021). Not only that, literature can also explain moral principles that might serve as educational resources for readers. This statement highlights the ethical and social message that can be conveyed through the dialogue between characters in literary works. For example, when the younger character obeys and respects the older character, the older character frequently uses a clever or beautiful phrase in their discourse. This undoubtedly demonstrates the social morality while engaging with an elderly or respected person in real life (Feinberg & Willer, 2019). Barzani et al. (2020) think that short stories can trigger ESL learners' motivation. Therefore, short stories not only improve English skills but also engage learners with various cultures and literatures broadens their perspectives on both their own culture and that of others. This exposure creates opportunities for deeper understanding, fosters intercultural dialogue, and promotes meaningful engagement with the cultural and literary traditions of different societies (Al-Ajmi, 2022).

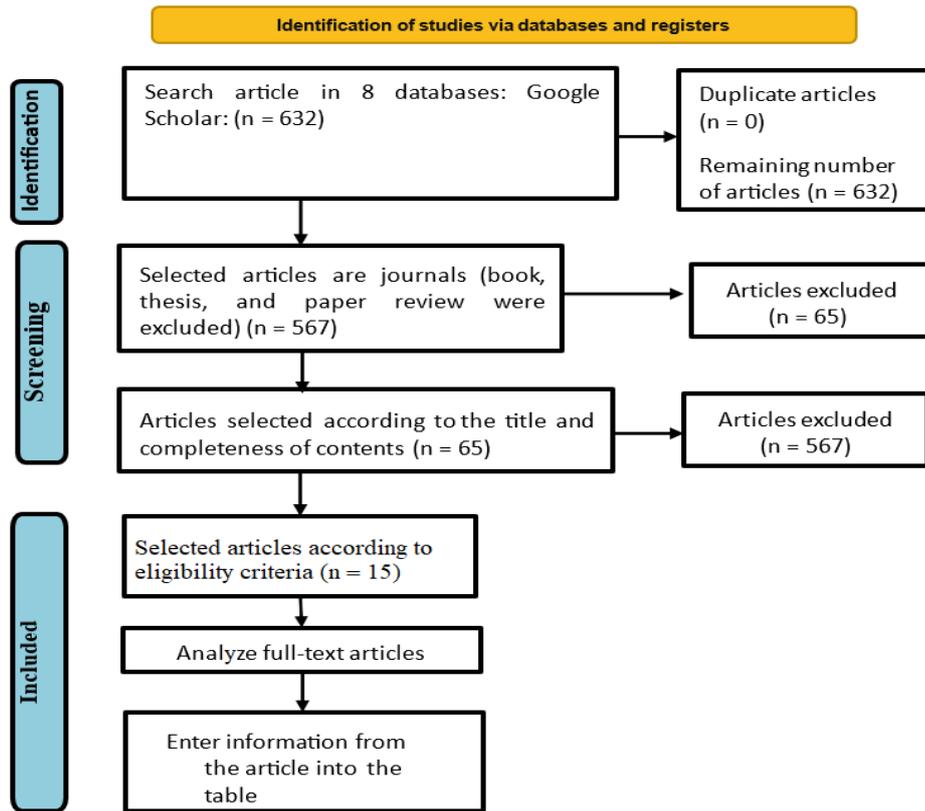
There are several benefits of using literature in language learning. Through utilizing it, students may improve their speaking, listening, writing, and reading abilities. One benefit of using short stories is their adaptability to various age groups, educational settings, and language competence levels (Mardiningrum et al., 2024). Because short stories are brief, they simplify the reading assignment for both students and teachers. Including short stories in the curriculum can help EFL students become more well-rounded persons and professionals (Mardiningrum & Adriyanti, 2023). Additionally, short stories can be used in a variety of educational situations, such as morning, afternoon, or evening classes, with students of different skill levels, from novice to expert, and across different age groups, from infants to adults (Pardede, 2021). While plays, poetry, and dramatic performances help students improve their speaking and listening skills, literary works like novels and short stories encourage pupils to read and write (Arafah et al., 2021). Literature's

motivating value, ability to foster cultural awareness, ability to elicit human reactions, and encouragement of language acquisition through real materials are all benefits of integrating it into language instruction.

English teachers frequently use short stories to gauge their students' level of English proficiency, but it is undeniable that many students still struggle with reading; for instance, due to a strong sense of laziness, a lack of interest in reading, and trouble pronouncing words correctly; many students still struggle to understand the text; and other issues are brought on by teachers who lack the instructional strategies or strategies necessary to help students improve their reading abilities (Roy et al., 2024). In line with this, Jeni (2020) argues that one of the teacher's most important responsibilities is to choose stories. Because short stories come in a wide range of lengths, pick one that is manageable during class time. Students can become more comfortable understanding when brief stories are told in plain terms. Additionally, it is beneficial and appropriate for the student to improve their reading comprehension since it offers a captivating and practical narrative, a variety of fascinating subjects, and an engaging illustration that can pique the student's interest. This is because student's enthusiasm for reading is crucial to raising their academic performance because uninterested kids won't be motivated to read. Junior high school pupils' reluctance to read and their desire to succeed in English provide a challenge. Their goal is to get better at English. However, many are unwilling to read in English. The most important thing is to learn a language, especially English, which is considered a world language and its use can help us adjust and communicate with others when we move from one nation to another (Novasyari & Fauziah, 2023). Selecting a short story for instruction is essential because it allows the teacher to assess each student's reading proficiency and determine whether the story inspires a sense of accomplishment and self-worth (Febriana et al., 2022). Therefore, it is important for teachers to know what kinds of short stories are suitable for their pupils and how to utilize them to engage and captivate them before including them into their lesson plans.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

Researcher performed a systematic review following the *Preffered Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses* (PRISMA) methodology by evaluating the article through article identification, screening, and the final step is article inclusion (Page et al., 2021). A total of 632 related articles were discovered while searching articles from 2020 to 2024. After careful consideration, researchers selected 15 publications to review.



**Figure 1 Identification of Studies Via Databases and Registers**

The process of identification is the initial article downloaded from Google Scholar. Search results get 632 articles from several keywords entered and those are “short stories”, “Indonesian”, and “classes”. Researcher, during the browsing process, downloaded articles from the period 2020 to the year 2024. Selecting a journal was the first step in the screening procedure, after which books, articles, and review volumes were disqualified. Next, choose the most pertinent articles using title research: the author and title filter are carefully chosen depending on the content study's appropriateness. Then, the relevant article is filtered by year and criteria. The criteria of the article is should be conducted for elementary school, junior high school and senior high school. Reports until step screening produced 15 of the most pertinent articles with title research, as the selected papers are considered the most relevant based on their focus on short stories in EFL contexts, research setting, and alignment with the research objectives.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

### **Finding**

This chapter presents the results of a systematic literature review analyzing the integration of short stories in English classes for Indonesian students. Utilizing the PRISMA methodology, 15 studies published between 2020 and 2024 were examined to identify key themes, challenges, and strategies in implementing short stories as an instructional tool. The findings highlight that short stories contribute

significantly to language learning by enhancing students' reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and overall engagement with the English language. Additionally, their use fosters critical thinking and cultural awareness, making them a valuable pedagogical resource in EFL classrooms.

Despite these benefits, challenges persist in effectively integrating short stories into English teaching. Teachers and students encounter obstacles such as difficulty in selecting appropriate texts, limited teaching materials, and students' low motivation to read (Oktaviana et al., 2022). There is a report that short stories included in textbooks often provide limited linguistic and cognitive engagement, reducing their potential impact on language proficiency (Enung & Dania, 2024). Additionally, teachers' lack of formal training in utilizing literary texts effectively further hinders successful implementation. Addressing these challenges requires structured strategies that align with students' learning needs and Indonesia's educational context.

Beyond the pedagogical and linguistic advantages, the role of short stories extends to shaping students' attitudes toward literature and language learning. Exposure to literary texts allows learners to explore different perspectives, develop empathy, and strengthen their ability to analyze texts critically (Oktaviana et al., 2022; Roy et al., 2024). However, without proper scaffolding, students may struggle to extract meaning from complex narratives, leading to disengagement. Studies suggest that when teachers employ interactive approaches, such as guided discussions and role-playing, students exhibit a more profound appreciation for literature and improved confidence in using English (Putri & Megawati, 2024; Zainnurahman & Djabir, 2022). Therefore, fostering a literature-friendly learning environment and equipping educators with the necessary resources and training are crucial steps toward optimizing the use of short stories in Indonesian EFL classrooms.

Moreover, the successful integration of short stories depends not only on instructional strategies but also on institutional support and curriculum design (Bunayya et al., 2023). Schools that incorporate literature-based learning into their English programs tend to report higher student engagement and improved literacy outcomes (Nisa et al., 2023; Hayati et al., 2024; Lawitang et al., 2022; Nasyirah et al., 2023; Irmawati et al., 2024; Lomi et al., 2024). Additionally, adapting short story selections to match students' linguistic proficiency and cultural backgrounds can make lessons more relatable and meaningful (Lomi et al., 2024). By addressing these factors, educators can create a more inclusive and effective learning experience, ensuring that short stories serve as a bridge to language mastery rather than a barrier to comprehension.

The results of the analysis of 632 articles taken from Google Scholar have been analyzed using the PRISMA method through various stages and the results of article screening, 15 articles were obtained to be reviewed in detail. The 15 articles are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Article Data Reviewed**

No.	Name	Method	Findings
Challenges of Integrating Short Stories in English Classes			

1.	Aplonia Nelci Ke Lomi, Madar Aleksius, Meylisa Yuliasuti Sahan, 2024	Mixed-method. The data was collected through pre-test and post-test and semi-structured interviews with the English teacher.	There is a significant 20% improvement in vocabulary knowledge in using short stories and teachers reported challenges in integrating cultural values.
2.	Gina Oktaviana, Sumardi, Endang Setyaningsih, 2022	Qualitative. Data collection gathered through semi-structured interviews with three English teacher educators	It is found that there are three challenges encountered by English teachers in integrating short stories into English language learning such as finding the “right” short stories, students’ low interest in reading, and limited facilities and time to execute the planned activity.
3.	Aiswarya Roy, Citra Prasiska Puspita Tohamba, Muflihun, Almuthmainnah, 2024	Qualitative. Data collection by semi-structured interview to five students	There are several difficulties students have in reading short stories: understand the word or vocabulary, discourse, and lack of main idea comprehension, and students efforts to overcome reading difficulties.
<b>Strategies for Using Short Stories in English Classes</b>			
4.	Zainurrahman, Sriyani Djabir, 2020	Classroom Action Research. The data collected through interviews, and pre-intervention, and post-intervention test	The 3-2-1 reading comprehension strategy has boosted the students’ reading comprehension and students positively appreciated the use of this strategy.
5.	Islah Hayati Ritonga, Yulia Arfanti, 2024	Quantitative with pseudo-experimental approach. The data collected through test	There is an influence of scientific approach on students’ ability to write short stories in class and there is a difference in students’ ability to write short stories with learning using scientific approach.
6.	Yoseph Nero Jack Enung, Rahma Dania, 2024	Quantitative using pre-experimental and using one group pre-test and post-test design.	The short stories with hidden pictures effective are effective in improving students’ vocabulary mastery.
7.	Muhammad Bunayya Ulul Azmi, Mohammad Aufal Maram, Wahyu Indah Mala Rohmana, 2023	Qualitative. The data collected through the interview method.	The school teaching program had used some kinds of literature in teaching and learning activities.
8.	Ilma Rahim, Abdul Azis, Ita Rosvita, Sri Asrawati Paramita, 2024	Quantitative – Quasi-experimental Studies. Data collected from the result of listening test.	The use of TTPS improved students’ listening comprehension of short story texts.

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9.	Ida Khudriyah, Fitri Budi Suryanti, Ahdi Riyono, 2024	Mixed method. The data collected through questionnaire and observation.	Incorporating collaborative learning into classroom can boost students' interest and motivation while also helping them write better short stories.
<b>Benefits of Using Short Stories in English Classes</b>			
10.	May Lucyana Kartono Putri, Fika Megawati, 2024	Quantitative with correlation method. The data collected through questionnaires and test.	There was no significant relationship between vocabulary mastery and liking short stories of 7 <sup>th</sup> grade students of SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Tulangan.
11.	Afifatu Khoirun Nisa', Slamet Asari, Ulfatul Ma'rifah, 2023	Quantitative – Correlation method. Data were collected from online questionnaires and test.	Students' reading interest on short story had a positive and significant correlation to students' translation ability.
12.	Nida Hayati, Riandi, Ari Fajria Novari, 2024	Quantitative descriptive. Data were collected through pre-test and post-test.	There is a significant increase in the reading comprehension of students who learn using short stories compared to students who use the comic method.
13.	Nabila Myrrha Rahmawati, 2020	Qualitative descriptive with library research approach. The object of study is ten short stories.	Short stories given many positive impacts on student's knowledge in the language field and it is considered effective to teach language skills.
14.	Ummul Nasirah, Asfah Rahman, Muhammad Basri Wello, 2023	Quantitative using quasi-experimental design with pretest-posttest control group.	Short stories can be a valuable resource for vocabulary instruction in second grade students.
15.	Irmawati, Titin Rahmiatin, & Nur Risky Alfiany. 2024	Classroom Action Research. The data collected through observation and vocabulary test.	Students' achievement after the study conducted was 90.62% proved that it achieved classical achievement. Percentage of teacher's and student's activity also achieved 800% in the second cycle

## Discussion

According to the articles above, there are challenges that are faced by both teachers and students when integrating short stories in English Classes. These challenges occur due to the difficulty in finding suitable short stories, lack of enthusiasm from students, resources in textbooks, and not have much time and facilities and also the vocabulary challenges slow students' progress in analyzing the text (Oktaviana et al., 2022; Lomi et al., 2024; Irmawati et al., 2024). Students' interest in literature has decreased since they do not understand the importance of literature in developing critical thinking although some of them enjoy writing activities like producing poetry and short stories (Izza et al., 2024).

Oktaviana et al. (2022) conducted research using semi-structured interviews with three English teacher educators. In this study, the researcher tries to examine

the integration of short stories in English language teaching. One of the teachers story from Mona, not a real name, who used to read short stories, said that the short stories can be implemented in the English classes for learning vocabulary by looking for difficult words in the short stories since it is the learner inhibitor if student not able to know the meaning of the vocabulary and the solution of this is to utilize the short story by reading and interpreting the context of the story. Another teacher, Hanna, is also has the same argument with Mona about short stories that can be utilized to improve vocabulary. However, not only that, short stories can also be used to learn grammar rules and moral values. The last teacher with pseudonym Kenny argues that there are several obstacles in the use of short stories and, aside of what already mentioned by Monna and Hanna, those are unfamiliar idioms and complicated grammar. He overcome this by note every unfamiliar meaning and translate it by using dictionary. Moreover, about the challenges, it is mentioned that the short stories they choose are classic short stories like British 70s and 80s, Hemmingway's, and Indonesian folk tales since it is suitable for students' proficiency level. Another challenge is that student is that reading is not a passion for most learners and this make their interest in reading short stories become low. The implementation of role-playing activity is carried out to make them not bored. The last is the limitary of time and facilities to realize the activity that is already planned due to inadequate room space.

One of the studies conducted in South Amarasari has objective to analyze the challenges in incorporating traditional short stories on English classes (Lomi et al., 2024). It is found that teachers encounter the major issue in which is the lack of resources. Particularly, when it comes to teaching resources, there is a need for more stable internet connectivity and more continuous availability to electricity. Another challenge is depending just on school-provided textbooks. Teachers usually rely on the basic resources and standard textbooks that are accessible due to resource limitations, which may not provide contextual information or local cultural insights. This restriction may make it more difficult for the curriculum to include pertinent, culturally rich topics.

(Panjaitan et al., 2024) stated that A person's reading proficiency is determined by his or her reading habits and vocabulary. One of the studies shows that there is a significant improve in students' vocabulary when they got exposed to short stories than those who not, making short stories is a good resource for vocabulary instruction (Nasyirah, Rahman and Wello, 2023). Moreover, another study has shown that the improvement of vocabulary knowledge among eight-grade students was 20% and 90.62% for their vocabulary achievement (Lomi et al., 2024; Irmawati et al., 2024). It is also found that students' interest in reading short story had a positive and significant correlation to their competence in translating with rxy value of  $0.969 > 0.349$  (rtable value) at the level of significance 0.05 (Nisa et al., 2023). Meanwhile, the result of Putri and Megawati's (2024) research show that there is no correlation in students' vocabulary mastery and their short stories preferences. Rahmawati (2020) states that, in the language field, many positive impacts are given by short stories because the short story's content gives students the chance to experiment with different terms that are undoubtedly simple to

comprehend, it has been regarded as an effective literary work to teach language skills.

Several strategies related to the use of short stories in English classes are used. Zainurrahman and Djabir (2020) using the 3-2-1 strategy as a solution for the issue of reading comprehension. Ritonga and Arfanti (2024) using scientific approach with the contextual Learning Teaching for writing short stories. Enung and Dania (2024) using hidden pictures to enhance the achievement of seventh grades' vocabulary. Azmi et al. (2023) discuss about various strategies in teaching literature. Rahim et al. (2024) implementing the think-pair-share strategy in listening short story.

In order to overcome the reading comprehension issue for better understanding in short story, Zainurrahman and Djabir (2020) conducted a study using 3-2-1 strategy as an effort to improve this skill. It is found that this strategy increases students' comprehension in reading that makes this strategy can be a choice for teacher. However, it is also stated that this suitable only for short text, the longer text may need 5-4-3 strategy. Another strategy conducted by Enung and Dania (2024) related to the integrating short story in English classes is using hidden pictures as a solution to the students who have limited vocabulary since it is found that this strategy is effective in improving their mastery in vocabulary. For listening skill, Rahim et al. (2024) utilize think-pair-share cooperative learning method to 11<sup>th</sup> students. Researchers found that this strategy enhance their comprehension in listening short story texts according to their mean score 74.36 compared to the experimental class 58.46. As for another study, it is found that teachers in SMA Panjura Malang asks students to do the story telling, discover the wisdom, quotes, and lesson from short stories to develop their reading and speaking skills, and improve their literacy awareness (Azmi et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, for productive skills, Ritonga and Arfanti (2024) employs scientific learning strategy approach and contextual learning teaching to understand which strategy is effective for their writing skill in short stories. It is found that students' ability to write short stories is influenced by scientific approach according to scientific approach t-test in the pre-test and post-test ( $t_{count} 2.54 > t_{table} 1.99$ ) and the results of scientific approach and learning with CTL is different in accordance to the tests' outcome ( $t_{count} 2.03 > t_{table} 1.99$ ). Azmi et al (2023) also discover that the teachers in SMA Panjura Malang asks their students to do the story telling of short stories to enhance their speaking skill. Another strategy to improve students' grammar for writing short story is through incorporating collaborative learning as there is a 48% improvement in students' works (Khudriyah et al., 2024).

Out of all those strategies, Think-Pair-Share and Collaborative Learning are particularly noteworthy in Indonesian classrooms, where it might be difficult for students to participate actively. Both approaches place a strong emphasis on teamwork, which fits in nicely with Indonesia's collectivist culture. TPS is also adaptable and encourages engagement, which makes it appropriate for a range of school situations. The emphasis on grammar and collaboration in collaborative learning successfully addresses foundational language abilities. Additionally, both approaches need very little extra resources, which is beneficial in environments with restricted resources.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The use of short stories in Indonesian EFL classrooms offers a creative and effective way to enhance students' language proficiency while fostering critical thinking, cultural understanding, and moral awareness. Strategies have shown significant success in improving listening, writing, and reading skills. These approaches actively engage students in the learning process and provide a platform to connect language learning with cultural and moral themes, making it more meaningful and relevant to their experiences.

However, the full potential of this approach is limited by challenges such as low student interest in reading, limited resources, and insufficient teacher training. This study highlights the importance of tailored strategies for the Indonesian context, where collaborative and interactive methods align well with cultural values and resource constraints. By addressing these barriers, the findings underscore the potential of literature-based teaching to enrich EFL education, providing practical solutions to integrate language, culture, and creativity in a holistic way. Therefore, it is suggested that for policymakers to allocate more funds for teacher training and resource enhancement and for educators can use the think-pair-share and collaborative learning effectively since both of them are suitable in Indonesian contexts.

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