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The Effectiveness of the Participatory Reading Strategy in Teaching Arabic Language Skills to Develop Reading Comprehension Skills of Saudi Students

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ABSTRACT

Reading is still one of the finest and widest ways to learn about science and other subjects. As a result, specialists began looking for anything that may improve reading comprehension, raise student engagement, and aid in the development of reading comprehension abilities. They also explored how reading content impacts understanding and encouraged participatory reading to promote comprehension. The study aimed to reveal the impact of the participatory reading strategy in developing reading comprehension. In addition to identifying the statistically significant differences in reading comprehension skills due to the gender variable, and the interaction between the participatory reading strategy and gender. In order to accomplish the objectives of the study, a reading comprehension exam was created that included seven skills with (30) items. 48 male and female pupils were selected from ten schools connected to the Abha region to participate in the study. The participants in the study were split randomly into two groups: the control group, which studied using the usual approach, consisted of 24 male and female students; the experimental group, which studied using the participatory reading strategy, consisted of 24 male and female students. According to the study findings, the experimental group members who studied using the participatory reading technique had statistically significant differences in their reading comprehension skills that might be attributable to the teaching strategy. The findings also revealed that there were no statistically significant variations in reading comprehension skills attributable to the gender variable or to the interaction between the participatory reading technique and gender.

1. Introduction

One can gain knowledge and information in various kinds of subjects via reading. Students' importance of reading is growing because it is not just a subject, but since it largely determines their

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advancement and success in other disciplines [1]. Additionally, reading broadens and develops kids' sphere of experience, engages their minds, develops their tastes, instills in them a beneficial curiosity to learn about others and themselves, broadens their vistas of thought, improves their language, and fortifies their personalities [2].

Reading is still one of the best and broadest sources of science and knowledge [3]. The vigilant nations have been keen to spread science and facilitate its causes by encouraging reading among all segments of society [4]. Decoding and understanding are two parts of reading that work together to help you figure out what the text means [12]. Decoding is the process of converting written words into spoken ones, and when a learner's language proficiency is poor, they focus mostly on decoding rather than understanding [13]. Contrarily, readers who are fluent the language can easily skip the decoding phase and concentrate on comprehension. Consequently, an increase in reading speed invariably coincides with an increase in comprehension [14]. Bustamante and Welch [15] stated that teaching students reading comprehension at its various levels means that they learn how to actively search for meaning within the text and build comprehension skills. Giving students texts that are current and inspiring accomplishes this.

Modern education stresses the role of the teacher and the learner in the educational process in general [16]. This role is becoming increasingly important in teaching reading, because real reading is the interaction between the reader and the text [17]. The reader can read between the lines thanks to this interaction, which also gives him additional meanings for the information he has already read [18]. Therefore, experts started seeking for anything that would enhance reading comprehension, increase that engagement, and help pupils build their reading comprehension skills. They also discussed how the sort of reading material affects reading comprehension and suggested participatory reading in increasing reading comprehension, and they recommended a good selection of the text and its style to improve comprehension [11].

Egounleti [19] indicated that students who lack confidence in reading fluency may refuse to read aloud in front of the group. But some of them may be willing to train with supportive colleagues. Fluency is a collection of abilities that can be summed up as accurate, spontaneous, and quick word discrimination, reading at a pace appropriate for the student's age or grade level, appropriate use of the reading skills that must be available during reading, and the capacity to express the written text correctly when reading [20]. According to Mariana, Sutisna and Wahyuni [21], some students who struggle with verbal fluency misrepresent the meaning, fail to account for punctuation, take longer to read the same text, and struggle to comprehend the text similar their peers. Due to the fact that mistakes will inevitably occur, it is necessary to create a safe and encouraging learning environment for all students in the classroom. This will allow them to make cognitive progress while being tracked on a word-per-minute scale and receiving praise from their peers and teachers for their performance enhancement.

The importance of participatory reading stands out as a strategy for learning a language because it gives students the chance to make clear reading comprehension outputs, use all the language resources they know, and get feedback from their group members and the teacher on how to make the outputs clearer [5]. Klingner, Vaughn, and Schumm [6] argue that participatory reading is when students work in small groups to do tasks that need everyone in the group to be involved. While Johnson and Johnson [7] indicate that participatory reading means teaching through small groups to work together to maximize learning and increase opportunities for others to learn. In participatory reading, discussion plays an important role in allowing space for cooperation and interaction and allowing all students to participate in the reading process. The researchers think that the participatory reading process will help students in the same group talk to each other more, which will help everyone in the classroom learning.

The participatory reading strategy was mentioned in the previous literature using the term collaborative strategic reading. The researcher adopted the term participatory reading strategy because it is used more in the context of the Arab environment in general and Saudi Arabia in particular.

Participatory reading to others has several benefits. The beneficial cognitive interplay that results promotes language development. It assists teachers and students in establishing a shared

educational objective [8]. Additionally, it benefits pupils who don't always do well in challenging reporting situations [9]. Students' awareness of their active participation in participatory learning groups develops because it offers a different, more social approach to learning to read and works to connect reading with other language skills like speaking and listening [10]. According to Namaziandost, Homayouni and Rahmani [11], participatory reading promotes teamwork, vocabulary growth, and the teaching of understandable reading to pupils. This approach works well with pupils because it helps them understand how much they contribute to the groups they are a part of. Additionally, teachers are happy about the practice of participatory reading since they think it improves their students' vocabulary, reading comprehension, and participatory and communicative abilities.

Members of linguistic academies, professors at universities that focus on linguistic and educational studies, and Arabic language supervisors and teachers who work to improve Arabic language education see that teaching reading does not enough to identify basic skills and abilities, pay attention, and develop students. Therefore, we find a clear weakness among students in these skills, as the majority of students focus on distinguishing letters and words and speaking them out, and do not receive training in the skills necessary for reading [24]. There seems to be a need for more theory and application-based research on the participatory reading technique. The researcher found only a few studies that examined this strategy and revealed its impact on different reading skills [25]. Therefore, the researcher has endeavored to develop fluency in reading and has turned to using modern methods and strategies, especially since recent trends in the educational process encourage teachers to reduce the use of traditional methods in education and pay attention to modern methods [26]. The participatory reading strategy is one of the modern strategies that aims to develop reading skills in general and reading fluency and reading comprehension in particular.

Guthrie [22] asserts that the participatory reading technique pairs a fluent reader with a less fluent reader. They switch roles while reading aloud to accomplish appropriate behavior through modeling and coaching, and they decide when to make remarks or offer adjustments. This encourages students to share with their peers according to the rules, builds their confidence and improve their abilities since each student values the others. In this regard, Kott [23] emphasized the value of integrating students in taking responsibility when reading by structuring the educational environment in a way that teaches them the responsibility of teaching and learning and managing the educational environment through the partner. Which supports thought implementation, active learning, student growth, and improvement in academic achievement. Which fosters students' independence so they can study more and teach their peers in the community, turning the student into a hub for cultural and educational transmission for his peers.

More specifically, the current study aimed to define participatory reading as a modern teaching strategy that helps create a safe environment, in which students feel free to discuss and share their experiences and also aims to investigate the effectiveness of the participatory reading strategy in developing reading fluency and reading comprehension among students in the first intermediate compared to the normal method.

Accordingly, the current study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. Are there statistically significant differences between the two arithmetic means in the post-test of the study members on the reading comprehension test, due to the variable of the teaching strategy (participatory and usual reading)?

2. Are there statistically significant differences between the two arithmetic means in the post-test of the study members on the reading comprehension test, due to the gender variable?

3. Are there statistically significant differences between the two arithmetic means in the post-test of the study members on the reading comprehension test, due to the interaction between the gender variable and the teaching strategy (participatory and usual reading)?

2. Literature review

The participatory reading strategy is one of the most important teaching approaches that appeared in 1987 through Klinger and Foghan, who developed this strategy, which includes four main strategies: the introductory presentation; identifying the comprehensible or difficult elements in the reading text; understanding the essence of the text; and finally, the conclusion [27]. This strategy is seen as a holistic approach that has been used to improve reading comprehension skills, develop

language skills, and develop students' participatory work skills. This strategy is characterized as a multi-level approach [28]. A big part of this strategy also falls on the teacher, whose job it is to teach students how to use it efficiently and effectively. Navarro and Lara [25] indicates that the participatory reading strategy is a general framework used in the teaching of the mother tongue and the second language, which is the integration of the reciprocal teaching strategy and the participatory learning strategy aimed at helping students work in participatory groups, activating previous knowledge and experiences about reading while identifying and summarizing the main ideas of the subject being read.

This strategy stems from the social learning theory of Albert Bandura and Vygotsky, which is based on a central idea based on the interaction between different factors, which leads to the recognition of both internal and external influences [17]. These interactions occur based on three forms: the view of the individual and the environment on the basis that they are two independent entities; the second form is the view of the individual and the environment as two interdependent causes; the third form is the perception of behavior and individual and environmental units as if they were an interlocking system of influences [2].

The most important thing presented by social learning theory is its focus on observational learning, as learning occurs when we interact with others and learn the correct responses by observing the behavior of our colleagues, parents, and teachers while tracking those behaviors [12]. The individual can acquire some patterns of good behavior through observation, which includes four main aspects: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation.

The four steps that make up the participatory reading strategy will be discussed in greater detail.

Preview: Using their prior knowledge of what they have read and their ability to extrapolate potential ideas and information from the reading, students are encouraged to read about the issue in question. These procedures involve swiftly skimming the topic, which takes two to three minutes, to look for data that aids in establishing expectations for the topic being read. Reading the topic's primary headings, graphics, and charts; reflecting on the meanings of the main and subheadings; concentrating on the keywords, and reading the topic's introductory paragraph are a few techniques for speed reading. The students have a six-minute discussion about the subject after the speed-reading exercise [13].

Identification of understandable or challenging topic matter (click and clunk): This approach aims to educate pupils how to assess their own comprehension, study independently, cultivate metacognitive abilities, comprehend challenging words and concepts in the reading, and identify what they don't understand. It will also teach them to keep reading until they understand what they read. The steps involved are: reading the phrases without the difficult words present; attempting to grasp the sentence without the tough words present; examining the antecedents and suffixes contained within the words; and speculating on the most likely interpretation of the words [14].

Determine the gist of the topic (Get the Gist): The aim of this procedure is to train students to identify the main idea of a reading topic and formulate it in their own language, and to exclude unnecessary details from the topic. Accordingly, students are trained to analyze the information in the reading based on scanning a large number of paragraphs in the text to find the word that represents the main concept or the most important idea. The method of asking questions, such as who and what, can be used [9].

Wrap up: The aim of this procedure is to train students to understand the topic and develop memory by summarizing the topic read. To achieve this, one must first create a list of questions pertaining to the topic's key principles and then go in search of the answers. If the students were able to answer these questions, it is a good indicator of the quality of the question formulation. Otherwise, the opposite is true [5].

According to Klingner et al [6], students employing this technique do it in small, collaborative groups, with each member having a designated function to play.

Leader: The student acts as a coordinator between his peers and the teacher and also guides the group as they use the critical reading approach's learning tactics by deciding on the readings that will be read [21].

Clunk Expert: This is done through the use of a set of cards that help them identify the meanings of difficult vocabulary and concepts [1].

Announcer: This is done by communicating with all members of the group and encouraging them to read and participate in discussions on the topic, in addition to making sure that each student participates positively and on time [21].

Encourager: This is accomplished by observing the group in action and offering suggestions for improving their performance overall, as well as singling out those who have made significant contributions [1].

Reporter: The person who reports on the main idea posed by the participatory group and the most preferred questions that this group was able to generate and ask [10].

Time Keeper: the student who determines the time allotted for the use of each sub-strategy and determines when the group can move from one strategy to another [22].

The participatory reading strategy is closely related to reading fluency and reading comprehension skills. The reader uses a number of methods to help him accurately analyze the topic. Pre-reading is the first step, followed by self-observation to gauge comprehension, then exploration of the topic to get to the heart of it, and finally a review that provides an overarching summary of the material. Given the importance of the participatory reading strategy, many studies have been conducted aimed at developing reading fluency and reading comprehension skills. Reciprocal reading and participatory learning are combined.

Nejad and Keshavarzi [29] examined the impact of participatory learning on L2 reading comprehension skills for pre-university students by contrasting participatory learning instruction with traditional lecture instruction. Reading comprehension accomplishment exams were used as the tools for gathering the study's necessary data. The results of the current study showed that, when compared to the effects of conventional teaching methods, the participatory learning method had a greater impact on L2 reading comprehension skills. Giménez et al [30] examined the impact of participatory learning on high school students' reading comprehension at Unidad Educativa "Riobamba" during the 2017–2018 academic year. The reading process was divided into three stages: before, during, and after. The results showed that the students improved their reading comprehension through participatory work in pairs and in groups as well. Based on the findings, it was clear that the students' participatory work in groups and pairs helped them to increase their reading comprehension. Tankersley and Cuevas [24] evaluated the impact of several participatory learning strategies on attitudes, motivation, and reading comprehension. The first group utilized the CSR method to read the information on four distinct topics, while the other group read material on the same issues using the Jigsaw technique. The CSR group improved significantly on all four posttests, but the Jigsaw group improved significantly just on the first two tests when prior knowledge of the four individual themes was controlled for. Namaziandost et al [31] examined how adopting two participatory learning methodologies affected Iranian intermediate EFL students' spoken English language fluency. The two participatory learning approaches were useful in supporting learners' spoken English fluency, with treatment group members outperforming those in the control group, according to a comparison of mean oral fluency score improvements between the two treatment and control groups. Mariana et al [21] looked into how the participatory integrated reading and composition technique affected students' reading comprehension. The outcome demonstrates how the participatory integrated reading and composition method impacts students' reading comprehension.

Based on the above, the following hypotheses can be formulated:

1. There are no statistically significant differences between the arithmetic means in the post-test of the study members on the reading comprehension test due to the variable of the teaching strategy (participatory reading and usual reading).

2. There are no statistically significant differences between the two arithmetic means in the post-test of the study subjects on the reading comprehension test due to the gender variable.

3. There are no statistically significant differences between the arithmetic method in the post-test of the study members on the reading comprehension test due to the interaction between the gender variable and the teaching strategy (participation and usual reading).

3. Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of the program based on participatory reading on reading comprehension skills. The experimental method is founded on the idea that the independent variables cause the dependent variable's variation. To determine the impact of the independent variable (a program based on participatory reading) on the dependent variable (reading comprehension skills [32], this study employed the quasi-experimental approach. Where two groups were selected: experimental and control, the experimental group was subjected to a pre-test, then was exposed to teaching using a program based on participatory reading, then was subjected to a post-test to measure the impact of the program. While the control group was subjected to a pre and post-test by teaching in the usual way.

4. Study population and sample

The participants in the study were first-year intermediate Arabic students in the city of Abha during the second semester of the academic year 2021–2022. The study sample included (48) male and female students from the first intermediate grade, and it was split into two groups: (24) male and female students in the control group, who received instruction using the usual strategy, and (24) male and female students in the experimental group, who received instruction using the participatory reading strategy. The study sample was selected randomly. Table (1) shows the distribution of the study sample by gender

Table 1.

The distribution of the study sample by gender.

The Group	Category	N
The Control Group	Male	13
	Female	11
The Experimental Group	Male	14
	Female	10

5. Research instruments

1. An educational program based on participatory reading.
2. Reading comprehension skills test and applied before and after.

5.1 Treatment

These treatment are divided into pre-reading, during, and after reading, as follows:

• Pre-reading stage:

1. Choosing reading partners from the first intermediate grade based on their degrees in the reading subject, and taking into account the opinions of the Arabic language teachers who teach them.

2. Training students on the procedures for applying the participatory reading strategy to ensure that they are able to apply it properly.

3. Creating the appropriate educational environment to ensure that there are no sources of distraction, ensure good lighting and ventilation, taking into account the appropriate sitting position for students.

4. Giving students a general idea about the content of the reading text by using the pictures and figures presented in the reading text.

• During reading stage:

1. Students read the reading text together for some time. In the case that the student wants to read alone, gives the partner a signal to stop reading with him and continue reading alone.

2. If the student reads a word incorrectly or stutters for five seconds, the partner corrects it and reads it, then asks the student to re-read it correctly. When he pronounces it correctly, the partner continues reading with the student, but the partner stops each time the student asks to read individually.

3. The partner alone reads the text aloud and expressive, and ensures that the student follows up and listens to him effectively (reading by example).

- Post-reading stage
1. The partner asked the student to extract the new vocabulary and put it into useful sentences.
2. The partner posed comprehension questions to the student.
3. Student's conclusion the main idea contained in the reading text.
4. Ask the student about what he learned in this lesson.
5. End the session by thanking the student for his good listening and his motivation to learn.

5.2 Reading comprehension skills test
The study's reading comprehension test was designed with the following abilities in mind: the ability to identify the text's main purpose, the ability to identify the text's linguistic category, the ability to identify the text's orthography, the ability to identify the written drawing, the ability to identify the text's grammatical function, and the ability to identify the text's linguistic style. The items of the initial test consisted of (32) items distributed on reading comprehension skills, each skill includes a set of behavioral indicators indicative of it.

6. The validity of the test
The reading comprehension test was presented in its initial form to a number of arbitrators specializing in the Arabic language and its teaching methods including university professors, educational supervisors, and teachers. They were asked to check the suitability of the test and the accuracy of the language to make it more clear and appropriate. Two items were removed and the wording of some behavioral indicators was changed in response to their comments. As a result, the scale's final version includes (30) items of multiple-choice questions with (30) marks.

7. Equivalence of the Two Study Groups
To verify the equivalence of the two study groups (control and experimental) according to the means score and standard deviations of the pre-test of the sample. The paired sample t test was used, as shown in Table (2).

Table 2.

Paired sample t test.

Teaching strategy	M	Std. Dev	T	df	Sig
Usual	19.38	4.73	-0.107	23	0.915
Participatory Reading	19.41	3.59			

Table (2) shows that there are no statistically significant differences between the two means score of pre-test. The value of "t" was (-0.107) with sig (0.915), which indicates that the two groups were equivalence before the study was applied.

8. Data analysis
After gathering the data, the means scores and standard deviations of the pre-and post-test, as well as the results of a Two-Way ANCOVA were determined to determine the statistical significance of the post-apparent differences according to the teaching technique and gender variables. Using the Eta square, the effect size was found to show how well the participatory reading technique helped students understand what they were reading.

9. Results and discussion
In order to meet the primary purpose of the research, the means and standard deviations of post-test scores were determined according to the factors of teaching technique (participatory reading, usual reading) and gender, as indicated in Table (3).

Table 3.
Means score and standard deviations of the post-test.

Teaching Strategy	Gender	Pre test		Post test	
		M	St.dev	M	St.dev
Usual	Male	15.6154	2.56705	18.5385	4.46496
	Female	18.4545	3.26691	20.3636	5.06503
	Total	17.0350	2.91698	19.4511	4.76410
Participatory Reading	Male	12.5714	3.34467	27.5000	1.87083
	Female	16.0000	3.59011	27.4000	2.31900
	Total	14.2857	3.46739	27.4500	2.09492

There seems to be a difference in the post-arithmetic mean scores of the control and experimental research groups on the post-test of reading comprehension abilities, as shown in Table 2. Where the post-mean score of the experimental group studied using the participatory reading technique was (27.45), which was greater than the post-mean score of the control group studied using the conventional strategy, which was (19.45).

To determine the statistical significance of the apparent variations in post-tests based on the two independent variables, teaching strategy, and gender. Two-Way ANCOVA test was used, as shown in Table (4).

Table 4.
Two-Way ANCOVA test.

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Effect size
Pre-test	37.835	1	37.835	0.584	0.452	0.006
Teaching strategy	6539.392	1	6539.392	95.688	0.000	0.495
Gender	72.092	1	72.092	1.023	0.315	0.012
Teaching strategy	8.715	1	8.715	0.142	0.724	0.005
*Gender	6960.600	20	68.709			
Error	296118.00	24				
Total						

Table (4) demonstrates that there is a statistically significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in the reading comprehension skills exam, with an F value of (95.688), which is statistically significant. Table (5) provides an illustration of how the adjusted means scores for the experimental and control groups were determined.

Table 5.
The means score adjusted for post-tests.

The groups	Gender	Adjusted means score	Standard error
Control Group	Male	42.934	1.966
	Female	44.536	1.750
	Total	43.735	1.325
Experimental Group	Male	59.576	1.415
	Female	60.480	1.670
	Total	60.028	1.331

Table (4) showed the means score that have been adjusted for the experimental and control groups. Where the adjusted mean score of the experimental group is higher than the mean score of the control group by a difference of (16,293). Which indicates a statistically significant effect of using the participatory reading strategy in improving the reading comprehension of the experimental group students who were taught using the participatory reading strategy more than the students of the control group who were taught in the usual way.

The superiority of the experimental group over the control group in reading comprehension may be attributed to the nature of the partner's reading strategy. This strategy picks the right partner on the basis of justice and credibility, concentrating on the skill of training and practice to ensure the partner's ability to effectively implement the strategy, engage in adequate psychological preparation,

eliminate potential sources of distraction, and create a physically secure and conducive setting. This result may also be attributed to the method of implementing the participatory reading strategy that combines individual reading by the student and shared reading between him and the partner. Where the partner and the student read the reading text together for some time. If the student wishes to read alone, the partner gives a signal to stop reading with him and continue reading alone, which makes him feel the atmosphere of freedom and independence in learning and is reflected in his motivation towards learning and his reading level.

This outcome may also be related to the partner's evaluation of the student's reading. The partner reads the word, corrects it, then asks the student to reread it correctly if the student stutters for five seconds or reads a word wrong. Due to the nature of the pleasant relationship between him and the partner based on appreciation and respect, this gives the student a sense of security, self-confidence, and freedom from fear and doubt. This may also be the result of the researcher's observations of the students' excellent engagement with the strategy's associated activities and their openness to learning. The fact that the students eagerly welcomed the implementation of the planned lesson may have been due to their perception that it catered to their psychological and social needs and tendencies. This strategy also captured their interest and integration, which had a noticeable effect on how well they applied their reading comprehension skills. This result is consistent with studies [29, 30, 24, 31, 21].

The results of Table (4) indicate that there are no statistically significant differences in the reading comprehension skills test between males and females after applying the participatory reading strategy, where the P value was ($\alpha = 0.312$), which is not statistically significant. This is due to the fact that all students, whether male or female, showed an interest in carrying out the linguistic activities and duties presented to them. In addition to their focus and accuracy in the tests, which leads to an increase in the level of achievement and achievement motivation them, thus acquiring language skills.

Moreover, Table (4) showed that there were no statistically significant differences in reading comprehension skills due to the interaction between the group and gender variables, where the p-value was (0.724), which is not statistically significant. That is, there is no effect of the interaction between gender and the participatory reading strategy in the post-reading comprehension skills test. This result is attributed to the similarity of application between males and females. The participatory reading strategy has been applied in girls' schools and boys' schools in a similar manner in terms of time, age group, teaching units, and activities.

10. Conclusion

This study supports the idea that a participatory reading technique is a viable choice for teaching reading comprehension and can be more effective than conventional direct instruction in raising students' reading comprehension achievement. Therefore, it is advantageous for teachers to foster students' reading comprehension knowledge, small-group cooperation skills, and academic ability in accordance with the objectives of the curriculum. The use of participatory learning in the classroom promotes different learning styles rather than doing away with the teacher-fronted approach. The study's results demonstrated that group members' learning can advance in a supportive environment provided they feel favorably interdependent with one another. Additionally, the results of this study demonstrated that including participatory reading technique in reading comprehension lessons can lower students' reading anxiety and improve their reading comprehension ability.

It is possible to draw the conclusion that participatory reading technique, particularly the thinks together learn together technique applied in this study, creates a relaxed, stress-free environment and allows the students chances to encourage support, and recognize one another through group projects, discussions, and group-based thinking rather than in a whole-class context. Therefore, incorporating participatory reading technique into lesson plans and curricula can help students feel less anxious about using that ability. The small size of the groups in this study is a drawback because it makes it challenging to generalize the findings. Future research should gather some qualitative data, such as interviews, to have a deeper understanding of how students perceive participatory reading technique as this study is only based on quantitative data.

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