

Effectiveness of Readers Theatre to Enhance English Reading Fluency in Fifth Grade: Action Research in Thrimshing Higher Secondary School

Abstract

Researchers have identified the reading problem in the rural schools in Bhutan, and students hardly read English text. Therefore, researchers have resolved to conduct action research study to investigate the effectiveness of Readers Theatre as an intervention strategy to enhance reading fluency and motivation among fifth-grade students in Bhutan. The researchers identified a decline in reading habits and fluency among students, particularly in English, despite recognizing the importance of reading for academic success and personal development.

A mixed-method design was employed, combining quantitative data collection through pre- and post-tests with qualitative insights from structured interviews from 24 participants. To enhance the reading fluency, Readers Theatre approach was integrated into exploring its potential impact on motivation and fluency.

The results indicate significant improvements in reading fluency among participants after the intervention, with many exceeding expectations. Qualitative data revealed that Readers Theatre not only improved reading skills but also engendered enthusiasm and confidence in reading. This study highlights the critical role of motivation in successful reading interventions, emphasising that motivated readers are more likely to become proficient ones.

The findings underscore the importance of innovative and engaging reading strategies in fostering reading fluency and motivation. This research offers valuable insights for educators and policymakers, advocating for the adoption of such strategies to empower students with essential reading skills and cultivate a lifelong love for learning.

Keywords: *Readers theatre, effectiveness, reading fluency, motivation, enhancement.*

Introduction

Reading is a fundamental skill that plays a pivotal role in the academic success and overall development of individuals. It is often considered the cornerstone of education, as it not only impacts language proficiency but also fosters critical thinking, creativity, and a broader understanding of the world. In Bhutan, as in many other countries, the importance of reading is emphasised, but challenges persist in ensuring that students develop strong reading habits and fluency, especially in English. **Therefore, reading is found to be given due importance at the primary level and motivates students to develop reading habits.**

This action research study was conducted to address the issue of declining reading habits and fluency among fifth-grade students at Thrimshing Higher Secondary School, South Trashigang Dzongkhag, Bhutan. The researchers recognised that reading is not just a skill but also a source of motivation and empowerment. The researchers aimed to explore the effectiveness of a specific intervention strategy, Readers Theatre, in enhancing reading fluency and motivation among these students.

The study employed a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative data collection through pre-test and post-tests with qualitative insights gathered through structured interviews of the participants. The researchers also integrated the Readers Theatre approach to explore its impact on motivation and fluency.

Background

Reading is one of the four language skills that academic often study. This is because reading is seen as the most important language skill and has a big effect on students' speaking and writing skills, academic success, and ability to communicate. Furthermore, reading broadens minds and cultivates positive character traits, as it is seen as the key to opening the vault containing the collective wisdom of the race. Erdem (2015) asserts that it is the foundation of lifelong learning. These facts might be the justification for all Bhutanese schools requiring English language teachers and their students to meet the required reading standards (CAPSD, 2005). Thus, motivation is an essential at a very young age.

Reading and academic accomplishment are strongly correlated, according to educational researchers. Students who struggle with reading are seen to divert their attention and get restless when reading. Reading's main goal is to gain understanding. Reading difficulties make reading seem more difficult and increase people's anxiety, which limits their reading experience and prevents the growth of their vocabulary and their capacity for knowledge. The cycle is deliberate and dynamic, as the reading suggests. Reading is done for the purposes of

comprehension, memory retention, and application of the information. A reader may choose to read for entertainment, information, or data. Reading has a significant role in fostering free learning and helping children gain access to more linguistic knowledge and global awareness. The habit of reading is essential to building an advanced culture on the planet. Reading develops a person's character and helps them develop their intellectual faculties, both of which help them come up with novel ideas. The English curriculum includes a variety of artistic works that are suitable at different levels for the students' ages.

Students who read extensively and comprehend what they read typically achieve good scores. The relationship between reading and learning actually starts considerably earlier, in the pre-primary years. However, it may be overlooked that there is a correlation between oral language development and reading skills. During the school year, improvements in one area led to improvements in the other, and children who have a word in their verbally expressed vocabulary are likely to use it correctly when reading. This connection between spoken and written language during the school years is an important area where SLTs can show and improve best practices in clinical and classroom settings.

Furthermore, 2015 has been designated as a national reading year. Schools that read the most books were also awarded certificates. Hence, a seven-day reading week has been offered in schools every year. Even though students have more opportunities to read, they still have trouble because they do not know how to understand what they are reading. states that teachers in Bhutan instruct students in reading using traditional methods. As a result, reading should be done using efficient processes. Most researchers have shown that reading is the basis for all skills, including communication, expression, imagination, creative thinking, lateral reasoning, and innovation. However, getting into the habit of reading might take time and work.

Reconnaissance

Situational Analysis

Thrimshing Higher Secondary School is located in Thrimshing Gewog under Trashigang Dzongkhag, which is approximately 83km away from the district headquarter. The school houses classes ranging from PP to XII and has boarding facilities. The school caters to the children of Thrimshing village and also to feeder schools, namely Tsangpo PS, Kangpar LSS, Phegpari PS, Thungkhak PS, Barshon, Khaling, and Brekha PS. It has moderate facilities for learning and teaching, with ICT facilities (a smart TV) in a few classrooms. However, there is

no WiFi connection in all the classrooms and very poor net connectivity in the staff room. Although the school strives to excel in academic performance, the results for the past few years have been declining due to poor reading habits.

Competence

The researchers in this team have had professional development in action research, and as part of their M.Ed. programs, they have also done conventional research. Researchers have published a few research papers at the international and national levels. Further, I, as the lead researcher, have done conventional research for my M.Ed. thesis and also done some research with colleagues. Therefore, researchers have enough ideas about research norms and procedures.

Class V students

The researchers have chosen the students of class V, which counts to a total of 24 students. The students come from different backgrounds, but they take English, Dzongkha, and mathematics as their major subjects. They are practically experiencing that reading is important to perform other subjects well, and they can feed us with accurate problems and information related to my research topic, and we expect to get feedback from them. However, most of the students were very poor at reading English texts, even though they knew that reading fluently and comprehending the text were very important factors in learning.

Critical Friend

A critical friend is a person who is trusted and who can be a friend, an adviser, or a guide. Critical friends will help to come up with good research by providing direct opinions and critiques of a person's work. A critical friend contributes to a person's work outcome by taking time to go through and understand the context of work. In the process of carrying out our research, our principal Tsheten Tshering will be our advisor and critical friend, who will guide and help us throughout the research process. He obtained a M.Ed. in English from Ransist University, Bangkok, under the Trongsa Penlop scholarship. He had published a few research papers at the international and national levels. He has zeal and passion in the field of research.

Research objective

This study aims to enhance the reading fluency of class V students through Readers Theatre and investigate the effectiveness of RT.

Aims

The action research aimed to examine the effectiveness of the Readers Theatre strategy in enhancing the reading fluency of fifth grade students studying in one of the higher secondary schools in the Southern part of Trashigang Dzongkhag.

Literature Review

With the exception of the Dzongkha subject, the English language predominates in Bhutan as a means of correspondence in most institutions and even as a medium of education throughout the curriculum (Phuntsho & Wangdi, 2020). The most crucial skill taught in integration with other strands in Bhutan is reading, which is one of the receptive modes and strands of language learning, beginning in the pre-primary class. The Ministry of Education (MoE) of Bhutan launched a number of reading programs since it recognized how important they were. Declaring a National Reading Year in 2015 was one of the primary measures to promote a strong reading culture among students for their intellectual and personal development. The National Education Policy states that all educational institutions shall encourage strong reading habits to foster a reading culture and study skills among students for their personal growth and intellectual development, as it is believed that reading programs can be implemented effectively at the school level. Moreover, the School Self-Assessment Tool (SSAT) now includes reading as one of its essential components (Education Monitoring Division, 2013).

Given the national initiatives, it is unfortunate that so many educationists, authors, and historians have focused on students' poor reading habits (Rinzin, 2019; Zangmo, 2016). Many of them held the opinion that a lack of reading materials, a lack of interest, a glut of audio-visual information, and reading without comprehension are just a few of the many factors that contribute to students' poor reading habits in Bhutan.

Motivation in Reading

Motivation is essential for students to develop a love of reading. According to Alhamdu (2016), the presence of motivation when engaging in reading can enable students to attain their maximum potential in learning. Conversely, the absence of motivation could lead to

detrimental effects on students' reading fluency and comprehension. Ericksen (2016) argued that educators across the nation encounter significant challenges in instilling a passion for reading among students. Ericksen (2016) also contended that students often lack the drive to read due to factors like their proficiency level, heightened anxiety, and their perception of reading as mundane and uninteresting. Some students perceive reading as a tedious task.

Reading Fluency

The first stage in mastering reading comprehension is being a fluent reader. According to the National Reading Panel, fluent readers can read aloud quickly, accurately, with appropriate expression, and with solid knowledge. There are three aspects of fluency: automatic processing (using little mental effort to decode text), accuracy in word decoding (sounding out words in a given text with few errors), and prosodic reading (putting emphasis, pauses, and duration on particular syllables) (Vacca, Vacca, Gove, Burkey, Lenhart, & McKeon, 2006). Building on other abilities like vocabulary and understanding requires decoding and fluency abilities. The incapacity of students with fluency difficulties to read sight words, decipher words, and read phrases and sentences automatically is a specific and prevalent issue, according to Chard (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002).

Students who are taught and learn decoding techniques have improved word recognition automaticity (Swain, Janssen, & Conley, 2013). Students can practice words alone as a strategy to help with word recognition. Teachers introduce students to frequently used terms, or sight words, as frequently as they can, beginning in kindergarten. Activities that improve recognition include sight-word stories, word walls, and sight word games. To ensure that students can rapidly and independently recognize known words, sight word teaching is offered. If students have trouble recognizing words, reading becomes challenging and tiresome. Unskilled readers who struggle with fluency and spend a lot of time trying to decipher words lose the sense of the passage or text (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002; Corcoran, & Davis, 2005), which leads to poor comprehension. According to studies, one of the most important characteristics of students who struggle with reading is having a small sight word vocabulary (Rasinski, Samuels, Hiebert, Petscher, & Feller, 2011). Students who struggle with reading are less likely to participate in class activities and are more likely to feel alienated. High levels of stress, anxiety, behavioral issues, unfavourable attitudes about reading, and poor test results could result from this. By offering students both informal and formal assessments, it is possible to establish a student's fluency rate by counting the number of words they read per minute (Overton, 2009). Furthermore, the study shows that when students read texts that contain drilled words, they do it more swiftly and accurately

(Begeny& Martens, 2006). Students are deemed proficient readers when they can read with fluency and comprehension (Moore, 2001). The use of oral reading practices can improve students' word recognition, fluency, and comprehension, helping them reach a level of proficiency. According to research, pupils' reading comprehension is improved when reading fluency and other areas of difficulty are addressed. Oral reading, according to Rasinski et al. (2011), links spoken and written language. According to the study, oral reading improves fluency, reading comprehension, and decoding abilities. It implies that effective strategies for enhancing reading fluency include reading aloud, choral reading, partnered reading, repeated reading, and performance reading.

Therefore, Marc (2019) study found that the average silent reading rate for adults in English was 238 words per minute [wpm], and for silent reading of English non-fiction by adults, fall in the range of 175-300 wpm.

Readers Theatre

Performance reading is one of the proposed methods to increase reading fluency. Readers Theatre is a style of performance reading. Teachers utilize Readers Theatre in the classroom as an instructional tool and technique. Readers Theatre is a scripted text. Students practice plays, scripts, poetry, or other related writings under instruction and modeling. These varying-length scripts give pupils the chance to practice reading aloud (Corcoran & Davis, 2005). Depending on the pupils' independent reading levels and skills, the script's complexity fluctuates. They shouldn't be excessively challenging or frustrating. Instructors should refrain from utilizing scripts that are below the pupils' reading levels. The scripts may be written by teachers or students, taken from books, or based on poems (Rasinski, 2003). Instructors are urged to base their screenplays on real-world events, including field excursions, school activities, festive occasions, and unique student experiences. Students can improve their social, fluency, and comprehension skills through Readers Theatre. The approach can also be used with social studies, science, and/or other content-related themes and subjects. Readers Theatre offers kids a lot of opportunity for progress in all areas when it is properly applied.

ReadersTheater has been found to be a successful approach for encouraging reading achievement (Smith, 2011). It has been demonstrated that using this approach will increase word recognition, fluency, and comprehension. Advocates assert that Readers Theatre is inventive, interesting, and motivates students to read (Rasinski, 2003). Through Readers Theatre, characters are brought to life in the classroom, giving the kids the chance to have

fun. When students are active in the learning process and moving around the classroom, some of the best learning experiences can be had.

According to research, Readers Theatre has benefited students of all levels and aptitudes. A group of second-grade kids took part in Readers Theatre for many weeks as part of a 2002 study. Despite the fact that students' reading levels varied, researchers found actual evidence of improvements in both the students' oral reading fluency and comprehension levels (Morra, J., & Tracey, D. H., 2006). Readers' Theatre has been shown to improve fluency scores, reading attitudes, and confidence levels in a 2005 study including low-achieving second- and third-graders (Corcoran & Davis, 2005). As a result, Readers Theatre has assisted English language learners in developing their fluency and comprehension skills.

Effectiveness of Readers Theatre

Readers theatre is found to be effective and helps enhance reading fluency, which brings students to life. According to Muayad (2021), reading is the interaction between people and the materials they read. In addition, RT is found to be an effective method of teaching English as a foreign language [EFL] to read, which seems vital for improving students' reading proficiency and brings pleasure and interaction to the learning process. The researcher suggested that interaction takes place when more competent readers help less competent ones during the preparation process of the readers theatre. In this context, Flynn (2004) stated that when faced with challenging text, stronger readers support classmates reading below grade level, and together they use the same information to create a new text (the script) and increase their comprehension of the information. The study conducted by Hemalatha and Hamidah (2021) found that RT is a necessity for incorporating Audacity Readers Theatre in the primary ESL classrooms to remedy problems of low motivation and dysfluency in reading.

Research objective

Enhance the reading fluency of class V students through readers theatre.

Action research questions

1. How effective is a readers theatre strategy in enhancing the reading fluency of fifth grade students' English?
2. How is a readers theatre motivating the fifth-grade students' reading fluency in English?

Research methodology

This study used a mixed-method design to study the effectiveness of a readers theatre to enhance students' reading fluency in English.

Participants/Sampling

This study involved 24 (11 females and 13 males) fifth grade students from one of the higher secondary schools' classes ranging from PP to XII in eastern Bhutan. Participants were selected purposefully after the researchers observed them facing challenges in reading comprehension and language fluency. This may be possible as they transit to the current grade, which requires higher standards of reading fluency in English. The fifth-grade students were chosen because they were found to have trouble with reading fluency and comprehension. It is troubling for them to get along with the reading of English literature texts fluently and comprehending the text as demanded by the set standard.

Quantitative data collection

Pre-test

The researcher used a quantitative method through a pre-test and a post-test to measure reading fluency. The pre-test was conducted to test the reading fluency of the participants, and the post-test was conducted on the chosen text to see the improvement in reading fluency. The researcher conducted a pre-test, and the readers theatre was used as an intervention strategy for six weeks.

Post-test

The post-test was administered at the end of week 6 using the same genre of texts. The reading texts were based on a descriptive genre adopted from the fifth-grade language and literature text book. As identified in the areas of study (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001), a series of observations on reading fluency by an English teacher was one of the tools used to gather the data for this study. The students were observed one-on-one by the teacher during the post-test on the read text and recorded the words read in five minutes. Descriptive analyses of the pre-test record and the post-test record were done.

Qualitative data collection

The researchers also collected qualitative data through structured interviews or feedback from participants. Participants were asked to share their experiences through an informal letter sharing the advantages and disadvantages of practicing reading. Data was collected, color coding was performed, and the data was thematically analysed.

Intervention

The following intervention strategies emerged as appropriate after analysing the pre-test data: It will be implemented in combination with the flipped classrooms, mainly to focus on the reading fluency of fifth-grade students.

Readers Theatre

According to Reutzel and Cooper (2011), readers theatre constitutes an interpretative approach to literary works, involving the collective reading and rehearsal of a chosen text by groups, culminating in a staged performance before an audience. The process involves the selection of a specific text, guided re-reading sessions by the teacher to acquaint students with the text's content, followed by a performance for a designated audience. The primary objective of Readers Theatre is to offer students a platform to deliver readings with expressive features, precision, tonal variations, and intonation. However, establishing fluency in reading necessitates an underlying motivation to engage in the reading process.

According to Yienger (2016), it is evident that both young children and adults are witnessing a decline in their reading habits due to excessive utilisation of technological gadgets like mobile phones and iPads. Celik (2020) further adds that as young learners spend more time in front of screens, they tend to acquire language skills through auditory means rather than traditional reading. This phenomenon elucidates the challenges faced by struggling readers. Consequently, students encounter difficulties in reading and consequently tend to avoid it. Interestingly, these very technological devices could potentially serve as tools to motivate students to cultivate reading habits, leveraging their ubiquitous presence in students' daily lives.

Beamish and Brown (2012) proposed that podcasting tools could be effectively harnessed within the classroom environment to address this issue and stimulate active student participation in reading and other academic activities. After several iterations of guided reading sessions in the context of Readers Theatre, students could be introduced to audio editing software like Audacity. Through this software, students take turns recording their readings. Hicks, Winnick, and Gonchar (2018) affirmed that podcasting tools, such as

Audacity and Soundtrap, immerse students in the process of inquiry and foster their active engagement in tasks. Vasinda and McLeod (2011) maintained that repeated reading supplemented by microphones and Audacity software could potentially elevate students' motivation levels compared to conventional practice methods. This highlights the research gap addressed by the present study, as it integrates podcasting tools, particularly Audacity software, with Readers Theatre to amplify reading motivation and subsequently contribute to the development of reading fluency.

Activity

According to Irvine (2019), self-determination theory posits that students are driven to learn new concepts by a sense of accomplishment and contentment (intrinsic motivation), as well as by recognition and external rewards (extrinsic motivation). For students, performing confidently before an audience to receive praise and acknowledgment represents an external incentive that encourages them to practice reading with accurate word pronunciation, proper pitch, and intonation. Godsey (2018) expressed the view that the integration of podcasting software (leveraging technology) effectively motivates students who may be easily distracted or who are accustomed to digital environments. The final recorded output of students, which is shared through broadcasting, becomes an external source of motivation as they aspire to have their voices heard by a wider audience.

The entire process, from active participation in reading lessons and familiarisation with the software to recording, editing, and broadcasting, contributes to students' sense of accomplishment and self-satisfaction as they take ownership of their learning journey. Nunez and Leon (2015) underscored that this process aligns with self-determination theory by fostering intrinsic motivation among students as they experience satisfaction and joy through active engagement in lessons and activities. Engaging in discussions during lessons and assisting peers in rectifying mistakes through voice editing serves as an intrinsic motivator, granting students the opportunity to be independent learners. The act of assisting peers in rectifying errors and aiding each other in pronunciation fosters an understanding that they are collectively working towards learning, growth, and mutual enhancement, thereby augmenting their sense of achievement and motivation.

Furthermore, the valuable end result of the recorded content, earmarked for broadcasting, serves as a compelling incentive for students to strive for fluent reading during practice stages. This substantiates the notion that Readers Theatre not only serves as a potent tool for enhancing struggling readers' fluency but also effectively motivates students to engage in reading. It is posited that integrating Audacity software with Readers Theatre can not only

boost reading motivation but also advance reading fluency. Vogan (2013) recommended the integration of technology with Readers Theatre as a fruitful avenue for future research, addressing the dearth of studies on the intersection of reading motivation and fluency. This gap underscores the uniqueness of this study, as previous research predominantly focused on employing Readers Theatre to enhance motivation and fluency without the integration of technology.

Repetition

Repeated readings in the Audacity Reader's Theatre improve the automaticity of the pupils recognition of words. Al Jaffall (2014) opined that repeated reading would help pupils to pronounce words and sentences with intonation automatically and without difficulty. Pupils will be able to pronounce words learned automatically, as they will be reading the particular sentence continuously until the fluency level is attained before moving on to the other sentences. Consequently, frequent repetition of words improves the accuracy of pronunciation as well as the ability to pronounce the same word correctly when it is encountered in a different context.

The concept of repetition in repeated reading is further elaborated with Tolman's latent learning theory. This theory depicts that humans and animals learn best through repetition. Tolman (1948) claimed that the experiment proved that the rats were able to find the food in the maze after a few days as they tend to 'learn the environment' via repetition. Thus, pupils tend to discover information and store it in their memory easily when the actions are repeated. The tendency to acquire knowledge or skills is higher due to constant exposure to repeated practice and behaviour. According to Weibell (2011), a stimulus that is constantly repeated generates a natural tendency for the response to occur again. Repeated reading that is present in Readers Theatre acts as the stimulus whereby pupils are constantly engaged into reading the same text or passage. When pupils are engaged in repeated readings, the tendency to improve their word pronunciation and prosodic skills will increase due to the repeated exposure to the words in the text.

Scaffolding

Guthrie (2017) emphasised that the effectiveness of repeated reading is heightened when students engage in echoing models, such as their peers, parents, or teachers. Myrset (2014) highlighted that Readers Theatre has proven effective in enhancing the reading fluency of struggling students through the practice of repeated readings accompanied by appropriate guidance from teachers. Alamri (2016) asserted that both students and model readers become

immersed in a constructivist approach during the process of repeated reading. In this approach, model readers, often teachers, offer guidance to students during these repeated reading sessions. For instance, in the initial two rounds of repeated reading, teachers extend guidance whenever students pause, stumble over words, or overlook the prosodic elements present in the text. These forms of assistance are referred to as scaffolding, which is rooted in Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development. This constructivist strategy underscores how students construct knowledge by assimilating the guidance provided by the model.

The researchers Abtahi, Graven, and Lerman (2017) expounded on Lev Vygotsky's theory, which postulates that students can accomplish tasks that are challenging with the aid of a more knowledgeable other (MKO). This concept is recognised as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where new information from the MKO is integrated with existing cognitive frameworks, enabling independent learning in the future. Readers Theatre resonates with this theory as students learn to articulate unfamiliar words (new information), incorporating them into their existing mental framework (sight words) with the guidance of their teacher (MKO). For instance, when teachers correct students' errors during repeated reading sessions, students acquire the correct pronunciation of 'new' words and subsequently rectify themselves while reading the same words. This scenario places students within the Zone of Proximal Development, facilitating the acquisition of fluent reading skills.

In the context of Readers Theatre, the technique of adult modelling is applied, where a tutor or the MKO provides scaffolding by exemplifying accurate reading, complete with proper pitch and intonation. This enables students to identify the correct mode of reading and incorporate it into their own reading practice.

Findings and Discussions

The quantitative data was collected through a pre-test on reading fluency to see the reading speed of an individual student in five minutes, as recorded in Table 1 and Figure 1.

Table 1: Pre-test of an individual student on reading fluency

Sl. No	Students	Words read correctly in (1minutes)	Words read correctly in (2minutes)	Words read correctly in (3minutes)	Words read correctly in (4minutes)	Words read correctly in (5minutes)
1	A	36	45	80	97	108
2	B	80	123	300	380	408
3	C	65	122	221	253	301
4	D	31	63	87	125	174

5	E	15	18	27	38	47
6	F	74	126	215	271	437
7	G	29	49	83	117	166
8	H	26	28	49	62	78
9	I	24	28	36	85	105
10	J	79	156	229	367	397
11	K	93	187	314	407	499
12	L	25	54	80	103	134
13	M	49	95	160	198	234
14	N	19	36	48	58	69
15	O	32	59	91	134	168
16	P	57	129	186	236	336
17	Q	89	143	229	313	391
18	R	69	125	185	241	310
19	S	72	97	141	169	212
20	T	54	110	151	194	281
21	U	59	118	157	201	245
22	V	70	96	134	168	205
23	W	68	169	272	374	477
24	X	19	38	56	79	98

UNDER PEER REVIEW

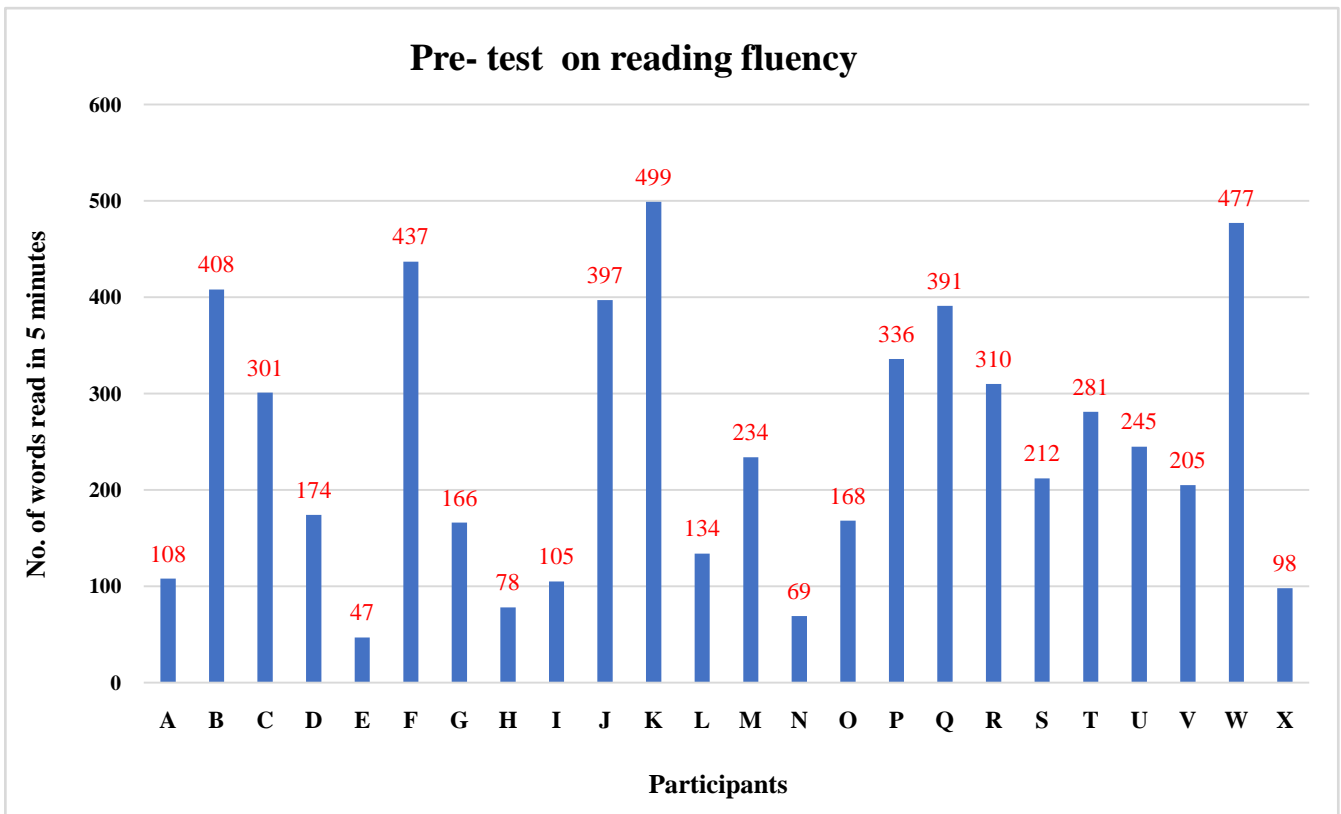


Figure 1: Pre-test on reading fluency

A pre-test on reading was conducted to examine the reading fluency and ability of an individual student. The pre-test data revealed that the majority of the students were poor at reading fluency with correct pronunciation. It shows that teachers must motivate students to read, and students too must show zeal in their reading habits. However, data revealed that few students were fluent in reading. Students (B, C, F, J, K, P, Q, R, and W) were able to read more than 300 words in 5 minutes. It shows that students were competent in reading with fluency, which means they read more than 60 words per minute on an average. It also indicates that students exploring reading resources at home could help them acquire good reading skills, and a few of them showed relish in reading and learning in school. Similarly, the majority of the students (A, D, G, I, L, M, O, S, T, U, and V) could be categorised as average readers. However, a few students (E, H, N, and X) were found to be very poor at reading because they were not able to read even 50 words a minute on an average.

In general data shows that pupils' reading fluency varies, with some making considerable gains over time and others making more gradual gains. These variations could be the result of a number of things, including practice, familiarity with the subject matter, and individual reading talents. Comparing these findings with post-test data might be a useful analytical tool

for assessing student growth and identifying children who may want further assistance with fluency reading.

Therefore, to motivate the students and upskill their reading fluency, researchers implemented the “Readers Theatre” strategy to examine the effectiveness of the strategy to motivate and enhance their reading fluency. Students were given vigorous practice for one month (August), providing dialogue from the stories in the text. It was also conducted as a reading activity, and a post-test was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of Readers Theatre in enhancing reading fluency.

Thus, post-tests were recorded in Table 2.

Table 2. Post-test on reading fluency

Sl. No	Name	Words read correctly in (1minutes)	Words read correctly in (2minutes)	Words read correctly in (3minutes)	Words read correctly in (4minutes)	Words read correctly in (5minutes)
1	A	62	113	132	185	228
2	B	140	252	392	490	642
3	C	110	207	290	360	440
4	D	75	130	190	245	280
5	E	22	30	35	40	50
6	F	185	315	390	490	624
7	G	90	180	226	315	400
8	H	90	145	220	280	430
9	I	188	320	415	545	703
10	J	149	270	375	478	583
11	K	228	437	646	798	1020
12	L	58	110	180	230	275
13	M	130	240	340	415	490
14	N	55	70	85	90	95
15	O	168	300	360	489	578
16	P	165	270	359	480	600
17	Q	110	208	306	403	473
18	R	170	300	360	470	620
19	S	90	160	220	280	345
20	T	56	110	176	230	300
21	U	105	210	283	373	450
22	V	83	107	176	230	283
23	W	165	300	448	600	748
24	X	89	175	235	310	370

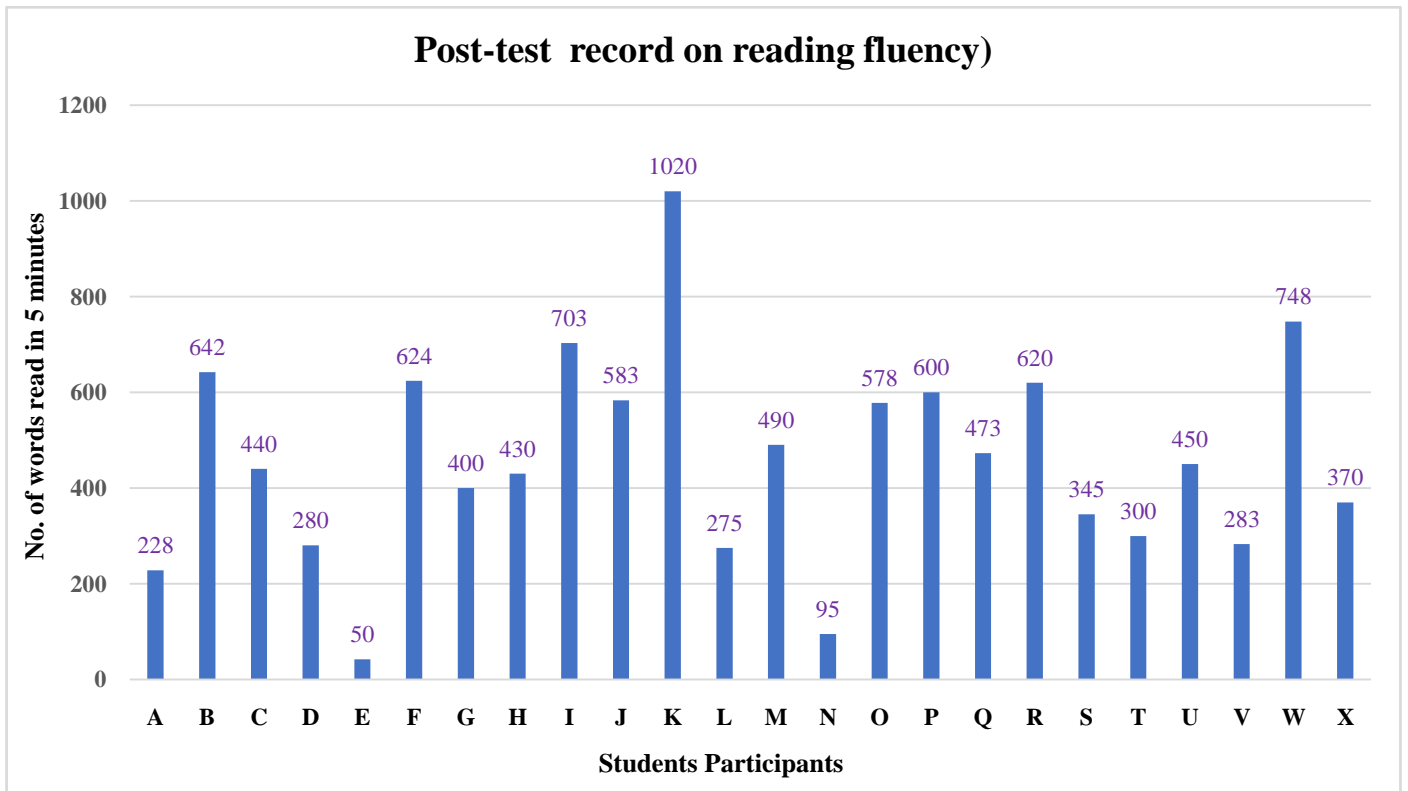


Figure 2. Post-test on reading fluency

Figure 2 shows the post-test reading fluency and ability of an individual student. The post-test data revealed that most of the participants had significantly improved reading fluency with correct pronunciation. The finding shows that ‘Readers Theatre’ is effective in enhancing reading fluency. The data revealed that most of the participants (B, F, I, J, K, O, P, R, and W) were able to read more than 110 words in 1 minute. Similarly, the majority of the participants (A, C, D, G, H, L, M, Q, S, T, U, V, and X) were able to read more than 50 words in a minute, revealing that their reading fluency significantly increased compared to their pre-test record. It also signals that students need to provide enough reading materials, enough practice, and enjoyable reading techniques to motivate their reading habits. However, participants (E and N) could not enhance reading fluency but observed that they were showing zeal in reading and motivated to read and speak English compared to the beginning of the academic session.

The current study found that participants have significantly improved reading fluency with correct pronunciation. In addition, the finding indicates that Readers Theatre is an effective strategy to enhance reading fluency. This finding corroborates the ideas of Myrset (2014),

Alamri (2016), and Guthrie (2017) who highlighted that Readers Theatre has proven effective in enhancing the reading fluency of struggling students through the practice of repeated readings accompanied by appropriate guidance from teachers. Similarly, Weibell (2011) suggests that stimulus that is constantly repeated generates a natural tendency for the response to occur again. Repeated reading that is present in the readers theatre acts as the stimulus whereby pupils are constantly engaged into reading the same text or passage. When pupils are engaged in repeated readings, they have a tendency to improve their word pronunciation. Furthermore, the finding shows that the majority of the participants have significantly improved reading fluency (B, F, I, J, K, O, P, R, and W). This finding aligns with the study of Muayad (2021), which found that reading is the interaction between people and the materials they read. In addition, RT is found to be an effective method of teaching English as a foreign language [EFL] to read, which seems vital for improving students' reading proficiency and brings pleasure and interaction to the learning process. Similarly, Reader's Theatre has been found to be a successful approach for encouraging reading achievement (Smith, 2011). Furthermore, the participants of second language learners revealed that the majority of the participants were able to read more than 110 wpm which amazingly aligns with the Marc (2019) study, which found that the average silent reading rate for adults in English was 238 words per minute [wpm], and for silent reading of English non-fiction by adults, it fell in the range of 175–300 wpm. Therefore, it indicates that RT is an effective approach to enhancing reading fluency.

It has been demonstrated that using this approach will increase word recognition, fluency, and comprehension.

1. RT enhance reading fluency

Researchers believed that RT helps enhance reading fluency, irrespective of gender and class level. Figure 2 above shows the individual post-test record of the participants' reading fluency. The graph shows that almost all the students have improved their reading fluency significantly compared to their pre-test records. It indicates that RT is an effective reading strategy to enhance reading fluency. Further, the qualitative data revealed that RT helps enhance reading English. The majority of the participants (A, B, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, and W) shared that "RT helps us to read fast and fluently and become successful readers; it improves speaking English and pronunciation."²⁹ The findings align with the quantitative results, as shown in Figure 2. The finding revealed that RT is a strategy to enhance reading fluency. Therefore, the reader theatre could recommend that the teacher colleagues apply RT for teaching reading activities in the class, irrespective of the subjects.

The finding shows that RT helps to improve reading fluency, pronunciation, and speaking skills in English. The findings corroborated the study by Al Jaffal (2014) that repeated reading would help pupils pronounce words and sentences with intonation automatically and without difficulty. Further, it corroborates with the study by Chard et al. (2002) and Swain et al. (2013) that abilities like vocabulary and understanding require decoding and fluency abilities. Students who are taught and learn decoding techniques have improved word recognition automaticity. It is possible to establish a student's fluency rate by counting the number of words they read per minute (Overton, 2009), which aligns with the finding in the post-test record shown in Figure 2. It also aligns with the study done by Moore (2001), which opined that students are deemed proficient readers when they can read with fluency and comprehension.

The majority of students' reading fluency has significantly increased, as seen by the post-test results, demonstrating the efficacy of the reading program. This development emphasizes how crucial focused interventions and consistent practice are to raising reading proficiency. It also highlights the need for ongoing assistance and direction in order to guarantee that every learner makes steady progress toward fluency in reading.

Therefore, these findings from qualitative and quantitative data revealed that RT is an effective reading tool or strategy to enhance fluency. Thus, researchers recommend the teacher colleagues to apply [RT] in teaching reading activities.

2. RT motivates reading

The majority of the researchers believed that RT could motivate students to read. The post-test data (Figure 2) strongly reveals that students were motivated to read fluently and learned new vocabulary due to repeated reading. The quantitative data post-test shows that participants have significantly improved reading compared to their pre-test record. It reveals that participants were strongly motivated to read the text. This finding aligns with the qualitative data result. The majority of the participants revealed that RT is an interesting and joyful strategy to read text, which helps to improve reading fluency. Participants (C, D, E, F, H, J, K, L, N, O, P, R, S, T, V, and W) opined, "RT is fun while reading and improves reading skills; it is a very interesting and enjoyable reading strategy; get confident; gain creativity; and feel interesting to read." Interestingly, the participant 'K' shared "I don't like to read, but after practicing RT, I like to read and will read, group members helped each other improve reading, and most interestingly, "I am happy because I could read better than last time; I will read more than 15 pages, and reading is important in our lives." The finding

strongly relates to quantitative data (Figure 2), and it is evident that RT is very effective and motivates participants to enhance their reading fluency.

However, a few participants (B, I, and J) opined that “RT makes us angry and boring because it makes us read again and again.” This finding reveals that RT makes a few participants feel bored and frustrated since RT compels them to read repeatedly. In contrast, they also shared that “RT helps us to read fast and become successful readers; RT helps us learn new words and read well with expression.” It reveals that these participants were motivated, though they shared frustration about RT.

The quantitative and qualitative results revealed that student participants were motivated to read after applying RT. It improves our reading skills, and it is a very interesting and enjoyable reading strategy (I, K, L, M and W). This finding agrees with Alhamdu (2016) that the presence of motivation when engaging in reading can enable students to attain their maximum potential in learning. It is also supported by Moore (2001) that the use of oral reading practices can improve students’ word recognition, fluency, and comprehension to help them reach a level of proficiency.

The qualitative finding revealed that RT is a strategy that lets the learners read repeatedly until they master the scripts. The result, as confirmed by the readers theatre, is a scripted text. Students practice plays, scripts, poetry, or other related writings under instruction and modelling. These varying-length scripts give pupils the chance to practice reading aloud (Corcoran & Davis, 2005). Readers Theatre has been found to be a successful approach for encouraging reading achievement (Smith, 2011). Most interestingly, participant ‘K’ shared “I don’t like to read, but after practicing RT I like to read and will read; group members help each other and improve reading; and most interestingly, “I am happy because I could read better than last time; I will read more than 15 pages; and reading is important in our lives.” The finding strongly associates with Flynn’s (2004) **found** that when faced with challenging text, stronger readers support classmates reading below grade level, and together they use the same information to create a new text (the script) and increase their comprehension of the information. Moreover, the finding aligns with Hemalatha and Hamidah’s (2021) finding that RT is a necessity for incorporating Audacity Readers Theatre in the primary ESL classrooms to remedy problems of low motivation and fluency in reading.

However, the qualitative finding also revealed that “RT makes us angry and boring because it makes us read again and again.” This finding reveals that RT makes a few participants feel bored and frustrated since RT compels them to read repeatedly. The result aligns with Rasinki’s (2003) recommendation that instructors refrain from utilising scripts that are below

the pupils' reading levels. The scripts may be written by teachers or students, taken from books, or based on poems.

Most of the participants also shared that "RT helps us to understand and realise the content of the text, and most importantly, we learn many new vocabularies" (A, C, E, G, H, I, K, and L). The finding aligns with the study done by Morra and Tracey (2006), which opined that reading levels varied. Researchers found actual evidence of improvements in both the students' oral reading fluency and comprehension levels. Furthermore, the study aligned with Muayad (2021) found that reading is the interaction between people and the materials they read. In addition, RT is found to be an effective method of teaching English as a foreign language [EFL] to read, which seems vital for improving students' reading proficiency and brings pleasure and interaction to the learning process.

Therefore, the finding strongly reveals that RT is an effective strategy to enhance reading fluency and comprehension.

Comparative study of pre-test and post-test

Figure 3 was generated from the quantitative pre- and post-data of the individual student reading fluency.

Post-test on reading fluency

A pre-test was conducted to investigate the fluency of reading foreign languages and found the majority of the students were slow readers. As an intervention, researchers adapted the Reader's Theatre to investigate its effectiveness in enhancing the reading fluency of an individual child. Students were grouped into 3 groups consisting of 8 members. Each group was given dialogues, words, and short phrases to read. The researcher had prepared the reader's theatre dialogue from the text. Three stories were chosen to prepare the RT dialogue. Students were given extensive practice for one month every two hours after the class.

The post-test was conducted over a period of two hours over three days. Individual students were asked to read the chosen story for 5 minutes and recorded as shown in Figure 2.

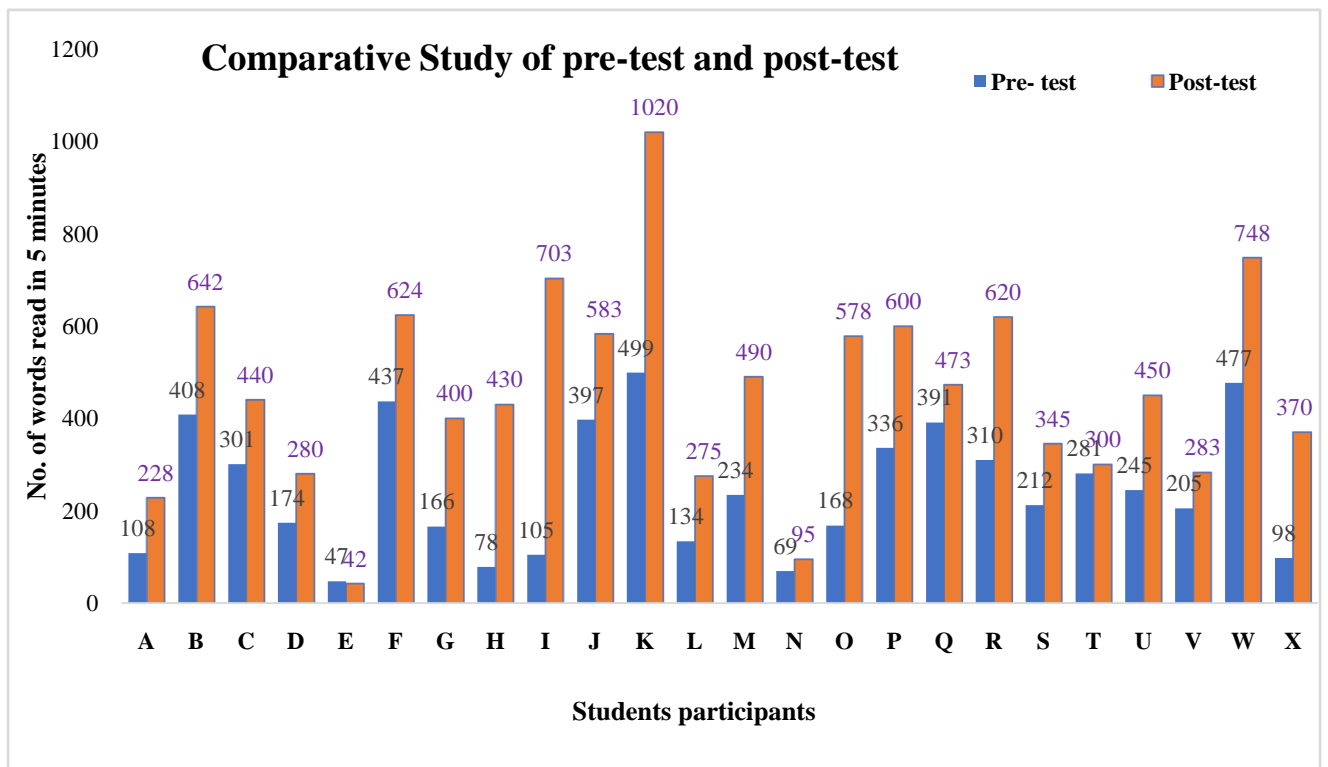


Figure 3. Data commentary

Figure 3 shows an individual participant's reading record during the pre-test and post-test. The graph shows that most of the participants have significantly increased their reading fluency. An individual participant has increased more than 100 words after the intervention, indicating that the readers theatre is a very effective strategy to enhance reading fluency. Therefore, it strongly recommends using the readers theatre to enhance reading fluency, not only in English; it can be used in different subjects. Findings strongly align with Muayad's (2021) finding that reading is the interaction between people and the materials they read. In addition, RT is found to be an effective method of teaching English as a foreign language [EFL] to read, which seems vital for improving students' reading proficiency and brings pleasure and interaction to the learning process. Researchers found actual evidence of improvements in both the students' oral reading fluency and comprehension levels (Morra & Tracey, 2006). Readers Theatre has been shown to improve fluency scores, reading attitudes, and confidence levels in a 2005 study including low-achieving second and third graders (Corcoran & Davis, 2005).

Therefore, the findings strongly conclude that Readers Theatre has assisted English language learners in developing their fluency and comprehension skills.

Conclusion

The findings of this action research study shed light on the significant role that Readers Theatre can play in enhancing reading fluency and motivation among fifth-grade students. The quantitative data clearly indicates that the participants showed remarkable improvements in reading fluency after the intervention, with many surpassing expectations. Moreover, the qualitative data highlights the positive impact of Readers Theatre on students' attitudes towards reading, with many expressing newfound enthusiasm and confidence in their reading abilities.

The study also revealed that motivation is a key factor in the success of reading interventions. Students who participated in Readers Theatre not only improved their reading skills but also developed a sense of enjoyment and engagement with reading. This aligns with the broader literature on reading motivation, emphasising that a motivated reader is more likely to become proficient.

Overall, this action research provides valuable insights for educators and policymakers in Bhutan and beyond. It underscores the importance of innovative and engaging reading strategies, such as Readers Theatre, in fostering reading fluency and motivation among students. By integrating these findings into educational practices, schools can empower students with the essential skill of reading and nurture a lifelong love for learning.

Limitation

The sample size for this was minimal, and the study pertained to only one particular class. It would have been better if the selected samples were from different classes or two sections of the same grade. This action research was done by one particular language teacher. The researcher has 24 participants who participated in a structured interview (writing a formal letter sharing the advantages and disadvantages of RT). Researchers encounter certain limitations in the process of conducting research, as follows:

1. Teacher researchers have limited time to conduct research due to other teaching periods.
2. Researchers could have chosen two sections of the same grade to implement a quasi-experiment to examine the effectiveness of RT. Therefore, future researchers are recommended to conduct AR using a quasi-experiment.
3. Teacher researchers were pressurised to complete according to the plan of administrators, which could lead to the manipulation of unauthentic findings and data

collection. The researchers could have given enough time to conduct their research according to their action plan.

4. All the authorities concerned must understand that AR too takes time to derive authentic data collection and result findings.
5. School future research could be done department-wise so as to enable producing more research papers in the school and imposing research culture in the school.
6. It is a hectic work for the researcher, because teacher had to prepare RT dialogues for lower classes.

Recommendation

Based on the findings and insights gathered from the action research on enhancing reading fluency and motivation through Readers Theatre, several recommendations are made for educators, school administrators, and policymakers:

1. **Incorporate Readers Theatre into the curriculum:** Schools and educators should consider incorporating Readers Theatre as a regular component of the curriculum, especially in the early grades. This engaging approach not only enhances reading fluency but also fosters a love for reading. It should be integrated across subjects, not limited to English language classes.
2. **Provide Training for Teachers:** Teachers should be trained in the implementation of Reader's Theatre and the integration of technology tools like Audacity. Professional development workshops can help educators effectively use these methods to motivate and improve students' reading skills.
3. **Promote a reading culture:** Schools should actively promote a reading culture by creating reading-friendly environments, establishing reading clubs, and organising reading-related events. This can help sustain and reinforce the gains made through Readers Theatre.
4. **Access to Reading Materials:** Ensure that students have access to a variety of reading materials, including books, magazines, and digital resources. A well-stocked library and digital resources can further encourage students to explore different genres and develop diverse reading interests.
5. **Monitor Progress:** It is crucial to keep an eye on students' reading development at all times. Teachers can ensure that struggling readers receive extra support by customizing their teaching techniques to meet the needs of each individual student through the use of regular assessments and feedback mechanisms.

6. **Research and Evaluation:** Encourage further research on the intersection of technology, motivation, and reading fluency. Future studies can delve deeper into the specific impacts of different technological interventions on reading outcomes.
7. **Collaboration:** Encourage cooperation between educators, researchers, and policymakers to exchange innovative approaches to teaching reading. Creating a network for knowledge sharing can result in reading skill improvement techniques that are more successful.
8. **Long-term commitment:** recognize that it takes time to develop excellent reading habits and fluency. For long-lasting gains, dedication to programs aimed at improving reading motivation and proficiency is essential.
9. The finding strongly recommends applying RT to motivate students to read fluently, irrespective of the subjects, especially Dzongkha, social studies, science, geography, and history.

Therefore, the action research demonstrates that Readers Theatre, coupled with technology integration, can significantly enhance reading fluency and motivation among students. Implementing these recommendations can further support the development of proficient and enthusiastic readers, ultimately contributing to their academic success and personal growth.

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