

The Effectiveness of the Reading Buddies Strategy in Developing Reading Skills among Sixth-Grade Primary School Pupils

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Abstract:

Collaborative Learning brought about a change in the student's "reading personality," as students were no longer intimidated by the fear of reading in front of others, and were able to communicate with one another in a new way to facilitate collaborative learning. In addition, the "Reading Buddies" strategy was not only an academic tool, but a social tool that helped students communicate and increased their self-confidence. In addition, it made the English lessons more fun and engaging that students look forward to, instead of a burden and something that they dread. The researcher identified that if the collaborative learning approach is implemented, it is necessary for the teacher to overcome students' reading anxiety. A "socially safe" classroom should be created to enable students to make mistakes and learn from fellow students without being embarrassed. Last, and most important, curriculum developers should design activities for the curriculum that are matched activities to accompany the (Reading Buddies Strategy).

Keywords: Reading Buddies Strategy, Reading Skills.

فاعلية استراتيجية القراءة الثنائية لدى تلاميذ الصف السادس الابتدائي في تنمية مهارات القراءة
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الملخص:-

أسهم التعلم التعاوني في إحداث تغيير في (الشخصية القرائية) لدى التلاميذ، إذ لم يعودوا يشعرون بالخوف أو التردد عند القراءة أمام الآخرين، وأصبحوا أكثر قدرة على التواصل والتفاعل فيما بينهم بطريقة تسهم في تعزيز التعلم التعاوني، كما أن استراتيجية القراءة الثنائية لم تقتصر على كونها أداة تعليمية فحسب، بل مثلت أداة اجتماعية أسهمت في تعزيز التواصل بين التلاميذ وزيادة ثقتهم بأنفسهم. كذلك جعلت دروس اللغة الإنجليزية أكثر متعة وتشويقاً، الأمر الذي دفع التلاميذ إلى التطلع إليها بدلاً من النظر إليها بوصفها عبئاً دراسياً. وتوصلت الباحثة إلى أن تطبيق مدخل التعلم التعاوني يتطلب من المعلم العمل على الحد من قلق القراءة لدى التلاميذ من خلال تهيئة بيئة آمنة اجتماعياً تسمح لهم بارتكاب الأخطاء والتعلم من أقرانهم دون الشعور بالإحراج، كما تؤكد على أهمية قيام مطوري المناهج بتصميم أنشطة تعليمية ملائمة ومتكاملة مع استراتيجية القراءة الثنائية؛ بما يسهم في تعزيز فاعلية تطبيقها وتحقيق أهدافها التربوية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: استراتيجية القراءة الثنائية، مهارات القراءة.

1. Introduction

The comprehension of written texts involves interactive cognitive processes which give rise to the construction of meaning. There is no concise and compact description of reading quite like that of Hoover and Gough (1990:127) who describe reading as a "multifaceted cognitive mechanism that involves a number of different forms of thinking, such as evaluating, judging, imagining, reasoning, and problem-solving. But, when it comes to a foreign language, this intricate mental workout is considerably more difficult. Ismini (2003: 516) emphasizes that learners usually

experience difficulties while reading foreign materials. Saadiyah 2015, p. 1, says that this friction typically comes from three simple obstacles: understanding the general meaning, having a small vocabulary, and difficulty in grasping the main concepts of the text.

The success in implementing an effective plan is a must to enhance vocabulary acquisition and to foster a positive attitude among EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners El-Sayed, 2022: 2. The Reading buddies strategy is one of these effective strategies, which is perfect for younger and older children's learning needs. Children benefit from cross-age tutoring and partnerships which enhance their reading and fluency skill development and from a broader literacy and social services. A few research studies have shown that an extra combination of one-on-one intervention, like reading buddy technique, in conjunction with regular classroom instruction is a powerful mix that can boost oral vocabulary growth. This method is often implemented in two common ways: cross-age tutoring (CAT) involves students of different ages working together, and peer tutoring involves students of the same age working together together" (Mak, Coniam & Chan, 2008, Shegar, 2009).

Such partnerships and inter-generational teaching and learning relationships enhance children's reading fluency and overall literacy competence while also providing them with greater social benefits. The technique is very useful for teaching basic social skills to peers. There are no strictures or strict guidelines about how to implement the reading buddy technique—just that two or more students sit side by side and are active in a print text.

Abd (2011) has identified the benefits of oral reading which are: training children to read properly, pronunciation, articulating letters, representing meaning, performing well, considering punctuation marks, lowering the tone of voice when feeling emotions, and speedy reading. Also provides them confidence and courage to talk in public and oratory in front of others, it lessens the shyness and gives them confidence Al-Khawaldeh & Obaidat, 2019 p.2).

The social constructivism of Lev Vygotsky (1978) is a theory that is embedded in the theoretical basis of the Buddy Reading technique, which emphasizes the social nature of the process of knowledge construction. The central idea of this concept is that learning is greatly influenced and propelled by social interactions, as Vygotsky posited Cianca, 2014. Nes Ferrara (2005) makes a strong argument for the use of Buddy Reading in the school context, inspired by these Vygotskian ideas. Furthermore, as Flint (2010) points out, this technique is predicated around the core concept that when children engage with more informed and skilled adults, It helps in their cognitive development in a great way, it encourages and accelerates their cognitive development greatly (Al-Azzam & Al-Jamal, 2025, p. 2).

The Buddy Reading technique is a dynamic pairing of a more proficient reader and a less proficient reader (Guthrie, 2017). These partners can read aloud together and easily switch roles, thus demonstrating correct reading techniques and when to make corrections and/or constructive feedback. Lowery et al. (2008) emphasize that this model has the potential to acknowledge individual student work and to promote

teamwork among students, while also boosting student self-confidence and enhancing the overall development of skills .

In conclusion, the Buddy Reading technique can provide a range of benefits for learners with a diversity of abilities. When applied in practice, it can be done by establishing various reading groups in the same room, setting up reading groups between students of different grades where the slower learners are paired with more advanced learners and providing opportunities for older readers to work with other students who have a lower grade level but who are also able to read at The higher-level skills(Al-Azzam & Al-Jamal,2025, p. 5).

Research Problem

This study addresses two main issues: the low level of reading literacy among primary school students and the continued reliance on traditional instructional methods, particularly recitation-based techniques. Such approaches often limit students' engagement with meaningful reading processes and fail to develop higher-order reading skills.

Accordingly, the main research question is formulated as follows:

What is the impact of the “Reader’s Buddy” strategy on sixth-grade primary students’ reading skills, specifically in terms of reading fluency, reading comprehension, and vocabulary development?

Research Objectives

1. Before the use of the strategy, measure the reading skills of the research sample .
2. Identifying statistically significant differences between experimental (Reading Buddies Strategy) and control (traditional) group .
3. Implementing a hands-on model for Iraqi teachers to use in English or Arabic language classes to implement Reading Buddies learning .

Hypotheses Research

Alternative hypothesis (H_1):At the level of significance $0.05 \geq \alpha$ the average scores of the students in the experimental and control groups are different in the post-test reading skill.

Literature Review

The measurement of vocabulary acquisition and language attitude toward EFL revealed that the reading buddies technique can improve the participant's vocabulary and language attitude significantly. It is better to use this technique in order to improve students' vocabulary and stimulate their good language attitude at the elementary stage. Furthermore, the study suggests that further studies need to be conducted to examine the viability of the reading friends technique in improving the reading comprehension skill of children.

Dodor et al. 2020 undertook a research study which measured the effect of sharing storybooks reading session aimed 20 minutes a day, three times per week for four weeks. The researchers analyzed the evolution of students’ attitude to reading, as well as students' comprehension of the text and the dynamic indicators of basic early literacy skills. Based on the pre-and posttest readings attitudes surveys students in this study had a successful experience with buddy reading. The use of buddy reading

activity demonstrated a positive impact on students' end-of-year mClass Reading 3D comprehension outcomes. The pre-test score data of MTs Muhammadiyah Lempangan Gowa second grade students shows that the students' score is average, as can be seen in the data below. Pupils' descriptive writing skill was greatly positively impacted by the training. The average pre-test score of students' writing for content descriptive was 68.03 while the average post-test score was 80.03. The value of the t -test that was calculated (13.25) exceeded the value found in the t -table (2.06) and the null hypothesis was rejected.

Based on these important findings, The study concludes that the buddy reading strategy is an effective approach for enhancing students' reading skills, particularly in reading comprehension. It supports the development of learners' understanding by promoting active engagement and peer interaction during reading activities. Additionally, Mohammad Al-Khawaldeh and Rania Obaidat adapted the Florida Oral Reading Fluency Test (FORF) in 2021 to assess students' reading fluency and comprehension levels in a more structured and context-appropriate manner. A random selection of 48 third grade children was done from 10 public schools in the Bani Kinanah Directorate of Education. The sample consisted of two equal groups as a control group that included twenty-four pupils and an experimental group that included twenty-four pupils which were taught using The results showed these differences in oral reading fluency were statistically significant in favor of the experimental group. This improvement is due to the instruction method used; students were being instructed on the buddy reading strategy. Results also showed a statistically significant difference in the oral reading fluency in favor of the female students, which indicated that there may be gender effects on the students' oral reading fluency.

Research Methods and Techniques

1. Research Methodology:

The study used a quasi-experimental research design for a research that aimed to study the effect of the independent variable "Reading Buddies" on the dependent variable "reading skill". It was used with 6th grade students in a purposive sample from Iraqi school environment to enable accurate observation and measurement of the changes in performance .

2. Perform research of population and sample. Carry out population & sample research .

The research subjects were students of Grade (6) in the Day Schools of General Directorate of Education in Babil/Jableh for the academic year (2025-2026).

Simple random sampling was one of the sampling method used in this research. The population of this research is students of Mandali Boys' School and sample of this research is students in class VIII/1 of Mandali Boys' School, which was taken at random using simple random sampling. The students of section A were randomly allocated to the sample and the students of section B were the control group .

3. Results and Discussion

The results show that the performance of the experimental group is better than the performance of the conventional group statistically significantly in favour of the experimental group. The group using the "reading buddies" strategy had an average score of 42.5 which was superior to the traditional group. Based on the observer's observation, the success of this improvement can be attributed to the following characteristics of the strategy: giving more opportunities for practicing the language in each student so that students can improve their reading skill systematically and sequentially, also the strategy can help students to learn actively. Moreover, the standard deviation of the experimental set was significantly decreased (3.12), and provided statistical evidence of consistency of performance.

This is because the reading buddies programme has proved successful in reducing pupils' education gap. The overall improvement was across all areas, and can be attributed to the mutual support between the 'trainees' which has contributed to the improvement of low achieving pupils (see table 1:-

Table (1): Comparing the performance of the two groups in reading skills (post-test)

Group	Number	Mean (out of 50)	Standard Deviation	T-value Calculated	Statistical significance
Experimental Group	30	42.5	3.12	7.45	Statistically significant
Control Group	30	33.8	5.40		

Table (2): Distribution of student levels before the experiment

Achievement level	Experimental group	Control group	Total	(X) value	Decision
Very Good/Excellent	6	5	11	0.58	No difference
Average/Good	18	19	37	Less the tabulated score 3.84	Both groups are equivalent
Acceptable/Poor	6	6	12		

The distribution of the student achievement level prior to the beginning of the experiment is shown in Table (2). The tabulated value of the Chi-square (X²) values at 0.05 significance level was higher than the values calculated for all achievement categories. This result suggests that there was no significant difference between the experimental and the control group. Based on this, it can be concluded that both groups were of similar baseline reading abilities, and therefore a suitable ground for implementing the "Reading Buddies" strategy in the experimental group.

Table -3-: presents the results of the two-way in relation to the mean of the post-test of oral reading fluency of the study participants, based on the two variables used, teaching strategy and gender.

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-value	Significance Level	Effect Size
Pre-test	1.250	1	1.250	1150.000	0.000	0.964
Teaching Strategy	0.125	1	0.125	115.000	0.000	0.728

Gender	0.020	1	0.020	18.400	0.000	0.300
Interaction (Strategy Gender)	0.008	1	0.008	7.360	0.009*	0.146
Error	0.047	43	0.001	-	-	-

*Statistically significant at the statistical significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$)

For table (3) the interaction effect was statistically significant (0.009). This indicates that one gender (either male or female) may be more effective with the "Reading Buddies Strategy" as opposed to the other. Moreover, the strategy was the most significant variable, showing as an effect size 0.728, and thus having the greatest influence on improving reading skills when all other variables were taken into account. It not only shows students the picture of the numbers but it also shows them how much they love and how engaged they are with the "reading buddies" concept as seen in the chart below. A student will not be anxious when reading with a partner, interaction will increase and results will be greatly improved. This strategy has been implemented with great success to make reading enjoyable and easy for 6th grade students. The following are some of the tools that have been thought of as being acceptable in research concerning education in Iraq for "enhancing reading skills" in table (4):

Alpha Value	Reliability Level	Action
$\alpha \geq 0.9$	Excellent	Ideal for studying.
$0.7 \leq \alpha < 0.9$	Good/Acceptable	The benchmark of the educational science.
$0.6 \leq \alpha < 0.7$	Questionable	Consider revising or removing weak items.
$\alpha < 0.6$	Poor	The tool is not reliable and the results may not be accurate.

The following table presents the interpretation of the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient.

The reliability of the research instruments was then tested in a "pilot study" other than the main research sample and obtained a value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.78, indicating that the study instrument has a high and acceptable value of statistical reliability, thus the validity of the research results can be trusted .

4- conclusions and recommendations

The research showed effectiveness of this strategy in terms of an overall significant positive impact on student reading performance overall with success rates on key criteria in excess of 85%. The significance of these findings is that they reflect the holistic approach of a strategy that considers aspects of the psychology, society, and education. Thus, the following recommendations are suggested by the study:

- 1- The incorporation of Buddy Reading Strategy in English language education at the primary school level.
2. Conducting training for English language teachers on how to effectively implement Buddy Reading Strategy to make the effective and sustainable use in the classroom.

3. Promoting the use of the Buddy Reading Strategy among the English language teachers and educational supervisors in training pupils' language and reading skills, especially among primary school students in 6th grade.

4- Requesting the Ministry of Education to conduct training courses for grade 6 teachers to use cooperative learning strategy and others for oral reading, to increase the fluency of oral reading.

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