

# The Effectiveness Of A Proposed Strategy Based On Repeated And Choral Reading In Developing The Reading Fluency Skills Of Primary School Students

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## Abstract

This study aimed at identifying the effectiveness of a proposed strategy based on repetitive and choral reading in developing reading fluency skills (pronunciation, expressive reading, reading accuracy, and reading speed). The study used the quasi-experimental design and was applied to a sample of 60 students in the third grade in Taif. The students were distributed into two equal groups, (30) students for the experimental group and 30 (students for the control group. The study instruments were the list of reading fluency skills, the reading fluency test, and a scorecard for the performance of the third-grade students in reading fluency. Several statistical methods and treatments were used to analyze the results, including a t-test for one group, a t-test for two independent groups, and the equation for calculating the effect size. The percentages of availability of sub-skills for the third-grade students ranged between 61.2 - 75.2%, and the total score of combined skills was 69.3%, all of which indicate that the level of literacy skills of third-grade primary schoolgirls is around the average. Statistically significant differences were found between the mean scores of the students of the experimental and control groups in the post-test of pronunciation skills, expressive reading skills, reading accuracy skills, and reading speed skills from reading fluency skills, as well as the total score in favour of the experimental group. The proposed study significantly improves reading fluency skills, and in light of this, several recommendations and proposed research were presented.

**Keywords:** repetitive reading, choral reading, reading fluency.

## INTRODUCTION

Reading is a major skill in Arabic language as it has priority in building the individual and society culturally, linguistically and scientifically, and even in all fields of knowledge. It receives the most attention in the early years of school because it is the gateway that enables the individual to enter the world of knowledge and ideas (Taha and Qenawy, 2004). Younis et al (1991) mentioned that reading is a means and an end at the same time during the first stage of education, where the educational principle (learn to read) and read to learn) are instilled in students. The main objective of the primary stage is for the child to translate written symbols on the printed

page into sounds and words, pronounce them correctly, and be aware of their meanings. Therefore, the stage of learning to read begins for students whose development is normal in the first year of primary school, and reading programs continue until the student reaches the second and third grades. The ability to read fluently is a requirement for effective functioning in a society exploding with knowledge and information every day.

In a world that provides limited job opportunities for those who cannot read and write or do not read, the future of young generations depends largely on their ability to read well and learn. Hence, teaching reading is one of the most important tasks in public

education, especially in the early stages of the learner's life (Abdul Halim, 2009). Therefore, reading fluency is one of the defining characteristics of a good reader, and lack of fluency is a common characteristic of struggling readers. Differences in reading fluency not only distinguish between a good reader and a struggling reader but are also considered predictors of reading comprehension problems. According to Moats (2005), fluent readers are distinguished by the ability to make others understand their communicative messages. As a result, they usually focus on reading sentences, and complete phrases, respecting the rules of intonation for reading and the semantics of words used and communicating actively with the listener. In addition to the above, it can be said that students who stumble in reading usually suffer from a low level of basic vocabulary, focus on reading word by word, and rarely do the self-correction of their errors. On the other hand, we find Students who are good at reading are those students who have automatic word recognition skills, do self-correcting processes, have a rich linguistic reservoir, and are good at expressive reading (Morisoli, 2010).

The ability to read fluently is one of the most basic requirements for developing reading levels. Reading fluency includes several basic elements. It is the ability to read the text accurately and quickly while maintaining the weight, and the rhyme of the read sentences (Drumheller, 2008). Readers who enjoy reading can read texts with expressions, or graphically. It is this combination of accuracy, spontaneity, and clarity in reading that makes the read text appear like normal spoken language (Kuhn, 2004). The special importance of reading fluency emerges from being a basis for reaching mastery in reading, and it can also be used as an indicator of educational quality, which educational institutions depend on to determine the actual level of their students in reading. Therefore, the attention to teaching fluency skills has become an important part of teaching reading using the most appropriate strategies.

### **Problem Statement**

Despite the importance of loud reading and the huge interest from the scientific circle, there is

still a shortcoming in the performance of students in this skill. To strengthen the sense of the problem, the researcher conducted an exploratory study, by holding personal interviews with Arabic language teachers in some primary schools, and their number was (16) teachers. They were asked several oral questions, to survey their views on the level of primary school students in oral reading fluency and its various skills, and their interest in reading fluency skills during teaching. From these interviews, it was found that the teachers complained about the low levels of female students in reading in general, and in reading fluency skills in particular, as confirmed by follow-up and guidance reports on the need to pay attention to the students' reading and to be free from spoken language errors, and to use modern approaches and teaching methods in their treatment.

The researcher recorded a sample of the students' readings on cassette tapes. Through examining the audio recording, it was found that the students had errors represented in pronunciation, grammatical control, failure to distinguish between short and long movements, substitution and sometimes deletion of letters and their repetition. The weakness of the students of this stage was confirmed in their reading fluency skills (proper pronunciation, expressive reading, speed and reading accuracy). Other studies, such as Al-Khudair (2011), Abdel Bari (2011), Abdul Halim (2009), Strickland et al (2013), Susanti (2013), and Ferry (2010) argued that the method of repeated reading and choral reading plays a large and important role in the educational process, and in the development of reading fluency skills.

### **Research Objectives**

This study sought to identify the necessary reading fluency skills for third-grade students. The study also aimed at identifying the extent to which the third-grade students of primary school can read fluency skills and the effectiveness of a proposed strategy based on repeated and choral reading in developing the reading fluency skills of these students.

### **Research Questions**

The study attempted to answer the following main question:

What is the effectiveness of a proposed strategy based on repetitive and choral reading in developing the reading fluency skills of third-grade students?

The main question has the following sub-questions:

- 1- What are the reading fluency skills needed for third-grade students?
- 2- What is the level of reading fluency skills among the third-grade students?
- 3- What is the effectiveness of a proposed strategy based on repetitive and choral reading in developing the reading fluency skills among the third-grade students?

### Significance of the Study

This study presents a proposed strategy that may contribute to the development of reading fluency skills for third-grade female students, which can be included in the reading curricula at the primary stage. The study contributes to providing a list of reading fluency skills, a test for these skills, and a guide for using the repetitive and choral reading strategies. This strategy may be considered an attempt to develop the teaching of Arabic language in this stage. The strategy could be invested by the supervisors in directing the teachers to develop their teaching skills by paying attention to modern strategies, which take them out of the fixed stereotyped framework in dealing with reading issues in general. The results of this study open the way for researchers to conduct further studies on reading fluency skills and to use other modern strategies.

### Delimitations of the Study

- 1- Thematic limits: the study is limited to a proposed strategy based on repeated and choral reading in developing reading fluency skills.
- 2- Spatial limits: the proposed strategy was applied to a sample of third-grade girls in primary school in the city of Taif, Saudi Arabia.

- 3- Time limits: The proposed strategy was implemented during the first semester of the academic year 2021-2022.

### Definition of Operational Terms

**Effectiveness:** The ability to achieve the intended result according to predetermined criteria (Al-Kasbani, 2010). Effectiveness is procedurally defined as the effect resulting from the use of the repetitive and choral reading strategy in developing the reading fluency skills of third-grade students, which is determined by their performance level.

**Strategy:** It is the method of teaching and learning that the teacher follows inside or outside the classroom to teach specific content to achieve certain predetermined goals (Zaytoon, 2003). It is defined procedurally as a set of procedures and steps that are sequenced in a coordinated manner that the teacher follows with students to develop their reading fluency.

**Repeated reading:** It is reading words, phrases, and the entire text in an interconnected manner several times, by employing one or more educational strategies that contribute in one way or another to support repeated reading (Lvey, 2012). It is defined procedurally as one of the educational strategies aimed at improving the performance levels of female students by allowing them to read the selected text several times until the required standard performance level is reached.

**Reading choral:** One of the assistive reading strategies in which more than one pupil reads one text together aloud. The special nature of choral reading allows less fluent pupils to gain greater knowledge by listening to reading from more fluent readers (Rasinski, 2010). It is defined procedurally as one of the forms of oral reading in which all the students in the classroom learning environment participate in reading the same text at the same time, to provide an opportunity for the less fluent students to improve their reading performance by listening to the text read by the readers with high fluency levels.

**Reading Fluency:** The reader can read quickly, spontaneously, and efficiently with the appropriate expression of the intended

meaning. It is characterized by accuracy, ease of performance and smoothness (Ruskey, 2011). It is defined procedurally as the third graders' capture of written symbols, pronunciation of it correctly, quickly and accurately, with a good expression of the meanings included in the reading.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Educational institutions around the world seek to develop reading fluency skills. This is because of its great importance and its prominent role in improving the outcomes of linguistic education in terms of quantity and quality. Experts and specialists in the field of Arabic language curricula are trying to research the factors and influences that contribute to the formation of reading fluency skills. Among these influences are teaching methods using modern strategies that contribute to improving the level of primary school students. Repetitive reading and choral reading strategies are among the strategies used in developing reading fluency skills. The repeated reading method is one of the oldest methods related to reading fluency, and this method is based on automated theory premises in processing information that emphasizes the importance of reading and provides multiple opportunities for the learner to practice reading.

Many foreign studies have been concerned with developing reading fluency skills. Abram (2014), aimed to investigate the effect of teaching directed at pronunciation, appropriate reading steps, and correctly formulating sentences among eighth-grade students, who have reading difficulties concerning their grade level. The study used the correct words per minute test (WCPM), and the researcher also used a multidimensional fluency scale. The results revealed no significant impact on the rhetorical reading of texts from the grade level. Teaching directed to oral reading fluency improves reading proficiency at all grade levels.

Martens, et al (2013) identified the general effects of teaching children to combine sounds for words containing soft letters while reading words they didn't train to read, and put them in a list and prose pieces. The study consisted of all second-grade students in New York, and

the researchers relied on the experimental method based on a curriculum-based measurement tool to measure the children's low level of reading and to test the number of correct words that the child reads per minute. The results of the study revealed that children mix sounds that are not the correct word.

Johnson (2011) investigated the theatrical environment in the readers' theatre and its impact on increasing spontaneity and accuracy in reading and prose reading. The study sample consisted of second-grade students at a public elementary school in Georgia. The study used the quasi-experimental design based on the pre-post tests and the (ANCOVA) analysis to analyze the variance, and the accuracy-test (star) to measure the level of accuracy and comprehension. The results of the study showed that reading theatre is an important strategy in repeated reading that leads to the development of reading fluency for students, and leads to an increase in comprehension for both stumbling and outstanding students.

Bowling (2011) identified the effect of the instructional reading study program and the Harcourt Basic Reading Program on the level of reading fluency among students. The results revealed that reading instructions that encourage reading individually contribute to the enhancement and development of students' fluency skills.

Al-Khudair (2011) investigated the effect of the repetitive and broad reading methods on the development of expressive and reading fluency in the seventh grade. The study used a quasi-experimental design based on a test (pre/post). The results revealed differences between the performance averages of the students in the study for all oral reading fluency skills, attributed to the method of teaching in favour of the two experimental groups.

Hartness (2011) identified the effectiveness of repeated reading with electronic registration systems in comparison with the services of the traditional repeated reading program. The study sample consisted of all primary school students in the southeastern countryside of the United States of America. The study used the quasi-experimental approach to measuring oral reading. The results showed that the use of electronic recording systems with repeated

reading develops reading fluency and students' reading comprehension.

Kita (2011) determined how frequent reading can enhance and improve students' fluency while clarifying the impact of repeated reading on students' reading achievement. The study sample consists of all female primary school students in western New York. The study used the descriptive analytical approach by conducting interviews with the student, active observations and participation techniques. The results of the study revealed that the application of direct modelling, and the emphasis on practices helped to enhance the students' fluency level, and repeated reading of unfamiliar texts helped many several teachers and researchers to assess the accuracy of students.

Pierce (2012) investigated the effectiveness of repeated reading of both poetry and prose in the development of reading fluency and reading comprehension among students, and their impact on students' behaviour. The results showed differences between students in the reading fluency as a result of using or not using repeated reading in favour of using repeated reading (correct words per minute, phrasing, and harmony). The results also showed that the behaviour resulting from reading poetry positively is more important than the behaviour resulting from reading narrative pieces.

These studies showed that the main advantage of the repeated reading strategy is that it is one of the tools that improve reading fluency levels by working to repeat reading several times, which leads to an increase in the reading rate.

Choral reading (group reading) is one of the educational strategies in which two or more students read the paragraph in harmony and with each other. The choral reading may include many individuals - including teachers - who read the same text, and the paragraph may be short, or it may be relatively long (Carbo, 2013). It should be emphasized here that there is a relationship between repeated reading and choral reading. The choral reading itself includes repetition of the text several times to increase levels of enjoyment of the text, improve the rate of reading, and reduce the levels of reading errors (McCaule, et al, 1992).

Several studies showed that choral reading was useful in increasing the rates of speed and accuracy in reading after reading texts a number of times. For example, Newsome (2014) investigated the effect of repeated choral reading of poetry on reading fluency and reading comprehension among third-grade students. The study consisted of all third-grade students in the southeast the United States of America. The study used the two quasi-experimental approaches based on the oral reading fluency test. The results revealed statistically significant differences between the repeated choral reading of poetry to develop fluency and reading comprehension and between traditional methods of teaching reading in favour of multiple choral reading of poetry.

Susanti (2013) aimed at helping teachers to overcome the existing problems in teaching reading to high school students. The researcher relied on the documentary approach based on a review of several previous literatures that clarifies the concept of textual narrative reading, and the concept of choral reading strategy. The study concluded that reading is the best way to acquire knowledge and communication between students, and correct understanding.

Paige (2011) identified the effect of choral reading for each grade in developing oral reading fluency for the narrative text among sixth-grade students. The study used the quasi-experimental design based on the word reading proficiency tests, the word vision competency test and the verbal pronunciation competency test. The results revealed that choral reading for each text repeatedly helps to facilitate verbal pronunciation of words and develop reading fluency. Choral reading helps class students not to feel embarrassed in reading aloud, especially students with reading difficulties, which improved the level of their reading skills.

Trousdal et al (2010) focused on the performance aspect of choral reading, and the distinctive role of the teacher-led lessons where the teacher and pupils together read poetry aloud. The sample consisted of all students of a school as an experimental group. The study used the descriptive analytical approach based on the analysis of some poetic pieces. The results showed that the students in

the experiment developed reading fluency skills, word discrimination, and an appreciation of the value of poetry correctly and realize how much fun it is to read poetry.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study followed the quasi-experimental approach based on the design of the experimental and control groups, to identify the effectiveness of a proposed strategy based on repeated and choral reading in developing reading fluency skills.

### Population and Sample

The study population consisted of third-grade primary schoolgirls in the city of Taif who study in the first semester of the year (2021-2022). The study sample was chosen randomly by choosing a school from among the primary schools in the General Administration of Education in the Taif region, the Forty-Third primary school was selected, which contains two grades (3/A, 3/B). The selection then was done to specify groups, where grade (A) was chosen to represent the experimental group, and the number of students was (30) students, and accordingly, class (B) was the control group, and the number of its students was (30).

### Research Instrument

First: The list of appropriate reading fluency skills for third-grade students: The researcher prepared a list of reading fluency skills, by reviewing previous Arab and foreign research and studies that dealt with oral reading skills and reading fluency. The researcher also reviewed the Language curriculum for third-grade girls. The list was presented to a group of judges to ensure its reliability and validity. The list included reading fluency skills, and the list was modified in light of the judges' suggestions until it reached its final form, where it consisted of four main skills, and under each of them several 17 sub-skills.

Second: Reading fluency test: The researcher prepared the test according to the following steps:

- Determining the objective of the test: This test aimed to measure the effectiveness of the proposed strategy based on repetitive and choral reading in developing the reading fluency skills of third graders.

- Test preparation sources: the preparation was done by reviewing the list of reading fluency skills necessary for third-grade students, educational writings related to how to measure reading skills, the opinions of experts and specialists in the field of Arabic language education, and benefiting from some previous studies that dealt with reading fluency and oral reading (Abdel Bari, 2011; Ferry, 2010; Bowling, 2011).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides the findings obtained from the present study. These findings are presented based on the research questions that guide the present research.

### The results of the first question:

To answer this question, the researcher performed a set of steps and procedures represented in reviewing educational literature and previous studies and research in the field of reading fluency skills, as well as the characteristics of primary school students. The list of reading fluency skills and its indicators came in four main skills that include (17) indicators, as follows.

First, pronunciation skills: These skills include short movements are pronounced correctly, long movements are pronounced correctly, distinguishing between Arabic letters that are close in pronunciation, such as (Sin, Dal, Dhad, Taa, Taa, and Thaa), distinguishing between the forms of the article (the) during reading, distinguishing pronunciation that shows emphasis and intonation. Second, expressive reading skills (variety of high and low phonemes, pay attention to punctuation while reading). Third, reading accuracy skills (read without replacing one word with another, read without replacing one letter with another, read without deleting a letter or more, read without adding one or more words, read without adding one or more letters, read without repeating words, read without deleting one or more words). Fourth, reading speed skills (reading from the beginning of the line to the end without bouncing movements, repeatedly returning to a letter, a syllable, or a word continuously, the level of the number of words read per minute.

**The results of the second question:**

To answer this question, the single-group t-test was used to measure the level of reading fluency skills by determining a hypothetical average of half a degree on the notecard (2 x the number of items for each of the main

skills) and the total score and comparing the actual performance of the students with this average. The purpose was to measure the pre-measurement of both the experimental and control groups, and the results were as follows:

**Table 1. The level of reading fluency skills among the third-grade primary school students**

Skill	Total score	Actual mean score	Hypothetical mean score	t value	Sig.	percentage
pronunciation skills	18	11.02	12	3.31	0.01	% 61.2
expressive reading	6	4.08	4	0.50	Not significant	% 68
reading accuracy	21	15.80	14	4.33	0.01	% 75.2
Reading speed	6	4.43	4	2.80	0.01	% 73.8
Total score	51	35.33	34	1.45	Not significant	% 69.3

Table 1 shows the value of (t) and its significance for the differences between the actual and hypothetical averages for each of the reading fluency skills. The t value for the differences between the actual and hypothetical averages was close to average, which means that students' level of pronunciation skills is lower than the average. The t value of the differences between the actual and hypothetical averages was not significant in expressive reading skills, which means that the level of the students in expressive reading skills was medium. The t value of the differences between the actual and hypothetical averages in the reading accuracy skills was more than average. However, the t value of the differences between the actual and hypothetical averages of the reading speed skills was also above average. The t value for the differences between the actual and

hypothetical averages was not indicative of the total degree of reading fluency skills, which means that the student's level of reading fluency skills as a whole was medium. Therefore, the availability of sub-skills ranged between 61, 2 - 75.2%, and the total score for the combined skills reached 69.3%, all of which indicated the level of mastery of third-grade students in reading fluency skills is around the average.

**The results of the third question:**

To answer this question, the t-test for independent groups was used to identify the differences between the two experimental and control groups in the post-measurement of pronunciation skills, and the results were as follows:

**Table 2. The t value and its significance for the differences between the averages of the experimental and control groups in the post-measurement of pronunciation skills.**

Skill	Group	NO.	Mean score	Standard deviation	t value	Sig.	Effect size
Pronunciation skill	control	30	9.70	2.14	17.11	0.01	0.83
	experimental	30	17.00	0.95			

The previous table presents the (t) values of the differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in the post-

measurement of pronunciation skills. The results revealed that the average of the experimental group was greater than the

average of the control group, and accordingly, the differences were in the direction of the experimental group. To clarify these differences, the t-test for independent groups

was used to identify the differences between the experimental and control groups in the post-measurement of expressive reading skills, and the results were as follows:

**Table 3. The t value and its significance for the differences between the experimental and control groups in the post-measurement of expressive reading skills.**

Skill	Group	NO.	Mean score	Standard deviation	t value	Sig.	Effect size
expressive reading	control	30	4.03	1.22	6.65	0.01	0.43
	experimental	30	5.73	0.69			

It is clear from the table that the (t) values of the differences between the mean of the experimental and control groups in the post-measurement of expressive reading skills were significant. The mean scores of the experimental group were greater than the mean score of the control group. Therefore, the differences were in the direction of the experimental group. The result indicated that the students of the experimental group who were taught by the method of repeated reading and choral showed an improvement in expressive reading skills better than the students of the control group, who were taught by the traditional method. The result of the performance of the experimental group of students in expressive reading skills can be attributed to the inclusion of the proposed

strategy, which included many activities that provide the opportunity for the students to good intonation of the phrases, and how to perform expressive the meaning up and down. The training included a focus on the students of the experimental group to represent the punctuation marks during reading, so that the students express in their voice the meaning of each sign.

To find out the differences between the mean scores of the students of the experimental and control groups in the post-measurement of reading accuracy skill of reading fluency skills, the t-test was used for independent groups to identify the differences between the experimental and control groups, and the results came as follows:

**Table 4. The t value and its significance for the differences between the experimental and control groups in the post-measurement of reading accuracy skills.**

Skill	Group	NO.	Mean score	Standard deviation	t value	Sig.	Effect size
reading accuracy	control	30	14.30	2.84	10.68	0.01	0.66
	experimental	30	20.17	0.99			

Table 4 shows that the (t) values of the differences between the mean of the experimental and control groups in the post-measurement of reading accuracy skills were significant. As it is clear through the comparison that the mean of the experimental group was greater than the mean of the control group, and accordingly, the differences were in the direction of the experimental group. This result indicates that the students of the experimental group who were taught (repetitive reading and choral method) had an improvement in reading accuracy skills better than the students of the control group who

were taught the traditional method. The previous result is based on the procedures followed in the proposed strategy; which directly contributed to reducing reading errors while reading,

To find out the differences between the mean scores of the students of the experimental and control groups in the post-measurement of reading speed skills of reading fluency skills, a t-test was used for independent groups to know the differences between the experimental and control groups in the post-measurement of reading speed skill, and the results were as follows:

**Table 5. The t value and its significance for the differences between the experimental and control groups in the post-measurement of reading speed skill**

Skill	Group	NO.	Mean score	Standard deviation	t value	Sig.	Effect size
reading speed	control	30	4.30	1.32	5.49	0.01	0.34
	experimental	30	5.70	0.47			

It is clear from the table that the t-values of the differences between the mean of the experimental and control groups in the post-measurement of reading speed were significant. As it is clear through the comparison that the average of the experimental group was greater than the average of the control group. This result indicates that the students of the experimental group who were taught by the method of repetitive reading and choral revealed an improvement in reading speed skills better than the students of the control group who were taught traditionally.

The previous result is based on the fact that the procedures that were followed in the proposed

strategy directly contributed to increasing the speed of the students, such as providing good reading models that take into account the speed of reading, preserving the general meaning of the read text, and training the students on speed reading. This was done by assigning them some reading tasks, which are based on reading in a fast or slow way and assigning the students a set of reading activities that help them to control their reading speed.

To find out the differences between the mean scores of the students of the experimental and control groups in the post-measurement of the total score of reading fluency skills, the t-test for independent groups, and the results were as follows:

**Table 6. The t value and its significance for the differences between the experimental and control groups in the post-measurement of the total degree of reading fluency skills**

Skill	Group	NO.	Mean score	Standard deviation	t value	Sig.	Effect size
Total score	control	30	32.33	6.58	12.62	0.01	0.73
	experimental	30	48.60	2.57			

It is clear from the table that the (t) values of the differences between the mean of the experimental and control groups in the post-measurement of the total degree of reading fluency skills were significant. As it is clear through the comparison that the mean of the experimental group was greater than the mean of the control group, and accordingly, the differences are in the direction of the experimental group. This result indicates an improvement in the performance of the experimental group students in the combined reading fluency skills, which means that the experimental group students who were taught using the repeated reading and choral reading strategies showed an improvement in the combined reading fluency skills better than the control group students who were taught Traditionally, and the previous result can be explained that the choral reading strategy increases the motivation to learn among

students by listening to each other during choral reading to master reading fluency skills, and learning through repeated and choral reading is done by focusing on more than one skill from language skills.

### Recommendation

In light of the findings of the study, the study recommends adopting the skills that have been reached through the current study when building language curricula. The study also recommends inviting curricula authors and developers to plan language curricula and their objectives and teaching methods to focus on developing reading fluency skills through modern teaching strategies. It is important to include reading fluency skills within the objectives of teaching reading in the different educational stages in general, and the objectives of teaching Arabic in particular. The

activities accompanying the reading topics should be reconsidered so the focus of these activities is on developing reading fluency skills appropriate for each stage of public education.

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