



## **The Effect of Read-Aloud Method on Iranian EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension**

**Dr. Ali Mohammad Fazilatfar\* (Corresponding Author)**

*Associate Professor in Applied Linguistics & TESL, English Dept., Faculty of Foreign Languages, Yazd University, Yazd, Iran*  
E-mail: afazilatfar@yazd.ac.ir

**Hossein Kargar Behbahani**

*M.A. Student of TEFL, English Dept., Faculty of Foreign Languages, Yazd University, Yazd, Iran*  
E-mail: [hossein\\_july1993@yahoo.com](mailto:hossein_july1993@yahoo.com)

### **Abstract**

One of the most important language skills affecting students' success in academic settings is reading comprehension and the ability to read fluently in a second language. Japanese EFL learners' less-than-satisfactory performance in standard English tests led Shinozuka, Mizusawa, and Shibata (2014) to design the read-aloud method. This study investigated the effectiveness of this newly designed method on Iranian EFL Learners' reading comprehension. The aforementioned method with its high priority on reading aloud enjoy four main activities: chunked reading practice, read-aloud practice, cloze test, and concurrent read-aloud and summarization. Participants of this study, selected through convenience sampling, were 140 undergraduate students whose English reading comprehension was considered poor based on the pretest. Then, the subjects were assigned in two groups of control (N = 40) and experimental (N = 100). The subjects in experimental group received 8 teaching sessions, while the control group received no specific training. Using a pretest-posttest design we attempted to see if read-aloud method turns to affect our subjects' reading ability level. Therefore, some T-tests were run. The results of the statistical analyses demarcated that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in the posttest. The pedagogical implication of this study is that ESL/EFL instructors can implement the read-aloud method in their classes to promote their students' reading comprehension.

**Keywords:** Reading Comprehension, Read-Aloud Method, Chunking, Cloze Test, and Concurrent Reading Aloud and Summarization.

### **ARTICLE INFO**

#### Article history:

Received: Thursday, July 12, 2018

Accepted: Monday, August 13, 2018

Published: Thursday, September 20, 2018

Available Online: Tuesday, September 4, 2018

DOI: 10.22049/JALDA.2018.26255.1070

## **Introduction**

Inarguably, an essential skill for academic students is being able to read in an L2 and this ability represents the main way for independent language learning (Carrel & Grabe, 2002). Moreover, there are a number of arguments in the amount of research conducted in the last few decades for the importance of reading skill, which has largely enriched our knowledge about the enigmatic nature of reading comprehension. One of the main outcomes of these studies is that they have helped us better understand the reason for which reading skill was traditionally viewed as a passive skill with no specific place in language teaching, and how it has been increasingly viewed as an interactive, constructive, and contextualized process with a primary role in promoting students' communicative competence (Juan & Flor, 2006).

All around the world, a large number of students without having the required ability of reading in an L2 enter higher education (Shokouhi & Jamali, 2013). When these students are pressed to read, more often than not, they choose ineffectual and insufficient strategies with little strategic intent (Wade, Trathen, & Schraw, 1990, p. 150; Wood, Motz, & Willoughby, 1998, p. 701 as cited in Shokouhi & Jamali, 2013). This often arises from their low level of reading strategy knowledge and lack of metacognitive control (Dreyer, 1998, p. 20 as cited in Shokouhi & Jalali, 2013). As is quoted in Shokouhi and Jamali (2013), Dreyer and Nel (2003, p.350) claims that another reason might be students' inexperience originating from the limited task demands of high school and the fact that 50% of the focus is still on knowledge reproduction.

English is an obligatory course of students in all stages of their academic life in many EFL contexts of Asia. As Huang (2006 as cited in Zafarani & Kabgani, 2014) puts it quite neatly, in such contexts, the main goal of teaching English is to aid students' success in their examinations and to help them get admitted at universities. In order for English language learners to be able to communicate as efficiently as possible and to successfully take part in jobs and economy, acquiring English language literacy is needed (Zafarani & Kabgani, 2014). As long as information access and knowledge transfer is concerned, English plays a decisive role. Thus, no country can neglect the dominance of English and still expect to compete professionally and economically (Grabe, 1988 as cited in Zafarani & Kabgani, 2014). Afterward, these students enter higher education and study ESP. These students, do not have to take any English courses during their studies at their universities after the first year (Huang, 2006 as cited in Kashe, Damavand, & Vijani, 2012).

One of the very first language teaching methods which came into existence was grammar translation method (GTM) in which priority was placed on reading and writing (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Yet, as the students taught through GTM were not that successful in communicating in an L2, Direct Method and Audio Lingual Method (ALM) came into existence as a reaction to GTM (Saville-Troike, 1973).

These two methods, especially ALM which came into existence during World War II to instruct soldiers (Richards & Rogers, 2001), are often referred to as oral approaches to language teaching and learning (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). In these methods, the priority is mostly given to oral skills namely, listening and speaking, and sadly receptive skills (reading and writing) are relegated to later stages of foreign language teaching (Saville-Troike, 1973). Hence, it is safe to say that traditionally reading instruction was neglected on the part of some EFL teachers.

One of the key factors in learning and, probably, the most principal language skills is reading which is considered to be the mother of all study skills (Frei, 1997). It is crystal clear that all children begin going to schools to learn reading. Also, one of the chief activities a child is often asked to do is to read. Trelease (1989), who is probably the most well-known supporter of reading-aloud, believes that by motivating children to read, not only will their financial condition be affected, but also the financial condition of the next generation be affected.

English is considered to be an important lingua franca among speakers of different cultural backgrounds (Jenkins, 2009). In Iran, to improve people's foreign language skills, English teaching begins in junior high schools with the time allocation of two hours a week (Jafari & Shokrpour, 2012). EF English Proficiency Index (2017) shows that Iran is ranked 65 in English skills. EF English Proficiency Index (2017) also shows that countries such as Bangladesh, Cuba, Guatemala, Ecuador, Syria, Morocco, though been less developed, have outperformed Iran in the ranking (retrieved from <https://www.ef.com/ir/epi/>). International English Language Testing System (Academic module) in 2017 demonstrates that Iranian participants' overall band score is 6.12 and their reading band score is 5.98 (retrieved from <https://www.ielts.org/teaching-and-research/test-taker-performance>). Iranian IELTS test takers' less than satisfactory performance could be related to the fact that in Iran, reading sections to which students are exposed in their junior high school and senior high school are non-authentic and that the teaching method is based on GTM. In Japan, students' bad results in standard and widely acclaimed language tests such as IELTS and TOEFL led Shinozuka, Mizusawa, and Shibata (2014) to design the read-aloud method. The main focus of this newly developed method is based on reading-aloud. The aforementioned method consists of four chief exercises, the first one being chunking, the next being reading-aloud exercise, the next being cloze test instruction, and finally the last one being concurrent reading-aloud, and summarization practice (Shinozuka et al., 2014). Shinozuka et al. (2014 as cited in Shinozuka, Shibata, & Mizusawa, 2017) found out that after a three-month course, the method can result in Japanese EFL learners' reading comprehension.

The present paper has three main objectives. The first aim of this study is to compare the performance of the control and experimental group in the pretest to see if these two groups are homogenous in terms of their reading comprehension level.

The second objective behind conducting this study is to find out whether the experimental group with the read-aloud instruction package will outperform the control group without the package in the posttest. Finally, the last goal of this research is to examine the interaction of the pretest and posttest results of the experimental group through read-aloud method.

## **Literature Review**

Researchers consistently posit that metacognition plays an important role in reading. Metacognition has been defined as “having knowledge (cognition) and having understanding, control over, and appropriate use of that knowledge” (Tei & Stewart, 1985, p. 48 as cited in Shokouhi & Jamali, 2013). Therefore, metacognition entails “both conscious awareness and conscious control of our own learning” (Shokouhi & Jamali, 2013).

A significant factor in demystifying reading abilities, especially at its earlier stages of development, according to Perfetti (1985) and Stanovic (2000), is word recognition fluency in L1 reading research (cited in Grabe, 2004). While word recognition fluency has not been a main focus of L2 research, Segalowitz (1991) and (Koda, 1996) demarcated that for distinguishing proficiency level of very advanced L2 readers, word recognition automaticity was a decisive factor (quoted in Grabe, 2004). Also, as Grabe (2004) argues, based on the research conducted by Segalowitz, Segalowitz, and Wood (1998) it was made clear that those students enjoying better word recognition automaticity skills were more fluent readers. Furthermore, they demonstrated that after being academically taught for one year, less fluent students’ L2 word recognition fluency promoted. These results showed that being incidentally exposed to vocabulary through instruction over time could lead into an increase in word recognition automaticity (as cited in Grabe, 2004).

In language learning, one of the most important roles is played by individuals’ vocabulary size (Mohammadi & Bayat Afshar, 2016). The decisive role vocabulary knowledge plays on individual’s reading ability has been demonstrated by a large number of researchers (Anderson & Freebody, 1983; Mezynski, 1983; Nation, 1990; Read, 1989, 1993; Qian, 1998, 1999, 2002). In a research conducted by Snow (2002 as cited in Anjomshoa & Zamanian, 2014), it was shown that as children moved toward higher levels of education, the association between their reading comprehension level and vocabulary knowledge was substantially improved. As quoted in Grabe (2004), Thordike (1973) was one the first researchers conducting a large-scale research in this regard. This researcher (1973) surveyed reading in 15 countries (with more than 100,000 subjects) and reported median correlations across countries and age groups of between  $r = .66$  and  $r = .75$  for reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge.

A powerful relationship between vocabulary and later reading ability for children in an L2 setting was shown by Droop and Verhoeven (2003). In a similar

vein, in studies done by Schoonen, Hulstijn, and Bossers (1998 as cited in Grabe, 2004), L2 vocabulary knowledge was found to be a solid predictor of L2 reading ability for EFL students ( $r^2 = .71$ ).

In the last few years, especially in L1 settings, the prominence of reading fluency has been given much more emphasis. Word recognition accuracy and automaticity are two requirements of reading fluency (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003 as cited in Grabe, 2004). A rapid velocity of processing across extended text is required for reading fluency (Segalowitz, 2000 as cited in Grabe, 2004). Additionally, reading fluency makes suitable use of prosodic features and syntactic aspects and takes more time to develop (National Reading Panel, 2000; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Segalowitz, 2000 as quoted in Grabe, 2004). A main part of the National Reading Panel's (2000) report was allocated to reading on fluency development and fluency teaching. Its (2000) meta-analysis indicated that fluency can be instructed and that reading comprehension abilities can surely be positively influenced by reading fluency (quoted in Grabe, 2004).

### ***The Emergence of Read-Aloud Method***

In an attempt to develop Japanese EFL learners' reading ability whose overall English proficiency was the elementary level, Shinozuka et al. (2014) designed the read-aloud method. The method with its main emphasis and focus on reading aloud has four main exercises, the first exercise being chunking, the next being reading aloud exercise, the third being practicing cloze tests, and, lastly, concurrent read-aloud and write-out practice (Shinozuka et al., 2014; Shinozuka et al., 2017). Each of these exercises will be discussed in turn below.

### ***Chunked Reading***

Chunking theory was first put forward by Newell and Rosenbloom (1981). According to this theory, response and stimulus components are chunked (Newell & Rosenbloom, 1981). The research and practice on chunking is very common nowadays (Nishida, 2013). While chunking, which sometimes can be referred to as text phrasing (Newell & Rosenbloom, 1981), complex stimuli are perceived and responded to as single units (Breznitz, 2006). One of the problems which is almost always associated with chunking is that categorizing chunking as specific linguistic unit is impossible (Nishida, 2013). As mentioned in Nishida (2013), in Tanaka's (2006) terms, a semantically and structurally distinct unit constructed by the writer is referred to as chunk. Linking one chunk to another in a sequence is known as chunking (Tanaka, 2006 cited in Nishida, 2013). A number of research conducted in previous years support the effectiveness of chunking on reading comprehension (Shinozuka et al., 2017). Many researchers believe that chunking increases reading speed (Newell, 1990; Ohtagaki & Ohmori, 1991; Komaba, 1992; Kameyama, 1993; Tan & Nicholson, 1997; Ellis, 2003; Nishida, 2009, Yubune, 2012 cited in Nishida,

2013). Another benefit of chunked reading which is cited in Nishida (2013) is that it promotes reading comprehension (Ellis, 1996, 2001; Tuchiya, 2002; Ushiro, 2002). In an attempt to shed light on the effect of chunked reading, Casteel (1988) examined whether this exercise might result in an improvement in learners' reading comprehension. He (1988 as cited in Shinozuka et al. 2017), using a pretest posttest design, arrived at the conclusion that the treatment group statistically significantly outperformed the control group. Shinozuka et al. (2014) and Shinozuka et al. (2017) included chunked reading exercise in the read-aloud method inspired by these positive findings.

### ***Reading-Aloud Practice***

As opposed to silent reading, reading aloud forces the readers to vocalize the materials they are reading including prosodic features (Shinozuka, et al. 2017). One of the most common exercises for developing reading fluency is repeated reading (Chang, 2012). The theory of repeated reading was put forward by Laberge-Samuels' (1974) model of automatic information processing (cited in Chang, 2012). Based on this model, a text is automatically decoded without awareness by a fluent reader (cited in Chang, 2012). When repeated reading is orally practiced, the written text is translated into spoken language by readers until they can accurately, effortlessly, and fluently read the text (Chang, 2012). Researchers often posit that "the speed at which a passage is read by a person can be increased through repeated reading" (Carver & Hoffman, 1981; O'Shea, Sindelar, & O'Shea, 1985 cited in Stoddard, Valcante, Sindelar, O'Shea, & Algozzine, 1993).

### ***Cloze Test Instruction***

The cloze procedure was developed by Taylor (1953). The term has been derived from the concept of closure in Gestalt psychology (Taylor, 1953). Gestaltists are of the view that learning follows a sequence through which one first grasps the whole, and then understands the details (Stansfield, 1980). The bibliography on cloze is vast (Alderson, 1978). Studies conducted on this procedure has concentrated on the association between cloze and reading comprehension (Oller, 1972 cited in Alderson, 1979). As quoted in Shinozuka et al. (2017), the validity and reliability of cloze tests have been corroborated by a majority of researchers (Darnell, 1968; Jongasma, 1971; Oller, 1972). These tests are also considered as a reliable measure of overall L2 proficiency (Aitken, 1977; Bialystok & Howard, 1979; Ollender, 1976 as mentioned in Shinozuka et al., 2017).

### ***Concurrent Read-Aloud and Summarization***

As quoted in Shinozuka et al. (2017), concurrent reading-aloud and summarization has become one of the most welcomed method in Japan since it was first proposed by Kunihiro (1970). In this exercise, learners need to first read the materials and

then write down what they have grasped from the reading materials (Shinozuka et al., 2017). Marzec-Stawiarska (2016) defines summarization as a task in which learners read to write. Research has shown that this exercise is positively associated with recall and learning (King, Biggs, & Lipsky, 1984; Rinehart, Stahl & Erickson, 1986; Spurlin, Dansereau, O'Donnel, & Brooks, 1988; Wittrock & Alessandrini, 1990 cited in Marzec-Stawiarska, 2016). During concurrent reading aloud and summarization, subjects do three motor activities concurrently (Shinozuka et al., 2017). These motor activities are visual (as the learners see the reading materials), kinetic (when the learners begin vocalizing the reading materials), auditory (as the learners hear what they have just vocalized), and kinetic again which relates to their writing output (Shinozuka et al., 2017). In psycholinguistics, it is claimed that concurrent use of various motor activities helps the materials be conserved longer in long-term memory (Baddeley, 1986, 1998, 1999; Pontart et al., 2013, cited in Shinozuka et al., 2017).

### **Research Questions**

1. How is the subjects' performance in experimental and control groups different in the pretest?
2. Do the participants in experimental group with the read-aloud instruction package outperform those in control group without the package in the posttest?
3. What is the interaction of pretest and posttest for the experimental group through read-aloud instruction package?

### **Methodology**

#### **Participants**

The participants in this study were 140 freshmen students of Physics, Mechanical Engineering, and Tourism studying at Yazd University. These participants were divided in two groups. Group 1 served as the experimental group (N = 100), and group 2 served as the control group (N = 40). They all had studied English as a compulsory course for 7 years before coming to university. It is also worth mentioning that all the participants of the current research were selected through convenience sampling.

#### **Instruments**

In the present study a pretest (two reading sections of Iran's University Entrance Exam) and a posttest (two reading sections of Iran's University Entrance Exam) were used.

### ***Iran's University Entrance Exam Reading Sections as the Pretest***

Each year in Iran an entrance exam is held and the students wishing to carry on their education at university level compete. Those subjects who perform better in UEE (University Entrance Exam) will be admitted at universities.

In the current paper, instead of using TOEFL, IELTS, or even TOEIC reading section to assess our participants' reading comprehension level, we opted to exploit UEE. The reason behind this selection is that TOEFL and IELTS are two standard English tests which are communicative in nature, while UEE is a standard test which is structural in essence. As Iranian students are taught through structuralism or Grammar Translation Method (Rahimi, 2005), we made the decision to choose UEE as our pretest.

UEE's reading section consists of two texts (each contains approximately 300 words). Each of these texts contains 5 questions. The format of the test is multiple choice and the students are required to choose the best choice from among alternatives. In this research, as for the pretest, we used two reading sections (4 texts) carefully chosen from UEE. The participants had 30 minutes to answer 20 questions.

#### **Posttest**

As mentioned earlier, UEE's reading section was also administered as for posttest. We again chose two reading sections (4 texts) cautiously and gave the test. The subjects of the study again had 30 minutes to tick correct alternative from among 20 questions. It is worth mentioning that our pretest and posttest had the same formats but they were of different versions of the same type of test.

#### **Treatment and materials**

The treatment lasted for 8 teaching sessions (approximately two months). Teaching sessions consisted of four major activities: chunked reading, repeated read-aloud practice, cloze test, and simultaneous read-aloud and write-out practice. The researchers selected *Select Readings Pre-Intermediate* by Lee and Gundersen (2002) to choose texts from.

#### **Procedure**

As stated above, the treatment lasted for 8 sessions. In the first session, a text entitled "Are you getting enough sleep?" was selected. The researchers retyped the text in a word file and put a slash after every phrase. Thus a sentence like "Randy Gardner, a high school student in the United States, wanted to find out" would read as: Randy Gardner /, a high school student / in the United States /, wanted to find out. Students, to become motivated and galvanized, were made aware of the effectiveness of chunked reading as researched by scholars in the field. The instructor first chunked read the whole text for the students and asked them to

underline the words whose meaning were obscure for them. Once the instructor's work was done, the pedagogue asked them to utter the words they did not get. Then the teacher through simple English provided subjects with the English equivalent of the unknown words. Thereafter, students were asked to read-aloud the texts using chunks. At the end, to check students' understanding of the text, some true false questions were raised. In the second teaching session, a text entitled "Mika's Homestay in Japan" was used. At first, the data collector functioning as the teacher of the class asked students to underline the words or grammatical structures to which they had no exposure before as he was reading aloud the text to the class. Then the teacher started to read aloud the text to the class. Once he was done with reading, the students asked the teachers to help them with few words and grammatical structures. When finished, some comprehension questions through use of true false questions were asked to understand if subjects had gotten the text fully. Afterward, it was students' turn to read-aloud the text several times. The next session, the teacher came to class with two cloze tests in hand. When the papers were distributed to the students, they were given 5 minutes to skim the text first to get an idea what the text was about. Once finished, the teacher read the text (without paying any attention to blanks) to the class. When the teacher was done with reading, he asked students whether they had completely gotten the text. Some students asked for the definition of some unknown words and some grammatical points to which they had little, if any, exposure before. The instructor then provided them with explanation. Then, with the help of the teacher, the students filled in the blanks. Once the blanks were filled in, the students were asked to read-aloud the texts. In the fourth session, the teacher first read-aloud the selected text to the class. Like previous sessions, the students circumscribed the words and grammatical points they did not know. Once the instructor was done with reading the text, the students raised their questions and the teacher answered their questions. Also to check students' understanding, some comprehension questions were asked by the teacher. When finished, the students were told to summarize and paraphrase the text overleaf. The same procedure was repeated for the next four sessions.

## **Results**

### ***Addressing the first research question***

As, in the first research question, there is a categorical variable, namely group having two values (experimental and control) and a continuous variable namely subjects' score, the use of Independent-samples T-test is warranted.

At first, in order to check the normality assumption underpinning this kind of T-test, a One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was conducted with the help of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.

**Table 1.** One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test<sup>a</sup>

		score
N		100
Normal Parameters <sup>b,c</sup>	Mean	26.3500
	Std. Deviation	13.53736
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.170
	Positive	.170
	Negative	-.111
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		1.697
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.061

a. group = Experimental

b. Test distribution is Normal.

**Table 2.** One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test<sup>a</sup>

		score
N		40
Normal Parameters <sup>b,c</sup>	Mean	24.8750
	Std. Deviation	10.77078
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.170
	Positive	.170
	Negative	-.155
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		1.078
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.196

a. group = Control

b. Test distribution is Normal.

As tables 1 and 2 demarcate, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov results obtained for the experimental and control groups

**Table 3.** Group Statistics

		Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Score	Experimental		100	26.3500	13.53736	1.35374
	Control		40	24.8750	10.77078	1.70301

**Table 4.** Inferential Statistics for Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for		t-test for Equality of Means			
		Equality of Variances		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
		F	Sig.				
Score	Equal variances assumed	4.404	.038	.615	138	.539	1.47500
	Equal variances not assumed			.678	89.74	.500	1.47500

In the next step, the researchers checked the assumption of homogeneity of variance. Looking at the **Levene's test for Equality of Variances**, we noticed that the  $p$ -value is less than 0.05. Therefore, this assumption is violated. Table 4 also demonstrates the mean difference between the two groups (1.475). Thus, we arrive at the conclusion that those in the experimental group outperformed those in control group in pretest. Nonetheless, as the alpha value is above 0.05 ( $p = 0.500$ ), we understand that the difference between the two groups is not statistically significant. In pretest, the experimental group only marginally outperformed the control group as there is no significant difference between the two groups.

#### **Addressing the second research question**

Since there are two variables in the second research question, one of which is categorical, namely group having two levels (experimental and control) and a continuous one (subjects' score in posttest), the researchers ran an Independent-Samples T-test again.

At first, a One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was run.

**Table 5.** One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test<sup>a</sup>

		score
N		100
Normal Parameters <sup>b,c</sup>	Mean	48.5000
	Std. Deviation	16.97443
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.115
	Positive	.056
	Negative	-.115
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		1.152
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.141

a. group = Experimental

b. Test distribution is Normal.

**Table 6.** One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test<sup>a</sup>

		score
N		40
Normal Parameters <sup>b,c</sup>	Mean	25.2500
	Std. Deviation	11.65476
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.184
	Positive	.184
	Negative	-.115
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		1.161
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.135

a. group = Control

b. Test distribution is Normal.

As the results of tables 5 and 6 show, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov results obtained for the experimental and control groups are 0.141 and 0.135, respectively. Hence, normality assumption is met as the two aforementioned values exceed 0.05.

**Table 7.** Group Statistics

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental	100	48.5000	16.97443	1.69744
Control	40	25.2500	11.65476	1.84278

**Table 8.** Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
Score	Equal variances assumed	8.111	.005	7.938	138	.000	23.25000	2.92885	17.45877	29.04123
	Equal variances not assumed			9.280	103.816	.000	23.25000	2.50542	18.28155	28.21845

In the next step, we checked homogeneity assumption. Again, as the Sig. value was less than 0.05 (Sig. = 0.005), this homogeneity assumption was violated. Table 8 also indicates that the mean difference between the two groups of experimental and control is so large (23.25) and also at 103.816 degrees of freedom (df = 103.816) the difference between the two groups is statistically significant ( $p = 0.001$ ). Thus, unlike pretest in which there was no significant difference between the groups, in posttest, the experimental group outperformed the control group. Additionally, to examine the magnitude of the difference between the two group, eta squared formula was exploited. The result obtained is 0.384 indicating a large effect size according to Cohen (1988).

### **Addressing the third research question**

As the same subjects in experimental group (N = 100) were pretested and posttest, the researchers performed Paired-Sample T-test (Rezai, 2015).

**Table 9.** Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	pretest_score	26.3500	100	13.53736	1.35374
	posttest_score	48.5000	100	17.70201	1.77020

The above table (Table 9) demonstrates that in the posttest, subjects performed much better as the mean in pretest is 26.35 while it is 47.35 in the posttest (Mean difference = - 21)

**Table 10.** Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
						Lower	Upper		
Pair 1	pretest_score - posttest_score	-22.15000	23.65578	2.36558	-25.69382	-16.30618	-8.877	99	.000

Table 10 also shows us that the intervention has been quite effective ( $p = 0.001$ ).

The difference in the reading comprehension of Iranian EFL learners from time 1 (pretest) to time 2 (posttest) was tested with a paired-samples t-test. The results indicated a statistically significant increase in participants' reading score from pretest (M = 26.35, SD = 13.53) to posttest (M = 48.50, SD = 17.70),  $t(99) = -8.877$ ,  $p < 0.001$  (two-tailed). The eta squared statistic (0.44) demonstrated a large effect size.

## Discussion

Even though a large number of studies have been conducted in the world of reading, no other study, to the best of our knowledge, has investigated the impact read-aloud method can have on learners' reading comprehension other than the Japanese one. Some other studies only explored just one category of this method's exercises e.g. chunking (Nishida, 2013; Anggraeni, 2015), cloze test (Habibian, 2012), repeated reading (Stoddard et al., 1993; Chang, 2012), or concurrent reading and summarization (Marzec-Stawiarska, 2016). Among such kind of studies, only Shinokuka et al. (2014) and Shinozuka et al. (2017) examined these four categories of the method in just one shot.

The current study enjoyed a pretest, posttest design. For measuring change originating from treatments and/or comparing experimental and control groups, pretest, posttest designs can be exploited (Dimitrov & Rumrill, 2003). Apropos the research questions, reading similarities or differences of the groups (experimental and control groups of the study) will be discussed below.

The first research question was formulated to check if the subjects of the study perform similarly in a standard English test or not. The main aim was to check if subjects of the experimental group and the control group are homogenous in terms of their reading comprehension. The obtained results ( $p = .500$ ) pointed to the homogeneity of the groups prior to embarking on the treatment as the alpha value exceeded the significance level. Thus, it is safe to assume that prior to conducting the research, the subjects had the same level of reading ability.

The second research question guiding this study was formulated to examine whether or not statistically significant differences existed in the posttest comprehension scores for both groups. The findings of statistical analyzes showed that the experimental group who had received an intensive two-month instruction statistically significantly outperformed the control group who had received no particular instruction ( $p > .05$ ). This finding is in line and compatible with the works of Shinozuka et al. (2014) and Shinozuka et al. (2017), who arrived at the conclusion that this newly developed method will enhance Japanese learners' reading ability after being exposed to the method for three months. The results also show the effectiveness of chunking exercise which, according to Schreiber (1980), is one of the main aspects of fluent reading. Furthermore, as cited in Shinozuka et al. (2017), Nishida (2013) found out that for promoting reading understating, the learning of text phrasing is highly required. In an Iranian context, Mashhadi and Bagheri (2015 as cited in Shinozuka et al., 2017) demonstrated that cloze test practice promoted Iranian EFL learners' grammatical accuracy who were at the intermediate level and language proficiency. Also as quoted in Mashhadi and Bagheri (2015), Sahebkhair and Assadi (2014) claimed that obliging students to complete the models by conjunction and also using model essays in the form of cloze task is considered as a beneficial tool for improving subjects' cohesive devices. Therefore, by including cloze test into the method, participants' awareness of English skills might have promoted (Shinozuka et al., 2017). The findings can also be related to Kadota (1982) who stated that repeated oral reading ameliorated

automatic processing and, as a result, enhances reading comprehension, because this practice obliges the reader to focus on grasping the materials being read (quoted in Shinozuka et al., 2017). Additionally, Kuhn et al., (2016) and National Reading Panel (2000) reported that “just like EFL learners, in the United States, elementary school children could develop word recognition automaticity and acquire the appropriate prosodic features of English” (cited in Shinozuka et al., 2017). The results we obtained also show the effectiveness of concurrent reading and summarization. As opposed to recall in which mental representations of a text might automatically be formed (Winograd, 1984), “concurrent reading and summarization requires deliberate active operations which aim at formation of the gist of a text” (Kintsch & Van Dijk, 1978 cited in Marzec-Stawiarska, 2016). The impact of trainings in summarization on learners’ L1 reading comprehension was analyzed by Rinehart et al. (1986). It was found out that training helped students recall more prominent information existed in the text (Rinehart et al., 1986, quoted in Marzec-Stawiarska, 2016).

The last question was formed to test if there was any interaction between the treatment subjects’ performance in the pretest and posttest. The results of the paired sample t-test indicated that in the mean scores of the pre- and post-test at the .001 level, there was a statistically significant difference. The posttest mean score was significantly higher than the observed scores in the pretest for these same subjects. Results of this finding are in line with those of Shinozuka et al. (2014) and Shinozuka et al. (2017) who demonstrated that participating in read-aloud classes significantly promotes reading skill.

## **Conclusion**

The fundamental objective behind conducting this research was to provide an effective instruction for EFL students at university level using read-aloud method developed by Shinozuka et al. (2014) and Shinozuka et al. (2017). Overall, the findings of this research corroborate the earlier findings by Shinozuka et al. (2014) and Shinozuka et al. (2017) who found that this method promotes Japanese learners’ reading skill. Therefore, the pedagogical implication of the current research is that ESL/EFL teacher who want to have a better instruction in their reading courses can implement the method in their classes because the method can, to a great extent, result in better comprehension ability in the area of reading.

Nonetheless, as a matter of research fact, no research in without flaw(s). There are some limitations in the present study. One of the major limitations of this research is that we did not take the role of proficiency into account. It is still not clear whether learners with different language proficiency level perform similarly through this method or not. Another limitation of this work is that the role of gender was overlooked. Yet, another limitation would relate to the role of motivation. It is yet to be researched in Iranian context whether read-aloud method would motivate students to keep up reading. Finally, the last limitation can be associated with the fact that we did not examine the age of learners. It is still not clear whether the method can be of similar benefits for learners with different age groups or not. To shed more light on the effectiveness of this method on Iranian EFL learners’ reading

skills, future research aiming to take the role of these variables (proficiency, gender, motivation, and age) into consideration is needed.

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## Author Biography

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**Dr. Ali Mohammad Fazilatfar** is an associate professor in Applied Linguistics & TESL at Yazd University. He received his PhD from University of Manchester, UK, in 1998. He has vast teaching experience and has published in many national and international journals. His main areas of interest include Language Teaching Methodology, Language Skills, and Applied Linguistics.



**Hossein Kargar Behbahani** is an M.A. student in TEFL at Yazd University. He has published an article on move analysis and has presented papers in a couple of national conferences up to the present time. He has taught English for almost 2 years. His main areas of interest include Language Skills, Language Teaching Methodology, Second Language Acquisition, and Move Analysis.

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