



Story-Based Extracurricular Tasks for Improving EFL Learners' Speaking Skills

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the impact of story-based extracurricular tasks on enhancing the speaking skills of EFL learners. The parameters of grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency were examined. A pre-test/post-test one shot case study design was adopted. A sample of 20 students, enrolled in the common first year program at Jouf University, Saudi Arabia, participated in the study. The results showed that learners' speaking skills improved due to the use of the story-based extracurricular tasks. Findings also showed that the highest improvement in students' speaking skills was in pronunciation, followed by vocabulary, and then, grammar. Fluency was the least improved skill. The study recommends the incorporation of story-based extracurricular tasks in EFL programs for enhancing speaking skills. Educators should choose culturally relevant stories that correspond to the learners' proficiency level. They should involve students in conversations and arguments about the stories, prompting them to examine the themes and implicit messages. This study also recommends to use other resources such as language games, quizzes, and dramatization for enhancing speaking skills of EFL learners.

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Keywords: Short Story, Extracurricular Tasks, Grammar, Pronunciation, Vocabulary, Fluency.

Introduction

Speaking and listening are activities that humans involve in right from the birth. These activities develop some communication habits as we hear stories, lectures, discussions, even arguments. Such communication takes place in hundreds of ways, and the fact remains that we remember some stories and discussions and forget others. Listening to others not only give the language exposure through practice and perseverance, but also the opportunity we play and replay and finally imitate speech (Kriz, Kluger, & Lyddy, 2021). Although all skills of a language are taught in an integrated way, the awareness of the skills and sub-skills of language is essential for effective learning (Celce-Murcia, 2001).

Taking this further, natural language acquisition of one's mother tongue seems to be an automatic and easy phenomenon, but when speech is formally taught in the second or foreign language, it seems more difficult. In the context of second and foreign language learning, there are two perspectives for developing speaking skills (Pitura, 2022). First, speaking can be developed as a form of skill-learning in which the

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items to be learnt are isolated and presented separately to the learners. Second, skill-getting when learners practice the items collectively in order to master them. Teachers also need to create opportunities for learners to integrate all the parts and move from accuracy to fluency. Thus, classroom methods have to help learners internalize the language system and try to speak fluently and correctly.

Storytelling provides the opportunity of a natural process of developing speaking skills through exposure and direct use. This gives learners opportunities to the natural learning mechanisms. They are engaging in learning the language in a motivational and interesting way and they have something to work on (Rahimi & Yadollahi, 2011). Storytelling is one of the earliest language teaching acts that adults adopt with young learners in the case of mother tongue (Lems, 2018; Snow, 1983). This approach is linked to the human nature as story tellers (Bruner, 1990). A number of researchers have reported that the use of short stories successfully helps the development of speaking skills in EFL contexts (Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009), while others equate story telling with extracurricular tasks aiming at language development (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Patil, 2021).

Extracurricular tasks have been identified as one of the best activities for children interested in public speaking, as they help develop skills such as thinking quickly, expressing new ideas, and growing in confidence, all of which are essential for effective speaking (Fan & Chen, 2023). Furthermore, various fun speaking games have been recommended to encourage students to speak, which can be incorporated into extracurricular language learning tasks (Aaltio & Auvinen, 2024). Moreover, extracurricular tasks that foster the development of speaking skills have a substantial positive impact on other skills (Song, Sheng, & Luo, 2024; Zhang et al., 2021). For example, extracurricular tasks promote the development of critical skills such as initiative-making, effective communication, collaboration, and decision-making (Cortellazzo et al., 2021). It was also found that students who took leadership positions in extracurricular tasks outperformed their peers in these skills (de Prada Creo, Mareque, & Portela-Pino, 2021; Rubin, Bommer, & Baldwin, 2002).

However, the idea of integrating short stories with extracurricular tasks has not been researched in depth. There are very limited earlier studies that dealt specifically with the role of extracurricular activities/ tasks based on short stories to enhance learners' speaking skills. This gap in literature is targeted to be bridged by this study. The main aim of this study was to merge the use of short stories with task-based instruction to produce extracurricular tasks that could help develop students speaking skills in an EFL context.

Specifically, this study formulated the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of story-based extracurricular tasks on developing the speaking skill of EFL students?
2. Which aspect of the speaking skill of EFL students develop most due to the use of story-based extracurricular tasks?

Theoretical Framework

Being in a foreign language environment, this study finds roots in the Narrative Theory (Bingjun, 2013; Bruner, 1990; Mishler, 1995; Polkinghorne, 1995). The Narrative Theory is currently enjoying a major burgeoning of interest in North America and throughout the world. Narrative theorists' study what is distinctive about narrative (how it is different from other kinds of discourse, such as lyric poems, arguments, lists, descriptions, statistical analyses, and so on), and accounts of what happened to particular people in particular circumstances with particular consequences can be very common and also so powerful. Thus, a key issue whether narrative theory as a method of thinking about or explaining human experience contrasts with scientific modes of explanation that characterize phenomena as instances of general covering laws. This approach encourages learning as it stems from the nature of human beings talking about what is around them. This study is based on this approach due to opportunities that are given to learners as an intervention to practice speaking based on the narration of short stories. To sum up, narrative theorists study how stories help people make sense of the world, while also studying how people make sense of stories.

The Narrative Theory suggests that humans are fundamentally storytelling creatures, and that storytelling is a central way through which we make sense of our experiences and communicate with others. Through storytelling, individuals develop their oral language skills, including vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and pragmatics. In this way, Narrative Theory highlights the importance of storytelling as a means of developing speaking skills (Hyland, 2018). Moreover, the Narrative Theory has also been used to develop innovative approaches to language teaching, particularly in the teaching of speaking skills. For example, narrative-based instruction involves using stories and narratives as a basis for language learning activities, such as retelling, summarizing, and responding to stories. Through engaging with stories in this way, students develop their speaking skills and become more confident and fluent in their use of the target language (Zuhriyah, 2017).

Lastly, the Narrative Theory can also be used to analyze and understand the role of storytelling in language learning. For example, researchers might study the narratives produced by language learners to better understand how they construct meaning and develop their speaking skills. By analyzing the structure, content, and style of learners' narratives, researchers can gain insights into the cognitive and social processes involved in

language learning and use (As, 2016). Overall, the Narrative Theory provides a useful framework for understanding the role of storytelling in language learning and the development of speaking skills. It highlights the importance of narrative in human communication and suggests that engaging with stories can be an effective means of developing oral language proficiency (Siavichay-Márquez & Guamán-Luna, 2022).

Literature Review

Using Short Stories in The Language Learning Class

Short stories have been an essential part of language learning classes for decades (Khatib & Nasrollahi, 2012; Pardede, 2011; Saka, 2014). They are an excellent way to introduce language learners to new vocabulary and grammar structures (Al-Dersi, 2013). Learners can see these vocabulary items and structures being used in context and can then practice using them in their own writing and speech. Short stories are effective in promoting language learning as they provide learners with engaging, meaningful, and contextualized input (Wardiah, 2016). Moreover, short stories can help learners improve their reading comprehension skills (Al-Qahtani, 2016; Syafi, 2018; Wardiah, 2016). Using short stories and worksheets develop students' reading comprehension positively (Bui & Fagan, 2013; Syafi, 2018). Using short stories may be a useful tool for improving overall language proficiency.

In addition, short stories require learners to focus on details such as characterization, plot, and setting, which helps them develop their analytical skills (Wardiah, 2016). Consequently, short stories can help learners develop their critical thinking skills (Khatib & Mehrgan, 2012; LaGarde & Hudgins, 2018). Reading short stories often involves analyzing the themes and underlying messages, which encourages learners to think deeply about the text. To support this idea, an experimental study was conducted to show the impact of reading short stories on EFL students' critical thinking skills. The study recruited TEFL students into experimental and control groups. The experimental group was taught reading short stories for two months. Findings established that the experimental group bypassed their peers who were trained traditionally (Khatib & Mehrgan, 2012).

Short stories help in comprehending complex sentence structures and developing vocabulary, while also fostering imaginative cognition and enhancing perception, making them an optimal tool for improving linguistic aptitude (Putri et al., 2023; Siavichay-Márquez & Guamán-Luna, 2022). Kara (2023) found a significant improvement in participants' speaking skills after using short stories. Additionally, storytelling has been shown to be an effective approach for adolescents to acquire English in a meaningful and entertaining way, leading to improved speaking skills (Huang, 2023; Ramalingam & Jiar, 2023). The narrative structure and thematic depth of short stories provide numerous advantages, most notably in terms of vocabulary enhancement and comprehension of intricate sentence constructions. Yang, Chen, & Hung (2022) emphasize the effectiveness of short stories in promoting creative thinking and improving comprehension abilities which are essential for the development of speaking skills.

Several strategies can be used to effectively use short stories in language learning classes. Firstly, it is important to select stories that are culturally relevant to learners (Gómez Rodríguez, 2014; Kibler & Chapman, 2019). This can be achieved by selecting stories that are set in the learners' own culture or by selecting stories that deal with universal themes such as love, loss, and family. Secondly, it is important to select stories that are at an appropriate level of difficulty. This can be achieved by selecting stories that are slightly above the learners' current level of proficiency to be quite challenging and at the same time within the reach of students' cognitive abilities to comprehend. Thirdly, it is important to engage learners in discussions and debates about the stories. This can be achieved by asking learners to analyze the themes and underlying messages in the stories. Fourthly, it is important to provide learners with opportunities to practice using the vocabulary and grammar structures introduced in the stories (Al-Qahtani, 2016; Al-Shammari, 2020). This can be achieved by asking learners to write summaries or responses to the stories.

This goes with Krashen's level of input hypothesis of "i+1", where "i" is the learner's interlanguage and "+1" is the next stage of language acquisition. This suggests that learners progress in their knowledge of the language when they comprehend language input slightly more advanced than their current level. In other words, second and foreign language learners can learn better when the input given to them is slightly beyond their current level not too easy nor too complex (Freeman & Freeman, 2011).

To sum up, short stories, when used effectively, have significant benefits for language learners, including improving reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, grammar knowledge, speaking skills and analytic and critical thinking skills. That is why there are recommendations to incorporate short stories into language learning curricula (Al-Shammari, 2020). It is also suggested that short stories can serve as a bridge to cultural understanding and promote learners' sense of belonging in the community (Anselmo, 2018). However, the relationship between short stories and speaking skills hasn't got enough focus in previous studies. The current study seeks to focus on this issue.

Challenges of Using Short Stories in Language Learning

There are challenges associated with using short stories in language learning classes (Wardhani et al., 2020; Sari & Wardhani, 2020). One challenge is selecting the right level of difficulty. If the story is too difficult, learners may become frustrated and lose interest. On the other hand, if the story is too easy, learners may not be challenged enough. The answer of this challenge has been mentioned above, that of applying the Krashen's hypothesis (i+1) which states that students learn better when they are exposed to input that is slightly beyond their current level (Krashen, 1982). Another challenge is selecting stories that are culturally appropriate for the learners. Stories that are not culturally relevant to learners may not engage them or may even offend them. Finally, there is also the challenge of finding stories that are appropriate in terms of content. Stories that deal with controversial or sensitive topics may not be suitable for all learners (Howard, 2001).

Furthermore, selecting appropriate stories and designing effective activities can be challenging for teachers. Teachers need to exert a lot of effort to select and design activities and may need to learn new skills to do this. Moreover, some researchers found that EFL learners faced challenges in some activities related to stories such as storytelling. Learners, for example, may feel embarrassed to speak in front of their teachers and classmates (Wardhani et al., 2020; Sari & Wardhani, 2020). This represents another challenge for teachers as they need to find ways to motivate and encourage students to engage in the story-based tasks.

Significance of Extracurricular Tasks in Language Learning

Extracurricular tasks or activities refer to the programs provided by educational institutions, colleges, and/or universities, among others, that are not part of the official curriculum (Dalrymple & Evangelou, 2006). Extracurricular tasks are also defined as student experiences that fall outside the formal educational curriculum (Isopahkala-Bouret, Siivonen, & Haltia, 2023). Participating in extracurricular tasks is crucial to the educational experience at a contemporary university as it fosters the well-rounded development of students and enhances the quality of their professional training (Lee 2018; Al-Tamimi et al., 2020). These tasks or activities constitute an autonomous aspect of higher education encompassing a variety of interconnected pursuits that are designed to cultivate students' overall growth and instill the professional attributes necessary for their future careers (Ivanova & Logvinova, 2017).

Extracurricular tasks such as debates, drama societies, and public speaking events provide practical opportunities for the application of language skills, leading to increased self-assurance and proficiency in oral communication (Park, 2015). Extracurricular tasks were found beneficial in developing students' speaking abilities (de Prada Creo et al., 2021; Hwang et al., 2016; Rubin et al., 2002). The integration of activities such as debates and dramatic performances enhances speaking confidence and communication abilities (Štěpánková, 2021).

Pentury, Anggraeni, & Pratama (2020) emphasize the positive effects of extracurricular tasks on active language engagement, which in turn promotes speech fluency and spontaneity. Pardede (2021) asserts that drama organizations are especially beneficial for students with an interest in public speaking citing their capacity to foster confidence, rapid thinking, and the expression of ideas—all of which are crucial for effective speaking. Furthermore, Khasawneh (2021) suggests that extracurricular language learning tasks should include enjoyable speaking exercises. In addition to making learning pleasurable, these types of activities also motivate students to communicate more, thereby improving their language proficiency. Research has also shown that these activities not only enhance language proficiency but also contribute to the development of soft skills such as leadership, critical thinking, and collaboration, all of which are crucial for effective communication (Yildiz, 2016; Zaiter, 2019).

Combining Extracurricular Tasks and Short Stories in Language Learning

There is limited research examining the effectiveness of combining short stories and extracurricular tasks on improving speaking skills. However, as stated above, several studies have investigated the effectiveness of using short stories and extra-curricular tasks separately in language learning (de Prada Creo et al., 2021; Hwang et al., 2016; Rubin et al., 2002). Incorporating extracurricular tasks, such as drama performances or debates, can enhance students' communication skills and boost their confidence in speaking (Hwang et al., 2016). Furthermore, a meta-analysis of various language teaching methods found that using authentic materials, such as short stories, can be beneficial for developing learners' oral proficiency. Overall, it's likely that a combination of both short stories and extracurricular tasks would provide greater benefits. This is what the current study seeks to investigate.

Task Based Language Instruction (TBLI) Approach

The Task Based Language Instruction (TBLI) approach has gained increasing attention in recent years as an effective means of promoting language learning and development. This implies that the materials used in this approach will essentially involve multi-level information processing with ample opportunities for language use

i.e., communication. In this sense, the tasks are deeply connected with real life, authentic language use. Consider the following example of a task. One of the students takes a role of a food critic and the other that of Wanda. Now students are required to prepare an interview between the food critics and Wanda to be posted on a YouTube channel. As is evident, the task is designed to elicit information and then, disseminating it to other listeners with the learning objective of strengthening learners' communicative competence.

TBLI is essentially a language teaching approach that takes off from learning through doing, where the aim of language is to convey meaning (Long, 2015; Nunan, 2004; Willis & Willis, 2018). Activities in TBLI aim for implicit learning as the teacher designs tasks so that conditions for language learning and use are created. Learning in this case is unplanned but authentic. The models that this approach can follow are: structural, functional, and interactional, i.e., the focus is on learning the grammar of the language implicitly. With communication as the basic aim in this approach, lexical units at not only word, but also, at phrase and sentence levels are important in the tasks. Besides, tasks enrich learners' language input and also motivate them to produce comprehensible output. Tasks are designed to be sensitive to learners' learning styles and encourage pair or collaborative work as a form of scaffolding. In addition, tasks move from simpler to complex form.

Methodology

Research Design

A pre-test/post-test one group case study design was adopted for this study. A group of 20 students was exposed to the test before and after the intervention. This research design is best suited when the sample size is very small and it is difficult to divide them into two groups. Hence, there was no control group in this study to compare with.

Sampling

Twenty EFL students from the common first year at Jouf University, Saudi Arabia voluntarily participated in this study. The participants were in the age range of 18- 19 years. The participants belonged to the same geographical background. All were native speakers of Arabic; and all shared conservative Muslim cultural heritage. They had also studied English for more than 8 years in primary and secondary education. All the students were female because of cultural reasons since it was difficult to aggregate both male and female students in a single research study.

Instruments of the Study

A speaking test (Appendix 2) was designed comprising some prompts to give students the opportunity to speak English fluently. To avoid examiner bias, a 5-point rubric was designed (Appendix 3) to score the test. The rubric consisted of four aspects: grammar, use of correct pronunciation, use of appropriate vocabulary, and fluent use of language. The scale ranged from 1 (poor performance) to 5 (excellent performance). The speaking test along with the designed rubric was sent to 12 experts in the field to check their validity. The test and the rubric were also piloted to measure the reliability. The researchers measured the inter-rater reliability of the rubric using alpha Cronbach, which reached 0.75 considered as an acceptable reliability level.

Material and Experimental Intervention

The teaching material included 8 units taken up in 8 sessions, 3 hours per session, amounting to a total of 24 hours (Appendix 1). The study applied digital storytelling with the use of videos, images, audio, and textual content. The teaching material was basically developed using 8 short stories available on YouTube. The session started by displaying a video of one short story which students watched attentively, closely listening to the conversations of the characters. The activities in the session were divided into pre, during and post listening activities.

The intervention continued for four weeks, from May 1 to May 30, 2023. Before starting the intervention, a pilot study was conducted to check the suitability of the material used with five students who were not included in the real experiment. In the initial session, the participants were told about the purpose of the course and asked to share some information including their name, their email address and WhatsApp number to have a WhatsApp group for easy contact and sharing the Google meet link with them before the session.

Each session comprised three stages: In Stage 1, known as 'What I know', the instructor gave the students access to spoken digital content of English language words correctly pronounced, some tips on the grammar and syntax of English, and reminders about rules to follow in speaking. These were directly related to the digital story that the researcher played to the participants. The Stage 2 was known as 'Let us practice', wherein the participants had opportunities to practice speech based on activities, they could also record themselves to check their mistakes, but limited to the stories they heard or watched in class. The Stage 3 was an opportunity for knowledge application, known as 'Let me speak', in which each individual used a set of scaffolding questions (such as 'What are your non-academic interests?') prepared by the researchers to help them create a digital story

about themselves. This stage gave them the freedom to choose a digital medium or a combination of these (such as PowerPoint or Windows moviemaker) to make the presentation.

Data Analysis

Students' scores on the pre and post tests on speaking were processed using SPSS. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for two related samples was also used to check whether there was a significant difference in the students' speaking skill in the post-test attributed to the use of story-based extracurricular tasks. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test (WSRT) was used because the sample size was small (n=20) which did not qualify well for the t-test.

Results

RQ1: What is the effect of story-based extracurricular tasks on developing the speaking skill of EFL students?

Table 1: Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for The Effect of Story-Based Extracurricular Tasks on Developing the Speaking Skill.

Test	Mean	SD	Rank	N	Z	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest	10.05	4.53	Negative	0 ^a		
Posttest	17.37	18.54	Positives	18 ^b	-3.732	.000
			Ties	2 ^c		

Table 1 show that the participants scored a total of (M=10.05, SD= 4.53) out of 20 in the pre-test. In the post test, their performance was better as they scored (M=17.37, SD=18.54) as seen in Figure 1 as well. Table 1 also indicates that 18 of the participants improved in the posttest while just two of them scored the same in the pre and post-tests. The Z value amounted (-3.732) while the probability value is .000, showing that the improvement in students' speaking skills is statistically significant.

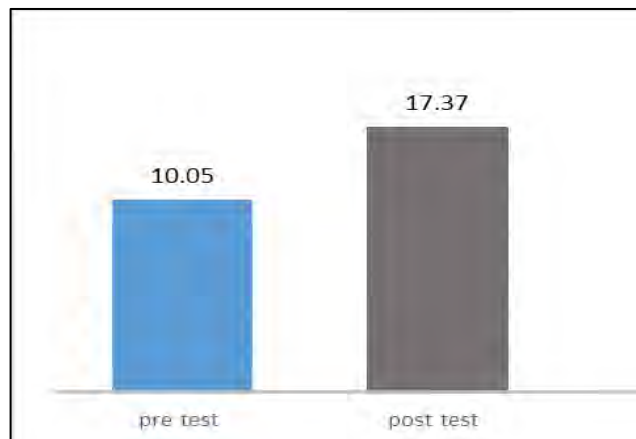


Figure 1: Mean Scores of The Pretest and Posttest Results of Speaking Skill.

RQ2: Which aspect of the speaking skill of EFL students developed most due to the use of story-based extracurricular tasks?

Table 2: Improvement of Students in The Grammar, Pronunciation, Vocabulary, and Fluency.

Skills	Test	Mean	SD	Ranks	N	Z	Sig. (2-tailed)	Effect size
Grammar	Posttest	3.150	.812	Negative	0 ^a			
	Pretest	2.450	.998	Positive	13 ^b	-3.304-b	.001	0.7
				Ties	7 ^c			
Pronunciation	Posttest	6.675	11.54	Negative	0 ^d			
	Pretest	2.750	1.208	Positive	9 ^e	-2.692-b	.007	3.925
				Ties	11 ^f			
Vocabulary	Posttest	3.450	.872	Negative	0 ^g			
	Pretest	2.150	1.136	Positive	16 ^h	-3.595-b	.000	1.3
				Ties	4 ⁱ			
Fluency	Posttest	3.375	.856	Negative	0 ^j			
	Pretest	2.700	1.341	Positive	11 ^k	2.966-b	.003	0.675
				Ties	9 ^l			

Table 2 shows students' improvement in four aspects of speaking ability. In grammar, students scored (M=2.450, SD=.998) in the pre-test and (M=3.150, SD=.812) in the post-test. Their grammar ability showed improvement with an effect size of (M=0.7). To check whether the effect is significant, the Sig.(2-tailed)

value was calculated using WSRT which shows .001. It indicates that the difference is significant. In pronunciation, Table 2 shows that students scored (M=2.750, SD=1.208) in the pre-test and (M=6.675, SD=11.54) in the post-test. Their pronunciation intelligibility improved with an effect size of (M=3.925) which is the highest among the four components of speaking skills. To check whether the effect is significant, the Sig.(2-tailed) value was calculated using WSRT which came to .007. It indicates that the difference is significant.

In vocabulary, the students scored (M=2.150, SD=1.136) in the pre-test as shown in Table 2, and (M=3.450, SD=.872) in the post-test. Their lexical mastery therefore, improved with an effect size of (M=1.3) which is the second highest among the four components of the speaking skill tested. To check whether the effect is significant, the Sig.(2-tailed) value was calculated using WSRT which shows .000. It indicates that the difference is significant.

Table 2 also shows that students scored (M=2.150, SD=1.136) in speaking fluency in the pre-test and (M=3.450, SD=.872) in the post-test. Their fluency therefore, improved with an effect size of (M=0.675) which is the least amongst the four components. To check whether the effect is significant, the Sig.(2-tailed) value was calculated using WSRT which came to .003. It indicates that the difference is significant. As evident on all the four parameters, the group mean has shown an upward trend with the SD lowering in all the cases. This indicates the tendency of the group to move towards less spread-out scores which may be an indicator of all learners benefitting equitably from the intervention. These findings are also represented in Figures 2 and 3.

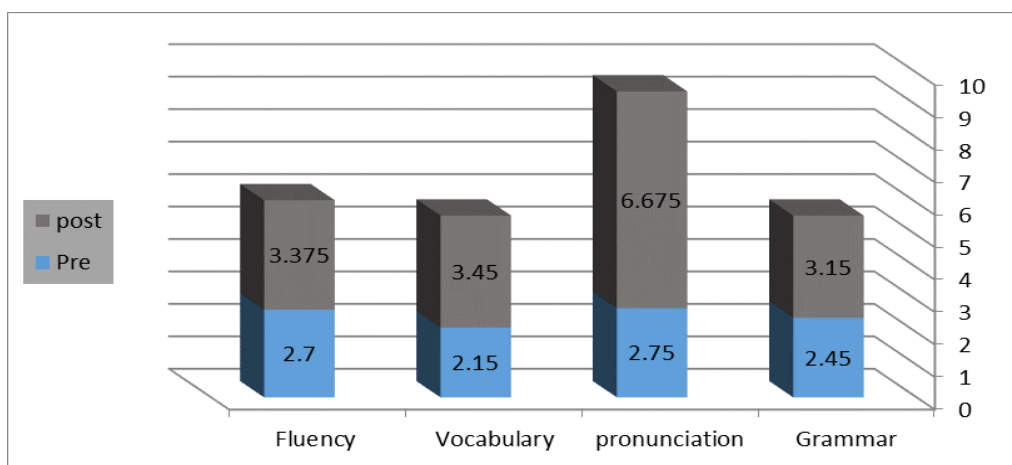


Figure 2: Improvement of Participants in Grammar, Pronunciation, Vocabulary and Fluency.

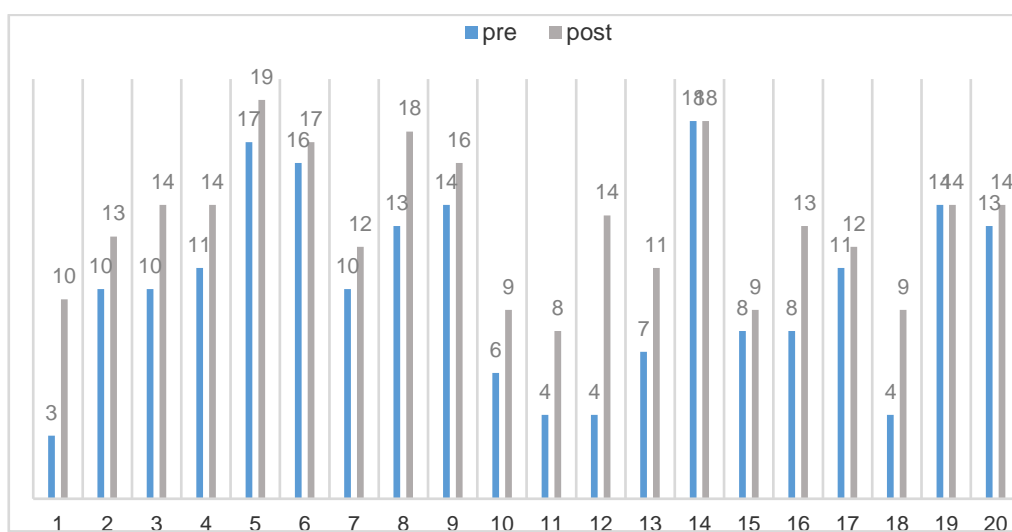


Figure 3: Individual Participants' Performance in Speaking Test in Both Pre and Posttest.

Discussion

The results of the study reveal that students in the post test scored higher than the pre-test in all the aspects of the speaking skill: grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary and fluency. This means that the use of story-based extracurricular tasks helped improve their speaking skills and this improvement was

statistically significant. This finding matches with Akalu (2020) who found that TBLT had impact on developing students' oral skills, and that authentic tasks improved different aspects of speaking skill including coherence, fluency, grammar usage, vocabulary selection, and pronunciation. Ibnian (2010) also reported that using story mapping developed 10th grade students' writing skills. Garcia & Martinez (2019) reported similar outcomes though their study, who focused on Spanish EFL learners and examined the effectiveness of TBLI in enhancing their grammar skills. The results indicated a slight improvement in the learners' grammar proficiency after engaging in task-based activities. Various grammar tasks and assessments were employed to measure the learners' progress.

The use of digital storytelling and online applications (Google Meet), which were implemented in the study, contributed to the improvements in student speaking skills. These highlight that the use of technology- mobile assisted language learning - helped improve students' oral skills and that online learning contributes to language development through stimulating learning that helped in interaction, engagement, cooperation between students, and reducing the level of anxiety. The idea of using short stories as authentic online materials for improving different language skills is related to the use of authentic online materials which help improve students writing skills.

Regarding the second research question, all the four parameters improved. The highest hike was in students' pronunciation, followed by vocabulary, then grammar and fluency. These findings indicate that using extracurricular tasks gave students a space to listen to the real use of English which reflected on their language use as well, as also agreed upon by Guo et al., (2023). While listening to stories, their vocabulary also improved. Pronunciation of the learners in the current study was the most improved skill. This improvement may be due to the time they spent in dealing with authentic natural pronunciation. This finding agrees with Rahimi & Yadollahi (2011) who found that storytelling affords a natural process of developing speaking skills through exposure and use, this gives opportunities to the natural learning mechanisms to have something to work on.

In addition, vocabulary and grammar were also developed. These findings are consistent with Al-Dersi (2013) who found that extracurricular tasks are an excellent way to introduce language learners to new vocabulary and grammar structures, as well as to engage them in critical thinking and discussion. Finally, students' fluency also developed. This finding is confirmed by Al-Ahdal & Alharbi, 2021 who reported that selecting stories that are slightly above the learners' current level of proficiency is a great way to boost their language fluency. Moreover, de Prada Creo et al. (2021) affirmed that extracurricular tasks participate in developing students' communication and interpersonal skills to a high level, as well as positively affect their decision making.

Conclusion and Implications

Four parameters were adopted to test the impact of using extracurricular tasks based on short English stories on enhancing the speaking skills measured. Findings reported that all the four of the parameters (grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary and fluency) developed significantly which proves the significance of using such tasks in developing students' speaking ability. In the current study, extracurricular tasks based on English short stories led to statistical difference though small, in the pre and post-tests, in favor of the latter. Thus, it can be concluded that the approach of using extracurricular tasks based on English short stories can be beneficial in improving speaking skills.

Conclusive and usable results can be arrived at in educational research only when an intervention or approach is applied for a substantial period of time as language acquisition is a slow and gradual process. Hence, it is recommended that extracurricular tasks based on English short stories be used in EFL classrooms for a longer duration to avail the fullest benefits. This can be accomplished by employing various teaching strategies that place students at the center of attention. For instance, educators should choose culturally relevant stories that correspond to the learners' proficiency level. They should involve students in conversations and arguments about the stories, prompting them to examine the themes and implicit messages. Additionally, it is crucial to offer learners chances to apply the vocabulary and grammar structures introduced in the stories. This study only used the short story as the language exposure resource, it may be recommended to try other resources also such as language games, quizzes, and dramatization for enhancing speaking skills of EFL learners.

All the students in the sample of the study were from the common first year at Jouf University. The sample size of 20 participants was a limitation when the statistical operations were carried out, since the results were sometimes not very well-defined due to this factor. Moreover, the sample was an all-female composition (because of cultural reasons), and it was felt that this lowered the possibility of generalizing results. These findings are of significance to EFL students, teachers and curriculum designers. These stakeholders can apply these tasks in practice and in designing curriculum to develop learners' speaking abilities. This approach creates opportunities for students to use language in natural situations.

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Appendix 1 (Course Design)

Course Title	An online course for improving speaking skills via listening to short story.					
Course Period	4 weeks					
Session Days	3 hours					
Group Level	Intermediate					
Course Out Come	1.Students will be able to fluently participate in discussions. 2. Students will be able to orally express their opinions about different topics using adequate grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation to be comprehensible to the listener(s). 3. Students will be able to narrate events using adequate grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation to be comprehensible to the listener(s).					

Session	Learning outcomes	Materials	Methods of teaching	Pre-listening activities	During-listening activities	Post-listening activities
1	Students will be able to: 1- orally express their opinions about their teachers. 2- orally express their guesses about the next event in a story. 3- participate in group discussion to share their experience.	listening to the short story: Sleepy teacher by Zen Tale https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=wztNpVxF0Tg	Task-based instruction	Instructor elicits learners' opinion through these questions: Who was your favorite schoolteacher? why? Which subject did he teach? Which teacher frightened you the most? Why? Name some emotions you felt when you were in the presence of your most liked and most disliked teacher.	Students guess what sentences is good to add after some line in story or predict what will happen next in the story.	talk to each other in groups or pairs and think of a scary situation in school that later turned hilarious. If not in real life, they can create one from imagination with their partner.
2	Students will be able to: 1-discuss their bad flow 2- provide synonyms and antonyms for some words. 3- act a short skit by using dialogues. 4- provide information	listening to the short story: The Shepherd Boy and the Wolf https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=DRS8DR0Rck	Task-based instruction	The instructor asks the students to share with their colleagues their personal flaws and how they corrected them	students provide a synonym or antonyms for some word and they share it with their colleagues.	Choose a partner and prepare a short skit of about 2 minutes using formulating dialogues that enact the storyline. The skit must include at least one lie and one truth. Each pair enacts the skit to the entire class and asks them to guess the truth and the lie. Students are asked to write a note and share it with their peers about how lying affects person's work, religious and social life .
3	Students will be able to: 1-orally express their background knowledge about the behavior of insects. 2- orally suggest a possible end different from the end proposed by the writer of the story. 3- participate in a critical discussion about the other possible endings that classmates proposed	listening to the short story: The Ant and the Grasshopper https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ISL1r9umtgA	Task-based instruction	The instructor elicits students' knowledge about the behavior of insects. Are ants mentioned in Quran? How many times ants are mentioned in the Quran? Who is the prophet who was given by God the ability to talk to animals?	The students are asked to complete the last sentence in their own words orally, or Expand the story by picking the last sentence or adding a new sentence to build the story from the given ending. The sequence has to be logical and interesting. The aim is to create a different ending than the author has given.	In pairs, students find shortcomings in the endings composed by their partners and help them improve. In pairs, students try to find the aims of this story? There's a time for work and a time for play.

4	Students will be able to: 1- narrate a childhood experience to the class. 2- share with a partner the meaning of the difficult vocabulary that they derive from the context. 3-orally summarize the story they listened to.	listening to the short story: MIRACLES https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=VQDPgtSuLvY	Task-based instruction	The instructor narrates a childhood experience with his parent which had a life lesson attached to it. then writes the names of learners randomly and ask them to talk about their similar experiences or when they were a source of moral teaching to a younger sibling or friend.	The instructor points out difficult or new vocabulary and asks the learners to share the meaning they derive from the context with a partner.	The instructor asks students to orally summarize the story they listened to.
5	Students will be able to: 1-speak for two minutes about their feelings about camping. 2-speak for 2 minutes about the events or the aim of the story.	listening to the short story :Mistakes are not always bad https://youtu.be/nCrioIU6NYw!	Task-based instruction	The instructor asks the following pre-listening questions: Think of two emotions you feel as you prepare for a journey away from home. Now speak for two minutes on the kind of preparations you make for the journey.	Students orally discuss the coincidences that happen with the main characters.	With your partner, prepare to speak for 2.5 minutes on same event that happened to them previously if it's in restaurant or travel or study. Also speak for a minute on the moral lessons you concluded from this story. Ask the students what is the aim of this story?
6	Students will be able to: 1-discuss the events of the story. 2- orally summarize the story.	listening to the short story : The Elephant https://youtu.be/m56bLt94O6E	Task-based instruction	What do you think is the topic of today's story?	The instructor asks the learner to think of the ways adults and children react differently to a situation and later share it with the class	Students orally summarize the story.
7	Students will be able to: 1- role-play the main characters of the story .	After listening to the short story : Sugar or Salt https://youtu.be/10ofiUVFSxA	Task-based instruction	The instructor asks the following questions: Can accidents be good at times? Can you think of an event that appeared to be devastating but turned to your or a friend's advantage a bit later? What do you think makes a person successful at work?	The instructor asks the students to provide an example of an accident they made while cooking and how that experience went on!?	One of the students take the role of a food critic and the other that of Wanda. Now conduct an interview to be aired on your YouTube channel.
8	Students will be able to: 1- participate in a discussion on what makes some people more likable than others. 2- recount at least one trait of people they found likable and unlikable. 3- provide oral criticism of the headings provided by classmates.	listening to the short story :likable https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ICIFQilE5gE	Task-based instruction	Discussion on what makes some people more likable than others. Every learner recounts at least one trait each for people they found likable and unlikable. Keywords are jotted on the board	During listening the instructor pauses where and asks the following questions: Why couldn't she be more likable? What was the problem? Did she just not enjoy the world anymore? Had the world gotten away from her? Had the world gotten worse? (Maybe, probably not. Or probably in some ways but not in the ways that were making her not like it). Did she not like herself? (Well, of course she didn't, but there was nothing new in that.)	The instructor divides the class into two groups A &B . Group A, prepare several sub-headings for the movie the class watched. Group B, collect their thoughts and write and speak five lines on why the heading that Group A holds out is appropriate or not .

Appendix 2 (Speaking Test)

The instructor will ask two questions from the following categories to each learner to assess his speaking skills. Learners will be asked to speak freely without time constraints. Secrecy of information will be assured.

Personal Information and Family	Please introduce yourself and tell me about your family briefly Can you tell me who your favorite relative is? Why?
You and the Society	Do you follow fashion trends in clothing? Why? How? What kind of people do you enjoy to spend your free time with?
Technology	Do you feel technology has made our lives better or worse? How? Do you use technology for fun or work? How?
Travel	Which place would you like to visit in the future? Why? Tell me about a place that you have visited (what is the place? with whom did you go? when did you go? what did you do there? what was good about the place? what was not good about the place? and would you like to visit it again or not and why?)

Appendix 3 (Speaking Scoring Rubric)

Aspect/level	Excellent 5	Ver good 4	Good 3	Needs progress 2	Poor 1
Grammar	The learner was able to express his ideas and responses with ease in proper sentence structure and tenses.	The learner was able to express his ideas and responses fairly well but makes mistakes with tenses, however is able to correct himself.	The learner was able to articulate his opinions and reactions well but often displayed inconsistencies with their sentence structure and tenses.	It was difficult for the learner to communicate his ideas and responses because of grammar mistakes.	Learner's speech lacks grammatical structure and usage to the extent of complete incomprehensibility.
Pronunciation	Pronunciation was very clear and easy to understand.	Pronunciation was good and did not interfere with communication.	Learner was slightly unclear with pronunciation at times, but generally is fair.	Learner was difficult to understand because of unclear in pronunciation.	Incoherence is there in speech due to extreme mispronunciation.
Vocabulary	Rich, precise and impressive usage of vocabulary.	Learner utilized the words in an accurate manner for the situation given.	Learner was able to use broad vocabulary words but was lacking, making him/her repetitive and cannot expand on his/her ideas.	Learner had inadequate vocabulary words to express his/her ideas properly, which hindered the students in responding.	Learner's vocabulary is very basic, repetitive, inaccurate.
Fluency	Speech is effortless and smooth with good speed.	Speech is mostly smooth but with some hesitation and unevenness caused primarily by rephrasing and groping for words.	Speech is slow and often hesitant and irregular. Sentences may be left uncompleted, but the student is able to continue.	Speech is very slow, stumbling, uncertain, with short or inaccurate expressions. Difficult to understand.	Learner's output is interspersed with frequent breaks and pauses, he/she gives up sentences midway for lack of structural knowledge