

SMALL STORIES, BIG IMPACT: BOOSTING READING SKILLS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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Abstract: *Learning English as a second language has become notably common around the world, especially in Asian countries. When learning a new language, acquiring essential skills, such as daily reading and speaking, is crucial. Among the four main language skills, reading plays an important role, supporting the development of listening, writing, and speaking. To boost reading comprehension, maintaining everyday practice and engaging in easy-to-capture texts are the main stepping stones. Integrating literature into education has several benefits, including reading comprehension, vocabulary, and overall fluency, which in turn can contribute to faster reading. The shorter length and engaging nature of short stories make them an effective tool for language learners, allowing them to practice reading without feeling overwhelmed. This article aims to explore the benefits of using short stories in the improvement of reading skills and language development as a whole.*

Keywords: *Reading skills, short stories, ESL students.*

Introduction:

In today's interconnected world, the ability to communicate in English has become a valuable skill, particularly for learners in non-English-speaking regions. As English continues to serve as the global language of education, business, and culture, developing strong language skills is essential for academic and professional success.

Reading skills are fundamental to language learning, particularly in foreign language acquisition (M. Nabil Irhamni, N. Nuzula and I.Mala Rohmana, 2025). Among the four core skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—reading stands out as a foundation that supports the growth of the others. Through regular reading, learners not only expand their vocabulary but also improve comprehension, grammar awareness, and overall fluency. Writing, speaking, vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and other language skills may all be taught via reading, according to educators (Mourão, 2009).

There has been a significant amount of investigation on how effectively employing brief narratives might aid ESL students' instruction (N.Ghafar and A.Zubaedah, 2023). While lengthy texts may discourage learners, short stories

provide an accessible and engaging alternative. Their concise structure and captivating narratives make them an effective tool for enhancing reading speed, comprehension, and motivation. Short stories, in particular, offer a powerful means of supporting this process. Their concise length, engaging plots, and relatable themes encourage consistent reading practice without overwhelming learners. They also help build vocabulary, improve comprehension skills, and enhance reading speed in an enjoyable way.

This article examines how short stories can foster reading development in English learners, highlighting their role in strengthening both linguistic ability and confidence. This research aims to explore how reading English short stories contributes to the development of skills among EFL students in Mogadishu. Specifically, it seeks to understand how such reading enhances vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, pronunciation, and grammatical knowledge.

Short stories can significantly improve reading speed in foreign languages. Using literature to teach language has several advantages (O.Nuray, 2016). Research suggests that reading short stories can enhance overall language ability, especially reading skills. Literature can stimulate the imagination of students, develop their critical abilities, and increase their emotional awareness (Lazar, 1993:19). While reading different texts about various topics, students can develop better imagination, broaden their mindset, and experience real-time feelings. Moreover, short stories are a powerful means of fostering critical thinking skills. Khatib and Mehrgan (2012) assert that engaging with short stories allows learners to evaluate characters' motives, interpret the message behind the story, and explore different viewpoints.

One of the main reasons short stories are effective in improving reading skills is their ability to capture the attention of students through engaging content (M. Nabil Irhamni, N. Nuzula and I.Mala Rohmana, 2025). That is, the reading of short stories in the class is more appealing as it brings an element of fun and excitement into the classroom (as opposed to expository essays), and is thus well suited for grammar and sentence structure, including and giving students suggestions for their own writing (Erkaya, 2005). The engaging and often shorter nature of short stories can be more motivating for learners than longer texts. This increased motivation can lead to more frequent reading practice, further improving reading speed and overall language skills.

Furthermore, short stories are useful to improve fluency in reading. Short stories, with their manageable length and often simpler language, help learners develop reading fluency. As they become more comfortable with the language, they can read faster and with greater ease. It is defined as the capacity of a language learner to comprehend a written text in order to identify the main

concept and particular details (Hişmanoğlu, 2005). While reading literary texts, the interaction between the reader and the text is very important; personal interpretations and analysis of literature are based on not only the textual elements but also the readers' personal views, experiences and feelings (O.Nuray, 2016).

According to the study done in 2013 by Vural, 34 students of prep classes of Two-Languages Department of Suleyman Demirel University, Almaty, Kazakhstan, literature can be used as a positive stimulation to motivate students, and a good means to improve reading and writing skills, as it was found that the use of literature in ELT classrooms may motivate students better than abridged and simplified reading passages in students' course books. This shows that short stories can also benefit in enhancing writing skills. Short stories introduce new vocabulary in context, making it easier for learners to understand and remember new words. This expanded vocabulary allows for faster reading as learners are less likely to encounter unfamiliar words that slow them down. They can use these new words in spoken and written language.

In conclusion, short stories offer a valuable and engaging way to improve reading speed in foreign languages by enhancing fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and overall motivation for reading, along with affecting the development of other skills. Stories also hold the kids' interest longer than any other kind of reading. Many ELT experts and educators have recognized the importance of short tales in helping students improve their reading comprehension skills for centuries (N.Ghafar and A.Zubaedah, 2023). The study highlights the potential of short stories to improve reading skills in EFL contexts and suggests that educators should integrate this approach into their curriculum to promote active engagement and deeper language development. Further studies can explore certain benefits of short studies in detail.

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