

Original Research Article

Experimenting Reader's Theatre to Improve Omani Pupils' Reading Motivation

ABSTRACT

Aim: To investigate the effects of Reader's Theatre (RT) on reading motivation in English of grade nine Omani male pupils. Also, this research attempts to explore the pupils' perceptions towards RT approach.

Study design: This was a quasi-experimental research.

Place and Duration of Study: An 8-week study was conducted at Al-Mothana Bin Haritha public boys' school in Muscat, Oman at the Basic Education level for the academic year 2018.

Methodology: The sample consisted of two intact classes comprising sixty three grade nine Omani male students. The experimental class was exposed to RT for six weeks, while the control class was not. The same excerpts from Frankenstein story was given to the control class and the experimental class over a period of six weeks. Five pupils from the experimental class were interviewed after the intervention of RT to explore their perceptions towards the effectiveness of RT. An adapted version of A'Riyami's [1] questionnaire on reading motivation, semi-structured interviews and observations were the instruments used in this research.

Results: Results from the questionnaire used showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the two classes. The interviews indicated that the pupils had a positive attitude towards the RT approach as it supported them to develop their reading.

Conclusion: Recommendations were made to introduce RT for grade nine male pupils in public schools in Oman.

Keywords: Reading motivation; Repeated Reading; Reader's Theatre (RT).

1. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Johnson and Johnson, cooperative learning is as "old as human kind" [2, p.10]. In Quranic Schools, learning through repetition and reading cooperatively were commonly used by the early Muslims. As such, the pupils may study more effectively by reading repetitively and cooperatively. Even though reading cooperatively and repetitively is used in Arabic tradition, it is not commonly being applied. With this information, we might be wondering, what are the reasons for low motivation to read in Omani students in the present day.

The first verse in the Holy Quran is 'Read' which directly stimulates reading. Nevertheless, at schools, there is no stimulating environment to encourage reading. Moreover, Al Abri [3] affirms that the limited reading material and poor preparation in the Language Resource Centre (LRC) is partly responsible for an overall lack of reading for pleasure. Additionally, Baker, Dreher, and Guthrie [4] suggest that struggling readers are not interested in reading and accordingly their academic productivity decreases considerably. Thus, developing pupils' motivation to read in English is critical.

The first author who was an English tutor working in the ministry of Education in Oman noticed that Omani pupils are infrequently motivated to read English documents extensively outside the ones included in their text books. Pupils, in general, have difficulties in reading motivation. During the informal interview with the school's English tutors, the researchers noticed that the tutors are confined to the weighty textbooks. They only teach the reading documents contained in the textbooks. This may truly influence pupils' level of motivation to read in English. Hence, there is a requirement to discover an exciting technique to assist improving motivation to read in English for grade nine Omani pupils.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Laberge and Samuels [5] have established the theory of automatic information processing in reading. Their opinion was that the practice and repetition of reading leads to the development of automaticity. This belief brought the beginning of the repeated reading method. RT could be considered to be an interesting model of the repeated reading method by the pupils. In the present research, their theory was applied as the theoretical framework since the researchers think that repetitive and cooperative reading of attractive materials in an exciting manner for a presentation can develop motivation to read in English.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The repeated reading method is useful because it is suitable for different texts and pupils. The pupils' reading comprehension, confidence and fluency can be developed by this method. The National Reading Panel declares that guided repeated reading aloud has "a consistent and positive impact on word recognition, fluency and comprehension for all learners, grades and ages" [6, p.3]. RT is an enjoyable model of the repeated reading method which is like a role-play. The RT approach needs a live cooperation of pupils in order to present the story ahead of groups who are observing an entertainment.

Figure 1, below displays the conceptual framework of this study. The theory of automatic information processing in reading brings the beginning of the repeated reading method. RT is an exciting approach of the repeated reading method. Attractive RT materials can promote pupils' enjoyment which unquestionably may also promote reading motivation. The repetitive reading practice in RT advances the overall reading fluency which brings self-confidence.

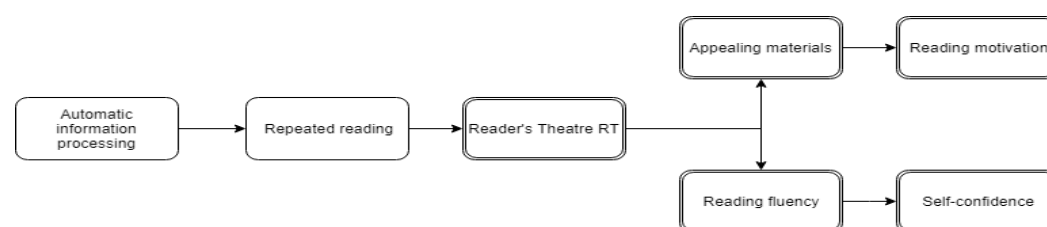


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of the present research is to investigate the effect of using RT in a repeated reading program on grade nine Omani pupils' motivation to read in English. Another purpose is to explore five pupils' perceptions towards using RT to improve their reading motivation. This research planned to answer the following two questions:

RQ1. What is the impact of the RT technique on motivation to read of Omani grade nine pupils in Basic Education (BE)?

RQ1 will be clarified considering the following hypotheses:

H_1 . RT develops motivation to read.

H_0 . RT does not develop motivation to read.

RQ2. How do Omani grade nine pupils observe the impact of RT and its influence on their motivation to read?

This article is a quasi-experimental research of post-test experimental group design. It begins with a quantitative stage and is followed by a qualitative stage. Hence, there are no hypotheses to RQ2. Based on the previous questions, this research explores the RT approach for developing reading motivation and concentrates on the approach of repeated reading of young adults Omani pupils. The impact of repeated reading of scripts is assessed inside the classroom (independent variable). Moreover, this research attempts to investigate a helpful reading technique to develop pupils'

motivation to read (dependent variable). Lastly, the study also attempts to investigate the pupils' perceptions about the RT approach.

DELIMITATION

It might be expected that developed motivation to read leads to developed proficiency of reading. However, this is not covered in the current research, because reading proficiency and comprehension are not be covered. Therefore, assessment of comprehension and proficiency are part of the delimitation of the present research. Furthermore, the procedural delimitations are mentioned at the end of this article.

2. EXPERIMENTAL DETAILS

The present study was a quasi-experimental post-test experimental group design. The experimental class has been exposed to RT while the control group has been exposed to the traditional reading technique using the same reading scripts. The same tutor taught both classes. Hence, stringent procedures have been followed for both classes, while having an objective mind about the consequences. This approach was supported by Al Farsi [27] who examined the effectiveness of a metacognitive reading strategy on reading performance and attitudes on Omani pupils. She was the sole researcher in her research as she was educating both classes. The present research was alike Al Farsi's study.

SAMPLING

The sample consisted of two grade nine male classes in the academic year 2017/2018. A total number of 63 grade nine students, from Al-Mothana Bin Haritha School in Muscat which represented a Basic Education (B.E.) level, participated in this research. The first author has selected the classes. The pupils' aged ranged from 15 to 14 years old. They were in the intermediate to pre-intermediate level.

The researcher was teaching in the same school where the study was conducted and the school was willing to participate in this research. The school was chosen based on practicality and logistics. In accordance with Creswell [28], this is known as Convenience or Opportunistic Sampling. However, it was understood that the conclusion of this sampling method is not typical of all Omani pupils.

Table 1. Each Group Treatment after the Sampling

Group	N	Treatment	Post-test	Interview
Experimental	31	RT	Yes	Yes
Control	32	Traditional Reading Technique	Yes	No

MATERIALS

Six passages from Frankenstein were used for this experiment. The passages used were chosen from Frankenstein to ensure that they were appealing to Omani students. They were also chosen as they were slightly above the level of the participating students. To enable students to select parts which were suitable to their interest and level, the passages were organized into several parts taken from the BBC. In terms of interest, gender, culture and level, four Omani experienced tutors plus a senior tutor who were working in the English language teaching in Oman were asked to assess the suitability of Frankenstein for Omani grade nine students. As a result, this story was approved as it was both suitable for Omani male pupils and culturally acceptable. It is noteworthy to mention that Barchers and Kroll [29] published a book with RT passages which includes the chosen story of the current study.

INSTRUMENTS

Three data collection tools were used for this study. These include the Reading Motivation Questionnaire, observations and the semi-structured interview.

QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was administered on the seventh week of the current experiment to assess their reading motivation. A'Riyami [1] modified Wigfield and Guthrie's [30] reading motivation questionnaire to the local setting. The researchers of the current experiment determined to use A'Riyami's [1] version because of its reliability in addressing several features of motivation to read and validity in the Omani context. Nevertheless, the researchers of the current research believed that a pilot study was needed to ensure that A'Riyami's [1] questionnaire was still valid within a new setting after five years. During the first semester of the academic year 2017/2018, piloting of the questionnaire was carried out with 10 grade nine students from the same school, but from a class which was neither the control class nor the experimental class. Based on results of this pilot study, the researcher modified and omitted some statements of the piloted questionnaire. Consequently, the last copy of the questionnaire was deemed understandable and clear.

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Creswell [28] asserts that even though assessing participants' behavior might not be easy to be marked and needs sufficient training, the researcher ought to make notes about the participants' behavior at the research location. An observation sheet was used to record information about the level of motivation to read during the weekly RT presentation in this research. This instrument allowed the researcher to identify the students who would be invited to take part in interviews relying on their observed level of motivation to read.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

The semi-structured interview was used to investigate how pupils observed the influence of the RT technique regarding reading motivation. The semi-structured interview was used to obtain qualitative data because it permits flexibility to investigate feelings of the participants as required. Pupils who could speak about motivation to read were picked by the researcher. Five pupils from the experimental class: three pupils who were less motivated and two highly motivated pupils were picked for the semi-structured interviews. These interviews were conducted in the pupils' mother tongue to make sure that they could express their ideas easily.

ETHICAL CONCERN OF RESEARCH TOOLS

The researcher did his best to fairly follow the procedures which were allocated to the control and the experimental classes. The researcher clarified to the pupils that the manner of responding to the questionnaire would not impact their grades at all. Moreover, the researcher allowed the pupils to choose to take part in the interview or not since they were provided with a Research Information Sheet and a Consent Form. Pseudonyms are employed for ethical reasons with the five selected pupils.

PROCEDURES

At the beginning of the experiment, explanations were given to both groups. The researcher showed both classes animated movies and pictures about the selected story to ease the reading activity. The same time assigned for the control group was also assigned for the experimental group which was 20-35 minutes. Moreover, the pupils of both classes were asked to write a simple weekly summary. During the seventh week of the experiment, the Reading Motivation Questionnaire was distributed to both classes as a post-test of their motivation to read. In the current experiment, the pre-test was not used because it may have threatened the validity of the results. Last but not least, the semi-structured interviews were conducted with the students selected from the experimental class. Additionally, the timetable of the control class and the experimental class were differed as they were educated on the same days but at different times. The researcher understood that this could have some influences on the outcomes. Therefore, the researcher tried his best to negotiate with other tutors who educated the

same classes to make the time table of the experimental class and the control class as similar as possible.

THE RT APPROACH INTERVENTION

The experimental group was exposed to RT. The RT intervention was implemented for six weeks. At the beginning of the RT intervention, the researcher explained the RT approach and introduced some key words and encouraged students to read appropriately and practice during the weekend. The students could select any role they liked for the weekly RT performance from the provided scripts. Daily, the students read while they listened for three times and the researcher provided assistance whenever it was necessary. In groups, the students were required to answer some focus questions. Additionally, the students were asked to write a short summary of the weekly reading scripts.

THE CONTROL GROUP

The pupils in the control class followed the same steps assigned for the experimental class but without the RT performance. They were exposed to the same reading scripts and were asked to read while listening three times. The researcher introduced key words and focus questions and the students were asked to write a simple weekly summary. The researcher provided assistance whenever necessary. In groups, the pupils discussed and cooperated to answer the focus questions. Additionally, the pupils were encouraged to read appropriately and practice reading during the weekend.

Table 2. The Differences in the Procedures for Each Group

The control group	The experimental group
The participants were required to copy and answer all the comprehension questions.	The participants were asked to read and answer all the comprehension questions.
	The participants were allowed to select any part of the script they liked to participate in the weekly RT.
Pupils read silently.	Pupils are encouraged to read out loud.
No presentation for Reading.	Presentation of RT.

DATA COLLECTION

This experiment took place in the second semester of the academic year 2017/2018. It started in the second week of February and ended in the first week of April. The school's principal was contacted for agreement. Table 3 shows the implemented RT program in this research.

Table 3. The Length of the RT Program

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
Part 1 12/2/18	Part 2 19/2/18	Part 3 26/2/18	Part 4 5/3/18	Part 5 12/3/18	Part 6 19/3/18	Questionnaire 26/3/18	Interview 2/4/18

QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE QUALITATIVE PHASE

Creswell [28] declared that when the researcher's interpretation of a phenomenon is given to the respondents, a discussion ensues which might or might not display a more complete picture gathered from the data. The discussion helped the researcher's comprehension and contributed to additional thinking. By triangulating data collected from the semi- structured interviews with the data analysed from the Reading Motivation Questionnaire, the researcher's bias for the interviews was reduced. While bias might have emerged involuntarily to the researcher's comprehension of the Reading Motivation Questionnaire's results, this was corrected and ensured by comparing the same phenomenon in the semi-structured interviews.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of the current experiment was to investigate the usefulness of the RT approach on the reading motivation of grade nine male Omani students. The researcher used a Mann–Whitney U test to compare motivation to read of the experimental and the control group in the post-test. To explore how pupils' perceive the usefulness of the RT approach, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with five students from the experimental group.

THE EFFECTS OF THE RT METHOD ON THE READING MOTIVATION OF GRADE NINE EFL STUDENTS IN BASIC EDUCATION (BE)

To answer the first research question, a Mann–Whitney U test was used. The pupils in the control and the experimental group were post-tested to compare their motivation to read after the RT program. Table 4, shows the descriptive statistics which were obtained from the Mann–Whitney U test.

Table 4. Test statistics

	Reading motivation	Reading efficacy	Reading curiosity	Reading involvement	Importance of reading	Reading for grades
Mann-Whitney U	479.500	468.500	464.500	485.000	474.000	492.000
Wilcoxon W	975.500	964.500	960.500	981.000	1002.000	988.000
Z	-.014	-.386	-.227	-.157	-.315	-.056
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.989	.699	.821	.875	.753	.955

Grouping Variable: Group type

Creswell [28] states that the probability value (p) should be less or equal to .05 to determine that the result is statistically significant. In the above table, Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) represents the level of significant for the probability value (p). Table 4 illustrates that there are no statistically significant distinctions between the control and experimental classes in reading motivation since the probability value (p) of reading motivation is .989. This indicates that, by the end of the RT program, both groups have gained the same level of motivation to read. This implies that the RT approach is not conducive to improve pupils' motivation to read over a period of six weeks. Therefore, the null hypothesis could not be refuted that reading motivation is not increased by the RT approach.

This finding is in agreement with the finding of A'Riyami [1] who has conducted a quasi-experimental research to explore the effectiveness of graded reading on reading motivation of Omani male pupils in grade nine. This finding is also consistent with Smith [31] who has conducted a quasi-experimental study to investigate RT as an instructional tool for reading motivation. Furthermore, the previous findings are in agreement with Martinez et. al [32] who conducted a quasi-experimental research to investigate the effectiveness of RT on oral reading motivation, ability and comprehension of grade two for nine weeks. The findings showed that the experimental class could not perform better than the control class in reading motivation, in the current research. These findings may be due to the pupils enjoying the repeated reading method, video clips and the story. The semi-structured interviews' analysis provides a broader comprehension.

HOW GRADE NINE STUDENTS PERCEIVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF RT AND ITS EFFECT ON THEIR READING MOTIVATION

The aim of research question two is to investigate how grade nine pupils' perceive the effectiveness of the RT approach. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five pupils from the experimental class, to answer this question. In order to analyze the data from the semi-structured interviews, a Descriptive Thematic Approach was applied. Even though the pupils' responses were simple, they reflected positive attitudes towards the RT approach. The following Figure 2 displays five main themes and fourteen sub-themes on the pupils' perceptions towards the RT approach which emerged while analyzing the interviews.

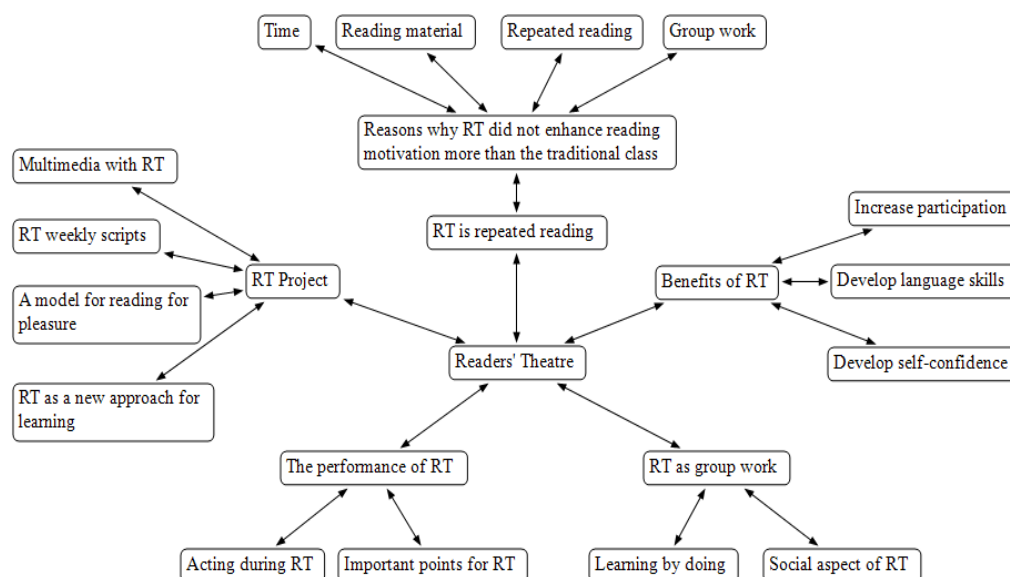


Fig. 2. Themes and sub-themes which emerged in the interviews

All pupils confirmed that the RT approach helped them to develop their vocabulary, pronunciation, self-confidence, reading fluency and participation. They also assured that RT was a new reading approach to be applied inside the classes and it promoted reading for pleasure. Through pupils' comments, it was found that RT could enhance reading comprehension and fluency. Moreover, RT can be used as a remedial plan low achievers, and as an additional task for more advanced learners. Another point which was confirmed by all pupils is that they liked the socialization aspect of RT since it is a group work which involves cooperation.

REASONS WHY RT DID NOT ENHANCE READING MOTIVATION MORE THAN THE TRADITIONAL CLASS

The reading motivation of the control class is similar to the reading motivation of the experimental class. This is obvious, from the findings of the first research question. This finding could be explained by ascribing it to various aspects. Firstly a possible justification for these results may be that the Frankenstein story maintained both classes' reading interest in the same manner. The added multimedia also may have similarly motivated both classes as the story was introduced with audio, video clips, pictures and a film. Secondly, the time for implementation of RT was possibly not sufficient and some pupils were not preparing. Thus, the impact of RT on reading motivation was not significant. The RT approach could improve reading motivation over a longer period.

Moreover, the practice of repeated reading in-class may have been a motivating element for both classes since not all pupils might have the chances to read in English outside the school. Also, the practice of repeated reading was similarly implemented in both classes. This may have motivated both classes in the same way because pupils may have wanted to develop their reading. This point was consistent with Rasinski and Young [33] who declared that researchers identified repeated reading in the RT approach as self-motivating because the pupils practice reading their scripts over and over again, because they have the desire to practice, not because they were asked to do so. Last but not least, group work which was used similarly in both the control and the experimental groups may have motivated the two groups in the same manner.

In general, the analysis of qualitative data seems to suggest that the RT approach improves reading motivation. Nevertheless, this undoubtedly disproves the quantitative findings. Millin and Rinehart [34] as well as Smith [31] observed the same contradictions between their interviews and questionnaire findings. Marshall [21] affirms that using a Likert scale of 1 to 4 may not be the best instrument to measure motivation as he has experienced possible response biases as a lack of focus, a desire to please the evaluator and understanding a positive response generates a greater score. As a result, Marshall proposes to employ pupils' journals, observation and interviews to understand the pupils'

motivation. In addition, Marshall affirms further exploration is needed to assess the reliability and validity of Likert scales as a measurement of motivation.

4. IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The most significant implication which arises from the findings of this research is that Omani EFL pupils might benefit from using the RT approach in teaching reading. The RT approach and repeated reading might be applied inside the classes. In accordance with Corcoran and Davis [35] many experts consider rereading a text several times as one of the most effective methods a learner can practice to improve reading fluency and comprehension. Furthermore, Flynn [36] declares that the reader becomes more fluent and understands the text better, through rehearsals and repeated readings of RT scripts.

The RT approach was only used for six weeks in the current study and it yielded positive effect on learners' attitudes towards learning and reading. Applying it repeatedly during the academic year could probably provide improved results. However, suggesting when and how to use the RT approach should be considered and contained in the teacher's guide book. Moreover, Training tutors to successfully use the RT approach should be considered to assure effective application of the RT approach. Additionally, the approach of RT can work as a remedial plan for the higher and lower achievers to improve their reading skills. Finally, implementing Multimedia was helpful for various learning styles and levels whenever educating reading.

Based on the results and findings of the current study, four recommendations are made for policy makers, EFL syllabus designers and EFL teachers. Moreover, there are four recommendations for further research:

1. There is a necessity to choose appropriate stories which match the pupils' level and interest to ensure profitable application of RT.
2. RT is a useful approach that should be applied as it stimulates authenticity and collaboration.
3. To apply the RT approach successfully in Omani classes, it is essential to increase tutors' knowledge.
4. To develop reading skills of level nine Omani pupils and pupils in other levels, policy makers and curriculum designers should consider implementing the RT approach.
5. To explore the usefulness of the RT approach to improve pupils reading comprehension and performance in Omani context further study is required.
6. This study can be replicated using different regions, gender and grades to evaluate the usefulness of the RT approach in a different context and with a different sample.
7. Other studies may be conducted to explore the impact of different repeated reading strategies in EFL classes on speaking, listening and writing.
8. The short period of time is considered to be a limitation of this research. Six weeks might not have been adequate to display critical changes in reading motivation. Consequently, a long-term research may be done which may result in an increased reading motivation.

In general, the results of the current experiment indicate that there were no statistically significant differences in motivation to read between the control and experimental group. Hence, reading motivation of the participants was not improved by the application of the RT approach. However, positive attitudes towards the RT approach were noted. The results of this research are consistent with earlier researches (Al Kharusi [37], A'Riyami [1], Martinez et. al [32], Smith [31]). The current experiment was restricted to two classes of grade nine Omani pupils in Muscat province. Large scale researches that include different academic grades may be done. However, some challenges related to language level and time might affect pupils. Nevertheless, with their teacher's help and guidance, group work and rehearsal, these challenges may be reduced in the RT projects. Last but not least, the

researcher of the current study did not succeed in increasing reading motivation of grade nine male pupils, but he was able to increase their participation and self-confidence.

CONSENT

This study was approved by the school's principal, the researcher who is an MA students in English language and TESOL conducted this study in the same school where the researcher teach based on logistic and practicality. This study was conducted during the academic year 2017/2018 during the school times.

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