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# **USING SHORT STORIES TO ENHANCE ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS OF YEAR THREE TAMIL SCHOOL PUPILS: A CASE STUDY**

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**THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER (TEACHING ENGLISH AS SECOND LANGUAGE)  
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**FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION  
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## ABSTRACT

This study was aimed to investigate how short stories assist Year Three Tamil school pupils to enhance their English speaking skills. Besides that, it was also conducted to investigate how these short stories help Year Three Tamil school pupils to enrich their English vocabulary in speaking. Qualitative approach with descriptive case study design was used to collect the data for this study. Four participants consisting of two boys and two girls were selected based on their oral assessment tests. Four short stories such as 'Si Tanggang the Ungrateful Son', 'Midas Touch', 'Pinocchio' and 'Thumbelina', with different cultural background and genres were chosen and used in this study. These short stories were simple and written from the perspective of the pupils that provide positive and appropriate social behaviour and moral values. The data collection tools used were observation notes, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were conducted not only to gather information on the participants involved but also to collect data. Video recording was one of the vital tool used in this study. It has been done to record participants' feedback and bodily-based behaviour as it allows better understanding of the different aspects surrounding the problem under investigation. The information gathered from the instruments was further analysed and triangulated to report the phenomena in a narrative form. The theoretical framework for this study was designed based on the combination of Language Learning Strategies and Cognitive Theories of Vygotsky (1962), Piaget (1970), Brunner (1983) and Mc Laughlin (1987). Besides that, Theories of Speaking by Bygate (1987) and Harmer (2001) were used to analyse the data obtained. Six speaking themes such as facial expression and body language, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, communication and pronunciation were also used to answer the research questions. Participant A achieved the highest score which was Level 4 in Lesson 10 for vocabulary and grammar. As for Participants B, C and D, they were able to achieve Level 3 for grammar in Lesson 10. All the four participants were able to use the words learnt in the four short stories in Lesson 10. The findings show that the use of short stories have positive impact on the students' English speaking skills and vocabulary enrichment. In conclusion, the study implicates that the use of short stories can enhance the speaking skills of Year Three Tamil school pupils.





## **PENGUNAAN CERPEN DAPAT MEMPERTINGKATKAN PENGUASAAN KEMAHIRAN LISAN BAHASA INGGERIS BAGI MURID TAHUN TIGA DI SEKOLAH TAMIL: KAJIAN KES**

### **ABSTRAK**

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyiasat bagaimana penggunaan cerpen dapat membantu murid-murid Tahun Tiga Sekolah Tamil mempertingkatkan penguasaan kemahiran lisan Bahasa Inggeris. Di samping itu, ia juga dijalankan untuk mengkaji bagaimana cerpen dapat meningkatkan perbendaharaan kata Bahasa Inggeris dalam kemahiran lisan. Ini adalah kajian kes deskriptif dan empat peserta telah dipilih berdasarkan ujian penilaian lisan. Peserta kajian terdiri daripada dua lelaki dan dua perempuan. Empat buah cerpen iaitu 'Si Tanggang the Ungrateful Son', 'Midas Touch', 'Pinocchio' dan 'Thumbelina', yang berlatarbelakangkan budaya yang berlainan dipilih untuk kajian ini. Cerpen-cerpen ini mudah difahami dan ditulis dari perspektif murid yang mana menonjolkan tingkah laku sosial yang positif serta nilai-nilai moral yang baik. Teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan adalah pemerhatian, kaji selidik dan temubual semi-berstruktur. Kaji selidik dan temubual semi-berstruktur bukan sahaja digunakan untuk mengumpul informasi tentang peserta kajian, tetapi ia juga digunakan untuk membantu menjelaskan dengan terperinci hasil dapatan kajian. Rakaman video juga telah dibuat untuk merakamkan maklumbalas, kelakuan dan bahasa badan peserta kajian kerana ia membolehkan pemahaman yang lebih baik tentang aspek-aspek yang sedang dikaji. Data yang diperolehi seterusnya di analisis, ditriangulasi dan dilaporkan dalam bentuk naratif. Kerangka teori untuk kajian ini direka berasaskan kombinasi Teori Strategi Pembelajaran Bahasa dan Kognitif oleh Vygotsky (1962), Piaget (1970), Brunner (1983) dan Mc Laughlin (1987). Di samping itu, Teori Pertuturan oleh Bygate (1987) dan Harmer (2001) juga digunakan untuk menganalisa data yang telah diperolehi. Enam tema pertuturan iaitu ekspresi wajah, dan bahasa badan, perbendaharaan kata, tatabahasa, kefasihan, komunikasi dan sebutan juga digunakan untuk menjawab persoalan penyelidikan. Peserta A memperolehi skor tertinggi iaitu Aras 4 untuk perbendaharaan kata dan tatabahasa dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran yang ke-10. Bagi peserta-peserta B, C dan D, mereka telah memperolehi Aras 3 untuk tatabahasa dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran yang ke-10. Kesemua empat peserta dapat menggunakan perkataan-perkataan yang telah dipelajari dalam empat buah cerpen dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran yang ke-10. Hasil dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa penggunaan cerpen memberi impak positif terhadap kemahiran lisan dan perbendaharaan kata Bahasa Inggeris dalam kalangan murid Tahun Tiga Sekolah Tamil. Kesimpulannya, penggunaan cerpen dapat mempertingkatkan penguasaan kemahiran lisan Bahasa Inggeris murid-murid Tahun Tiga Sekolah Tamil.



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

As a global language, English plays a very significant role in one's life such as in education, economy and international relationship. Malaysians are aware that English is needed greatly to help them keep abreast of international affairs. Though it is acclaimed to be an important second language, it is in reality, a compulsory foreign language to most pupils. Being a developing country in the eyes of the world, Malaysia has to produce citizens who are able to communicate effectively and meaningfully in the language that is so universally acknowledged and used. Therefore, it is necessary to adopt a new approach and attitude towards the teaching and learning of the English language. In other words, conventional methods have to be well-integrated with new, communicative techniques that would give pupils wider and more purposeful use and understanding of the language. Not only will pupils gain considerable knowledge, they will also be able to impart knowledge and use their latent skills. With these, they will contribute constructively and successfully towards the betterment of themselves, their society and their nation at large.





In the pursuit of re-establishing and reaffirming the importance of English in the Malaysian school, drastic changes in the education curriculum have been witnessed over the past few years. Therefore, preliminary National Education Blueprint (2013 – 2025) was introduced by the former Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak on the 11th of September 2012. The Blueprint charts the education policies in Malaysia for the next 17 years and focuses on 11 shifts to transform the education system. The Blueprint is meant to ensure Malaysia's ability to compete globally with other developed nations. Among these shifts, Shift 2 is concerned with ensuring that every child is proficient in Bahasa Malaysia and the English language (National Education Blueprint, 2012, E-10). Among the strategies outlined in Shift 2 include the 'upskilling' of English language teachers and expanding the opportunities for more exposure to English at primary and secondary school level. The English Literature component is foregrounded in the Blueprint and is given the role of promoting English proficiency. This role of literature as an avenue to improve English proficiency has often been highlighted. For example, the Prime Minister particularly emphasized this role of English Literature in one of his speeches in reference to the Blueprint:

"English (language) is a reality; (it is) not a zero sum game but an asset if we can speak well in English," he said. He added that English Literature can help improve proficiency in the language and suggested that students could start with abridged version of Shakespeare. "If this is too hard, you can even start with Enid Blyton," he said during his speech before launching the preliminary report on the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 here on Tuesday. (Chapman, 2012))





The teaching and learning of literature in English has been through many phases in the Malaysian context, from being the foci, to a point of near extinction only to be foregrounded once again. According to Ministry of Education Malaysia (2010), the 2011 Primary English Language Curriculum is to equip pupils with basic language skills to enable them to communicate effectively in a variety of contexts that are appropriate to the pupils' level of development. In the KSSR curriculum, literature in English is given a prominent role via the Language Arts strand. In the new primary curriculum, the Language Arts strand includes the use of readers in Level One which includes Big Book, the Lady Bird series as well as music, poetry and drama. For Level Two, the Language Arts strand combines both readers and English at Play (literature) component. On top of that, pupils also need to produce simple creative works as well as take part in creative works such as nursery rhymes, action songs, jazz chants and stories. Thus, the focus is both on productive and receptive skills via literary texts and works.

Therefore, stories play an important role in our daily routines and also in our education system. Stories guide us through our whole life and it does not change even when we become teenagers or adults. Stories are everywhere and in anything. Pupils can learn English from the earliest age since they have acquired knowledge and ability to learn other languages. Halliwell (1998) believes that young children do not come to the language classroom empty-handed but they bring with them an already well-established set of instinct, skills and characteristic which will help them to learn another language. Therefore, it is the teacher's responsibility to develop their basic ability through meaningful teaching in improving it.





Stories are one of the best ways for pupils to not only learn the language but also to learn the cultural aspects. In addition, stories help pupils acquire and develop many creativity skills such as prediction, analysing, guessing and assimilation of new vocabulary. In other words, stories give way to pupils to be creative and imaginative.

Thus, the first objective of this study is to investigate whether short stories help Year Three Tamil school pupils to enhance their English speaking skills and the second objective is to investigate how these short stories help Year Three Tamil School pupils enrich their English vocabulary in speaking.

Therefore, in this introductory chapter, the researcher explains the background of the research and school, English Literature and English Language curriculum in Malaysian primary schools, statement of the problem, purpose of the research, significance of the research, limitations of the study and definition of the terms.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Many primary school pupils, especially Tamil school pupils, who do not come from English speaking background, continue to be weak in their oral communicative skills even after completing their primary studies. Some of these pupils feel shy to communicate with their friends and teachers. Therefore, the lack of vocabulary made them lose confidence in using the English Language. It is sad to learn that some of these pupils are good in their studies but unable confidently in English as for them English has become a monotonous, tedious, overbearing and a difficult language governed by many rules that are complicating in structures and forms. To those who come from a





non-English speaking background, it may well appear as a “forced-upon” burden of learning an extra language. With this attitude, they find it difficult to enjoy learning English, and hence, this will lead to their inability to master the language particularly the speaking skill. Not only that, according to Gurnam Kaur (2003), Siti Norlina (2003) and Suriya Kumar (2004), pupils appeared to be passive and were unable to respond critically and creatively on their own. Thus, literature lessons were often too teacher-centred and labelled teachers to be dull and less motivating. This shows that English lessons are becoming less interesting and pupils’ participation in using the language is also becoming less.

The evidence to this claim being the issues of the poor performance of English among non-English speaking undergraduates and graduates in our Malaysian public universities as publicized in the mass-media not long ago. Therefore, to uncover the root of this problem, there is a need to review how language is taught from the early years of a child’s education. Thus, this study is carried out to find out whether short stories can be used to enhance English speaking skills of Year Three Tamil School pupils. Besides that, it is also conducted to find out, whether short stories enrich Year Three Tamil School pupils’ English vocabulary in speaking.

### 1.3 Purpose of the Study

It has become the responsibility of the teacher to promote and create a more effective, realistic, authentic and meaningful learning situation in the classroom. Motivating the pupils to learn with more involvement and fuller interest has become a need. To teach the speaking skill, teachers have been adhering to conventional methods like chain drills, choral reading, substitution tables and simple dialogues. How much one has





gained in practice is a question to be answered. A lot of assumptions have taken place. These boring, monotonous activities not only tire the pupil but also the teacher as well. It is at this juncture, that short stories are used to teach aural-oral skills. Short stories are considered as good resources that can be used in language classroom. Wheeler (2001) believes that stories are a natural part of a child's life. He states that good stories can draw the child's attention, stimulate his/her imagination and his/her desire to use the language. According to Laine (1997) one more important advantage of the use of the story is that in classes where there are pupils who are not motivated by the foreign language and who are low achievers, a story, if it is well-chosen, can change their attitudes to the language as they will think that learning language is interesting and not difficult as they previously would have thought. It is obvious that pupils take to stories quite naturally. A teacher can introduce the use of short stories at any stage to introduce, practise or reinforce vocabulary and language items. They can be used for remedial and enrichment work too.

Pupils will feel free and uninhibited when such an informal learning atmosphere is created. There will be active participation as pupils get a chance to use their abilities and talents. A healthy competitive spirit will surface and there will be peer teaching, learning and positive criticism taking place. Learning English through short stories will become less stressful and more meaningful. Even a shy learner will be encouraged to speak so as to participate and contribute. Hence, this research is conducted among Three Year Three pupils to find out whether using short stories in lessons can actually help in the process of developing the speaking skills, the vital oral skill in learning a language in the school. The researcher also focuses on whether short stories help Year Three Tamil School pupils enrich their English vocabulary in speaking.





The research questions are:

- i) Do short stories help Year Three Tamil School pupils enhance their English speaking skills?
- ii) How do short stories help Year Three Tamil School pupils enrich their English vocabulary in speaking?

#### **1.4 Significance of the research**

According to Richards and Rodgers, Jack C. (1986) acquiring good speaking skill in English is the main concern of many second and foreign language learners, and today's English teacher needs to be well-versed in current approaches to the teaching of the oral skill. A short story session, which is well-planned, can be exploited to bring about meaningful, successful and effective learning.

The speaking skill is considered the fundamental skill in the learning of a foreign language, as it is involved in almost all foreign learning activities. Many pupils frequently remain deficient in the ability to actually use the language and to understand its use especially in real life situations where, in order to respond, one needs the ability to encode and decode messages to enable effective communication to take place. A pupil's speaking skill can be greatly enhanced if provided with a rich environment for the development of this skill.







Therefore, this research will provide information to Tamil school lower primary teachers on, whether short stories help Year Three Tamil School pupils enhance their English speaking skills. It is also conducted to find out how short stories help these targeted pupils enrich their English vocabulary in speaking the language. Thus, the implementation of short stories and research-based practices can be tailored to reach Tamil school lower primary pupils to help the pupils directly. Moreover, it may present information that impacts policy decisions concerning the type of programs available for Tamil school lower primary pupils.

### **1.5 Limitations of the research**

This research is to look at the effects of using short stories in enhancing Year Three Tamil School pupils English speaking skills and how it can enrich their English vocabulary in acquiring the speaking skills. However, certain limitations are foreseen in the course of carrying out this study.

Firstly, one urban Tamil medium school is selected to carry out this study. The chosen class of pupils does not really represent the samples of the whole population. Furthermore, the sample is small and idiosyncratic, and because data is predominantly non-numerical; there is no way to establish the probability that data is representative of some larger population. Thus, the results gained from the study are not valid to represent the general population.





Secondly, this study was done after school hours, and this hindered the flow of the research study. Due to time constraint, this study could only be carried out in a short period of time, where supposedly, more time is actually needed to undertake this study.

Lastly, lack of prior recent research studies on 'speaking skills' made it difficult for the researcher to find relevant updated information pertaining to the study. It became a constraint in laying a foundation for understanding the research problem that is being investigated. Therefore, there is a need for further research for this study to identify new gaps to have in-depth analysis of the problem.

## **1.6 Definition of Terms**

Throughout this research, some terms will be used repeatedly and definitions of these terms give general understanding on overall purpose of this research. These definitions are specific for this descriptive case study only and should not be generalized to other studies in different context. The following operational definitions are used in this research.

### **1.6.1 Short story**

According to Edgar Allan Poe (1846), in his essay "The Philosophy of Composition," a short story is a fictional work of prose that is shorter in length than a novel. He said that a short story should be read in one sitting, anywhere from a half hour to two hours. In contemporary fiction, a short story ranges from 1,000 to 20,000 words. Due to the shorter length, a short story usually focuses on one plot, one main character (with a few additional minor characters), and one central theme, whereas a novel can tackle multiple plots and themes, with a variety of prominent characters. In this study, the term short





story is used to mean ‘a story that has a main character with two or three minor characters, with simple dialogues and focuses on one plot and theme’.

### 1.6.2 Tamil primary schools

According to Ministry of Education (2010), Curriculum Development Centre, **Tamil primary schools in Malaysia** are Malaysian government-aided primary schools and referred to as "National-type (Tamil) Schools" (Malay: *Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Tamil)*). As like other government schools, they follow the unified national curriculum, with the teaching of the Malay and English languages as compulsory subjects. English is taught as a third language for only 150 minutes in a week. All the other subjects are taught in Tamil, except Science and Mathematics which are in either Tamil or English



05-4506 depending on the school and school grade.

bupsi

### 1.6.3 Speaking

According to Burns (1992), speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing. Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, including the participants themselves, their collective experiences, the physical environment, and the purposes for speaking. It is often spontaneous, open-ended, and evolving. In defining speaking skill, one needs to understand that this skill refers to the skill of articulating long sounds properly to enunciate clearly and pronounce words in acceptable ways. Speaking is a composing process requiring the speaker to use expressive language to construct meaning.





Whereas, in this study, the term speaking is used to mean ‘able to convey the message structurally besides pronouncing the words in acceptable way’.

## 1.7 Summary

Having taught English in Tamil school lower primary for a few years and encountered problems and disappointments in being unable to motivate pupils in speaking effectively in the use of the English Language, the researcher has embarked on this research so as to motivate pupils in the language. By introducing short stories in classroom teaching, the researcher hopes to create amongst pupils an awareness for the need of the English Language and that it could be learned through much fun and to use the language without any inhibition. It is hoped that the pupils not only learn to speak fluently but also read and write in time to come. Thus, this research is being carried out in order for the researcher to address the questions of how do short stories help apprehensive Tamil school pupils to speak in English. It will also provide an insight into the various methods of carrying out lessons using short stories as a basis of learning the skills mentioned.

