



The effects of the repeated reading method from teachers' perspectives of cycle one schools (1-4)

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Abstract

The ability to read during the early years of education plays a crucial role in students' academic life. However, Cycle One Omani students continue to face significant challenges in reading fluently and comprehending texts. Many students struggle to read the assigned texts within a reasonable time, which negatively affects their ability to answer comprehension questions. This research paper focuses on grade three and four teachers' opinion in North Al-Batinah Governorate regarding the repeated reading method, which they have been implementing in their classrooms for over six years. A designed and validated online questionnaire, to which 121 teachers responded was used to collect data. The study revealed that the majority of the participants strongly agreed on the effectiveness of the RR method in enhancing grade three and four students' English language learning skills, particularly their reading fluency and overall English proficiency. Moreover, the data showed that RR is an effective, new and useful method, which made the teaching environment more interesting and broke the usual routine of teaching the reading skill. In addition, the results indicated that most grade three and four students enjoyed the RR experience and were motivated and eager when applying the RR method. Therefore, this study is one of the few in Oman to have investigated primary students' reading skill, so it makes a distinguished contribution to the Omani context with regard to investigating young learners' reading skills and strategies.

Keywords:

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Automaticity
Oral reading fluency
Reading comprehension
Repeated reading
Speed
Word recognition.

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1. Introduction

Reading is essential to achieving successful foreign language learning. Birjandi, Bagheridoust, and Mosallanejad (2006), emphasize that reading is the foremost skill for the majority of English learners globally, particularly in countries where interaction with native speakers is limited, but access to written material is available. Throughout the academic sphere, reading has consistently been a central focus in systematic research on English teaching and learning (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). Issue of reading difficulties has been

extensively studied in the Omani context, yielding results similar to international findings, although some variations exist due to the country's unique nature and educational philosophy. Al-Khamisi (2014); Al-Ajmi (2003) and Al-Barashdi (2002) conducted some of the studies in the Omani context and found that Omani students face difficulties in reading skills either in the early years of learning English Foreign Language (EFL) or in the advanced years. For example, Al-Ajmi (2003) examined the reading difficulties experienced by Omani students shortly after completing their secondary education. Based on the findings of her study, students highlighted two main challenges: a lack of content/background knowledge and insufficient automatic recognition skills required for identifying sounds and words. Furthermore, Al-Khamisi (2014) noted low performance in national reading exams. Fourth-grade students achieved mean scores of grades equivalent to an "F" in the Ministry of Education grading system, while tenth-grade students' scores fell within the D category.

2. Statement of the Problem

However, despite the ongoing reforms, it was found that the English language teaching (ELT) system in Oman suffers from various challenges (Al-Balushi, 2012). No one can deny that reading difficulty is one of the greatest challenges faced by Omani learners in the educational system. Therefore, one of the underpinning decisions taken by the curriculum designers in the MoE in Oman was the agreement to implement the phonics programme. Especially, it approved its effectiveness to develop reading in other contexts for example, Shoaga, Akintola, and Okpor (2017) conducted a study in Nigeria and found that teaching phonics in elementary schools improved students' reading ability by 96.7%. This decision was taken after the positive feedback received from the pilot schools on the effectiveness of the Phonics programme in improving their students' basic reading skills. Consequently, the MoE decided to include the teaching of basic phonics in Cycle One of basic education, mainly in grades one and two in 2015. This was suggested as a solution to learners' weakness in reading aimed at teaching phonics to grades one and two to develop their phonological understanding and in order to develop learners' ability to read. Based on my experience as an English supervisor in Al-Batinah North Governorate and working closely with a group of English supervisors - the English supervisors of the Al-Suwaiq and Al-Khaboura team - we noticed that students in Cycle One schools in Al-Batinah North lacked fluency and comprehension while reading a text. Especially, Al-Kharusi (2014) remarked that, "Cycle one students read in slow, laborious, word-by-word manner" (p.4). In addition, Al-Kharusi (2014) attributed these difficulties to the Omani syllabus, which did not integrate reading fluency as an amendment to reading instruction in the "English for Me" course. Moreover, the independent reading programme in Cycle One schools is only applied for a short period of time: only 15 minutes every two weeks. Therefore, suggesting a practical and efficient method of overcoming this problem might enhance and develop students' ability to read fluently and answer comprehension questions. The Repeated Reading (RR) method is used as a method to support students of cycle one schools with their reading.

Particularly, difficulties with the reading skill in the early years of teaching can be avoided and minimized by providing certain elements. For instance, Eskey (2005) stated that "good teaching" is the key element in teaching reading or any other subject. In terms of applying practical and effective techniques and strategies in teaching reading skills in the early years especially, reading strategies are not emphasized until the third grade or late during the early elementary years (Mullis, Martin, Foy, & Drucker, 2012). Thus, students who have poor reading fluency in the early stages of their academic life are also likely to have problems in the later stages.

For this reason, it is essential to build and develop literacy skills in the early learning stage (Rasinski, 2014) or learners who are poor readers by the end of the first grade may not be able to develop even average-level reading skills by the end of their elementary schooling without substantial remediation efforts and intervention (Emam, Kazem, Al-Said, Al-Maamary, & Al-Mandhari, 2014).

3. Significant of the Study

The findings of this study could be practical and beneficial. If the method of RR is applied properly and accurately, the elements of the educational process would benefit from its outcomes. Also, this study might draw the attention of the curriculum designers at the MoE to the effective role of integrating the RR method in the current English course designed for grade three students for the whole Sultanate schools. Applying the RR method would be complementary to the Jolly Phonics programme which is already applied in Cycle One Omani schools for grades one and two. Furthermore, following both programmes would make positive and significant changes to students' reading skill, as well as all the strategies that could be applied to help students read.

In addition, the present study might also encourage the curriculum designers to find additional alternative strategies to overcome reading difficulties. Moreover, applying the RR method in the early years of learning and teaching is considered an effective suggestion to overcome the reading difficulties that Omani students face and have been discussed in a number of studies.

4. Research Objective

To discover grade three and four teachers' opinion of the RR method applied in their classroom teaching.

5. Research Question

What is grade three and four teachers' opinion of the repeated reading method which was applied in their classroom teaching?

6. Literature Review

The ability to read effectively is a crucial aspect of language proficiency. It allows for successful understanding of written information, which is the ultimate goal of reading (Xin & Yunus, 2020). According to Kim, Bryant, Bryant, and Park (2017), reading fluency typically develops in the second or third grade. Therefore, the purpose of multiple readings is to help students progress from decoding words to reading automatically and fluently (Swain, Leader-Janssen, & Conley, 2013). Consequently, to achieve a satisfactory level of reading, individuals need to acquire fluent reading skills, which are fundamental to reading (National Reading Panel, 2000). This holds particular significance in the earlier grades, as Reutzel (2012) emphasized that "fluency practice and instruction are essential components of high-quality reading instruction in elementary years" (p.120).

For that reason, students who read fluently have an advantage in simultaneously decoding and comprehending the text (Smart & Thompson, 2017). Conversely non-fluent students spend a significant amount of time decoding, which diverts their attention away from understanding the material (Young, Valadez, and Gandara (2016). It is worth noting that reading fluency to mention that fluency depends on automatic decoding and accurate word recognition, which are the essential elements of the automaticity theory. This theory suggests that readers who have not achieved fluency need to expand cognitive energy on decoding words rather than comprehending the text (Lahmann, Steinkrauss, & Schmid, 2017). Increasing reading fluency leads to improved reading comprehension and the development of more proficient readers (Fuchs, Fuchs, Hosp, & Jenkins, 2001). According to the theory of automaticity, continuous practice of rapid and automatic reading is necessary for effortless reading (Young et al., 2016). Consequently, the theory of automaticity promotes to the use of repeated readings as an important technique for teaching of fluency (Samuels, 2012). As a result, repeated reading has been studied as a method to address the issue of fluency deficits (Kostewicz, Kubina, Selfridge, & Gallagher, 2016) and has been deemed an effective way of increasing fluency (Bråten, Johansen, & Strømsø, 2017).

The technique of Repeated reading was introduced by Samuels (1979) as a practical application of the automatic information processing model. This model is based on the idea that practice leads to improvement and involves reading the same text multiple times until specific goals are achieved. These goals can be a predetermined reading rate (as measured by wpm) or a predetermined number of readings (National Reading Panel, 2000; Paige, 2008; Wexler, Vaughn, Edmonds, & Reutebuch, 2008). Furthermore, reading aloud is an essential learning strategy that can enhance students' reading comprehension abilities. It plays a significant role in overcoming difficulties with the content of learning materials (Sajid & Kassim, 2019).

Moreover, the RR method is widely recommended as an interventions for students who are struggle with oral reading fluency (Hawkins, Hale, Sheeley, & Ling, 2011; Ring, Barefoot, Avrit, Brown, & Black, 2013). Research has shown that students make significant improvement in both words correct per minute (WCPM) and reading comprehension through this method (Schwanenflugel et al., 2009). In addition, Allington (2011) observed that repeated reading not only increase the amount of reading but also enhances fluency development by expanding the variety of texts students read. This repetition improves word recognition words and builds automaticity when encountering familiar words later on (Chard, Ketterlin-Geller, Baker, Doabler, & Apichatabutra, 2009; Kuhn, Schwanenflugel, & Meisinger, 2010).

Repeated reading can be categorized into two types: assisted and unassisted or unassisted (Dowhower, 1987; Stahl & Kuhn, 2002; Taguchi, Gorsuch, Lems, & Rosszell, 2016). Assisted repeated reading involves the use of models for fluent reading, such as a teacher, parent, peer, tape recording, or some other method. On the other hand, unassisted repeated reading does not involve any modeling. The following studies highlight the effectiveness of the repeated reading method.

The practical role of the repeated reading (RR) method has been demonstrated in several aspects of reading instruction, including error correction, vocabulary and oral reading fluency rate and accuracy. In a study conducted by Flint (2021) a multiple baseline across participants single-subject design was employed to investigate the impact of repeated reading combined with systematic error correction (SEC) on increasing words correct per minute (WCPM). The study involved were four elementary students with a specific learning disability (SLD) in reading, situated in a northeast Texas suburb. The intervention consisted of an initial 5-minute reading of the passage with SEC with each participant. Additionally, each participant read the passage two more times with limited error correction. The results indicated the potential of this practice to enhance reading fluency, accuracy, and comprehension for elementary students with a SLD. In a study conducted by Hmeidani (2020) the impact of the repeated reading strategy on reading comprehension and English language

development among sixth-grade students in Jordan was investigated. The study included 60 students from Wadi Al-Seer secondary girls' school. Thirty students were assigned to the experimental group, where they were taught a short story by using the repeated reading strategy, while the remaining students formed the control group. The effectiveness of the repeated reading strategy was measured through Comprehension and vocabulary tests. The results indicated that statistically significant differences (at $\alpha=0.05$) between the two groups in terms of reading comprehension and vocabulary performance. These findings can be attributed to the teaching strategy employed and the group that received instruction using the repeated reading strategy.

In a study conducted by Winter (2020), the impact of repeated reading as an academic practice on oral reading fluency rate and accuracy was examined. The study employed a pre-experimental design, consisting of a pretest, treatment, and a posttest conducted over a four-month period. This study involved five participants from an urban public school in Maryland. The results of this study indicated a significant difference in the posttest compared to the pretest. Specifically, there was a significant increase in word correct per minute ($t(5) = 8.27, p < 0.001$). and accuracy ($t(5) = 3.07, p < 0.003$).

7. Methodology

The present study aimed to investigate the effects of the repeated reading method. The population of the current study covered North Al-Batinah Governorate teachers and students. The researcher used an online questionnaire to collect the opinions of Al-Batinah North teachers of grade three and four students on the effect of applying the RR method on their students' reading. Thus, the sample of the study consisted of grade three and four teachers in Al-Batinah North Governorate.

The study applied a quantitative phase involving the distribution of an online questionnaire to grade three and four teachers in Al-Batinah North Governorate. Those teachers have been applying the RR method in their schools for six years. They were asked questions regarding their feedback after applying this method with their students. The questionnaire contained three sections: the first section collected data about the number of years teachers applying the RR; the second section collected data about teachers' feedback on the method; and the third section collected data about the effect of the method regarding students' reading level.

7.1. Research Participants

The participants of this online questionnaire were contacted by following a purposive sampling strategy. The strategy started by recording the total number of Cycle One schools in Al-Batinah North and the population of English teachers in these schools. These data were taken from the statistical office of the General Directorate in Al-Batinah North Governorate for the academic year 2019-2020. For example, out of the total number of 506 English teachers in Cycle One schools from 66 schools in Al-Batinah North, about 214 English teachers teach grades three and four. About (102) teachers taught grade three students, while (104) taught grade four and (8) teachers taught both grades. Approximately (95%) teachers applied the RR method, whereas the minority (4.13%) teachers did not apply the RR method as it appeared from analyzing the results of the online questionnaire. Therefore, the sample of the current study comprised teachers of grades three and four only who applied the RR method with their students for the academic year 2019-2020. The sample represented the general population of the present study and is distributed in all schools in Al-Batinah North Governorate. This means that the researcher was able to reflect genuine feedback on applying the RR method in Al-Batinah North Governorate through this representative sample.

7.2. Data Collection Methods

7.2.1. Online Questionnaire

Evidence from the research literature has shown that questionnaires are appropriate tools to investigate the beliefs of teachers in general (Borg, 2015). Therefore, an online questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data regarding grade three and four teachers' opinions in Al-Batinah North Governorate of the RR method which was applied in their schools for several years. The questionnaire, is used to answer research question one 'What is grade three and four teachers' opinion of the repeated reading method which was applied in their classroom teaching?'. The researcher aimed to collect participants' views and opinions of the RR method and its effect on students' fluency and developing their reading comprehension. The researcher used an online questionnaire because she believes that questionnaires are generally an efficient way of collecting data from large numbers of respondents in geographically spread areas within a short period of time without necessarily requiring the presence of the researcher (Bryman, 2004; Campbell, McNamara, & Gilroy, 2004). The questionnaire has two main constructs, namely (i) teachers' experience of using the RR method (7 items) and (ii) teachers' opinion about the effect of RR on students' reading level (7 items). The initial construct focused on gathering insights from teachers regarding their experience with the repeated reading (RR) method. It consisted of seven statements, and participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. These statements were referred to elicit teachers' personal experience with teaching RR, as it was assumed that they would be more familiar with these

aspects and thus able to provide their individual perspectives. The following are some excerpts from the first construct:

- I decided to apply this method with my students because it is part of the curriculum strategies that should be applied in teaching reading.
- I decided to apply this method with my students because I want to try a new strategy which might be effective.
- I find using this method useful.

The second construct aimed to reveal teachers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the repeated reading (RR) method. It consisted of seven statements focusing on the impact of RR on students' reading levels. Respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement on five-point Likert attitude scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The statements specifically addressed teachers' opinion based on their own experiences with the RR method. It was assumed that participants would be familiar with these issues and, thus capable of providing their personal viewpoints. The following are some excerpts from the second construct:

- The repeated reading method helps students to read word by word.
- The repeated reading method helps students to read effortlessly and with expression.
- The repeated reading method enhances students' level of reading comprehension.

7.3. Online Questionnaire Design

The online questionnaire was designed by the researcher of the current study based on my experience as an English supervisor to elicit the opinions of 214 grade three and four teachers who had applied the RR method in their classroom teaching in Al-Batinah North Governorate. There were a number of considerations the researcher took into account while designing the online questionnaire. As [Howell \(2013\)](#) suggests that when designing a questionnaire, it is important for the researcher to ensure clarity and understanding by formulating clear questions. Additionally, a covering letter should be included, providing explicit instructions and explaining the research project. Howell recommends using a funnel approach, starting with general questions and gradually moving towards specific ones. Personal information, if necessary, should be collected either at the beginning or end of the questionnaire. Moreover, the questions of the questionnaire should be carefully crafted using simple, straightforward and unambiguous language ([Howell, 2013](#)). Hence, the researcher designs the questionnaire in a way that is easy and understandable for the participants to answer. I tried to consider all the above-mentioned elements when I designed my own online questionnaire. The estimation for the time required to answer the questions was only about 15 minutes, in order to encourage teachers to complete it easily and quickly. The questionnaire started with an introductory section, which included background information about the study and instructions for completing the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of three further sections as it mentioned above: background information, teaching experience, and opinion of the effect of RR on students' level. Within each 5- item- Likert- scale statement, each of the five choices/ answers to the statements was given a score of 1-5 where corresponds to "strongly disagree" and 5 to "strongly agree". The last question in section three was open-ended question, which gave the teacher a chance to express her opinion of the investigated method. There were 16 questions in total. In specific, the questionnaire followed a mixed format of five-item Likert rating scales, multiple choice, and one open-ended question.

7.4. Reliability and Validity

The online questionnaire was piloted by an English trainer working at the MoE; she holds a PhD degree in Education. The online questionnaire was also piloted by three English supervisors working in Al-Batinah North Governorate; all of whom have a master's degree in Education. All the comments and corrections were taken into consideration. The pilot participants were different from the actual study participants; they were senior English teachers (SETs) and English teachers in three of the Cycle One schools in Al Batinah North Governorate. All of the pilot participants have previously applied the RR method with their students. The researcher distributed the questionnaire to them via email in a Word format before transferring it into an online questionnaire via the WhatsApp program to be completed by participants using their smartphones. The data from the pilot online questionnaire were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to establish the internal consistency of the questions using the Cronbach's alpha reliability test.

All the suggestions and changes to the items were added and taken into consideration according to the comments mentioned in their feedback. After distributing the questionnaire during the pilot study, the researcher utilized Cronbach's alpha to check the reliability of the items. She discovered that the Cronbach's alpha of the items in section three was .767, which confirmed it met the criterion of internal consistency. However, the Cronbach's alpha of section two questions was low: only .238. After checking each item, I discovered that two items contained problems: item three was a leading question; "I decided to apply this method with my students because it was a supervisions decision?" and item 10 was similar to question 9; "I

agreed to apply it with my students immediately” and “I agreed to apply it with my students after a long time of negotiations”. It was suggested to delete these two items and, as a consequence, the alpha increased to .642, which means it met the internal consistency for reliability after omission of the two items.

8. Findings

A. Findings from the Online Questionnaire

The online questionnaire was sent to the participants (grade three and four English teachers). Of the total of 214 grade three and four teachers in Al-Batinah North Governorate, 121 answered the online questionnaire, which made the response rate 57.8%. This shows a good level of participation since online questionnaire researchers often suffer from a low response rate (Al-Balushi, 2015).

8.1. Background Information

The first section of the questionnaire collected background data about the participants’ experience in applying the RR method. As can be seen from Table 1, approximately 95% of the participants applied the method. The majority of the sample (70%) has less than six years’ experience in applying the RR method, whereas the minority has more than six years’ experience in using this method see Table 1. This indicates that the sample could be representative of the general population of grade three and four teachers.

Table 1. Percentages of participants who applied the RR method and participants’ experience in teaching the RR method.

Numbers of grade four teachers	Numbers of grade three teachers	Numbers of grade three & four teachers	Participants who applied RR method		Teaching experience in applying RR method	
			Applied	Did not apply	Less than six years	More than six years
104	102	8	95%	4.13%	70.25%	29.75%

8.2. Teaching Experience with the RR Method

Section two of the online questionnaire asked participants about their views regarding their experience of teaching the RR method. The participants were asked to choose from the options on a Likert-type scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Table 2. Responses regarding teaching experience with the RR method (by frequency, mean & standard deviation)

Item N	Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Standard deviation
3	I decided to apply this method with my students because it is part of the curriculum strategies that should be applied in teaching reading.	Zero	4	10	52	55	4.31	0.76
4	I decided to apply this method with my students because I want to try new strategy which might be effective.	2	1	8	56	54	4.31	0.77
5	I find using this method Practical and effective.	Zero	4	5	56	56	4.36	0.72
6	I find using this method not useful.	28	60	14	13	6	2.25	1.08
7	I find using this method an extra burden on teacher.	8	22	27	49	15	3.34	1.11
8	I agree to apply it with my students immediately.	2	7	11	68	33	4.02	0.87
9	The repeated reading method helps me as a teacher to make reading lesson an interesting and practical period.	1	4	8	65	43	4.2	0.77
Overall mean:							3.82	

The findings show that the majority of the respondents (N= 55) strongly agreed with the statement that the RR method is one of the curriculum strategies which should be applied in teaching reading (see Table 2

above). The second statement in section two asked participants about their decision to apply the RR method with their students. Table 2 shows that the mean of this statement is about (4.31) and the standard deviation is about (0.76). Also, nearly all of respondents and definitely more than half (N=110) agreed that they applied this method because they wanted to try new strategies in reading which might be effective. Only (N= 2) strongly disagreed with the statement. This suggests that the participants are willing to apply new strategies to develop their students' reading skill. Moreover, the standard deviation of this statement is about (0.77). The findings regarding the fifth statement in the questionnaire, "I find using this method practical and effective", show positive responses, with (N=56) of the respondents strongly agreeing with the statement. The mean of this statement is about (4.36), which considers the highest mean in this section. Whereas, it has the lowest standard deviation among all the statements in this section about (0.72). This indicates that repeated reading method has a crucial and vital role in teaching reading skill. Approximately half the respondents (N= 60) disagreed with the sixth statement in the questionnaire: "I find using this method not useful" as can be seen in Table 3. This seems to indicate that many teachers find significant outcomes after applying this method with their students, so their responses are the opposite of the suggestion in the sixth statement in the questionnaire. Therefore, this statement takes the lowest mean in this section about (2.25). Although the majority of the respondents agreed regarding the effectiveness of RR as a practical and useful method, the seventh statement in the questionnaire measures if the participants find this method an extra burden on the teacher. It is apparent from Table 2 that (N=49) of the respondents agreed with this statement and only a small number of respondents (N=8) strongly disagreed with it. I believe that due to such responses regarding the RR method, it could possibly be included in the curriculum strategies in more flexible and interesting ways since the majority of the teachers agreed with its effectiveness even though some evaluated it as an extra burden.

The findings show that the mean of the eight statement is (4.02) and just over half the respondents (N=68) agreed to apply this method immediately with the students and (N=65) agreed that the RR method helps them as teachers to make the reading lesson an interesting and practical period. However, (N=2) said they would not apply this method immediately and (N=1) of the respondents strongly disagreed and did not think this method would help them in making the reading lesson an interesting and practical period (see table 3). Such differences in the participants' views could be due to some of them seeing the RR method as an extra burden, as mentioned above, so they have negative views about it. However, the others might have focused more on the positive impact of the RR method based on their experience of applying it with their students, so have positive views about it. In general, the overall mean of the statements in section two is (3.82) and it is clear that the fifth statement has the highest mean about (4.36), while the sixth statement has the lowest mean about (2.25). On the other hand, the seventh statement has the highest standard deviation; about (1.11) and the fifth statement has the lowest one; about (0.72).

8.3. Opinion on the Effect of the RR Method on Students' Reading Level

Section three of the online questionnaire asked participants for their views regarding the effect of the RR method on students' reading level. Participants were asked to choose from options on a Likert-type scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The majority of the responses agreed on the positive role of the RR method in improving students' reading level. The findings for the first statement in section three show that (N=55) of the respondents agreed that students are able to read word by word when they are asked to read the sight words which follow each text of the repeated reading in a separate table see Table 3 below. In addition, the standard deviation of this statement is about (0.84), which considers the highest one in this section. Moreover, the second statement in section three shows that (N=71) of the respondents agreed that the RR method helps students to read effortlessly and with expression, whilst (N= 5) of them disagreed with the statement, as shown in Table 3. Moreover, the mean of this statement is about (4.16) and the standard deviation is about (0.72). This means that participants believe on the positive effects of the RR method on helping students to read.

The participants were further asked about the following two statements in section three: repeated reading increases students' word recognition and decreases students' errors in reading. Table 3 below illustrates that the results are in favour of the repeated reading method because almost half the respondents (N= 56) strongly agreed that repeated reading increased students' word recognition with a second highest mean in this section about (4.36) and (N= 58) agreed that it decreased students' errors in reading. It is interesting to note that the result indicates that students' level in reading significantly increased after applying the RR method.

For additional analysis, the findings illustrate that just over half the respondents (N= 64) agreed that the RR method enhances students' level of reading comprehension and only (N=6) disagreed regarding its effectiveness in developing students' reading comprehension with a mean about (4.17) and a standard deviation is about (0.77). From a similar perspective, approximately half the respondents (N=61) strongly agreed that repeated reading develops students' reading skill and the mean of this statement is about (4.43) which considers the highest one in this section. On the other side, it has the lowest standard deviation in this section which is about (0.68). It is obvious that the overall mean of these statements is about (4.25). These

consequences signify the vital impact of the RR method on grade three and four students' reading level after applying the technique with them in Al-Batinah North Governorate.

Table 3. Responses regarding the opinion on the effect of the RR method on students' reading level (by frequency, mean & standard deviation).

Item N	Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Standard deviation
10	The repeated reading method helps students to read word by word.	1	6	7	55	52	4.25	0.84
11	The repeated reading method helps students to read effortlessly and with expression.	Zero	5	8	71	37	4.16	0.72
12	The repeated reading increases students' word recognition.	1	Zero	10	54	56	4.36	0.71
13	The repeated reading decreases students' error in reading.	Zero	7	11	58	45	4.17	0.82
14	The repeated reading method enhances students' level in reading comprehension.	Zero	6	9	64	42	4.17	0.77
15	The repeated reading method develops students reading skill.	1	1	4	54	61	4.43	0.68
Overall Mean:							4.25	

B. Findings from the Online Questionnaire Open-ended Question

The last question in section three in the online questionnaire was open-ended question and contained two parts: in the first part, participants were asked if they had enjoyed applying the RR method and, in the second part, to explain why they had or had not enjoyed the experience. Table 4 shows that 108 of the participants out of 121 stated that they enjoyed the experience, but the minority 13 had not enjoyed applying the RR method.

Table 4. Percentage of teachers who enjoyed/did not enjoy the experience of applying the RR method.

Participants who enjoyed applying the RR method	Participants who did not enjoy applying the RR method
108	13

8.4. Enjoying Teaching with the Repeated Reading Method

The results indicated that the majority of the respondents commented positively, as mentioned earlier, and they enjoyed the experience of repeated reading, while only the minority of them did not enjoy it. After reading and analysing manually all the qualitative responses from this open-ended question, the researcher first coded them and then clustered and categorized them into themes and sub-themes. The main theme is enjoying teaching with RR method; when explaining this theme, the researcher will provide examples of the views of teachers who enjoyed the experience and the contradicting data of teachers who did not enjoy the experience. A number of sub-themes emerged from the data which enjoying teaching with repeated reading method which is:

- (A) Description of the repeated reading method.
- (B) The effect of the method on the teacher and teaching.
- (C) Students' impression of the repeated reading method.
- (D) Students' level in reading skill.

8.5. Description of the Repeated Reading Method

Three respondents described the RR method as boring and not effective and that it needs a lot of effort, as the following respondents clarified: T1, "Because it is boring", T2, "Because it is not effective", and T3 "Needs more effort and time" T4 "As the teacher takes longer time with students to read and to repeat". Such negative responses showed some of the respondents' worries that they might not finish the actual lessons they had

planned according to their annual schedule because of applying the RR method as a part of daily lesson. In practice, most of the sight and high-frequency words are repeated in the majority of the practised texts during RR, so spending the first 10 minutes reading the text will enhance students' ability to read and will give them a significant chance to practice reading these words fluently. Moreover, the new and core vocabulary items which are in the RR texts are repeated throughout the themes of the curriculum, so this is considered a chance to practise them through the daily repetition of the RR texts. The following is what some participants stated: T5, "students can recognize new vocabulary" and T6 "I discovered new teaching strategies that help students to recognize new vocabularies and texts". It is important to acknowledge that teaching and learning need effort and time from teachers and students and, in time, the processes become easier and both groups adapt. However, teachers who enjoyed the experience of repeated reading justified their preference by stating a number of reasons. Of a total 108 respondents who enjoyed the experience of RR method, more than 20 described the repeated reading method as effective, useful, interesting, practical, applicable, and a new and different way and experience in teaching reading. Some of them explained their preference for the method in the following comments:

T7: *"A different way in reading that is fun and enjoyable"*;

T8: *"more effective and useful"*;

T9: *"Because it is useful"*; and

T10: *"It is an excellent method to improve students' reading"*.

The recent and innovative methods in the teaching and learning field attract teachers and learners to apply, try, accept and share various ideas and ways of teaching and learning to create favourable, beneficial and meaningful environments for learners. Applying the RR method is an example of applying a new experience in teaching generally and of teaching the reading skill practically in the hope of making learning more valuable and enjoyable. After a few years of experience of the method, the vast majority of the online questionnaire respondents reflected positively on the experience because they had encountered its effectiveness, either in students' reading level or in their teaching, as the data showed above.

8.6. Effect of the Method on the Teacher and Teaching

Seven respondents commented that there is no time to apply the RR method in one classroom period. For example, T11 stated: "Indeed it requires much time to do that instead of spending one period". Participants provided some justifications for that. For instance, they thought that the application of the method takes a long time for the teacher to explain as well as students taking a long time over the reading and repetition processes. The following extract is an example of this, when T12 remarked: "Because it takes a long time and there is not enough time for all the steps to be done or to assess all the students". The participants' comments regarding the difficulty in assessing all students could be related to their lack of understanding of the method and how to assess it properly. In practice, according to the instruction given to the teacher who applied the method in the Al Batinah North Governorate, there was flexibility in assessing students during the whole two weeks of applying the RR method. The teacher can assess two or three students before starting the actual lesson while she is doing the daily practice of the repeated reading text, as is usually the case in any type of continuous assessment or assessment for learning. Moreover, she can start with outstanding students and then move to the average students during the two weeks of applying the RR text and focus on low achievers on the day of the assessment which is on a Thursday of the second week.

In contrast, some data in this respect present a contradiction with previous findings. To illustrate, many participants expressed the positive effect of the RR method on teaching and provided different reasons. One of the participants, for instance T13, explained: "it has clear steps that move smoothly from reading words, phrases, sentences and finally texts". Another participant T14 commented: "Because that helps me to introduce the lesson smoothly and in an easy way" and T15, "my lesson became well organized". Teachers are also encouraged to use technology and different games when applying the RR method to attract and involve all the students in the lesson. As T16 highlighted:

I applied the smart board in teaching repeated reading, that helped me to add pictures, games, activities to the lesson. I saw my students more engaged and active and as a result their reading skill was improved.

Moreover, many respondents described the RR method as breaking the daily routine, as well as encouraging students to read intensively in a relaxed atmosphere and the whole period is spent on reading. Thus, students can understand more easily, since they practise and repeat the main structure or grammar that will be studied later in the theme. The following is what some participants reported about the method: T17, "makes the lesson easier to understand" and T18 "it helps my students to repeat the main structure in each text". Moreover, to emphasize the importance of the practised text in developing students' other skills, one of the participants, T19 added: "also the reading texts help them in writing since that the texts were related to the curriculum".

A further reason for teachers' preference for the RR method is the useful activities that are practised by students during the activity, such as dictation, writing and practising answering comprehension questions. The following response is an example of how T20 justified a preference:

"Because it is a new experience...It involves many activities like – reading fluency – comprehension questions – dictation – writing".

From my experience and as one of the designers of these activities, it could be said that these exercises are meaningful for students to practise reading the RR text. For example, two of the sentences of the dictation are taken from the practice texts for the repeated reading and, at the same time, contain the sight and frequency words that students have seen before. In the writing section, students are asked to re-write the text in order to practise reading it while they copy the text. The last activity asks students some comprehension questions after each text. These questions are designed to fit the level of the different students and to train them in the different types of comprehension question.

8.7. Students' Impression of the Repeated Reading Method

On the one hand, three respondents indicated that students did not enjoy the method, felt bored and were noisy after they were assessed. Outstanding students found the method boring and refused to participate in the daily reading activities, unlike when they are asked to read a new text, when they usually feel eager and ready to read it. The following data present T21 remarks about students' impressions:

However, I noticed that outstanding students feel that reading is very boring and do not even raise their hands to participate in regard to a loss of enthusiasm of reading. In contrast, to a new text given to read, they all want to show their courage and confidence, which leads them always to need to obtain the nickname of the best reader in the class.

On the other hand, the vast majority of responses illustrated that, students have a positive reaction towards the applied RR method. For instance, many respondents remarked that students enjoyed the method, became more active and liked reading different texts and were not afraid of making mistakes. The following data describe students' impressions, as participants referred to the RR method. For instance, T22 stated that: "students [are] more active", T23 said "shy kids can join in stress free without being afraid of making mistakes", and T24 noted that, "students like the lesson of repeated reading". Furthermore, students liked the games that were used in teaching as an educational technique to attract their attention to learning as T25 stated that, "Because as like to read more and enjoy with the game that use in RR". Students also liked the idea of competing with each other when they were asked to finish reading a text in one minute, as T26 reported: "and there was a big competition between them to read it". This suggests that the competitiveness between students creates a challenging and enjoyable environment in class. As far as I am concerned, teachers can make the learning and teaching process of RR a workable and enthusiastic experience for students in each lesson by knowing exactly how to deal with them and what attracts them based on their levels, abilities, interests and ages. Knowing these key success indicators for each student will make applying a new method or teaching a new strategy an easy task for the teacher.

8.8. Students' Level in Reading Skill

The data illustrated an interesting response regarding the students' level in reading; students were dependent on memorizing the word forms, not reading them. As T27 mentioned: "because the students rely on memorizing the word forms, not reading them". This suggests that students recognize the words since the practised RR texts consist of a number of high-frequency vocabulary items and sight words which they practise daily, so they will automatically memorize these words by sight with daily practice. Although this could be seen as a drawback of the method, I think that this comment could possibly be considered a sign of success in applying the RR method because students will not take a long time to recognize words by sight and learning the most frequent words easily. Moreover, the rest of the brain will be used to comprehend the text in order to be able to answer the comprehension questions. LaBerge and Samuels (1974) remarked that the "repetition of text encourages automaticity by transferring attention to the recognition of visual representations of a word, word groups, or short phrases, allowing the reader to direct attention to gaining meaningfulness from the text". In my view, therefore, if students memorize some words, become fluent in reading and are able to comprehend the text at the same time, the aims of the RR method are achieved.

Many of the respondents stated that the level of the students' reading skills had improved after applying the RR method. The findings show that students can read fluently, accurately, easily, quickly, correctly and with emotion. In general, 21 respondents stated in response to the open-ended question in the questionnaire that, "repeated reading helps students to read fluently", "It helps my students to read correctly and fluently", and "repeated reading gives my students confidence to read accurately and quickly". This suggests that oral reading fluency, which is defined as "the ability to read connected text quickly, accurately, and with expression" (Rasplica & Cummings, 2013) has been achieved after applying the repeated reading method. Therefore, students can not only become better readers, as T28 commented: "it made my students better

readers”, but also more confident in reading, as T29 remarked that it “helps my students to be confident in reading”. The data also demonstrated that students’ word recognition and ability to deal with tricky words and vocabulary items had increased and they were able to read either word by word or in chunks. The following extract from T30 illustrates this:

[it] increases students’ word recognition and they learn how to read tricky words and difficult words because it helps students to read word by word and it increases students’ vocabulary”, as well as “it helps students to read in chunk.

It is important here to clarify that this finding creates either ambiguity or contradiction because some respondents to the open-ended question remarked that students can read word by word and read chunks at the same time. The findings from the online questionnaire also showed that 55 of the respondents agreed that students can read word by word after applying the RR method. From my experience, some participants might have meant that students can read words when they are isolated or when the teacher points randomly to words in the texts, especially the sight words that follow each text. It might also mean that students become better able to read words, sentences and texts. In addition, some respondents emphasized that weak students also benefit from this method; for example, T31 stated that: “this method also helps weak students to read and learn English”. Therefore, the data indicated the crucial role of the RR method with low achievers.

Moreover, the concept of repeated reading gives students sufficient practice to read a text until they are able to read it fluently in the allocated time. The data revealed that students finish reading in a specific time (one minute), which is agreed to be a sign of success in achieving fluency in reading, as T32 mentioned that, “for a quick reading without errors and at a specific time”. In addition, the repetition of the text makes sentences and words familiar to the students when they meet them in other texts. This is exactly what T33 highlighted: “because it made students familiar with words and sentences”. Moreover, the findings showed that English skills in general and writing and speaking in particular had increased with students, as T34 reported: “also, the reading texts help them in writing since the texts were related to the curriculum”, and T35 stated “it is good for helping students to write and read also and improve their writing and speaking”. This is due to the repetition of the practised texts, which can help students to use the same phrases and sentences in their writing and speaking according to the situation. In addition, many of the respondents expressed their happiness at finding significant progress in students’ reading level, as T36 stressed the following:

Because it is really something beautiful when you notice the positive benefits in your students and how they improve their reading skills. You feel proud because they have the ability to be brilliant and good readers in another language not only their mother tongue and this will help them to be more aware about acquiring the new language.

9. Research limitation

This study was limited in its investigation because it was applied in a mixed abilities class that has individual differences between students. Future studies could focus more on applying the RR method with a certain category of students according to their individual differences (outstanding, average, and low achievers) to investigate the impact of repeated reading on each group individually and more precisely. The current study was applied only with students who do not have special education need, so I suggest future studies apply the RR method with students who have learning difficulties in English to verify the effect of the RR method on improving those students’ level in reading. Future studies could also investigate the application of the RR method in Cycle Two schools to investigate if the method produces similar findings with students in higher grades.

10. Discussion

The key findings of the current study are that teachers have a positive opinion of the RR method because it plays a crucial role in making reading an easy skill by helping students to read fluently and accurately. Furthermore, the data revealed that the majority of the participants strongly agreed with applying the RR method, even though it is not one of the curriculum strategies.

The researcher’s view, teachers’ willingness to apply the RR method without a long negotiation, as shown from the findings, is because they believe that this method involves skills that lead to helping students with their reading. Specifically, schoolchildren (young learners in the early grades) because their ability to read provides them with access to all other subjects in the school curriculum (Khalid, Buari, & Chen, 2017). In addition, there is a need for a remedial programme, method or strategy to help students to read fluently and accurately and, at the same time, to support teachers in not having to expend extra effort every day with these students alongside the daily routine of teaching in order to overcome this difficulty. Therefore, it is important to mention that curriculum designers do not currently integrate practical and beneficial strategies within the curriculum to support students in acquiring reading skills. In addressing this shortcoming in finding effective strategies to teach the reading skill, teachers in Al-Batinah North Governorate had accepted the challenge to apply the RR method for the first time with their students in grades three and four, although the majority of them stated in the online questionnaire that this is an extra burden.

In addition, after applying the RR method, teachers notice progress in students' reading level because this approach provides students with a structured opportunity to engage in a relatively high amount of reading practice of a segment of text. This kind of practice is responsible for increasing students' reading fluency (Snidarich, 2015). The findings of the present study showed that this method was a new experience in teaching reading and that it was practical, effective, useful, fun and had clear steps. Likewise, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (National Reading Panel, 2000) indicates that oral repeated reading is a technique that is fun and easy to carry out and provides a window into readers' ability to integrate the skills associated with reading fluently. On the other hand, some data from the current study illustrated that this method can be seen as boring by students, not effective, requires a long time to perform, and teachers in general do not have enough time to apply it.

In practice, with regard to the time required to apply repeated reading, the teacher was asked to apply the method for a whole lesson once only and for two weeks he/she practised the text before the actual lesson only 10 to 20 minutes. Moreover, the text of the repeated reading is from each theme of the English curriculum with which students are familiar, so the RR texts can be considered a reading lesson that is supposed to be in the annual plan while distributing extra lessons for practising the four English skills.

In addition, the findings of the present study indicated that the majority of the students who participated enjoyed the experience of the RR method, they became more active, it gave them confidence to read and, even if they made mistakes, they were not afraid. Shy children could also join in stress free without being afraid of making mistakes. Therefore, these positive outcomes of the RR method led to teachers feeling satisfied and pleased because they had found a method that addressed students' reading difficulties. However, the data from the present study also clarified that some students felt bored and started being noisy when they finished reading and some of the outstanding students refused to participate in their daily reading tasks. In my view, it is the teacher's responsibility to engage students in all stages of the repeated reading, as well as to clarify the aims of applying this method with students; the intention of the multiple readings is to help the student move from decoding words to automaticity and, therefore, fluency (Swain et al., 2013). Teachers should let students feel the differences between their initial reading of a text and the next reading by recording their reading, as their success in reading will motivate them and create a challenging environment within the classroom between the students.

As a result of the positive comments about the RR method and the excellent outcomes regarding students' reading skills in particular and other skills in general, I recommend that curriculum designers and policy makers integrate the RR method in teaching reading skills as a method essential to improving the oral reading fluency of students in Cycle One schools in the Sultanate. Especially, all Cycle One schools in Al-Batinah North Governorate have sufficient and profound knowledge of applying the method, which could help them become a training center for teachers from neighbouring governorates.

The data showed that this method could have a vital impact on teaching reading skills to students. For instance, it encourages students to read in a relaxed atmosphere and the aim of the period is to focus on practising reading, thus breaking the routine of a typical reading lesson and making the lesson easier to understand. In this respect, Rasinski (2003) stated that the RR method provides opportunities to experience the pleasure of reading with a real purpose. It is clear that since the experience of repeated reading is new and it fulfils the short-term objectives of the lesson, which are to understand the text better and read it faster and more accurately (Cohen, 2011), teachers notice that these objectives are achieved remarkably and these outcomes motivate them to give their best to their students. Teachers also stated that this method involves a number of activities, such as comprehension, writing and dictation, and gives students a chance to repeat the main structure in each text. All these activities enhanced the students' reading level and the experience demonstrated its effectiveness through the positive feedback found in the data, so it seems to be a good idea to include all these activities when applying the RR method, especially if they are related to the theme of the practised text.

Therefore, since there are real difficulties in acquiring reading skill among most Omani learners, as the researcher has shown, it is crucial that policy makers and curriculum designers integrate into the curriculum practical solutions or suggestions that have been applied, tested and experienced in the field with positive outcomes to overcome reading difficulties. The RR method provides evidence of an applied and tested method with substantial positive consequences for teaching reading skills and students' academic level in relation to the reading skill in particular and other related skills more generally.

11. Conclusion

The data demonstrate the substantial role of the RR method in improving the oral reading fluency of grade three and four students in North Al-Batinah Governorate. Hence, applying the RR method with all its benefits, as shown in the current study, would prevent most of the reading difficulties that face students in Cycle One schools, and these obstacles will not appear later in Cycle Two and post-Basic classes because students will be supported with all the basics required to address their reading skill in their earlier years of learning and being taught the English language. Therefore, I recommend that curriculum policy makers

benefit from this method by integrating it within the Omani curriculum. It is the policy makers' role to adopt beneficial, practical and innovative ideas and strategies, methods and techniques to overcome the educational and learning obstacles students face. These difficulties demotivate students from wanting to learn English effectively and easily. Such difficulties also often demotivate teachers from giving of their best to prepare well-educated and knowledgeable generations of students in a creative and innovative educational environment.

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