| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Investigating the Impact of Short Story Use on Students' Speaking Skill Development: A Case Study of Idriss I High School

Kanina Ilham[1] ✉ and Hind Brigui[2]

[1]Phd Candidate, Literature, Arts and Pedagogical Engineering Research Laboratory, English Department, Faculty of Language, Letters, and Arts/ Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra, Morocco
[2]Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics and TEFL, English Department, Faculty of Languages, Letters, and Arts/ Ibn Rofail University, Kenitra, Morocco.
Corresponding Author: Kanina Ilham, **E-mail**: ilham.kanina2@uit.ac.ma

| **ABSTRACT**

This study focuses on the use of short stories to enhance Moroccan public high school students' speaking skills. Its objective is to investigate the impact of utilizing short stories to teach English in fostering learners' speaking abilities. In order to attain this objective, we conducted an experiment in which we used a pretest-posttest design on 40 high school students who were divided into two groups. The selection of the first group (Group1), composed of 20 students, and the selection of the second group (Group2) composed of 20 students. The first group taught speaking utilizing short stories, whilst the second group taught speaking using the traditional way of their English classes. The study lasted 3 weeks and included two sessions per week from March to April 2023. The results of the study showed that the use of short stories had a very important impact on the enhancement of the student's speaking ability. As a result, the employment of short stories in teaching speaking was praised for helping students develop their communication performance.

1. Introduction

People around the world frequently use English as the primary lingua franca, or common language, to communicate between individuals who do not share a similar language. Despite the fact that there are not a large number of people who speak English, It is a predominant language and has a sweeping impact all over the planet. Over 60 nations recognize it as the official language and 20 nations have appointed it as their primary language. Additionally, it is utilized as the working language in 85% of worldwide associations (Crystal, 1991, p.360). Only 375 million people, according to Graddol(1997), speak English as their first language. Nonetheless, 375 million speakers and more utilize it as a second language (ESL) and more than 750 million as a foreign language (EFL). Moreover, an extraordinary number of individuals are motivated to learn it in order to communicate with it because of its use as the fundamental entryway to get a good job opportunity, particularly in international companies. The ability to speak English fluently has grown in importance as a result of the language's leading position in international communication. Speaking is the main ability to master among the four skills. Richard and Renadya (2002) affirmed: 'A large percentage of the world's language learners study English to develop proficiency in speaking' (p. 201). Bygate (1987: 6) states, 'Speaking is the vehicle of social solidarity, of the social making of professional achievement and of business'. Frequently, most people are judged through their way of speaking. Also, learners believe that being fluent and having the ability to communicate using the language with others is more significant than the capability to write or read.

According to Burnkart (1998), they assert that one of the most crucial language skills that individuals must control is speaking, and they measure learning advancement according to their mastery of speaking skills. In agreement with this, Ur (1996), '...of all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), speaking seems intuitively the most important:"... of all the four skills (listening speaking reading and writing), speaking seems intuitively the most important: people who know the language are referred to as "speakers" of that language as if speaking included all other kinds of knowing; many if not most foreign language learners are primarily interested in learning to speak' (p. 120).

Speaking is considered 'the most complex and difficult skill to master' (Hinkel, 2005, p. 485) for many EFL students despite its importance. As per Ur (1996), there are four principal issues that hinder learners from communicating using a foreign language inside the classroom: shyness, limited knowledge of the subject or having nothing to say low or unequal participation, and the use of the mother tongue. Bowman et al. (1989) confirm that students' difficulty with speaking mastery is because of shyness, as students are asked by the teacher to express themselves in front of their classmates, which may cause stress and anxiety in an oral activity. As far as the impact of first language use, Pastry specialists and Westrup (2003) point out that hindrances to learning can happen if learners intentionally or unconsciously move the social principles from their native language to the learned language.

In light of the current researcher's personal observation, the students in Idriss I High School experienced those four obstacles. The fear of making a mistake and being made fun of by classmates scares many of them. As a result, they frequently avoided participating in speaking practices. Additionally, the students were not exposed to English adequately to enable them to understand and respond appropriately and productively. Besides, the teacher explains the instructions and translates some words in the Moroccan dialect.

To defeat these hindrances, more successful learning and instructing procedures, exercises, and conditions that are attractive and challenging need to be worked with. To fulfil that need, a few researchers recommended utilizing short stories to promote and ease the learning of speaking skills. Brewster and Ellis (1991, pp. 1-2) declared that 'as stories are motivating and fun, they can help students develop positive attitudes towards the foreign language and enrich their learning experiences'. Likewise, Pardede (2011) claims, 'Short story can also be a powerful and motivating source for teaching both speaking and listening. Oral reading, dramatization, improvisation, role-playing, reenactment, and discussion are some effective learning activities which center on a short story. EFL classes can be used to enhance these two skills. Asking students to read stories aloud can develop their speaking as well as listening skills. Moreover, it also leads to improving pronunciation' (p. 22). Additionally, there are short stories on many topics and many genres learners may find. They may serve as excellent discussion materials, and the language can be reused and used by students in their oral interactions. Therefore, using short stories has a significant impact on the speaking ability. Through reading, students improve their fluency and speaking accuracy. According to Davies and Pearse (2000), the primary objective of English Language instruction is to prepare learners with the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in English.

According to the information above, this paper is designed to research the impact of utilizing a short story to boost "Speaking skills" at Idriss I high school, Kenitra. It was carried out in response to the following inquiry: are short stories useful to enhance students' "speaking skills?"

2. Literature Review
2.1 Short-Story
According to Poe, a short story is ' a narrative that can be read at one sitting off from one-half hour to two hours, and that is limited to a certain unique or single effect', to which every detail is subordinate' (Abrams 1970, p. 158). It is considered the most expedient literary form to use in English classes. Because it is brief, a short story mostly focuses on one plot and a few characters and doesn't include a detailed description of the setting. Therefore, following the storyline work is easier for students.

The short story is considered the best reading material for spoken English. Learners may grasp sentences, phrases and idioms used in daily communication in short stories because they are all based on real life situations and retell it. (Peacock, 1997) "A text is usually regarded as authentic if it is not written for teaching purposes but for real-life communicative purposes, where the writer has a certain message to pass on to the reader. As such, an authentic text is one that possesses an intrinsically communicative quality" (Lee, 1995). Therefore, using authentic and original text has a favorable impact on learning the target language through developing oral and communicative competence. It is, in fact, real life language generated by natives of the learner language in real situations in order to pursue communicative outcomes;

2.2 Speaking
'Speaking is utterances or speech with the purpose of having the intention to be recognized by speaker and receiver processes the statements in order to recognize their intentions' (Gert and Hans, 2008, p. 207 in Efrizal, 2012). According to the communicative point of view (Harmer, 2001), there are different aspects of speaking, which include two major categories – accuracy, which has to

do with the appropriate use of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary during controlled and guided practice activities, and, fluency 'the ability to keep going when speaking spontaneously'. Bygate (1987: 6) states, "Speaking is the vehicle of social solidarity, of the social making of professional achievement and of business". Frequently, most people are judged through their way of speaking. Using the language is the best method to learn any language, including English. To speak is not simply producing some sounds or words in their appropriate pronunciation. A good speaker is someone who is able to convey what he has in his mind in a good and clear way. "The ability to speak fluently presupposes not only knowledge of language features but also the ability to process information and language 'on the spot'" (Harmer, 2001: 269). There are some main things that can help you be more fluent and brave in speaking. These things are self-confidence, fluency and accuracy, finding the appropriate words, grabbing your audience's attention and keeping them interested and sounding natural. Having Knowledge about the language and knowing the language are essential elements for effective communication.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that speaking is a productive skill. It is the ability to express feelings and exchange ideas through using verbal language. Vocabulary building, appropriateness, fluency and accuracy are some aspects involved in speaking, and all of the aspects above have to be mastered by learners. Speaking is a very important skill to collect information from others who speak with us. Everyone has to concentrate and be attentive to the details of language because they need to choose the most suitable words and also the correct grammar to express meaning accurately and truthfully because it is an ability that is also related to culture. In order to overcome problems in speaking and maintain a healthy continuum conversation in the target language, reading is the most convenient skill to resort to.

3. Methodology
3.1 Research Question
The purpose of this study is to inquiry the following question:
Does Short story have an important impact on enhancing learners' speaking skills?

3.2 Participants
The number of participants in this inquiry was 40 1st year baccalaureate students of the science stream of Idriss I high school, Kenitra, Morocco. We used a pretest and posttest technique in this study. The first group (Group 1) was composed of 20 students, and the second group (Group 2) was composed of 20 students. The first group taught speaking utilizing short stories, whilst the second group taught speaking using the traditional way of their English classes. The study lasted 3 weeks and included two 50-minute sessions per week from March to April 2023.

3.3 Materials and Methods
Both groups were given the same materials and environment in this experiment; the only difference is that we gave short stories to Group 1 to learn from, but we used the activities from the textbook given by the ministry to Group 2, which is the regular way of how they learn speaking. The short stories were selected and downloaded from several e-resources. In order to choose the story, we set some criteria. First, the length of the story should be short enough to deal with during the course hours. Second, the vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure used in the story should be suitable to the students' level. Finally, the story should have a moral or a message to help keep the students interested. "Eleven" by Sandra Cisneros and "Thank You Ma'am" by Langston Hughes are the chosen stories. The teacher devoted three sessions to each story. During the first session, the teacher asked the students to read the story and underline words that they found difficult to understand or to pronounce. Then, students form small groups and discuss the difficult words; they also practice pronunciation of the new vocabulary. Meanwhile, the teacher moves around, notes down the observations, and helps students if they ask for it. In the second session, the teacher asked the students to set the outline and summarise the story. In the next session, the teacher asked four to five students, one after another, to narrate the story in front of their classmates. At the end of the session, students start a discussion about the topic, characters, the plot and the moral of the story. (The teacher devoted 3 sessions for each story)

3.4 Data Collection
A test technique containing a pretest and a posttest was used to collect data. We administered a pretest for both groups before taking any procedure and a post test after the 3 weeks experiment. Through observation during the speaking lessons, the teacher scored the students' performance in a scoring rubric before and after the use of short stories. The rubric contains five elements: Vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency.

3.5 Data Analysis
An analysis of the students' scores was conducted. The research goal was to measure the gains of students in speaking skills. Students' scores were examined using descriptive statistics.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Data Description

Prior to the experiment, a pretest was conducted to evaluate the students' primary speaking abilities. The data in this section are the results from the pre-test given to Group 1 and Group 2.

Chart 1: Descriptive statistic of Group1 and Group2 Pre-test Scores

Groups	N° of participants	Sum	Mean score	Minimum score	Maximum score
Group1	20	112	22.5	19	28
Group2	20	115	23	18	29.7
Y			22.75	18.5	28.85

The initial ability for both groups was approximately the same according to the pretest result in **Chart 1**.

Chart 2: Group 1 scores: Pre-test and Post-Test.

Group1	Pre-test	Post-test	Gains
Sum	112	118	
Mean score	22.5	23.6	1.1
Minimum score	19	19	0
Maximum score	28	29	2

Both groups (**Group 1** and **Group 2**) took a post-test to recognize the impact of the experience in each group. The results of the pre-test and the post-test are shown in **Chart 2**. The statistics show that **Group 1** acquired 1.1 points in the mean score, 0 in the minimum score, and 2 in the maximum score.

Chart 3: Group2 Scores: Pre-test and Post-Test

Group2	Pretest	Posttest	Gains
Sum	115	145	
Mean score	23	29	4.8
Minimum score	18	20	2
Maximum score	29.7	39.2	9.5

As a result, shown in **Chart 3**, **Group 2** acquired 4.8 points in the mean score, 2 points in the minimum score and 9.5 points in the maximum score. Therefore, the results of **Group 2**'s scores exceeded those of Group **1** concerning the 3 scores.
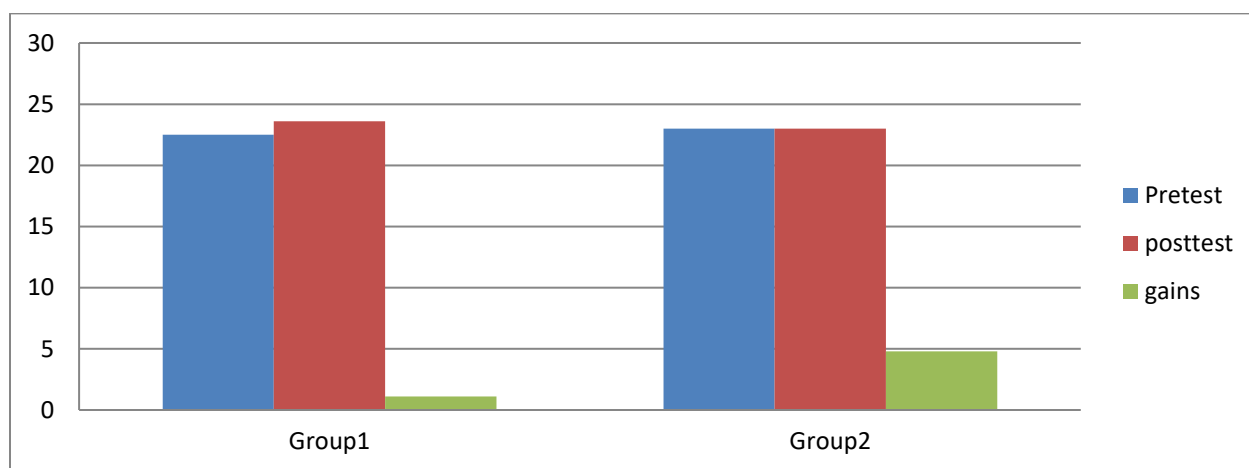

Figure 1: **Group1 and Group2 Pre-Test, Post-Test Mean Score and gains.**

Checking whether the use of short stories had an important effect on boosting speaking for first-year baccalaureate students at Idriss I high school was the main objective of conducting this study. According to the results of the pretest and posttest administered to Group1 and Group2, the mean scores affirmed that the employment of short stories to teach spoken English allowed students in Group2 to enhance their speaking skills, unlike the students in Group1, who learned speaking using the usual textbook activities, as shown in figure 1. Therefore, the use of short stories to boost speaking ability has an important impact. In

agreement with this result, the outcomes of Anissah et al. (2022) have shown that students' speaking skills were ameliorated by using short stories.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to show the important impact of using short stories in teaching English to enhance students' speaking ability in the EFL Moroccan classroom. Taking the results of this study, short stories have a remarkable and constructive impact on the 1st year baccalaureate students at Idriss I High School, Kenitra speaking abilities. Therefore, short stories can be used to enhance and build up students' language abilities. This is strongly linked to the fact that a short story is one of the most useful ways to help improve learners' speaking skills, as it helps students to evolve their abilities to exchange ideas, express themselves and debate, and also to increase their vocabulary repertoire. As a matter of fact, vocabulary knowledge is one of the key factors that can influence fluency in speaking. Reading is the best element to introduce learners to a larger set of language and contexts. Also, it helps learners construct better grammar skills (accuracy). Speaking and reading have a proportional relationship. Learners may develop sophisticated and complex speaking skills if they develop stronger reading skills. In this case, we used a short story.

To sum up, the article has addressed the question raised and has realized its objectives. However, because of some limitations of this study, which has only covered the impact of the use of short stories on students' speaking skills in EFL classrooms, there are some points we didn't take into consideration in which further studies should be conducted. The suggested points are as follows: First, students' attitudes toward using short stories should be taken into consideration. Second, teachers could choose various methods of teaching speaking through short stories in order to keep students interested and motivated (story map, role-playing, oral reading, etc.). In addition, this study was performed with a group of 20 students and only in 6 sessions using two short stories. Therefore, performing an inquiry with a larger number of students from different institutions and using more short stories in an extended time period in the future allows more valid outcomes. Moreover, textbook designers should emphasize the importance of short stories in English textbooks.

ORCID iD: 0009-0003-7078-7531
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