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Employing Read-Aloud Instructional Strategy to Transform Reading Attitudes of ESL Leaners

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Abstract:

This study focuses on the influence of read-aloud instructional strategy on the reading attitudes of elementary school students in Pakistan. The study was experimental, where a read-aloud instructional strategy was used to investigate its influence on reading attitudes of elementary students. Thirty students (aged 7-8 years) were selected as intact groups of 15 each for the experimental and control group, respectively. The read-aloud strategy of storytelling was used as an intervention for the experimental group for the entire academic year, whereas the control group was taught with a traditional oral storytelling method. Data for reading attitudes were collected through a questionnaire identifying the reading habits and practices of the elementary students. The mean differences in the pre-test and post-test results of the reading attitude questionnaire of both groups were compared using independent sample t-test, and paired sample t-test. The effect size was also calculated with a 95% confidence interval. The findings of the t-test and gain scores reveal significant statistical differences, indicating the effectiveness of the read-aloud technique in increasing the attitude to learn and read in English. A systematic and repeated read-aloud technique is proven by research to improve reading comprehension and vocabulary development in young learners. The read-aloud strategy is unique as it creates a classroom community of learners based on a story theme that forms the basis for developing language skills.

Keywords: elementary education, Pakistan, read-aloud instructional strategy, reading attitude.

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采用朗读教学策略改变英语学习者的阅读态度

摘要：

本研究的重点是朗读教学策略对巴基斯坦小学生阅读态度的影响。该研究是实验性的，其中使用朗读教学策略来调查其对小学生阅读态度的影响。30 名学生（7–8 岁）被选为实验组和对照组，每组 15 人。整个学年，实验组采用讲故事的朗读策略作为干预，而对照组则采用传统的口头讲故事方法进行教学。通过一份确定小学生阅读习惯和实践的问卷调查收集阅读态度数据。采用独立样本吨检验和配对样本吨检验比较两组阅读态度问卷前后测结果的均值差异。还使用 95%置信区间计算了效果大小。吨检验和增益分数的结果揭示了显着的统计差异，表明朗读技术在提高英语学习和阅读态度方面的有效性。研究证明，系统和重复的朗读技巧可以提高年轻学习者的阅读理解能力和词汇发展。朗读策略是独一无二的，因为它创建了一个基于故事主题的学习者课堂社区，该故事主题构成了发展语言技能的基础。

关键词：基础教育，巴基斯坦，大声朗读教学策略，阅读态度.

1. Introduction

The term motivation in the perspective of psychology introduces, maintains, and guides goal-oriented behavior (Imsa-ard, 2020). In language learning, motivation is influential in shaping students' desire and attitudes in the acquisition of a new language. Nieto-Márquez, Baldominos, and Pérez-Nieto (2020) state that a positive attitude for reading initiates cognitive operations. These operations facilitate the individual to perform acts such as obtaining knowledge, performing tasks, enjoying the experience of aesthetics, and participating in a social context. Motivation and reading attitudes benefit relevant reading behavior elaborate Lombardi et al. (2021); these include aesthetic involvement, interaction with the complicated ideas within the text, and curiosity. Research emphasizes the role of motivation in second language as a major factor in second language learning Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008).

According to Wood et al. (2018), to enhance student motivation, developing the knowledge essential for successful reading, and positively impacting their attitudes toward reading, read aloud offers a viable solution. According to Zucker et al. (2021), read aloud is an instructional strategy where parents, caregivers, and teachers read topics or text aloud to students or children. The reader exhibits and utilizes variations in tone, pitch, pauses, eye-contact, pace, volume, and questions to develop an enjoyable reading experience and teach through articulate delivery. Nomnian et al. (2020) stated that learners who are taught through read aloud develop their knowledge of the second language through storing and constructing vocabulary-based language representations.

In many developing countries such as Pakistan, tertiary education is mostly carried out using English as a medium of instruction (Asif, Bashir & Zafar, 2019; Haidar, 2019). In most developing countries, English is used for instrumental, creative, and interpersonal functions. The capability to read in English has an essential role in schooling as students at different levels complete projects and assignments based on English reading. The main mode of examination is also based on reading and writing. Tertiary students need to be fluent in reading, writing, and other language skills to comprehend texts and research papers. It has been observed that most students are not motivated to read as they are from different backgrounds and speak different languages.

Furthermore, many students have negative attitudes about the English language and consider it very complicated; this in turn leads to hesitance and lack of motivation for reading (Haidar & Fang, 2019). According to Chankova (2020), if the text or topics are not associated with the backgrounds of students, it will result in losing their interest in reading. Furthermore, difficult reading material and lack of teacher training are also major reasons for less motivation toward reading (Bashiruddin & Qayyum, 2014).

Iqbal et al. (2014) attribute the poor quality of teachers and outdated curricula as the main cause of decline in the reading habits of students. This has been further elaborated by Teevno & Raisani, (2017), whose research on the causes of poor reading skills of students in language highlighted that besides poor teaching methodology and outdated curricula, the teachers did not meet the needs of the learners, which affects their reading performance. To address the issue of improving reading and related issues in the early years, two major interventions occurred viz. The Pakistan Reading Project in 2014 (Zia, et.al. 2021) and the Sindh Basic Education Program (Khan et al. 2021). These interventions had two-fold aims of improving the reading skills of the teachers as well as the students. Khan et al. (2021) further highlighted that this intervention made a significant contribution to boosting the teaching of reading skills to early grades of teachers from rural and urban areas of Pakistan. Despite this, the reading skills of students are not up to the mark.

In this study, students of grade three, aged 7–8 years were exposed to read aloud sessions for ten months in an academic year with the intention to improve

comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, and attitude toward reading. This paper highlights the influence of read-aloud strategies on their reading attitudes, measured with the help of a pre and posttest.

The current study intends to answer the following research question:

● How does read-aloud instructional strategy influence the reading attitudes of elementary school students in Pakistan?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Read-Aloud Instructional Strategy for English as Second Language (ESL) Learners at Elementary Level

It has been identified by Vossoughi et al. (2020) that students learn to speak any language through what they hear; listening to forms that are used to lecture them directly, or what they hear from adults or teachers. According to Lopez (2020), listening skills are critical for ESL learners to attain proficiency in the English language. Moreover, ESL learners also need to be taught through explicit modeling of reading comprehension and writing skills. According to Teng (2019), while attaining English language skills, it is important to recognize various factors that influence the motivation, attitude, and knowledge-building of young ESL learners.

A demand in the teaching of English as a second language continues to experience growth in schools throughout Pakistan. Ahmad (2020) identified a lack of understanding and accuracy regarding varied vocabulary as a major problem among Pakistani students at the elementary level. His research has identified read aloud as a significant strategy for enhancing the second language vocabulary of students at different levels. An important aspect of the successful implementation of read-aloud technique if the training and capacity building of teachers in implementing the technique of read aloud.

2.2. Read-Aloud Instructional Strategy and Reading Attitudes

The read-aloud instructional strategy serves as the foundation for developing literacy; in addition, read aloud is very efficient in helping and motivating ESL learners to read (Sun, 2020). It helps students at the elementary level by providing a real-life demonstration of phrased and fluent reading. However, beside improving language skills, Nadirah, Asrifan, Vargheese, and Haedar (2020) highlighted that read aloud are instrumental in developing the interest of the listener to read books on their own. The experience enhances and influences the understanding of the book that is read to them (ibid.), hence shaping their reading attitudes.

Teachers have an influential role in influencing the attitudes of students toward reading and speaking skills in language development (Sajid & Kassim, 2019); language learners hold their teachers as language models and often imitate them. Teachers who use read aloud, use dialogues and stories to explore emotions, learn conversation and develop cognition; all these features of storytelling are fundamental in the education of young learners (Tobia, Bonifacci, Ottaviani, Borsato, & Marzocchi, 2016). Teachers model the interest and enjoyment of the content, storyline, and experiences of the books they read aloud to their students and transfer the implicit attitude to their students. The current paper offers an insight on how the continued use of read-aloud instructional strategy helps influence the reading attitudes if elementary learners in different contexts.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study investigated the influence of read-aloud instructional strategy in a private school in Pakistan. The private school caters to mix-gender students belonging to middle-class families in Pakistan. The method was quantitative, where an experimentation design was used to compare the pre-test and post-test results of the reading attitude questionnaire of the experimental group and control group after the read-aloud intervention. The questionnaire identified the reading attitudes inquiring about the habits and practices of the elementary students both before and after instruction of read -aloud strategies. After the completion of that intervention, the students of both groups were asked about their attitude about the read-aloud experience.

3.2. Population and Samples

The sample for this study were the 40 mix-gender elementary students, aged 7-8 years, who were selected as intact groups of 20 each in the experimental and control groups for the read aloud intervention. Due ethical considerations were observed before approaching the students; the researchers sought permission from the parents and school administration.

3.3. Data Collection Tool

The research adopted a questionnaire focusing on the attitude toward reading. This scale was developed and previously used by Heathington (1975) and consisted of 20 items; this has widely been used and reported in previous studies (Focarile, 2006; Park, 2016; Downs, 2021). The Likert type questionnaire gauged the intensity of feeling toward statements by showing students Smiley Faces showing 5 attitudes, ranging from extremely positive to extremely negative (points given from 5 to 1). The statements fell under three broad categories, which inquired attitudes regarding reading at home, reading in school, and reading generally.

3.4. Data Collection

In the study, an interactive teacher read-aloud technique for storytelling was used with the experimental group using nine grade -level stories for

the entire academic term spanning 10 months. The teacher made full use of facial expressions, gestures, body language, and variation in tone and pitch to make students understand. This also gave life to the story characters, in addition to explaining vocabulary words. The teacher took pauses while reading aloud the story and asked the students to make predictions and ask questions about the consequent part. These techniques were successfully implemented to arouse interest, encourage critical thinking, and to make the text comprehensible; this ultimately increased the desire for reading.

Data were collected in the classroom setting in the presence of the reading teacher; the researchers marked the correct option after reading it to each participant.

3.5. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using a paired sample T-test for mean differences between the experimental and control groups. The researcher calculated the effect size with a 95% confidence interval. This helped identify student attitudes and what made them feel motivated to read.

4. Results

The results of the pre- and post-tests of the control and experimental groups toward reading attitude have been represented with respect to three categories. For the first category related to reading at home, the mean difference in the experimental and control groups was less in the pre-test (0.74), but showed significant difference (3.73) in the post-test. For the first category of questions, the effect size on gain scores with 95% confidence interval was computed as 0.75 [0.04, 5.95].

The second set of questions investigated their general feelings while reading; the mean difference in the experimental and control groups did not reflect much difference in the pre-test (M = 1.93), but showed a significant difference (M = 3.6) in the post-test. For this category of questions, the effect size on gain scores with 95% confidence interval was computed as 0.8 [0.23, 6.29].

The third category was regarding their feelings while reading in school; the mean difference in the experimental and control groups did not reflect much difference in the pre-test (M = 1.8), but showed a significant difference (M = 3.2) in the post-test. Gain scores were also significantly higher than those of the control group (p = 0.047); hence the effect size on gain score was 0.65 (0.04, 7.95).

Paired sample t-test scores for attitude toward reading reflect that there is a significant difference pre-test and post-test scores with (p = 0.003) in the experimental group. Analysis of the results of the control group reveals pre-test mean scores were (M = 13.66, SD = 1.44) and post-test mean scores were (M = 14.40, SD = 3.83), which was not significant with (p = 0.470). In the second category pre-test mean scores of the experimental group were (M = 21.86, SD = 3.02) and post-test mean scores were (M = 28.80, SD = 3.83) with statistically significant (p =< 0.000) showing the

benefits of read-aloud intervention.

In comparison, the difference in the control group was not significant. For the third category, the difference in results shows that the experimental group results were statistically significant (p = 0.00), showing they were happier than control group students in terms of reading in school after the intervention.

The overall scores of the paired sample t-test for the three categories reveal a significant mean difference of 9.40 and 2 tailed significance (p = 0.003), reflecting that the attitude toward reading of the experimental group was significantly higher than that of the control group after the intervention.

5. Discussion

In this study, the effect of read aloud on students' desire and attitude toward reading to efficiently evaluate the read -aloud instructional practice. The objective of this experimental study was to measure the extent of impact using a teacher read aloud on students' attitudes to read at the elementary level in the ESL context.

It had been revealed from the findings of this research that reading aloud significantly impacts the reading attitudes of the ESL students at the elementary level. Furthermore, the findings also reveal that ESL learners developed a strong positive attitude to learn and read in English after the teacher read aloud technique was applied. In this study, it had been identified from the outcomes of post-test analysis that the technique of read -aloud instructional strategy enhanced the scores of the experimental group students at the elementary level. This indicated that the investigational group of students performed substantially better on the evaluation tests after the read-aloud technique was used. It has also been revealed from the findings of this research that children who had never developed desire to read, the school environment provides them with their initial introduction to the world of literature. Thus, creating a positive attitude toward reading is attributed to the efforts of educators.

Even in the classroom, however, the importance of reading aloud is often overlooked (Trelease, 2013). As stated by Vacca, Vacca, and Gore (1987), "reading aloud is too important to the reading program as a whole to be treated in an off-hand way". Reading aloud may be the easiest and most cost-effective way to inculcate positive reading attitudes (Kimmel & Segel, 1988). Research conducted over the past two decades in the field of education confirms that the most effective way to help children develop into lifelong readers is to read to them (Trelease, 2013). According to Atwal (2020), students in the ESL setting can enhance their reading comprehension abilities by reading loud as it has been identified from the studies that there is a significant correlation with reading aloud. The results of this paper also supported the study by Dyson et al. (2017), which shows that there is a positive influence and impact of the read-aloud techniques on enhancing

the critical understanding and conception skills of the students.

Furthermore, it also emphasizes that this technique requires readers to reflect about the content. However, the study also revealed that the major problem among the students at the elementary level is the understanding and accuracy of the diverse vocabulary. It has been stated by Vine, Boyd & Pennebaker (2020) that the use of diverse vocabulary generates difficulties for the students to understand the text that can be overcome by read aloud, which will in return enhance the desire to read.

Systematic and repeated application of read-aloud techniques is proven by research to improve reading comprehension and development of vocabulary in young learners. The read aloud strategy is unique as it creates a classroom community of learners based on a story theme that forms the basis of developing language skills (Wahyuni, 2022). The techniques employed in read aloud play a key role in creating opportunities of interaction amongst children, which helps in developing appreciation of literature at a young age, creating motivation to read, and increasing comprehension skills and critical thinking and general understanding of the pupils (Adilah & Eliza ,2021; McGee & Schickedanz, 2007). The technique is also proven to be effective in rural settings and in the context of second language learners (Novianti et al., 2021; Beck & McKeown, 2001; Hahn, 2002; Trelease, 2001).

6. Conclusion

It has been identified from the above study that language is regarded as an important aspect for understanding the prospects. It is one of the elements that tie communities together through different means of verbal and non-verbal language. However, an integral part of the process of language learning includes motivation and attitude. Furthermore, one of the significant elements in learning foreign language includes learning vocabulary because of the meaning of unique and difficult words emphasized both in the classrooms or in the books. In the context of Pakistan, the capability to read in English has an essential role in the learning process because the students must complete their projects and assignments on the basis of English reading. The study revealed that teachers must implement techniques that encourage reading motivation and developing of a positive attitude in students. A technique that teachers must consider includes reading aloud to students. The read-aloud technique gives the opportunity to the students at the elementary level to hear and then comprehend the difficult vocabulary. The reading comprehension skills of students also enhanced through listening to the reading of others. This study revealed that in Pakistan, the read-aloud strategy significantly impacts the students' desire to read and attitudes along with their reading comprehension abilities at the elementary level.

7. Limitations and Further Study

The limitations of the current study are that it has been limited to elementary schools of Pakistan only. The data were gathered from the elementary school located in Lahore, where only two integral groups were allocated as the experimental group and control group. For greater analysis, the size of the sample could be increased. However, it has been considered from the given nature of the research contrary to the fact that findings are going to be preliminary and thus limit the instant practical inferences of the study. A second limitation of the current study is that researchers only directed private schools of Lahore; thus, results cannot be comprehensive to public schools. However, instead of the limitations, the result assists in adding components of small groups to the whole group program of read-aloud for the persistence of structure vocabulary of students and comprehension.

It has been recommended to future researchers that the practices need to be recognized which are commonly used by the teachers of the elementary classrooms as it can prime toward the expansion of efficient instructional approaches and training programs of teachers. It was also suggested to the teachers that they should concentrate on the strategies of instructional and should provide attention to all students individually to ensure that every single student is performing well. However, the technique of read-aloud has been identified to be essential for enhancing the English language leaning of student; therefore, it has been suggested that institutes should execute the techniques of read aloud in their own syllabus or prospectus. Furthermore, the syllabus also needs to be reviewed to ensure that school is working on this technique largely for the drive of emerging a vocabulary and English language learning of students. Furthermore, it is significant for executing the read-aloud technique that teachers are well trained and know the significance of teaching through the technique of reading aloud. Therefore, it has been indorsed that teachers need to be trained on the foundation of both in and pre-service. The service of pre-training will permit the teacher to comprehend about the technique of read aloud and know how to develop it for enhancing student's vocabulary, reading comprehension and attitude toward reading. However, the training of service needs to be held through the lessons. Through these recommendations, teachers will be capable to expand their competencies in executing the technique of read aloud and eventually assist students in the enhancement of their English language learning.

Authors' Contributions

Kazi: conceptualization and supervision, critical revision of the manuscript.

Usman: data acquisition, data analysis/interpretation.

Moghal: drafting manuscript, writing, interpretation.

Saeed: technical or material support, statistical analysis.

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Asad: language editing/reviewing, proofreading.

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