



The Effect of Repeated Reading Strategy on Comprehension Among Grade Four School Students

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Article history	<p>This study essentially investigates the impact of RR on the reading comprehension of grade four students in the North Batinah governorate: namely in Al Khabourah. This was an 8-week study that investigated the impact of repeated reading on the reading comprehension of grade four students in a school at Al Khabourah in Al Batina North Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman. The study sample consisted of 61 grade four students, and they were divided into control and experimental groups as it was a quasi-experimental design study. The sample was divided into a control group of 30 students, who were taught normally, while the experimental group included 31 students, and they studied using the repeated reading strategy. The research instruments included pre and post-tests. All instruments were validated by a group of experts. The inter-consistency was calculated by using alpha Cronbach and the reliability factor reached $r=0.74$. The research findings revealed statistically significant differences in reading comprehension in favour of the experimental group. At the same time, the results also revealed no statistically significance differences between male and female students within the experimental group. In light of these results, the study makes suggestions and offers recommendations.</p>
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Introduction

Reading is one of the most significant elements for success in education, careers, and society as a whole. It is a critical skill for learning and academic success (Veeravagu, Muthusamy, Marimuthu, & Michael, 2010), not only in language subjects, but also in all other school subjects (McKown & Barnett, 2007). Through reading, one can acquire information either in a school setting or in society at large (Spiro, Bruce, & Brewer, 1980). Reading a text for comprehension is a vital goal for the reading process. Thus, reading is not only decoding print. Rather, it is a meaningful action. There is always a purpose for reading; whether answering questions or reading for pleasure. Comprehension is central to the reading act. It constitutes the primary purpose for reading. In order to understand a text, one must have sufficient skills and strategies to enable comprehension of the written work.

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Failing to comprehend reading texts can result in poor performance in other areas of education. Poor readers struggle with studies during school time, and they will likely continue to face similar challenges in their future careers. Reading deficiency may result in poor performance in other areas of education (Spiro et al., 1980). In an attempt to differentiate between good and poor comprehenders, Cain and Oakhill (2004) discovered that poor comprehenders struggle at the text level, not word level. In other words, they experience difficulties in establishing cohesion among sentences and have difficulties in incorporating their general knowledge into the existing text. Amayrah (2016) highlighted that comprehension requires retention and repetition, which urges us to find an approach that shifts away from lecturing to one that focuses on developing higher thinking skills. Lerner (2000, as cited in Al- Alwan, 2010) stated that comprehension is the final goal of the reading process. It is therefore important to look for a new intensive reading approach that focuses more on improving reading fluency and reading comprehension and that approach is repeated reading.

Despite the agreement that comprehension is developed by reading practice and reading fluency, as mentioned by the NRP, students still lack adequate practice in this area. The studies conducted by the NRP (2000), indicated that students should have a regular and continuous reading practice if they are to develop fluency and adequate reading comprehension skills.

The Omani government has always regarded English as a foreign language and has integrated its study into the national educational curriculum. Omani students start to learn English in Grade 1 and continue learning it until they finish their high school at Grade 12. They study English in seven 40-minute lessons weekly in their first four years in school, and this is referred to as Cycle One of Basic Education (Ministry of Education, 2009/2010). The textbook designed for students from Grades 1-4 is called English for Me and it places great emphasis on teaching different English skills. For example, students are taught the wh-words and their uses, but it must be admitted that they have little opportunity to implement this knowledge in real reading texts. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that, at this level, the students lack sufficient real practice, because the school textbooks (Class Books- CB) simply do not include adequate comprehension passages (Ministry of Education, 2009/2010).

More recently, the Jolly Phonics programme was introduced for Grades One and Two to enhance the students' phonemic awareness and also to give them more extensive reading practice (Ministry of Education, 2014). In this programme, students are taught to identify letters via sounds, and they are given associative actions for each sound. Teachers are then instructed to lead their students, blending the sounds that make up monosyllabic words and extending this practice to multisyllabic lexis. The identification of letters and words, and the reading aloud of short texts aloud is an accepted method of improving students' fluency, but it is insufficient preparation for the comprehension of the considerably longer texts that the students encounter when they advance to Grades Three and Four.

Students normally shift from the easier stages of reading to the more complex ones when they move to upper grades such as Grades Five or Six (Chall & Jacobs, 2003; Ehri, 2005). In Mckenna's (2002) terms, the students start learning to read in Cycle One schools, but soon they move to upper grades where they start reading to learn. This shift in purpose indicates that students should be ready to comprehend more challenging texts by the time that they reach the final years of Cycle One education. Reaching an appropriate level in reading, however, demands the easy recognition of words and the understanding of the meaning of



those words in different contexts (Salem, 2017). To achieve this level of reading fluency, another teaching strategy for comprehension is required and that strategy should also be enjoyable.

Statement of the problem

Although shared reading has been included in the curriculum for Grades One and Two in Sultanate of Oman, the time assigned for it is insufficient. Arabic remains the dominant language in all government schools, and it is spoken by all the learners in the school inside classrooms. In an attempt to respond to this problem, the Ministry of Education has organized a programme to integrate independent reading into Grades Three and Four. Students are given the opportunity to choose different books and later they answer some questions related to what they have read (Ministry of Education, 2011/2012). This strategy is applied once every two weeks, but it still does not offer sufficient practice, especially for the slower readers and those who have reading difficulties. Furthermore, it is an open secret that some of the work that is set is, in fact, completed at home by the students' older siblings or even their parents, and this negates the essential purpose of the work and negates the validity of its outcomes.

There is an extensive body of international research literature covering both repeated reading and reading comprehension but many of these studies have different, and specific aims. Some studies, such as Samuels (1997) have explored the definition of repeated reading. Other studies have endorsed the effectiveness of repeated reading on the development of fluency in reading comprehension, but these studies are frequently based on empirical work in specific contexts (Bayat, 2017; Dotson-Shupe, 2017; Gorsuch & Taguchi, 2008; Hapstak & Tracey, 2007; National Reading Panel, 2000). The results of these studies almost always show a great improvement in students' reading comprehension, and this is ascribed to the students' exposure to a programme of repeated reading. Some studies have also attempted to endorse the effectiveness of repeated reading with students who have learning difficulties (Landa, 2009; Savaiano Mackenzie & Hatton, 2013). Another study, Gorsuch and Taguchi (2008) examined the effectiveness of repeated reading on the reading comprehension of Vietnamese students, and it demonstrated that repeated reading had a significant positive impact on comprehension.

Many of these studies, however, were conducted in countries with students whose mother tongue was English, while other studies referred to ESL/EFL students from different backgrounds. Even so, there is general agreement that studies on repeated reading show relatively high positive results when compared to other strategies. Consequently, the same approach was adopted by those researchers who focused on students whose first language was Arabic (Al-Shdefat, 2015; Amayrah, 2016). One outstanding difference here, however, was that most of the students in the earlier studies had been learning at upper grade levels (Amayrah, 2016). Dowhower (1989) stated that repeated reading can be equally effective for both children and adults, but this claim is disputed in other research which suggests that repeated reading is more influential with regard to reading fluency than with reading comprehension (Taguchi & Gorsuch, 2002). This finding was supported by another study that found simple, quick recognition of words did nothing to develop reading comprehension (Paige, Rasinski, Magpuri-Lavell, & Smith, 2014).

In Oman, there have been studies that surveyed the teaching of reading strategies (Al-Jahwari & Al-Humaidi, 2015). Another study, conducted by Al-Kharousi (2014), specifically examined the effectiveness of repeated reading on fluency and it revealed a significant

impact. Royal Decree 101/1996 (referred to in Al-Azri, 2013), specifically stated that one of the essential aims of education is to improve thinking skills and to encourage students' scientific and critical thinking, but to date no Omani study has examined repeated reading as a strategy to improve comprehension. In the Omani context, to this researcher's best knowledge, there is an absence of research that deals with the interlink between repeated reading and comprehension.

Research questions:

The present study aims to investigate the following questions:

- (1) Is there any statistically significant difference within level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the pre and posttest among experimental group in comprehension attributed to repeated reading strategy?
- (2) Is there any statistically significant difference within level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the experimental group and the control group in comprehension attributed to repeated reading strategy?
- (3) Is there any statistically significant difference at level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between male and female students within the experimental group?

Significance of the study:

- (1) It suggests training courses in developing students' higher order thinking strategies for both pre- and in-service teachers.
- (2) It provides a new tool for teachers to be used within their classes to teach comprehension as well.
- (3) It raises curriculum developers' awareness of the importance of various comprehension activities which could bridge the division between the textbooks, classroom practices and formal examinations and continuous assessment.

Limitations of the study:

This study essentially investigates the impact of RR on the reading comprehension of grade four students in the North Batinah governorate: namely in Al Khabourah. Hence, results are only generalizable to students with the same characteristics and in similar situations. The study also has other limitations related to spatial, time and sample aspects, which are discussed in the following lines:

Spatial limitation: The study was conducted on Grade Four students in Al Khabourah in North Al Batinah governorate.

Time limitation: The strategy of repeated reading is only applied for eight weeks. It only covered the units of English for Me that are taught in the second semester.

Human/sample limitation: This study focuses on grade four students from Cycle One government Basic Education schools and excludes private schools. There are two groups (experimental and control group) from grade Four basic education in Al Khabourah.



Study design:

This study implemented the quasi-experimental quantitative design and as stated by Creswell (2008), quasi experimental research tries to “recognize the influence of a specific treatment or program on assigned learners” (p.313) because it aimed at investigating the impact of repeated reading on comprehension of fourth grade.

The experimental group in current study was exposed to the repeated reading strategy, whereas the control group was not. A pre-test was conducted to measure the students’ attainment in reading comprehension. A post- test was given after implementing the repeated reading intervention. Two different teachers taught the two classes. Table 1 displays the recent study design and the two variables included within it.

Table 1. *The quasi experimental Design of the study*

Pre-test exam	Study Groups	Treatment type	Post-test exam
Attainment comprehension test	Experimental Group	Teaching students using Repeated Reading intervention	Attainment comprehension test
	Control Group	Teaching students using regular way	

Study sample:

The sample for the study was drawn from the larger population from the government schools to ensure that the students selected were representative of the characteristics of the target population and that the school had students who were homogenous in terms of culture and background. All Grade Four classes were listed, but only two classes were selected to represent the experimental and the control group. Both classes were chosen, using the random cluster technique. The sample consisted of 61 Grade Four students in Al Khabourah in North Al Batinah. The students were between 10-11 years old. The experimental group consisted of 30 students and the control group had 31 students as well. All the students came from the same school to ensure that the control group was not affected by the strategy, and to avoid external factors. The present study sample consisted of 61 male and female students, of whom 35 were male and 26 were female. The participants were distributed equally between two experimental and control groups. Table 2 shows the study sample.

Table 2. *The number of Participants in the Study by Gender and group.*

Group	Male	Female	Total
Experimental	17	13	30
Control	18	13	31
Total	35	26	61

Groups’ equivalence

To ensure the equivalence between the experimental and the control group in terms of reading comprehension, a comprehension pre-test was administered to both groups. The results were recorded and analyzed with independent t-test from the SPSS package before starting the study. Table 3 below shows mean and the standard deviation of each group in the pre-test.

Table 3. *t-test results to compare between the experimental and control groups results in the pre-test of Recent Study*

	Number	Mean	St. Deviation	df	T-test	Sig
Experimental Group	30	.3200	.29525			
Control Group	30	.3867	.22242	58	.988	.327

Table 3 shows that there are no statistically significant differences within the levels ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) of the two groups in the pre-test. Both groups were therefore equal in academic achievement before starting the Repeated Reading method.

Research instruments and tools:

The present study used a comprehension test given to Grade Four students. The findings from the comprehension test answered questions one and two of the study's questions. A teacher's guide was also designed to guide teachers on how to implement the repeated reading strategy. The result of Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the study test is $r = .74$. Also, the Pearson's correlation coefficient result is $r = .96$ between the marks given by the researcher and by the class teacher that for ensuring the reliability of scoring of the reading test by using inter-rater reliability.

The comprehension test

The researcher designed two separate pre/post comprehension tests for the Grade Four students to assess their comprehension skills and to discover whether there were statistically significant differences between the EFL students' answers before and after applying the RR strategy. Al-Muhareb (2012) explained that a good test must ensure objectivity, validity, reliability, and it must also be reusable.

Description of the guide

The teacher's guide included a theoretical part and a practical part, as explained below:

Theoretical part: A brief introduction was prepared about the meaning of repeated reading and the roles of teachers and supervisors in this strategy. It also included some guidelines for teachers on how to teach this strategy. The main objectives of the guide to teaching repeated reading included:

- To develop students' fluency in reading (e.g., the ability to read aloud effortlessly with speed, accuracy, and proper expression).
- To increase the number of students' sight words (e.g., words that students can read by sight without exerting an effort in blending the sounds).
- To develop students' reading comprehension.
- To enrich students' vocabulary repertoire.

Practical part: This included the learning outcomes, a scheme of work and some activities and games for teaching reading comprehension and vocabulary. It also included guidelines on how to apply repeated reading at different stages. These stages are described below:

- **Pre- reading**



Daily for a whole week, the teacher displays a chart that includes the text. The teacher discusses the title and pictures in the text with the students. She may display some visual aids such as word cards, realia, and picture flash cards to clarify vocabulary. The teacher can show students a video related to the text, as suggested by Clark and Graves (2004) and Mohammadian et al. (2018). During this step the teacher selects the high frequency words and any tricky words. These are highlighted within the text. The teacher practices them through highlighting the tricky parts of the words and reading them aloud.

- **Reading**

The teacher displays the text on a chart and breaks it into chunks. Later s/he models the reading of the chunks.

- **Modeling**

The teacher models a fluent reading for students and points to each word using an attractive pointer. The students listen to their teacher and echo using choral reading. The passage is divided into sentences and the teacher reads sentence by sentence. The students repeat after their teacher. Then, students apply mumble reading, which is reading the passage individually in a low and soft voice. The teacher moves around to provide help and support (Chang, 2012). Students practice cooperative reading; they are paired with other students to practice reading the passage several times. The teacher can pair a fluent reader with a slow reader. The teacher invites good readers to come to the board and practice reading the passage while others just listen.

- **Comprehension practice**

In this step the teacher asks students to guess the meaning of new words through pictures or from the context. Later the students answer some comprehension questions related to the text. Approximately, 54% of the vocabulary words in the eight passages were found in the pretest and posttest. The experimental group practiced repeated reading for eight weeks. A whole lesson on Sunday was dedicated for RR practice and then five to ten minutes of the daily lessons were allocated for the repeated reading and comprehension practice. The first lesson teacher explained the strategy to the students and encouraged them to read fast and accurately. By contrast, the control group were taught the activities in their textbooks, and they were not exposed to any repeated reading practice. If the control group came across the selected passages for repeated reading, they just read them silently and answered the related activities as outlined in the teacher's book. At the end of the reading activity, the teacher assessed her students and provided notes for each child. The teacher wrote these notes on the students' notebook. S/he encouraged students to practice at home with their parents.

Ethic of Research:

- An approval letter was obtained from the Technical Office of Studies and Development in the Omani Ministry of Education to implement the study in the chosen school.
- Informed two different teachers to participate in this experimental research. After they agreed, applied the procedures of this study. The two classes were taught by these teachers. Class 4/1 was assigned randomly to be the experimental group and class 4/3 was assigned randomly as the control group.

Findings of the study

The first research question: Is there any statistically significant difference within level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the pre and posttest among experimental group in comprehension attributed to repeated reading strategy?

The data collected were analyzed using a paired samples (dependent) t-test to determine whether there were significant differences between the pre and posttest in the comprehension among the experimental group when using the Repeated Reading strategy. A Paired Sample t-test was used to indicate whether statistically significant difference existed between pretest and posttest. Table 4 shows t-test result.

Table 4. Paired Sample T-Test result

Variable	n	Pretest		Posttest		t	df	Sig.
		Mean	Std.Deviation	Mean	Std.Deviation			
comprehensin	30	1.60	1.48	3.30	1.53	5.16	29	0.001

The results in Table 4 showed that there were significant differences at the $p < .05$ level between the pretest mean ($M=1.60$) and the Posttest Mean ($M=3.30$), $t(29) = 5.16$, $P=0.001$, hence, it can be concluded that student comprehension improved after using Repeated Reading strategy. That indicated the Repeated Reading strategy had a positive impact on students' reading comprehension. The interpretation for this finding is that the experimental group was taught using the Repeated Reading strategy, which is a constructive cumulative process, as each stage is a consequence of the stage that precedes it and prepares for the next stage. That stage, in turn, facilitates the acquisition of new experiences in an organized manner, which enhances student comprehension (Cohen, 2011). The second research question of this study: Is there any statistically significant difference within level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the experimental group and the control group in comprehension attributed to repeated reading strategy? In order to answer the first question, that was intended to investigate the impact of the Repeated Reading strategy on students' comprehension, a post reading comprehension test was administrated to both groups. The data collected were analyzed using an independent sample t-test to determine whether there were significant differences between the comprehension of the experimental and control groups when using the Repeated Reading strategy. All the assumptions of independent samples t-tests were met. Table 5 below shows the independent sample t-test results.

Table 5. Independent Sample t-test results for post-test Scores of the Control and Experimental Groups on Comprehension ($n= 61$)

Variable	Experimental group (n=30)		Control group (n=31)		t	df	Sig.	Cohen's d
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation				
Comprehension	0.66	0.31	0.48	0.33	2.19	58	.033	0.56

As can be seen in the table no. 3, significant differences were obtained between the mean scores of the control group ($M=0.48$; $SD=0.33$) and the experimental group ($M= 0.66$; $SD=0.31$); " $t=2.19$, $df= (58)$, $p=0.033$ ". The findings also revealed that the mean score of the experimental group was higher than control group. Hence, there were statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) level between the two groups in favor of the experimental group. The



differences therefore indicate that it is more useful than the regular method in raising students' comprehension levels.

Furthermore, the Effect Size technique was applied to demonstrate the extent of the Repeated Reading impact on the experimental group's performance in comprehension. The researcher estimated the effect size, and it was 0.56. The Cohen's *d* statistic 0.56 indicated a large effect size according to Cohen's (1988) criteria, which indicates a large effect size of using the Repeated Reading strategy in the post-test. This result could be attributed to the techniques that were employed; to the regular weekly assessment of comprehension and to the teaching materials which were utilized in the Repeated Reading strategy.

It was also noted that the experimental group outperformed the control group in the posttest results in the five questions. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. As discussed in table 5, the findings revealed statistically significant differences between the experimental group and the control group at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) level in favor of the experimental group. Additionally, the result of Cohen's *d* shows that the size effect of the independent variable reached 0.56. This indicates an impact on the comprehension of the experimental group and that might be the result of the factors discussed below:

One interpretation is that in the experimental group, the variety of Repeated Reading activities that focus on reading fluency supports students' attention and stimulates their comprehension skills. For example, determining the time of reading word per minute (wpm), improves reading comprehension by stimulating the students' working memory (Al-Kharousi, 2014). Furthermore, using various teaching approaches in practicing high frequency words, like displaying them on cards, using them in rebus reading and showing videos, all make it easier to memorize and recognize such high frequency lexis in a reading text.

One more reason is that repetition and practice both help students' lower reading skills - decoding, word recognition, and automatic reading become faster and more automatic. This increases the students' attention span during the process of comprehension and in the extraction of meaning (Savaiano et al., 2013). Moreover, not only, as shown by the result of a Alharrasi (2009) study, that only sample of Omani teachers adhere to what was stated in the Ministry's curriculum and doing minor changing, but the strategy of this study enables teachers to provide opportunities for their students to model good reading through listening to the reading text with multiple repetitions in different class situations, such as teacher reading, choral reading, exchanging roles in reading between two students and listening to a recorded reading (whether associated with discussion or not) all activate students' aural comprehension and assist them in processing the written text (Reutzell & Cooter, 2011; Samuels, 1997).

As stated by Samuel (1997), pre-teaching trains students to read words in preparation for reading them faster in the second reading and understanding them in the third reading. This boosts students' confidence when reading a previously unseen paragraph. The experimental group students seemed to transfer fluency and comprehension gains to new passages. Dowhower (1989) believes that RR can help students to recognize words quickly and that it provides them with adequate practice. Hence, using continuous assessment on comprehension on a daily basis also improves students' understanding of the text.

The lexical intersection between the passages used in the post-test and the passages used for practice might be another reason for the experimental group's improvement in comprehension. About 54 % of the post-test words had been practiced in the Repeated

Reading intervention, so there might have been a cumulative training effect. Moyer (1982), states that readers can succeed if there is a lexical overlap and that could be one result of word redundancy in the practiced passages.

One last interpretation is that mothers showed enthusiasm in following their children and that was revealed through their enquiries and willingness to participate in the experiment, which eventually resulted in highly motivated students.

It can be concluded that the findings of the present study confirm the findings of many previous studies that addressed the RR strategy. Taguchi and Gorsuch's (2010) study, utilizing open ended written reports, found that RR had a significant influence on both fluency and comprehension. They also suggested that RR developed students' metacognitive reading strategies. The results of Chang's (2010) study also indicated a significant improvement in the reading rate and comprehension of the experimental group.

Additionally, Al-Aysrah's (2016) results proved that Jordanian students' comprehension improved markedly after implementing RR and Timed Reading, confirming the results of Al-Shdefat's (2015) study, which showed a great improvement in the comprehension scores for an all-female group. The recent study also revealed that RR had a significant and positive effect on reading comprehension.

More than that, Babacan and Yıldız (2022) revealed when implemented their study among 4th grade primary school students, they found that the experimental group is better than control group in reading fluency and reading comprehension skills after using the reader's theatre method in reading studies.

However, the study of Al-Hamdi (2021) shown that there is a significant difference in oral reading fluency on favor of the experimental group, also the qualitative side of study found, the students stated that they had learned by oral reading fluency through readers' theater, and the teacher also reported development in fluency in assessment work, but there was no significant difference between the two groups on reading comprehension.

Despite the agreement of the results of the above studies with the current study's findings, these results contradict those of Applegate, Applegate and Modla, (2009). Their study indicated that fluent readers are not necessarily good at comprehension. Their study also reinforced the findings in Taguchi and Gorsuch's (2002) study, where the results suggested that RR reading did not improve reading comprehension. However, later research conducted by Taguchi and Gorsuch in 2008 and 2010, supports the current study's results.

The third research question: Is there any statistically significant difference at level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between male and female students within the experimental group? To answer the second question, which aimed to investigate the effect of Repeated Reading on male and female students within the experimental group, the means and the standard deviation of the results of male and female students in the post-test were computed. The post-test reading comprehension results were analyzed again using an independent sample t-test to measure the significance of the differences based on the gender of students. Table 6 below highlights those results.

Table 6. *Independent Sample t-test results for post-test Scores of the Control and Experimental Groups on Comprehension (n= 60)*



Variable	Male (n=17)		Female (n=13)		t	df	Sig.
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation			
Comprehension	0.64	0.35	0.69	0.25	0.50	28	.623

The results presented in table 6 revealed that there were no significant differences in scores between male ($M = 0.64$, $SD = 0.35$) and female students ($M = 0.69$, $SD = 0.25$), $t = 0.50$, $df = (28)$ $p = .623$. Thus, the null hypothesis was accepted. As mentioned in table 2, it is clear that there were no significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between male and female students in the experimental group who were taught using the Repeated Reading strategy. A possible interpretation is that both male and female students had received continuous practice of the wh-questions and other forms of comprehension questions on a daily basis. They also used to discuss answers explicitly and immediately after completing the weekly comprehension assessment, which assisted students in finding their own reading strategies and in developing individual techniques to get answers (Ambu Saidi & Al Mahrooqi, 2012; Zeynali, 2012), especially, these types of student actions was produced by efforts of teacher of experimental group who has a desire to apply a new strategy, as found in the result of Al-Shukri's (2016) study which revealed that the Omani EFL teachers perceived their instructional strategies are higher than other types of their capabilities.

As Flores (2002) mentioned, students learn better when visual aids are used, because these activate their visual processing. One other interpretation is that students enjoyed the Repeated Reading texts because they included some pictures related to their English subject. Those pictures helped to create mental perceptions which deepened their learning and made it easier to recall new knowledge later on. Therefore, they learned faster when they tried to guess information from the pictures in the pre reading stage. This, in turn, stimulated their thinking process (Al-Ghafri, 2011).

Another explanation is that students learned to cooperate and worked with peers during class activities; completing sentences, playing games and using group work when answering the comprehension tasks (Todd, 2006). Male and female students interacted with each other and shared knowledge in a way that led to equal development in reading skills. Hence, the slow readers and students with low comprehension levels received support from their peers until they started to depend on themselves and reached their independent zone, as mentioned by Vygotsky in his sociocultural theory (Schunk, 2012).

It should also be noted that the students being taught at home and tracking their progress in fluency and comprehension raised their own awareness and the enthusiasm of their mothers. The continuous practice of the passages at home with the students' siblings or parents and in the school indicates the significant role of cooperation between home and the school in developing students' reading skills. As stated by Topping (1987), teachers should direct students' parents to apply the appropriate methods to improve their children's academic level and one of these methods is paired reading. Furthermore, the teacher kept a continuous assessment record to track her students' progress and she analyzed their work every Thursday. That helped her to identify her students' weaknesses and allowed her to give mothers weekly feedback about their children's performance.

Another reason for these findings is cooperating with a teacher who had taught the students for two years. She was familiar with their learning styles, their motivation and interests and she utilized different techniques and instructional aids to arouse the students' enthusiasm (Ambu Saidi & Al Mahrooqi, 2012). She created an interactive classroom environment that

fostered students' learning, for example, word wall activities, this type of activity which recommended by Almashikhi (2015) study who stated that daily posted of direct instructions for the idiom in the students' walls may lead to have significantly increase Omani students' comprehension. The teacher taught her students explicitly and provided them with constructive and clear instructions and guidance to familiarize them with the Repeated Reading strategy. She also excited her students and encouraged their willingness to participate in the strategy. She used competition and reading races which aligned with students' competitive nature to stimulate them (Zeynali, 2012). She also enjoyed a friendly relationship with her students which had a positive impact on providing a comfortable and stimulating environment.

The last interpretation is that male and female students in early grades comprehend short stories better than any other text type, as mentioned by Naif, Qabaja and Al abed (2018) and Oda (2018) Accordingly, this study employed short stories and topics that were related to the students' age and interests, such as sports and animals. However, the Repeated Reading intervention was taught for only eight weeks and this duration might be not enough to demonstrate significant differences among EFL students in comprehension.

The results of this study are consistent with the findings of Al-Slaiti (2014) and Al Zubaidi (2007) who both found that there were no significant differences between male and female students in comprehension. By contrast, the current results contradict those of Al-Shdefat (2015) and Oda (2017) which suggested that there were significant differences between the two genders. In both those studies, the results favored female students and that was associated with females' strong verbal abilities and their greater compliance with standards, both academic and linguistic.

Additionally, Al-Aysrah's (2016) results proved that Jordanian students' comprehension improved markedly after implementing RR and Timed Reading, confirming the results of Al-Shdefat's (2015) study, which showed a great improvement in the comprehension scores for an all-female group. The recent study also revealed that RR had a significant and positive effect on reading comprehension.

Implications

Reading comprehension is a multipart skill, and the recent study revealed the significant impact of Repeated Reading on that skill among Grade Four students. Many Arab learners, who study English as a foreign language, encounter difficulties in comprehending the reading texts and their questions. The main reasons for these difficulties are interference from their mother tongue and insufficient reading practice in early grades.

Reading instruction in Omani classrooms should be revised in order to provide reading strategies that correspond with students' reading needs. A combined effort by curriculum designers, supervisors, trainers, and teachers is required to overcome reading comprehension problems in Omani schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the current study, a few recommendations can be made. Since the present study found some positive impact from the RR strategy on students' reading comprehension, this strategy should be integrated into the Omani English language curriculum. Hence, the study encourages the curriculum designers to include more



comprehension strategies in the English language syllabus with provide with clear instructions for teachers in order to they know how to implement the strategies in the classroom.

Conclusion

It is also clear that the repeated reading has an impact on grade four EFL students' reading comprehension. The analysis of the results of both tests showed that the experimental group outperformed their peers in the control group in reading comprehension, and that they registered a significant difference in comprehending the questions. Additionally, the reading fluency of the experimental group improved and that was revealed through the weekly assessment.

Students' vocabulary was also enhanced through the regular practice of Repeated Reading and that was reflected in the test answers. Students were able to grasp the meaning and to relate sentences in the posttest answers. These results therefore showed that Repeated Reading has a positive impact on the comprehension skills of Grade Four students.

One of the factors that could have influenced the findings of this study is the time allocated for the posttest. Due to Corona virus lockdown, students completed three weeks in the school and then completed the rest of the experiment at home via whatsapp and other distance learning programs.

The motivation of students and their mothers should be taken into account. Most of the mothers were interested in the experiment and they were not overwhelmed by the other school subjects, so they gave more attention to this experiment.

In the present study the repeated reading method improved both comprehension and the students' speed of reading. Previous research on comprehension and Repeated Reading suggested that there was a strong relationship between these two elements and this study proves that conclusion.

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