



## **Investigating the Effect of Reading English Short Stories on Developing Skills for EFL Students at some Selected Universities in Mogadishu, Somalia**

Mr. Abdulkadir Abdullahi Mohamed

Lecturer, Mogadishu University, and Somali National University

Email: abdiok25@Gmail.com

DOI: 10.70595/sej106

### **Abstract**

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. Employing a quantitative research design with a descriptive method, the study utilized a questionnaire as its primary tool. It involved 100 English lecturers from five universities in Mogadishu, Somalia, with 80 selected as participants. The key findings suggest a significant correlation between reading English short stories and the development of language skills among EFL students. Additionally, the study highlights the effectiveness of this practice in enhancing vocabulary, comprehension, pronunciation, and grammatical understanding. The research holds potential for English lecturers aiming to enhance the skills of EFL students at the university level. It is anticipated to inspire students to engage in more reading of short stories, fostering their creativity and critical thinking. Furthermore, English lecturers encountering challenges in teaching EFL skills stand to benefit from the insights provided by this study.

**Key Words:** Short Stories, EFL, Vocabulary Acquisition, Reading Comprehension, Pronunciation, Grammatical Knowledge

## **1.0 Introduction**

Reading short stories is considered to be one of the most important aspects for learning a foreign language. Previously, more attention was given to fields such as grammar, syntax and morphology, but recently, the major focus was on literary areas. One of the most effective methods for developing language skills is through reading short stories, which are considered as a unique literary genre by teachers for improving student s' language skills (Aziz, 2012).

Historically, the short story as an oral tradition can be traced back to prehistoric times. Since the start of human civilization, it has thriven as a social art and has taken several different phases.

In Europe, written versions of the oral storytelling traditions emerged in the early fourteenth century. The most renowned of them were the Decameron by Giovanni Boccaccio and the Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer. Individual short stories from well-written literary fiction to hilarious anecdotes and fables were collected in these collections. The end of the 16th century produced some of the most popular short stories in Europe (Peden, 1975).

A sophisticated short novel called "nouvelle" by Madame de Lafayette was created in France in the middle of the 17th century. The publication of traditional fairy tales started in the 1690s, and Charles Perrault's collections were among the most well-known. A significant impact was made on the European short stories of the 18th century by Antoine Galland's first modern translation of the Thousand and One Nights (Arabian Nights). Some short stories were published independently between 1790 and 1810, but the first true collections of short stories initially emerged between 1810 and 1830 in a number of nations around the world (Peden, 1975).

Before the 20th century, it was almost impossible to distinguish between a short story and a novel. The short story was born in the bosom of the novel. Brander Matthews was the first to distinguish the short story from the novel as a different literary form in 1901. Despite the fact that it was consistently created and developed during the whole nineteenth century in America, becoming a huge success and a national form, he was the first to give it a name (Shapard, R.; Thomas, J., 1986).

Regionally, despite the fact that Africans had traditionally passed down their stories orally from generation to generation throughout the pre-colonial era, short story writing did not begin in Africa until the 1960s and 1970s, when nearly all of the continent's countries gained independence. A series of fictional short stories depicting African communities and their fight with colonial forces were written by the best Nigerian poet and well-known short story author Chinua Achebe. All African short stories had as their primary theme the conflict between tradition and modernity. Many Africans were unsure of how to respond to the sudden cultural changes that the missionaries threatened to bring about with their new political structure and

institutions because of the unanticipated presence of white missionaries in Africa. As a result, the majority of African short stories attempted to portray how European colonization affected their way of life (Ajuwon, 1985).

**In Somalia**, as in many other African countries, people transmitted their stories orally, considering that there were no written short stories until the adoption of a Latin orthography for the Somali language in 1972.

Cycles of traditional short stories (such as those of Queen Arraweelo, Wiil-Waal, and Deg-Deer) were among the stories rejoiced by many Somali people (Andrzejewski, 1985).

According to Cawl (1974), *Ignorance is the Enemy of Love*, written by Farah Mohamed Jama, was the first complete story ever to be published in Somalia. Shire Gaama's two short stories (Shire Jaamac Axmed 1973a and 1973b) had been published the year before. After then, the newspaper Xiddigta Oktoobar (also known as "The October Star") began publishing an increasing quantity of short stories and novels.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

This study seeks to examine how reading English short stories can enhance the language skills of EFL students. Recognizing the significance of language proficiency in English learning, educators and linguists are encouraged to adopt innovative methods such as utilizing short stories. However, there exists a gap in employing literature, such as short stories, for language skill development in Somalia. This oversight negatively impacts learners, as they struggle due to the continued use of traditional teacher-centered approaches. Given the challenges faced by EFL learners and the importance of implementing novel techniques like short stories, this research aims to investigate the impact of incorporating English short stories into the development of language skills for EFL students.

### **1.2 Research Questions**

The study will be guided by the following research questions. The research questions are stated as follows:

- How can reading English short stories help students in Vocabulary acquisition?
- To what extent can reading English short stories help students enhance their reading comprehension?
- To what degree can reading English short stories develop students' pronunciation?
- How can reading English short stories improve students' grammatical Knowledge?

### **1.3 Significance of the study**

There should be some substantial outcome to which the research can contribute when it attempts to conduct a specific examination. The results of this study will be extremely helpful to English teachers who wish to

raise EFL students' ability levels. The opportunity to use their creativity and critical thinking will encourage students to read more and more short stories. The findings will also be helpful to English students, particularly those who expect to learn the necessary language skills through the use of short stories and other literary genres.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 The Role of Short Stories in Language learning and Teaching**

Short stories are a very significant and a great source of knowledge in class, where students require improving their skills in the language that they are studying (Erkaya, 2005). More significantly, the use of short stories allows students to learn the four core skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) more successfully because of the motivational benefits inserted in stories. 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). In this context, for instance, EFL teachers can use short stories to help students with writing skills by creating diverse kinds of writing activities (Erkaya, 2005), thereby enabling them to write more creatively.

Teaching language through short stories improves students' reading comprehension by allowing them to practice varied skills in the classroom, such as predictive skills, extracting specific and detailed information, getting the big picture, identifying function and discourse patterns, and deducing meaning from context (Harmer, 1994).

### **2.2 Vocabulary Acquisition**

Acquiring vocabulary through using short story plays a vital role in becoming a fluent foreign language speaker. (Renandya, W.A., & Richards, J.C., 2002) states that Vocabulary is the basic element of language knowledge and gives much of the foundations of how learners put the core language skills into practice. Without having enough vocabulary and the techniques for obtaining new vocabulary, learners might get a little bit confused and cannot take advantage of the language learning opportunities around them such watching English movies, talking to native speakers or listening to English news.

According to (Al-Dersi, 2013), although students know grammar adequately, their ability to communicate effectively might be difficult without learning enough vocabulary in context. As such, Al-Dersi emphasizes that vocabulary acquisition/ knowledge is not only important for mastering a foreign language, but also enables EFL learners to express themselves and communicate effectively -and should thus be the core aim of teaching and learning a foreign language.

In this respect, (Thornbury, 2002) emphasizes that very little could be conveyed through grammar without

vocabulary, meaning that it is the vocabulary of a language that enables language learners to express themselves effectively and efficiently. Such vocabulary /knowledge includes the meaning of words and their correct pronunciation and spellings, the grammatical behavior of the word, the collocations of the word, the register of the word, the synonyms and antonyms of the word.

### **2.3 Reading Comprehension**

Comprehension needs the student's prior knowledge or experience along with the current reading task. It is related to putting a prior knowledge together with what the student is reading at that time in order to attain comprehension. Reading Comprehension is a triangle process which includes the reader, the task and the text (Smith, 1985).

Reading comprehension is a very fundamental skill that language learners need to improve. To be an excellent reader starts from recognizing sounds and letters and understanding the connections between the sounds, then learning words separately. After that students will be able to read sentences, paragraphs and short stories. Many researchers argued that most students don't understand what they are reading. Similarly, many students often read their traditional books so that they get good grades in the exam. Therefore, language teachers ought to use an effective method in order to develop students' reading comprehension to grasp what they are reading (Abu Nejme, 2011).

Regarding Roehl and Shiue (2011), reading comprehension entails the process of reading a written text and understanding the meaning of that text. However, reading comprehension makes students read skillfully and learn proficiently. These skills are involved in earlier stages of reading development. If language teachers don't concentrate on the earlier stages of reading, then the readers must focus on words and decode letters.

Reading comprehension is based on two strategies; bottom up process where readers start from bottom by reading the letters so that they can recognize words, phrases; and the top down process that is tested with students' ability to know which of the reading strategies are available in the text like skimming, skimming, or scanning (Keshta, A., & El-Deen, Z., 2009).

### **2.4 Pronunciation Skill**

Although it is true that pronunciation is not the most crucial part of EFL learning, it must be noted that we would be unable to communicate effectively with people in the EFL if we did not have appropriate or comprehensible pronunciation.

Pronunciation is the act of making speaking sounds in order to convey a message. As a result, in oral communication, having a strong pronunciation of the EFL is essential. Furthermore, it is important to mention that while foreign language students should strive for good pronunciation; this does not imply that

they must sound exactly like a native speaker (Dalton, C., & Seidlhofer, B., 1994).

Harmer (2001) stated that many teachers do not pay enough attention to English pronunciation. There are a variety of causes for this omission. Many students believe that mastering pronunciation is unnecessary and that it is time consuming. They claim that simply communicating in English is sufficient, and that once they are understood, nothing else matters.

## **2.5 Grammatical Knowledge**

A short story can be used to teach grammar in a fun and engaging way. Students can come across a variety of grammatical structures such as tenses, phrases, and sentences when reading stories. According to (Kartika, 2011), students can find a variety of tenses in short stories, including past tenses in legends, folktales, and fairy tales, as well as present and future tenses in modern stories. Teachers may quickly and interactively teach those tenses since the tenses in the short story are never isolated from their contexts and functions. In this regard, the contexts and functions present in short stories will help students grasp the concept of grammatical structure in the form of tenses more simply.

Additionally, a short story, which is part of literary work, can help with language learning by improving vocabulary, understanding sentence structure, and analyzing context. Furthermore, language learners might get some forms of sentences in short stories, such as affirmatives, imperatives, and questions, since the short story's concepts are imparting something in the form of text that undoubtedly uses those forms of sentence to convey the meaning. As a result, telling a short story is an effective technique to teach grammar (Kartika, 2011).

Considering some other researchers, there are a few different methods in which short stories can assist students in learning grammar. Firstly, stories improve the memory by allowing the learner to recognize patterns. Furthermore, Stories might be applied to elicit and illustrate grammatical aspects. In addition to that, a well-versed story provides the ideal context for a structure-discourse match, but this method may also be applied to a structure-social factor match. Nevertheless, if the learners are to understand grammar, they must first be exposed to it in its contexts use (Thornbury, 2002).

## **3.0 Methodology**

### **3.1 Study Design, Sample and Data Collection Process**

The researcher adopted a quantitative research design in descriptive method using a questionnaire which is best suitable for this article. The study was conducted in August 2023. The sample consisted of 80 English Lecturers selected from 5 universities located in Mogadishu, Somalia. These universities were among 41 universities which were formally evaluated, accredited and recognized by the National Commission for

Higher Education from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education in May 19, 2021.

Random sampling was used to pick all of the participants. This sampling approach is used when every member of a population has an equal opportunity of being part of the sample. Generally, Simple Random sampling is defined as a sampling process which aims at being a representative of larger population by giving everyone in the group the same opportunity of being chosen. A researcher uses random sampling to eliminate bias by including all members of the population and randomly selecting a sample of them (Greener, 2011).

The researcher used a questionnaire sent through an online platform called Kobo Collect as tool for data collection because this is the easiest method to gather a large quantity of information within a short period of time. The items of the questionnaire were rated with a scale known as Likert Scale (strongly disagree, disagree, Neutral, Agree, and strongly agree).

### **3.2 Data Analysis Procedure**

Data analysis is conducted after the researcher got all data. The researcher analyzed the data gathered by using Statistical package for social science (SPSS), version 27.0 and excel spread sheet. The data was cleaned and corrected all errors in it to achieve accuracy and consistency at the final stage. The data was presented using tables and Figures along with their analysis.

## **4.0 Findings and Discussions**

### **4.1 Demographic Information**

Demographic information presents the data obtained from the respondents. there was a total of 80 people who responded to the questionnaire in different ways based on the objectives of the study using the methodology given above. Table (1) shows that the majority of the respondents 60 (75%) to the study were males, indicating that more males were involved in the response as compared to females 20 (25%). Considering the age, 28 respondents aged between 19 to 29 years, representing (35%), 42 respondents aged between 30 to 40 years, representing (52.5%), and 9 respondents aged between 41 to 51 years old, representing (11.3%). This indicates that the majority of the respondents' age ranged between 30 to 40 years. Regarding to the academic qualifications, the study found that 48 respondents were master degree holders, representing (60%), 31 respondents were bachelor degree holders, forming (38.8%), and 1 respondent was a PhD degree holder, representing (1.2%). This shows that most of the respondents were master degree holders teaching English at various university levels. In terms of teaching experience, 29 (36.2%) respondents were teaching English from 1 to 5 years and 31 (38.8%) respondents were teaching English Language from 6 to 10 years while only 20 (25%) respondents were teaching English Language above 10 years. From this data, it can be drawn that the largest number of respondents had teaching

experience ranging from 6 to 10 years.

**Table (1) Demographic Information**

Profile	Items	Frequencies	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	60	75.0
	Female	20	25.0
<b>Age</b>	19-29 years	28	35.0
	30-40 years	42	52.5
	41-51 years	9	11.3
	52 and above	1	1.2
<b>Qualifications</b>	PhD	1	1.2
	Master	48	60.0
	Bachelor	31	38.8
<b>Experience</b>	1-5 years	29	36.2
	6-10 years	31	38.8
	Above 10 years	20	25.0

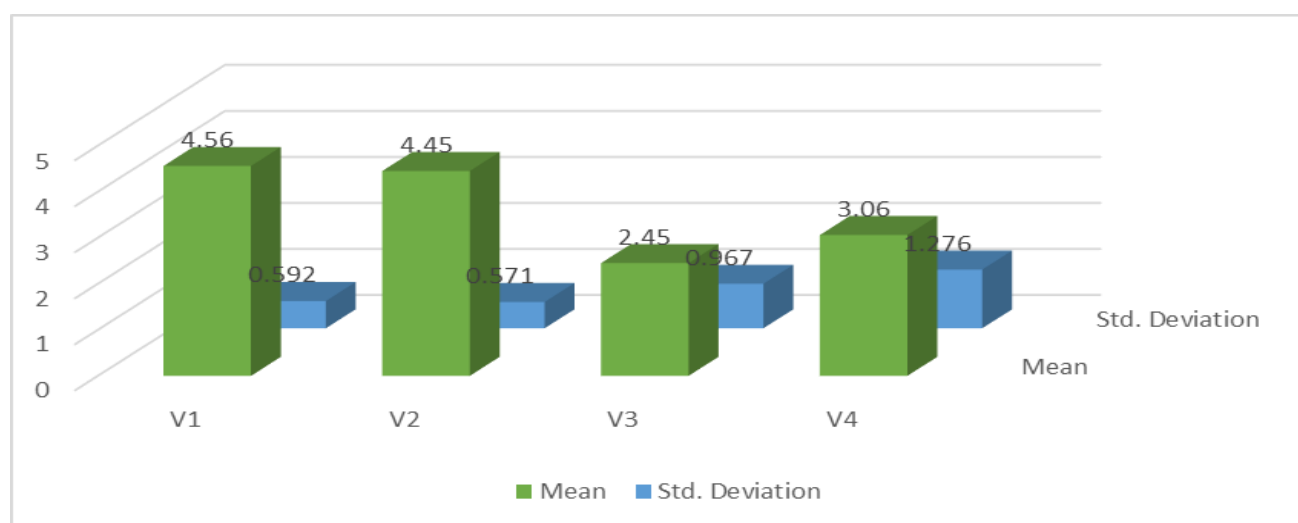
**Table (2) ) Vocabulary Acquisition**

Items	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
V1	Reading English short stories is a good way to develop students' vocabulary acquisition.	4.56	.592	Strongly Agree
V2	Reading English short stories provide opportunity for EFL learners to learn vocabulary through context.	4.45	.571	Strongly Agree
V3	Reading short stories does not help students focus on both the form as well as the meaning of words.	2.45	.967	Disagree
V4	While reading stories, vocabulary can only be acquired through guessing the meaning from the text.	3.06	1.276	Moderate
Grand Mean		3.6312	.54537	Agree

1-1.8=Strongly Disagree 1.8-2.6=Disagree 2.6-3.4=Moderate 3.4-4.2=Agree 4.2 -5=Strongly Agree

Table 2 and Figure 1 illustrate the respondents' mean scores and their standard deviations for the items of vocabulary acquisition. The items with the highest scores are V1 (mean = 4.56, SD= .592), followed by V2 (mean = 4.45, SD = .571) and V4 (mean = 3.06, SD= 1.276), while the item with the lowest score is V3 (Mean = 2.45, SD = .967). The grand mean of all items is 3.6312 with SD of .54537. This result shows a high score of all items of the vocabulary acquisition and indicates that the majority of the respondents agreed reading English short stories can help develop students' vocabulary acquisition.

**Figure (1) Vocabulary Acquisition**



**Table (3) Table (3) Reading Comprehension**

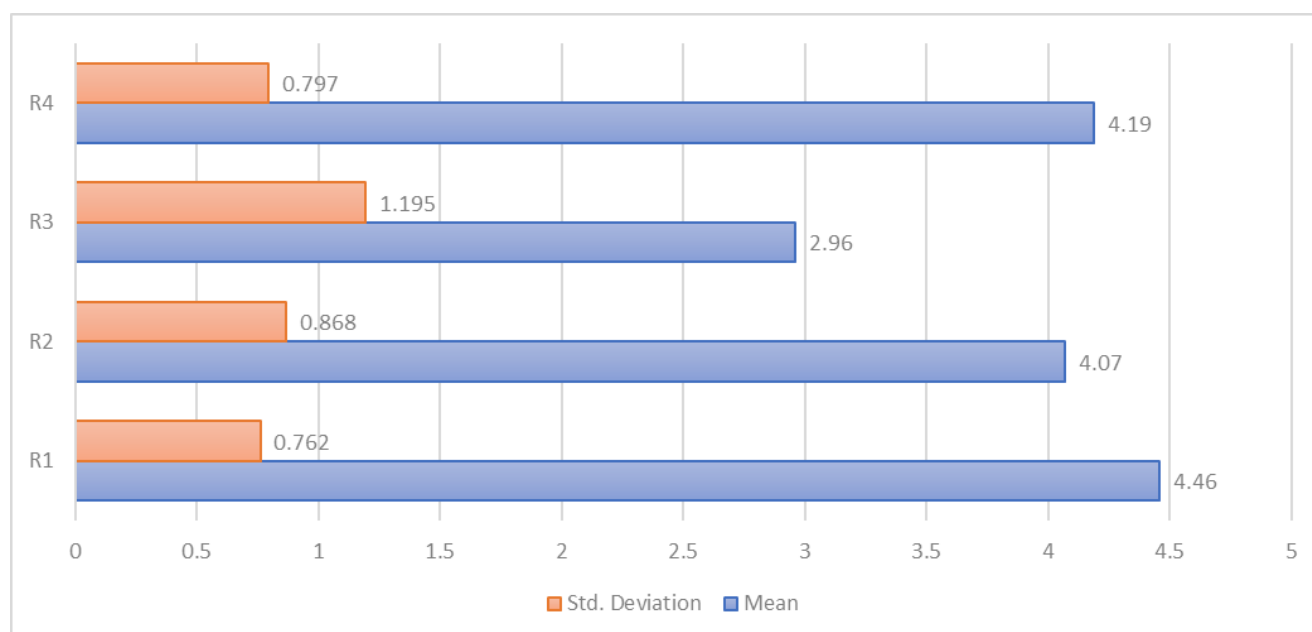
Items	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
R1	Reading English short stories help students increase their reading comprehension.	4.46	.762	Strongly Agree
R2	There is a direct relationship between reading English short stories and students' comprehension abilities.	4.07	.868	Agree
R3	Reading Comprehension could only be achieved through reading English short	2.96	1.195	Moderate

	stories.			
R4	Reading comprehension inspires students to evaluate stories critically.	4.19	.797	Agree
Grand Mean		3.9219	.56758	Agree

1-1.8=Strongly Disagree 1.8-2.6=Disagree 2.6-3.4=Moderate 3.4-4.2=Agree 4.2 -5=Strongly Agree

Table 3 and Figure 2 show the items of Reading Comprehension with the mean and standard deviation of each item. The item with the highest score is R1 with a mean of 4.46 and SD of .762, followed by R4 with a mean of 4.19 and SD of .797 and item R2 with a mean of 4.07 and SD of .868, while the item with the lowest score is R3 with a mean of 2.96 and SD 1.195. the grand mean is 3.9219 with SD of .56758. From this value, it can be inferred the majority of the respondents agreed that reading English short stories have greater effect in developing student's reading comprehension which is a positive indicator.

**Figure (2) Reading Comprehension**



**Table (4) Pronunciation Skill**

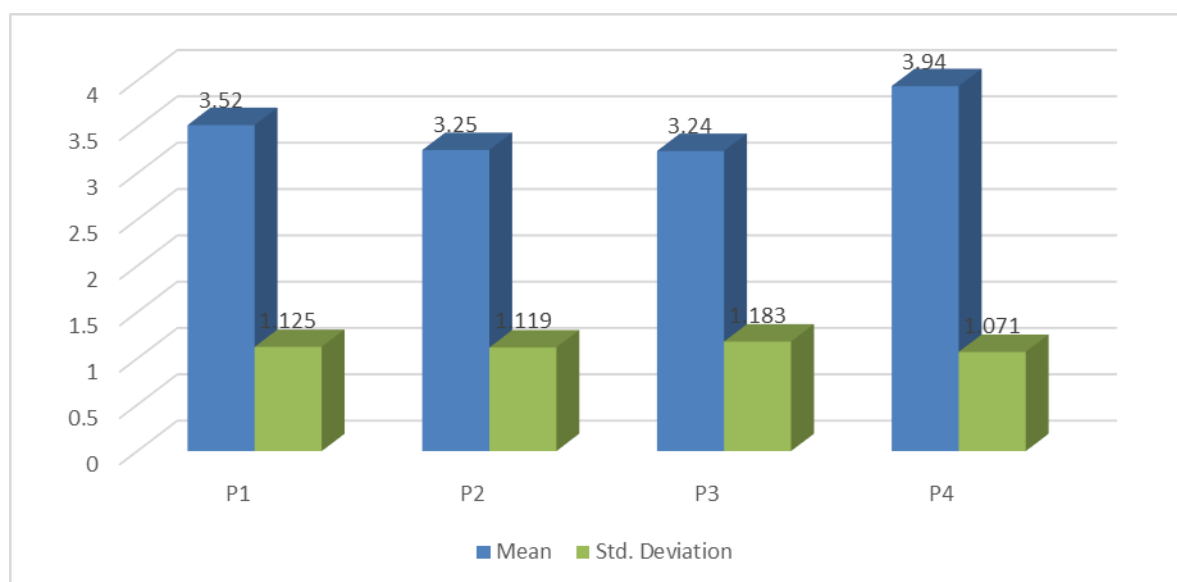
Items	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
P1	Reading English short stories is a great way to enhance students' pronunciation skill.	3.52	1.125	Agree
P2	Students think learning how to pronounce words while reading stories is too complex and boring.	3.25	1.119	Moderate
P3	Teachers do not pay enough attention to English pronunciation while teaching short stories.	3.24	1.183	Moderate
P4	Having good pronunciation skill can help language learners read stories more quickly.	3.94	1.071	Agree
Grand Mean		3.4875	.69912	Agree

1.8=Strongly Disagree 1.8-2.6=Disagree

2.6-3.4=Moderate 3.4-4.2=Agree 4.2 -5=Strongly Agree

Table 4 and Figure 3 depict the mean and standard deviations of Pronunciation Skill dimensions. The item with the highest score is P4 with a mean of 3.94 and SD of 1.071 which is a good indicator, followed by P1 that carries a mean of 3.52 and SD of 1.125 which is another positive indicator. The third item with the highest score in rank is P2 with a mean of 3.25 and SD of 1.119 which shows moderation. The item with the lowest score is P3 with a mean of 3.24 and SD of 1.183. The grand mean is 3.4875 with SD of .69912. Therefore, this value indicates a positive agreement on how reading English short stories affects students' Pronunciation skill development.

**Figure (3) Pronunciation Skill**



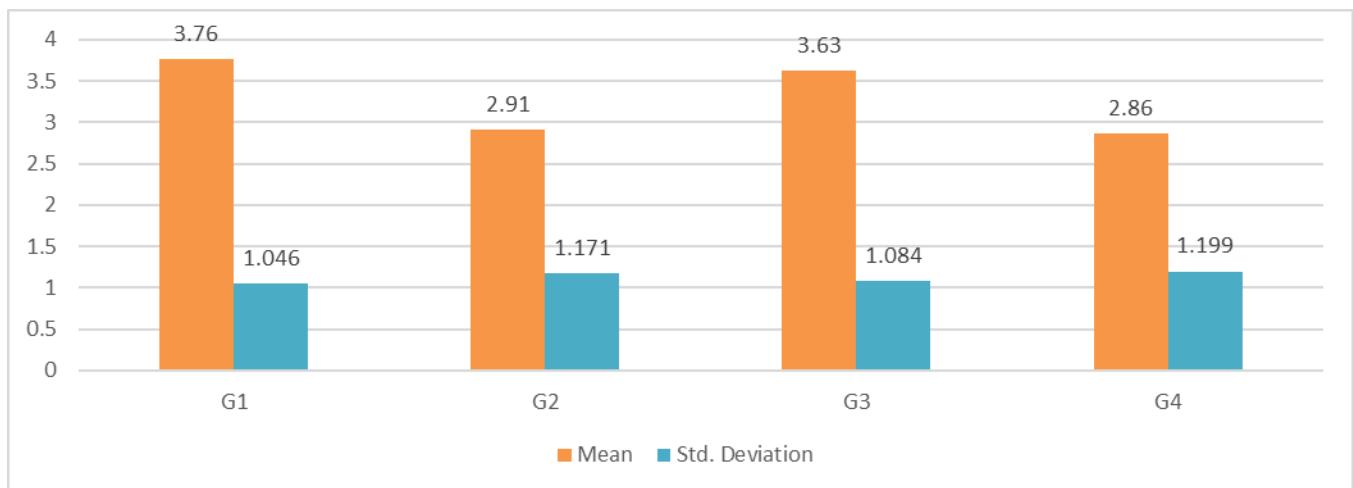
**Table (5) Grammatical Knowledge**

Items	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
G1	Reading short stories plays a crucial role in increasing students' grammatical knowledge.	3.76	1.046	Agree
G2	Students do not come across a variety of grammatical structures when reading English short stories.	2.91	1.171	Moderate
G3	There is a correlation between reading short stories and grammar learning.	3.63	1.084	Agree
G4	Learners do not need the grammatical aspect of the language while reading short stories.	2.86	1.199	Moderate
Grand Mean		3.2906	.59990	Moderate

1-1.8=Strongly Disagree    1.8-2.6=Disagree    2.6-3.4=Moderate    3.4-4.2=Agree    4.2-5=Strongly Agree

Table 5 and the figure below demonstrate the mean and standard deviations of the respondents' scores on the four items of Grammatical Knowledge. There are considerably lower scores on items of this section comparing to other sections. The item with the highest score is G1 with a mean of 3.76, SD of 1.046. The second item is G3 with a mean of 3.63 and SD of 1.084 and the third item is G2 which carries a mean of 2.91, SD of 1.171. the item with the lowest score is G4 having a mean of 2.86 and SD of 1.199. The Grand Mean is 3.2906 with a standard deviation of .59990. Thus, from the values above, although most respondents showed moderation in this section, there is still a positive indication that reading English short stories can effect EFL students' Grammatical Knowledge.

**Figure (4) Grammatical Knowledge**



## 5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

In general, almost all the respondents understand the concept of reading English Short Stories in Developing Skills for EFL Students. The areas that the study focused were the skills that students acquire while reading English short stories, including vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, pronunciation skill and grammatical knowledge.

The study uncovered the majority of the respondents agreed that Reading English short stories is a good way to develop students' vocabulary acquisition. It also revealed significantly that reading English short stories provide an opportunity for EFL learners to learn vocabulary through context.

Regarding the issue of reading comprehension, the study underlined that most of the respondents agreed reading English short stories help students increase their reading comprehension. Also, the study strongly

agreed that there is a direct relationship between reading English short stories and students' comprehension abilities.

Concerning the issue of pronunciation, the majority of the respondents agreed that reading English short stories is a great way to enhance students' pronunciation skill. Similarly, they strongly agreed that teachers do not pay enough attention to English pronunciation while teaching short stories.

Finally, regarding the aspect of grammatical knowledge, the study revealed that reading short stories plays a crucial role in increasing students' grammatical knowledge. Also, it emphasized there is a correlation between reading short stories and grammar learning, which provides a positive indication. On the other hand, the study disagreed with the issue concerning students coming across a variety of grammatical structures when reading English short stories.

On the basis of the findings that have been established and conclusion drawn from the study, the researcher thinks following recommendations are necessary:

- Curriculum designers have to consider continuity, sequence, and integration in building learning materials using short stories.
- Teachers need to be trained on how to develop and present stories through using the required skills such as vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension.
- Learners should be exposed to the grammatical and pronunciation aspects of the language while reading short stories.
- Language Teachers must realize that they can use short stories in English classes as vehicles for practicing language skills.
- Conduct further research on how reading English short stories can develop skills for EFL students in Somalia.

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