

## **HARNESS AND REIGNITE THE EFFECT OF READING SHORT STORIES ON ENHANCING STUDENTS' VOCABULARY ACQUISITION IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE**

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Vocabulary is a prominent area in learning a second language. Certificate-level students studying English as a Second Language in the Housekeeping sector (034 Group) of SLITHM, Colombo Campus, should be successful in improving their English and becoming effective interlocutors. To this end, various strategies were employed to increase students' knowledge of vocabulary related to housekeeping discipline. Among these strategies, extensive reading of authentic materials by students has been found to be highly effective. Therefore, the current study aims to examine the effect of reading short stories in improving students' vocabulary acquisition. In light of the stated purpose, it was hypothesized that assigning students to read short stories related to Hospitality English would help them improve their vocabulary more than teaching vocabulary in the traditional way. To prove or refute the proposed hypothesis, a quasi-experimental study was conducted in which 40 students were randomly selected and divided into two groups of 20 each. One is experimental and the other is control. Both groups of students were given a pre-test to check their vocabulary knowledge. After the pretest phase, the experimental group was asked to read three short stories within 3 weeks. However, the control group used the conventional method. The students relied solely on the English lecturer's instructions. Eventually, they got post-tested. From the data analysis, it was found that reading short stories significantly improved students' vocabulary acquisition. Short stories have entertainment value in the learning process. Thus, it was indicated that the participants were very much impressed with the short story and they successfully recalled most of the words used in the short story context. It helped students to know more about words' breadth and depth. Moreover, short stories provided motivation and it was proved that students acquire more when they were highly motivated. This supported the alternative hypothesis and rejected the null hypothesis.

**Keywords:** Acquisition, Certificate Level Students, Reading, Short Stories, Vocabulary

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