

The Role of Audio Narration and Visual Aids in Teaching Short Stories in Algerian Middle School

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Abstract:

This study examines the impact of integrating technology, specifically audio narration and visual aids, in teaching short stories to Algerian middle school students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Hence, short stories offer an engaging medium to enhance language skills and literary appreciation, while innovative tools help foster critical thinking and interpretative abilities. In this study, 70 second-year pupils were divided into two groups: one taught with traditional methods and the other with audio-visual aids. Using questionnaires, interviews, and listening assessments, results show that students exposed to audio-narration and paintings demonstrated higher engagement and comprehension. Indeed, teachers reported that these methods enriched the learning environment, highlighting the potential of technology to improve literary education outcomes in EFL contexts.

Keywords: Short story, literature, audio-narration, innovation, paintings and images.

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1.Introduction:

Teachers can find in short stories a definite friend they are important in ELT and regarded as a significant pedagogical tool for both teaching and learning. Students mainly in middle schools have a lot of difficulties in developing the target language that is to say receptive and productive Skills with a high level of anxiety or less motivation that frustrate them. Short stories seem generally interesting among teenagers at the beginning of studies and fruitful for experts and linguistics from developing the vocabulary, memorising the spelling of the word, reading skills to the critical thinking but also seems a sort of delight and enjoyment for them.

While the integration of literature, particularly short stories, is heralded as a crucial pedagogical tool, traditional teaching methodologies remain prevalent, often stifling student engagement and hindering linguistic proficiency. Since, not all students feel comfortable while dealing with short stories where the vocabulary may seem quite hard even the huge long of pages that takes a lot of time. So in the context of Algerian middle schools, where learners grapple with the complexities of a second language, the reliance on conventional storytelling techniques may exacerbate existing anxieties and motivational deficits. This raises a critical question: How can teachers effectively harness the potential of literature to advance a more dynamic and supportive learning environment that resonates with the needs of contemporary students?

Nowadays with the advancement of technology audio narration may be the key solution where it is very beneficial to students by boosting their motivation and making learning more pleasant to the direct effect on memory and acquisition of vocabulary and grammar rules. It may seem a big step in teaching literature and developing speaking or listening skills also on improving students pronunciation. By the same token, painting and images known as visual aids are also effective and supporting for the comprehension of the story and teenagers almost find it funny and joyful. Therefore, the present study seeks to address this pressing issue by shedding light on teaching short stories at Algerian middle schools and comparing between the innovative and the classical method of teaching where the teacher is the story teller. So this includes investigating the transformative potential of innovative teaching approaches that incorporate technology and multimedia resources, specifically audio narration and visual aids, in the instruction of short stories. Therefore, the primary objective is to elucidate the impact of these modern pedagogical strategies on language acquisition, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills among middle school learners. All while juxtaposing the efficacy of traditional storytelling with that of technology-enhanced methods, this research aims to identify which approaches are more conducive to achieving desired learning outcomes and fostering an enriching educational experience. To that end, the significance of this study extends beyond mere academic inquiry, indeed, it aspires to contribute to the reformation of teaching practices within the EFL context.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Short Stories as a Tool in ELT: Storytelling as a Teaching Tool

The use of literature in ELT (English Language Teaching) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms has become widely accepted, tracing its roots back to the 19th-century grammar-translation method. Despite its early significance, literature was largely excluded from language teaching approaches like the direct, audio-lingual, and alternative methods, such as Community Language Learning and Total Physical Response, which emerged prominently in the 1970s due to their focus on structural and linguistic principles

(Erkaya, 2005, p. 2). Consequently, literature was also sidelined in many ELT/EFL curricula. However, in the 1980s, this trend reversed as literature regained importance in language teaching, valued not only for enhancing communicative competence but also for fostering critical thinking, cultural understanding, and appreciation for the target language's social context (Pardede, 2011, p.15).

By the 1990s, literature became a fixture in curricula with a shifted approach, focusing on developing students' language skills. Collie and Slater (1991) emphasize that literature's inclusion in ELT/EFL offers four main advantages: authenticity, cultural enrichment, language advancement, and personal growth (Turan & Çolak, 2018). Literature, as an authentic resource, exposes learners to naturally occurring language use, allowing them to engage with unmodified language beyond classroom norms. This exposure benefits learners in both classroom settings and real-world language application. Additionally, literature encourages interaction, as its multilayered meanings prompt discussions, fostering student engagement and personal connection. Through literature, students not only deepen their language awareness by analyzing complex linguistic forms, but they also engage with cultural values and personal growth, broadening their understanding of the world outside the classroom.

According to Lindsay Clandfield (2011), the use of literature in language classes provides a unique motivation due to its high cultural value, offering learners a sense of achievement in comprehending esteemed texts. Literature thus plays a vital role in helping students grasp language through immersive, real-world experiences, illustrating societal relationships where the language is spoken, even within fictional contexts (Pardede, 201, p. 17).

Therefore, storytelling is a fundamental teaching method, timeless in its appeal and effectiveness. Despite modern adaptations like television, the live, oral tradition remains unparalleled. Hence, stories expose learners to authentic language beyond classroom "teacherese," spanning a full linguistic spectrum, from simple to literary expressions. Indeed, listening to oral stories uniquely builds listening skills and familiarizes learners with natural, spontaneous speech. Moreover, as the oldest form of literature, traditional tales convey cultural heritage, preserving values, fears, and aspirations across generations, fostering deep cultural understanding and appreciation (Pedersen, 1995).

2.2. Pedagogical Benefits of Short Stories in ELT: Enhancing Language Acquisition and Reducing Anxiety

Storytelling offers listeners an immersive experience, fostering empathy with past events and connections with different cultures, which illuminates the motives and behaviors that shape human interactions. Despite this, storytellers often prioritize the emotional benefits of their art over its cognitive value. As Augusta Baker and Ellin Greene (1977, p.17) assert, storytelling's primary purpose lies in nurturing "a sense of wonder, of mystery, of reverence for life," with cognitive enrichment as a secondary effect.

With this regard, some studies have examined how storytelling impacts the development of receptive and productive skills in a second language, alongside its effects on L2 grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Oral storytelling is believed to enable the segmentation of text into tonal units, pinpoint tonic syllables of essential information, and differentiate between known details (which are less emphasized) and storyline shifts that introduce new information or offer fresh perspectives on familiar content. As a result, storytelling is argued to help young learners become more attuned to rhythm and intonation in language (Ghafar, 2024).

That is to say that in the context of English Language Teaching (ELT), short stories serve as a valuable tool, helping teachers create engaging learning environments. Hence, these stories support language acquisition by strengthening receptive and productive skills while reducing

the common anxieties or motivation gaps that often hinder middle school students. For instance, the development of vocabulary, spelling, reading comprehension, and critical thinking all benefit from exposure to short stories, which offer enjoyment and motivation to learners. However, students may feel challenged by the complex vocabulary or the length of stories, which can deter their interest (Nair & Yunus, 2021).

2.3. Technology Integration and Short Stories: The Role of Audio Narration and Use of Visual Aids

The advent of technology provides solutions here, with audio narrations making literature more accessible (Sadik, 2008). Indeed, audio tools can improve vocabulary acquisition, memory retention, and grammar comprehension while enhancing pronunciation and listening skills (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Additionally, incorporating visual aids like images or paintings further supports understanding, transforming stories into lively, engaging experiences that students find enjoyable. Hence, storytelling is a living art form, much like music or dance, and, as Ruth Sawyer (1951, p.26) emphasizes, requires storytellers to explore their unique talents. Ultimately, storytelling's power lies in its ability to craft shared human experiences, brought to life through each storyteller's style and interaction with the audience. Consequently, teachers enable students to engage with sensitive topics, such as coexistence, differences, tolerance, xenophobia, and racism (Benabbes & Abu Taleb, 2024). Furthermore, according to UNESCO (2010), the learning of living together constitutes a fundamental educational mission. In this context, short stories present a unique opportunity to discuss linguistic and cultural elements, thereby fostering the development of learners' oral interaction skills and critical thinking (Benabbes & Abu Taleb, 2024).

In light of this principle, the current study aligns itself with these objectives by examining the extent to which storytelling, particularly through the use of technology and innovative teaching aids such as audio narration and visual artwork, can influence language acquisition, foster critical thinking, and enhance social skills among middle school students learning English as a foreign language. So, this study sheds light on the teaching of short stories in Algerian middle schools; moreover, it emphasizes the necessity of comparing this innovative approach with classical teaching methods, in which the teacher traditionally assumes the role of the storyteller.

3. Methodology

The present study was done in 2017 at the level of middle school in Sidi Bel Abbes in Algeria where 60 pupils were included from both sexes at the level of second-year middle school. A survey was designed in order to illustrate pupils' opinions, views, and attitudes toward the use of audio narration and painting as well as teaching short stories.

The participants were informed about the process and guided, firstly, a questionnaire was administered, including different aspects of the research, and a pre-activity and post-activity were designed. In this section, the sample was divided into two groups where the first one (30 learners) will be exposed to the traditional teaching of short stories in which the teacher plays the role of a storyteller. Meanwhile, the other half (30 learners) will be taught through audio narration and painting. Yet, both groups will have the same activities (pre-listening, while listening, and post-listening) through two different methods about Alice Munoz' "Child's Play" in order to effectively compare which method fits teenagers' needs and interests and helps to achieve the learning objectives.

4. Results and discussion:

As previously stated the present study investigates the integration of audio narration and visual aids, such as painting and images, in teaching short stories to middle school learners in Algeria. In this section students' preferences, challenges, and experiences are being explored since the aim is to assess the efficacy of these innovative methods in enhancing comprehension and engagement among young learners. So the findings from the survey reveal significant aspects regarding students' enjoyment of narratives, and their perceptions of various teaching methods. So, the data presented below highlight key trends and themes that emerge from the participants' responses, thereby providing an overview of how audio narration and visual aids can transform the teaching and learning experience in language teaching.

4.1. Students' Survey

We will review first the answers to the questionnaire question by question:

Q.1 What is your gender ?

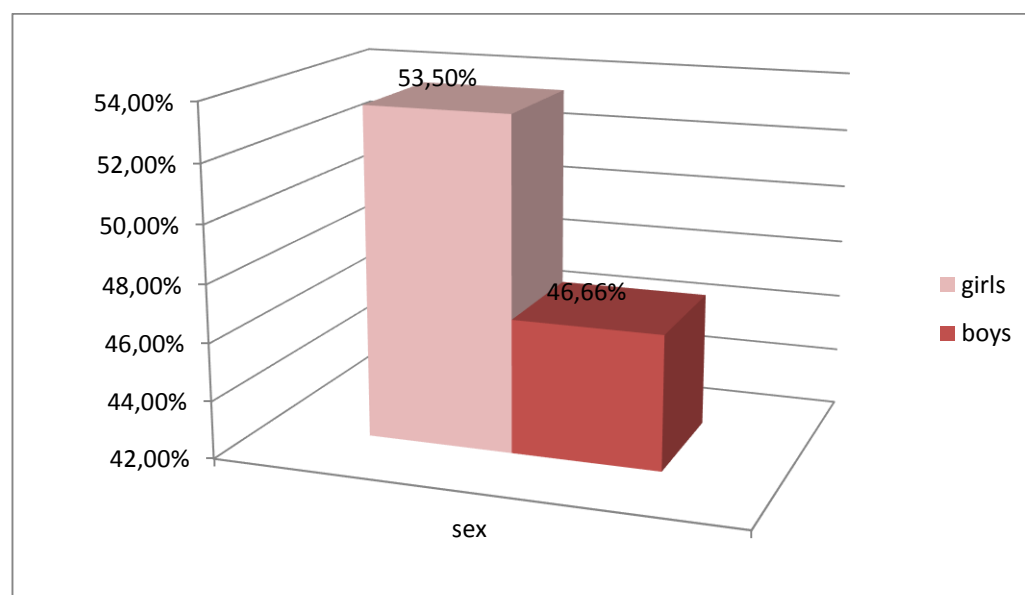


Figure 1: Gender of the sample

The population of the study contains a majority of 53.5.% girls and a minority of 46.6% boys, in fact Algerian middle schools are crowded by girls and standing to statistics recently done by the ministry of health each year 1boy is born in parallel 4 girls are born.

Q. 2 Do you like stories?

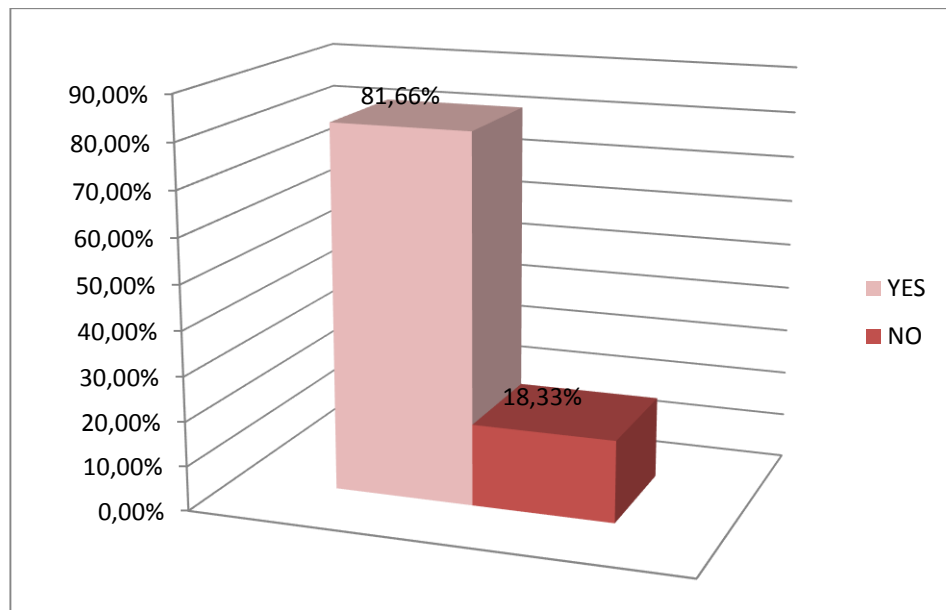


Figure 2: Acceptance of short stories among the participant

The majority of learners like stories because they find it enjoyable in the whole and fit their interest more than holding a book which may seem quite difficult with the complex vocabulary and figure of speech and the unexpected plot of the stories through a long pages that consume time and mental effort to comprehend and grasp the story regarding to their humble level of language as being beginners. Indeed, some students find reading boring and a big task with a lot of gap between lines.

Q.3. What kind of stories do you like?

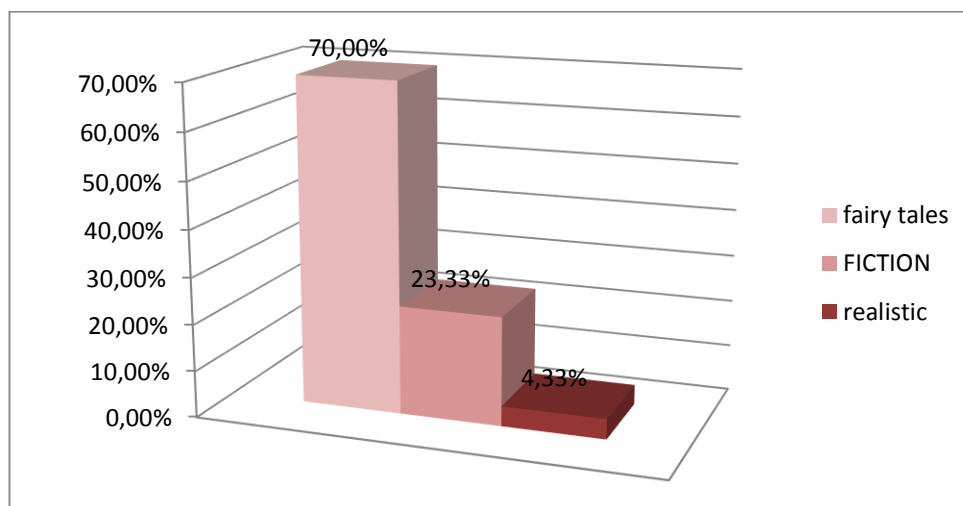


Figure 3: Preferred types of stories among participants

Since the majority of the sample are girls so it was fairly logical that around 70% prefer fairy tales as first choice than 23.33% of them enjoy reading fiction while only 4.33% are attracted by realistic short stories. The taste and the choice of stories is related to several facts mainly the nature of personality, the gender and psychological elements.

Q.4 What is your preferred method for learning short stories: audio narration or traditional reading?

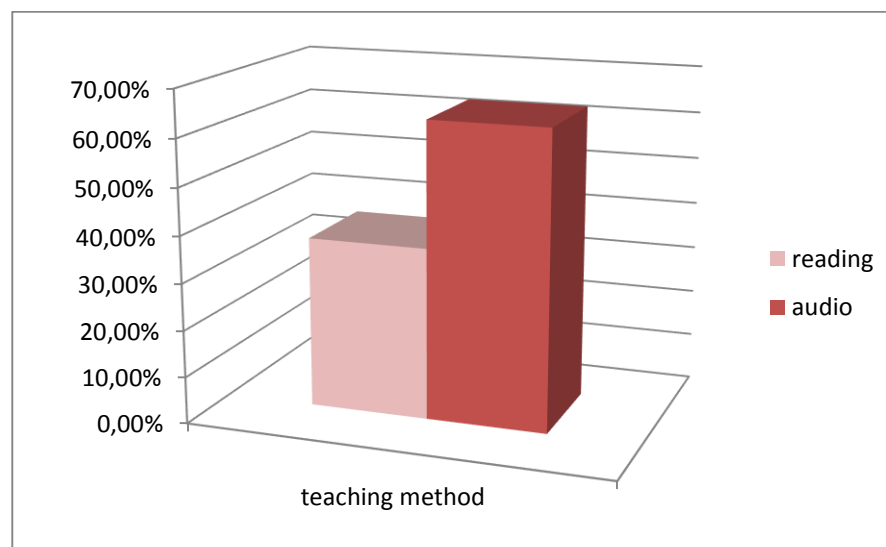


Figure 4: Method of teaching short stories

Nowadays teenagers are attracted by the visual world and the digital fashion that is why middle school pupils express that they like more the audio-narration that seems a source of joy , near to native speaking and imagination of plots through the voice intonation stress that create a sort of suspense and foreshadowing while the others prefer classical reading that seems quite safe and familiar to rely only on the voice of teacher or classmate.

Q.5 How easy or difficult do you find short stories to understand?

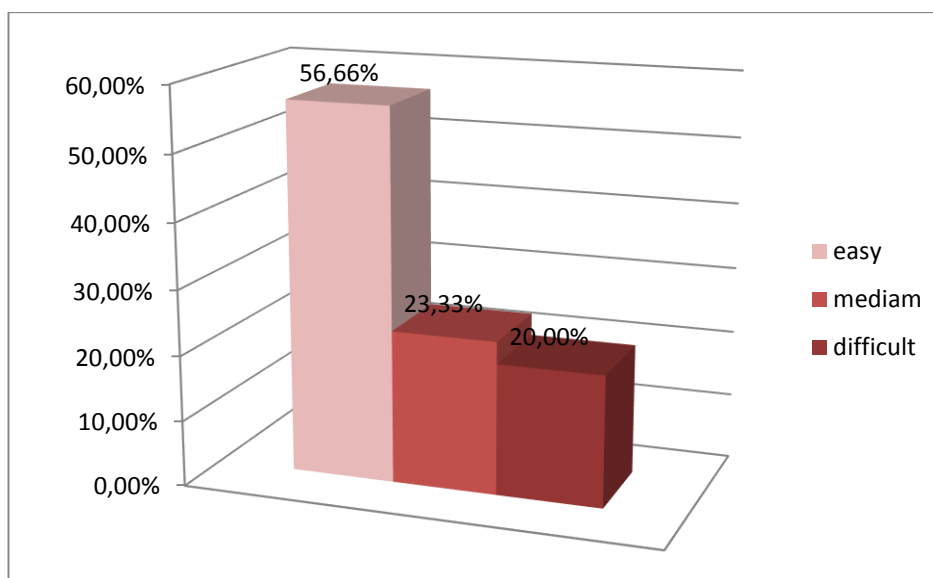


Figure 5: Level of difficulty of short stories

Middle schools Teachers should be selective and own awareness about the level of difficulty , topic and even the length of the extracted text taking into consideration the level of their students whether it is suitable or not which may explain that more than the half of pupils found it easy 56%whereas 20% feel it difficult . When some pupils find it clear, others claim

that short stories cannot be understood without the use of dictionary, and it is difficult to comprehend t their level.

Q.6 Do you like painting and images?

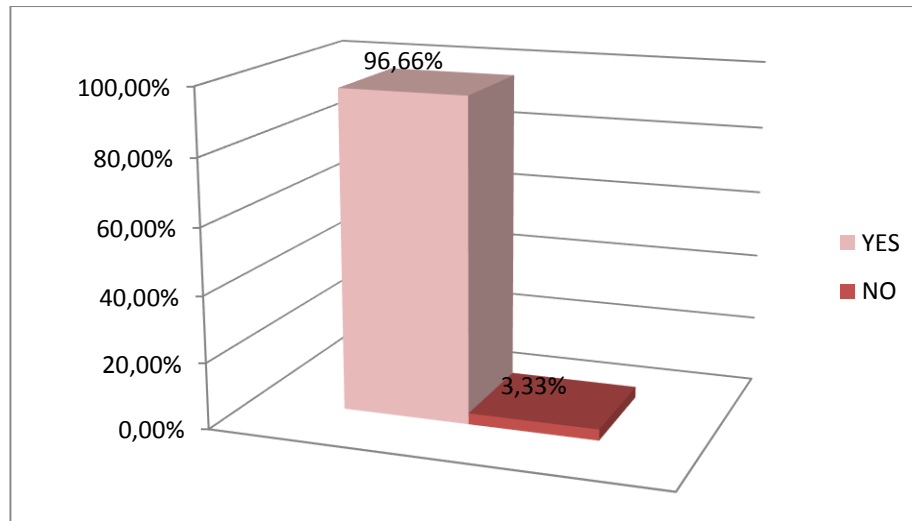


Figure 6: Preferences for visual aids in learning

The data presented in Figure 6 reveal that middle school pupils are enthusiastic about using painting and images in their learning. Indeed, visual aids enhance the connection between students' cognitive processes and their emotional responses, fostering a more engaging learning environment. As teenagers middle school pupils adore pinning up painting and images on the board to illustrate everything and that visual charm that connect the eye with the mind and then memory to be memorised in the repertoire of language without denying the fact of creating an enjoyable climate inside classroom and boost their motivation to break the ice and make them interested in learning the language of Shakespeare.

Q.7 How do you find the use images and paintings while learning ?

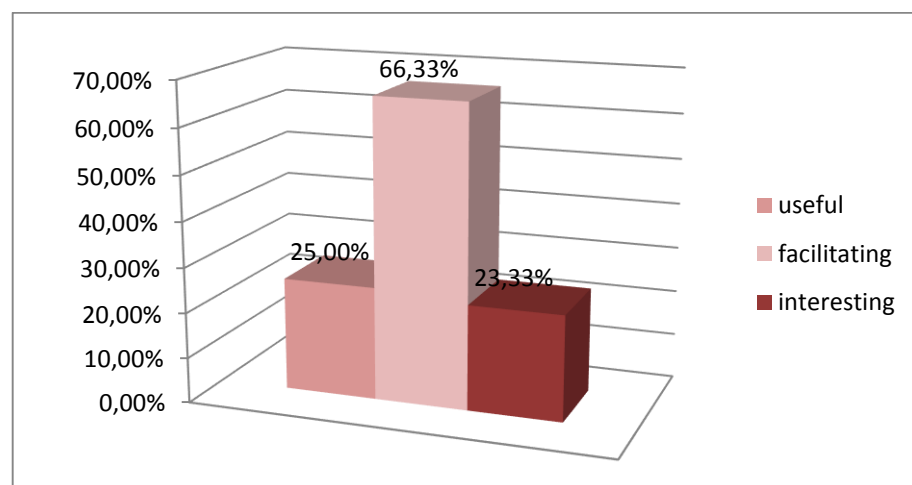


Figure 7: the role of painting and images

The survey demonstrate that pupils find painting and images a facilitating tools that aid them too much making their ear clearly pick out sounds and articulation which help their

minds in comprehension and touches their interest. Thus it fosters their receptive and even productive skills.

Q.8 Do you like the use of technology in classroom?

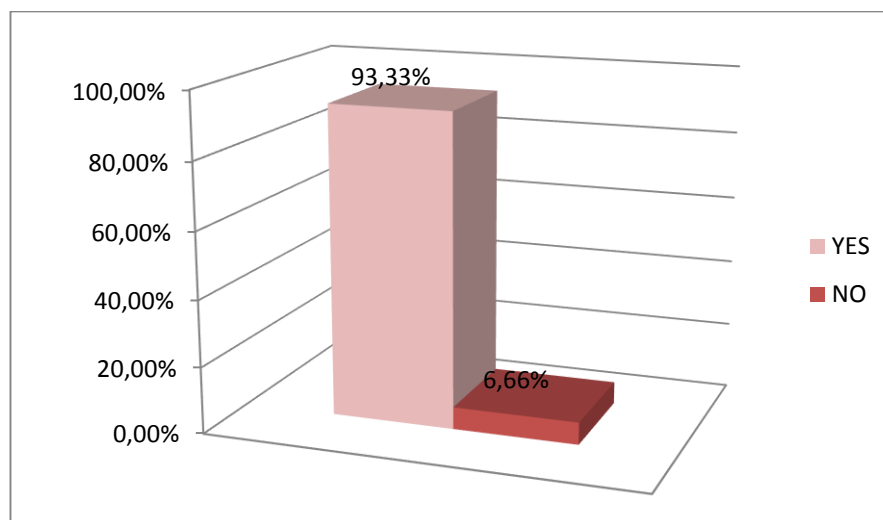


Figure 8: The use of technology in English class

Figure 8 indicates that students overwhelmingly appreciate the incorporation of technology in their English classes. The integration of digital tools not only modernizes the learning experience but also significantly motivates students, with 98.33% affirming that technology aids their understanding of the material (see Figure 9).

Q.9 Does the use of technology motivate you to follow the lecture in the classroom?

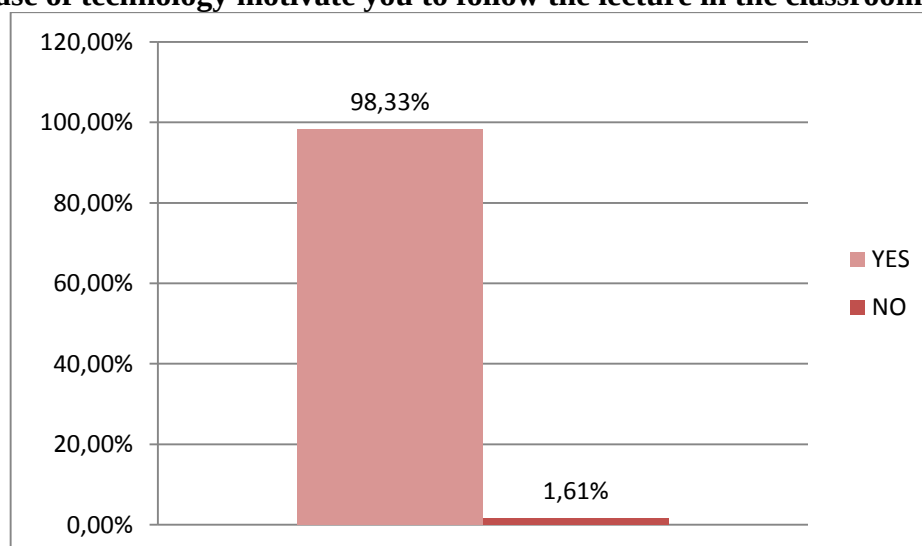
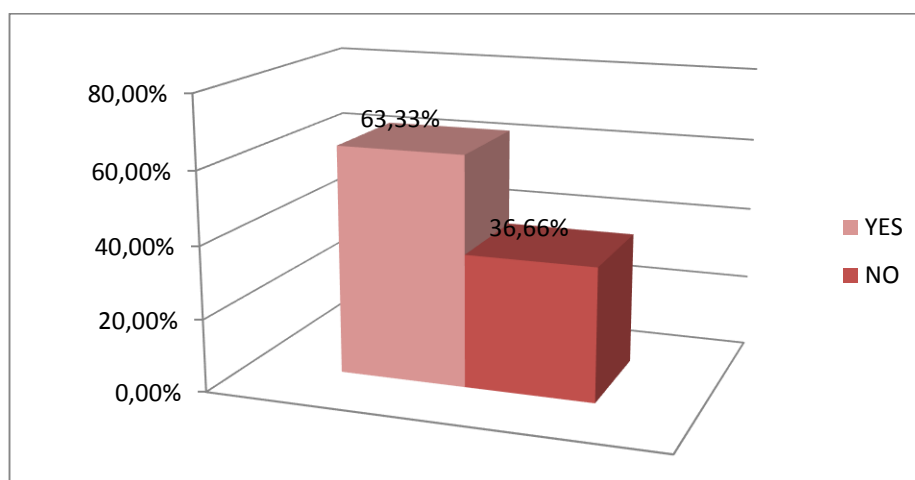
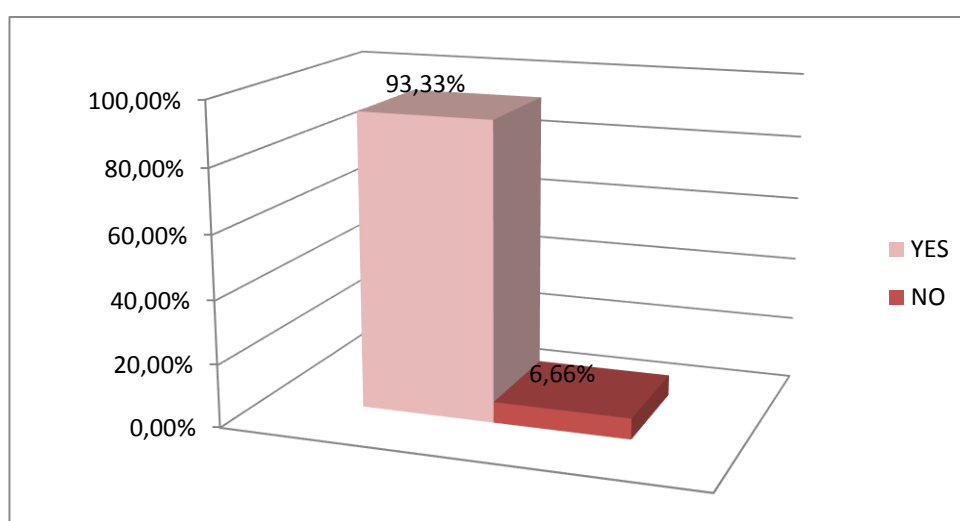


Figure 9: Impact of technology on student engagement in the classroom

Recent curriculum and program put an emphasis on motivating and integrating learners to be the owner of their classroom and their learning by adapting several tools and instrument and the guidance of teachers. Indeed, technology can be the easiest and the shortest way can teachers cross to quickly achieve the desired learning objectives and goals. Besides its benefits this tool is largely accepted among the pupils when 98.33% of them confirmed that it motivates them and pushes them forward to understand the story.

Q.10 Do you like audio narration?**Figure10: Attitudes toward audio narration**

More than the half of population reclaimed that they really like the audio narration when dealing with short stories and view it effective and fruitful in comprehending the story and manipulating their potential and capacities in improving their level of English and enriching their linguistic repertoire.

Q.11 Does this material help you to understand more the story?**Figure 11: The role of using audio narration in teaching short stories**

Audio-narration by the use of the attractive voice and the typical intonation plays a crucial role in holding learners on a fresh environment where their thoughts and imagery world can meet to build up a strong relationship together. Accordingly, pupils like playing with words, sounds and colours which explain the obtained results where it comes that the majority of them (93.33%) show their attraction by the audio-narration while dealing with short stories that world full of imagination, fiction, magic, the power of words, the wind of sounds by that deep voice audio-narrating this is that charm that bring those teenagers into its side and oblige them politely to follow and not just to hear but to listen carefully.

4.2. Teachers' Interview:

As guides and facilitators, teachers are the most knowledgeable about what happens inside the classroom while dealing with short stories; they are aware of each corner of their classes, including their pupils' needs, weaknesses, and strongest points. The teachers said that they have sometimes used short stories to target a new atmosphere and attract learners because they know how much their pupils love stories. However, some of them declared that they have never used short stories and they don't think they will use them. In addition, they indicate that, according to their experience, they agree to teach short stories at the middle school level simply because of their effectiveness in boosting learners' willingness and expanding their imagination. They also stated that short stories help them face different situations in a shorter time compared to long stories. Whereas others stated that short stories do not develop the topic as thoroughly as the long ones. While asking teachers if they feel at ease using traditional methods when teaching short stories, they claim that it can be easy for both teachers and learners if the topic covers the level of both groups. Others use both methods to teach short stories, depending on the story itself and, more importantly, if the visual aids are available and accessible in the school due to the lack of such aids. Some teachers confirmed that the use of audio narration and painting is an attractive and fruitful method for them because it involves the use of colours and pictures. Besides, they claimed that since using painting and images is not a verbal task, it offers the gifted learners a chance to showcase their talents in painting, helping them to empower their self-confidence and create a delightful climate outside the classroom.

Conclusion:

Literature is discovering something extraordinary about ordinary people and saying with ordinary words something extraordinary. Short stories are that nice space in this world where images, painting, and audio narration can play an interrelated role to simplify and illustrate literature and connect minds with emotional words that beautifully beat with the harmony of life, taking middle school learners to Alice's world, making them dream and amplifying their awareness about societies, reality, and experiences. The traditional method, yet, is time-consuming, boring, and involves complexity of words, where pupils may lose attention and motivation because nothing can attract them except the voice of their teachers. With that huge mental effort, pupils find themselves lost between lines and pages. Far from teacher-centeredness, audio narration and images involve pupils in manipulating their background and using their capacities to enhance their receptive and productive skills under the guidance of the teacher. This is what the current investigation confirmed, where middle school pupils expressed the worth of audio narration and images while dealing with short stories in this wide world behind closed doors. Teachers, then, are responsible for giving the right key to learners in order to open those doors. Based on this research, it is recommended that this new technique involving visual aids and technology be implemented, and teachers should be trained on how to use it, when, and what is needed to pick up its benefits for teaching at this level. From teacher-pupil to guide-lecturer leaders, the role of both has completely changed; teachers, as monitors, facilitators, and even participants, have abandoned spoon-feeding pupils and giving them cooked-up dishes. Instead, they should be selective and choose what fits their learners' needs and interests, without denying even the length of the selected texts. Pupils, then, should play an interactive and negotiating role while dealing with

short stories. It's high time that technology and visual aids should be available and accessible in all middle schools to make this technique effective in teaching in general and dealing with short stories specifically.

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