


## The effect of active learning strategies on developing oral reading skills in low-achieving native-speaker Arabic students




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### ABSTRACT

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Reading constitutes a multifaceted cognitive activity encompassing skills such as recognizing, understanding, and analyzing linguistic symbols. Proficiency in reading holds great importance as it serves as an educational tool and pathway for acquiring knowledge and skills and promotes the development of cognitive, linguistic, and physical abilities and aptitudes. The present study investigated the effect of active learning strategies on the development of Arabic oral reading skills for low-achieving second-grade students in remote areas of Jordan. The study population comprised 170 students, out of which a sample comprising 20 low-achieving second-grade pupils (11 females and nine males), was purposefully selected based on grades (less than 60%) in the Arabic language course. A pre-experimental design involving a one-group pretest-posttest research was used. The study identified 17 oral reading skills that the students needed to master. Over seven weeks, the participants were taught using active learning strategies, including visiting guests, learning by playing, telling the story, and peer education. The results showed statistically significant differences in the students' levels of oral reading skills due to the use of active learning strategies. The study recommends paying greater attention to the basics of teaching Arabic, particularly for students in the first three grades. There is also a need to apply active learning strategies to develop oral reading skills for students' reading proficiency, as weaknesses in these skills can lead to academic failure and negatively impact their lives.

**Contribution/ Originality:** The study examines the impact of active learning techniques on developing oral reading abilities for low-achieving pupils. It aids in a better understanding of how Jordanian instructors can design active learning techniques to improve the oral reading abilities of underachieving pupils who are native speakers of Arabic. Consequently, teachers can leverage the insights gleaned from this study.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is a complex cognitive endeavor involving competencies like identifying, comprehending, and dissecting linguistic symbols. Proficiency in reading is crucial as it acts as an educational instrument and avenue for gaining information and expertise. Competency in reading fosters the growth of cognitive, linguistic, and physical proficiencies and capabilities (Malkawi et al., 2023; Malkawi, Attiyat, Ismael, Ismael, & Rababah, 2023). They

function as a conduit through which individuals can explore diverse cultures, various fields of study, and knowledge, rendering them potent educational aids. Proficiency in reading is imperative for students to engage in studying, exam preparation, and enhancing their academic performance. Proficiency in reading also plays a pivotal role in enhancing students' language capabilities. Moreover, reading skills are significant for students' educational, psychological, and social advancement. Furthermore, reading skills support students in honing their capacities for analytical, critical, and creative thinking (Salah et al., 2022; Wolor, Ardiansyah, Rofaida, Nurkhin, & Rababah, 2022). Students' proficiency in reading is closely connected to their abilities in speaking, performing, and cultivating an appreciation for literature, all of which are vital for experiencing joy and satisfaction in life. Additionally, achieving expertise in reading greatly simplifies students' processes of understanding (Alghazo, Rababah, & Malkawi, 2023; Bower & Morrow, 1990).

Reading can be classified into three modes: vocal reading, silent reading, and silent reading with simultaneous listening. Vocal reading entails the act of reading the text aloud while adhering to proper Arabic grammar rules, pronouncing letters accurately based on their articulation points, ensuring precise pronunciation of words, recognizing the written text along with its correct pronunciation, and comprehending the relationships between words and their meanings (Al-Jezawi, Al-Abdulrazaq, Rababah, & Aldoory, 2023; Mahmoud, Issa, Turki, & Ali, 2022; Melhim et al., 2023). The process of vocal reading involves visually recognizing the text, mentally grasping its significance, and articulating the words. Students' vocal reading proficiency indicates their reading comprehension skills, demonstrating their ability to read, process, and grasp the text (Peets, Yim, & Bialystok, 2022). The reading process commences with word recognition, which encompasses attending to the written text and establishing connections between words and their meanings. Once words are recognized, students should ensure accurate pronunciation.

One of the primary objectives of primary education is to teach students to read sentences and words accurately. Mastering reading in Arabic requires students to understand the meanings of the text, identify different forms of written alphabetic letters, recognize letters when pronounced, pronounce written text correctly according to articulation rules, form new words and sentences, and recognize diacritics (Arabic short vowel marks). Students' oral reading skills aid in the development of their speaking, listening, writing, and reflective abilities. Furthermore, students' oral reading skills are accompanied by improvements in reading habits, such as holding books correctly, maintaining a proper sitting position (Rababah, Harun, & Shapii, 2019; Xia et al., 2023), borrowing books, engaging in communication and cooperation with peers (Yi et al., 2019). Several difficulties may arise for students when practicing oral reading, including a lack of interest in reading, dyslexia, slow and effortful reading, and difficulties with text tracking. Text-tracking difficulties encompass losing one's place on the page, using fingers to track words, and rereading words and sentences multiple times.

Enhancing students' reading skills has recently gained increased attention in schools (Kuhn, Schwanenflugel, & Meisinger, 2010). Allowing students to read aloud helps teachers effectively support and correct their students' reading competencies (Chall, 1989; Rababah, Al Zoubi, Al Masri, & Al-Abdulrazaq, 2021; Salah et al., 2021). Additionally, practicing reading aloud enables students to self-monitor their progress in mastering reading skills, enhance their phonemic expression (Xia et al., 2023), and improve their listening skills. Despite educators' interest in enhancing students' oral reading skills, students in primary education face several difficulties in learning to read. In Arabic, students encounter variations in written words in terms of their meanings and pronunciations. For example, many Arabic words are spelt the same but have different meanings and pronunciations depending on the diacritics used. Moreover, some Arabic letters appear similar but are distinguished by the placement and number of dots. For instance, there are letters with dots placed over the letter, under the letter, or not placed at all, such as the Arabic letters equivalent to the English letters "r," "z," "s," and "sh". The most common errors in students' reading involve deleting, substituting, and adding letters.

Research suggests that students who do not master the basics of oral reading skills in the first three grades are likely to struggle in the Arabic language and other subjects. Students' oral reading fluency strongly predicts reading comprehension (Pearce & Gayle, 2009). Therefore, many early elementary school students undergo oral reading assessments to identify and address their reading difficulties (Kim, Wagner, & Foster, 2011). As a result, educators have attempted to help students overcome reading difficulties, particularly in the primary stage. Educators recommend several programs, strategies, and teaching aids to develop reading skills for primary-stage students. These strategies and teaching aids are based on active education (Abd Al-Mu'min, 2020), such as using educational pictures, puppet theater, educational computers (Al-Ja'afari, 2018), simulation, and discussion (Hendrickson, 2021).

Active learning is one of the fundamental approaches to instruction that can be employed to develop native speaker learners' reading skills. In Arabic, Active learning strategies are based on constructivism, a theory in education that emphasizes the teacher's role as a learning process facilitator (Wolff, Wagner, Poznanski, Schiller, & Santen, 2015). According to constructivism, students actively engage in the learning process, take responsibility for their learning, and derive enjoyment from the educational process. Kovarik, Robinson, and Wenzel (2022) found that traditional teaching methods fail to involve students in their education meaningfully.

Active learning encompasses a set of teaching strategies that engage students in learning through various classroom activities. These strategies encourage student interaction with each other and the teachers through group learning and questioning strategies instead of treating students as passive recipients of information from teachers (Wolff et al., 2015). Numerous active learning strategies enable students to participate in the learning process actively. Examples of these strategies include discussion (Coulter & Onufer, 2022), online learning activities (Yu & Prince, 2022), flipped classrooms (Cheng, Ritzhaupt, & Antonenko, 2019), simulation (Mukherjee & Barker, 2021), cooperative education (Major, 2020), hands-on learning activities, problem-based learning activities (Kopecki-Fjetland & Steffenson, 2021), peer education (Mora, 2010), and collaborative learning (Major, 2020). Utilizing active learning strategies facilitates the creation of an appropriate learning environment and increases Arabic native speakers' motivation to learn Arabic (Sasikumar, 2014).

Language educators focus on using activities and strategies based on active learning in teaching reading and reading aloud skills. Examples of active teaching strategies for instructing vocal reading encompass conducting interviews, engaging in brief conversations, fostering communication with peers, incorporating educational drama, cultivating an interactive classroom atmosphere (Gholami, Moghaddam, & Attaran, 2014), implementing cooperative teaching approaches (Richards), and employing flipped classroom techniques (Cheng et al., 2019). Additionally, Kapp (2012) proposes the use of games as a pedagogical tactic.

Employing active learning strategies within the educational context offers several advantages. These include fostering students' self-reliance in the learning process, enhancing their learning capabilities, creating an enjoyable learning environment, boosting their self-efficacy (Hendrickson, 2021), improving their academic performance (Sasikumar, 2014), and establishing a physical and emotional setting conducive to increased student engagement in the learning process. Research indicates that active learning is an effective and efficient approach for teaching the Arabic language in general (Asmawati & Malkan, 2020), especially regarding vocal reading skills.

### *1.1. Problem Statement*

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced Jordanian schools to close completely for nearly a full year. During this crisis, both public and private educational institutions swiftly transitioned to remote learning. Despite the advantages of remote learning, this abrupt shift caused significant disruptions in the educational systems. Furthermore, the move from traditional in-person learning to remote education resulted in a temporary halt to the educational process, with students ceasing to attend school for a long period. Previous research has indicated that the adoption of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic had adverse effects on school students, as reported

by some educators. Many students, for example, encountered frustration due to difficulties in accessing digital educational platforms (Dhawan, 2020). Furthermore, many students faced technical difficulties in using computers in the distance learning process, triggering feelings of panic and anxiety (Rasmitadila et al., 2020). Teachers, students, and parents reported the high costs of computers and smartphones needed for distance learning (Ajmal, Arshad, & Hussain, 2019; Purniadi, 2020). Additionally, students in remote and poor areas faced several difficulties with distance learning, including poor access to high-quality internet connectivity, technical difficulties, high prices of necessary equipment, and poorly designed online educational content (Aljaraideh & Al Bataineh, 2019).

Distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a lack of face-to-face interaction among students, weakening their social relations. The drawbacks above of distance learning have also affected the oral reading skills of second-grade students and prior to the reliance on distance learning, theoretical literature and previous studies indicated that students in the primary stage, particularly second graders, may have weaknesses in recognizing, reading, analyzing, and synthesizing words. Additionally, these students may struggle with reading fluency. Furthermore, second-grade students might face difficulties in mastering oral reading skills (Essa, Al-Tawalbeh, Al-Gayam, Bani-Khair, & Rababah, 2023).

The authors of the current study have observed, during their internships of supervising teachers at primary schools, that many students in the first three grades had low scores in the Arabic language class. Therefore, urgent and appropriate educational support is required for these students at this critical educational stage. Students' poor proficiency in Arabic may lead to learning difficulties in later stages and negatively impact their academic and practical lives. The authors argue that teachers can support weak and slow learners by using interesting educational strategies that young students prefer. Accordingly, the present study aimed to examine the effect of active learning in developing oral reading skills for low-achieving second-grade students. The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How effective are active learning strategies in developing the oral reading skills of second-grade students in remote areas?
2. Are there statistically significant differences at ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ) between the mean scores of oral reading skills pre-and post-tests for second-grade students in remote areas due to active learning strategies?

### *1.2. Significance of the Study*

The theoretical importance of this study becomes apparent in its emphasis on the efficacy of active learning techniques for enhancing the oral reading abilities of second-grade students in Arabic language courses. The practical significance lies in offering recommendations, grounded in the study's findings, to both the curriculum department within the Ministry of Higher Education and Arabic language educators. This research can serve as a guide to design and identify oral reading proficiencies expected of second-grade students and the appropriate active learning approaches for fostering these skills.

### *1.3. Study Limitations*

The generalization of the study's findings was limited due to the extent to which the study sample represented the study population, which consisted of students in the second grade from primary schools in Al-Hussainiya District in Jordan for the academic year 2021-2022 and whose scores in the Arabic language were less than 60%. Additionally, other factors related to the validity and reliability of the study tools limited the generalization of this study's findings. The study tools used were a rubric to measure only the students' oral reading skills and active learning strategies. The active learning strategies employed in the current study were also limited to visiting guests, learning by playing, telling the story, and peer education. Furthermore, the generalization of the study's findings relied on all the test items being answered objectively and accurately. This study identified only 17 oral

reading skills (see Table 1), so there might be a challenge to generalize the study's findings to populations similar to the study population.

#### 1.4. Definition of Terms

*Active learning:* It refers to a set of structured active learning strategies used to teach oral reading skills, such as visiting guests, learning by playing, telling the story, and peer education. These active learning strategies, designed and developed by researchers, were implemented in the second-grade Arabic language class. Active learning strategies involve a mixture of individual and collaborative tasks. The teachers were responsible for supervising the implementation of active learning strategies, focusing on activating the roles of the students and making them the center of the educational process. The experiment lasted seven weeks, from December 21, 2022, to February 10, 2022.

Arabic oral reading skills refer to students' ability to read aloud with appropriate speed, accuracy, and mastery. They consist of 17 skills, such as reading diacritic letters aloud, reading diacritic words aloud, reading diacritic sentences aloud, reading the paragraph aloud with proper expression and speed, and pronouncing short vowel marks and long vowels. Students' levels of oral reading skills are measured by their scores obtained on a rubric designed to measure students' oral reading skills, which represents the study tool.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies have shown that active learning strategies effectively develop students' reading skills. For instance, Hadawiyah (2021) examined the effectiveness of using reading skill materials based on active learning in language games. The study sample consisted of 20 students from the seventh grade at the Islamic Junior High. The researcher used observation, interviews, questionnaires, and tests as data collection tools. The results showed that using reading skill materials based on active learning in language games effectively stimulated students' learning activities in acquiring reading skills. Abd-Aljawad (2021) studied the effect of the use of educational games on developing the skill of reading aloud. The study sample consisted of 60 students in the second basic grade purposefully selected. The researcher employed a quasi-experimental research design in which the data collection tools were a notecard and a reading text that students were asked to read aloud. The results showed a positive effect of the educational games in developing students' reading aloud and each reading skill was in favor of the experimental group.

Abd Al-Mu'min (2020) evaluated the impact of implementing the 'Formulate-Share-Listen-Create' strategy on enhancing listening comprehension skills in primary-level students. The study sample comprised 60 male and female students enrolled in the fifth grade in Assuit Governorate, Egypt. The research tools utilized in this study included a compilation of exercises to improve listening comprehension, a student activity guide, an instructional manual for the 'Formulate-Share-Listen-Create' method, and an assessment of listening comprehension proficiency. The results demonstrated the effective enhancement of listening comprehension skills in the experimental group by utilising the "Formulate-Share-Listen-Create" strategy.

Al-Ja'afari (2018) investigated the effectiveness of employing modeling as a teaching approach to develop reading skills among school students. The study involved 73 students in the sixth grade attending primary schools in Saudi Arabia. The students were divided into two groups: a control group, where traditional teaching methods were used, and an experimental group, where the modeling strategy was employed. Reading skills were assessed using notecards as data collection tools. The findings revealed statistically significant disparities in students' performance in the two groups, with the experimental group outperforming the control group.

Conversely, Al-Khawaldeh and Obeidat (2019) examined the impact of the buddy reading strategy on the development of oral reading fluency in third-grade students. Buddy reading is a teaching method in which pupils are paired off to read aloud to one another. This method is frequently applied in educational settings, especially in

primary schools, to foster collaborative learning and the development of reading skills. The main concept is to link a less proficient or struggling reader (the "buddy") with a more proficient or advanced reader. As they read a material together, the more experienced reader offers the companion assistance, direction, and encouragement (Roth, 2015). The study comprised 48 male and female students selected from 10 public schools in Jordan. The participants were evenly distributed into two groups: the control group received conventional instruction, while the experimental group was exposed to the buddy reading strategy. The study's findings demonstrated statistically significant differences in students' oral reading fluency, favoring those in the experimental group taught using the buddy reading strategy.

Al-Najar (2018) explored the effects of employing a phonological awareness strategy to enhance oral reading skills and reading comprehension in 142 third-grade students attending public schools in the Hebron District. The study was conducted within a language class titled "Our Beautiful Language." The experimental research design encompassed the administration of two tests: one assessing oral reading skills and the other measuring reading comprehension skills. The outcomes revealed statistically significant disparities between the mean scores of students in the experimental group and those in the control group, with the experimental group exhibiting superior performance. However, no statistically significant differences based on gender were observed.

To assess the influence of guided oral reading interventions on the reading skills of struggling readers, Oostdam, Blok, and Boendermaker (2015) studied eight primary schools in the Netherlands. The study sample included 143 students randomly selected from grades 2 to 4 who were facing reading difficulties. Employing an experimental research design, the researchers found that guided oral reading interventions effectively enhanced the students' reading fluency.

Mohammed (2011) examined 80 fifth-grade students from a public elementary school in Egypt. The primary objective of this study was to assess the impact of employing active learning strategies for teaching vocabulary to enhance fifth-grade students' English speaking and writing abilities. The participants were segregated into two distinct groups: an experimental group and a control group. The findings of the study revealed that using active learning strategies significantly enhanced the students' English speaking and writing skills. Richards (2011) investigated the impact of co-teaching on students with reading disabilities in Minnesota, United States. The study encompassed 29 students from primary schools, including seven with disabilities, and co-teaching strategies were employed over six weeks. The results underscored the effectiveness of these strategies for the experimental group.

These earlier studies serve as examples of active learning strategies employed to enhance students' reading skills, including the buddy reading approach (Al-Khawaldeh & Obeidat, 2019) and the modeling strategy (Al-Ja'afari, 2018). Furthermore, the findings of these previous studies have provided valuable insights that inform the present study in various ways. For instance, the study conducted by Oostdam et al. (2015) emphasized the importance of utilizing guided oral reading interventions to enhance the reading skills of struggling readers.

Additionally, Al-Najar's study informed the current study in determining the oral reading skills that were targeted to be developed. However, the current study differs from the previous research studies in terms of focusing on low-achieving students in a remote area in Jordan during the COVID-19 pandemic and the employment of distance learning. The students in this remote area lacked the electronic infrastructure and digital tools to participate in distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students' reading skills were negatively affected due to the switch to distance learning for about a year and a half. These students suffer from reading illiteracy, which warns of an inevitable weakness in the Arabic language in particular and other academic subjects in general. Furthermore, poor readers would suffer from negative psychological, social, and educational consequences due to their weakness in reading, particularly oral reading skills.

Moreover, the present study differs from previous studies examining the effect of various active learning strategies on students' oral reading skills. Such active learning strategies would fit second-grade students' educational tendencies and interests. The current study provided a set of educational strategies that would be useful

to teach reading oral skills for Arabic native-speaker students. Additionally, the current study employed various active learning strategies that have practical importance in allowing Arabic language teachers to select the appropriate strategy that fits their students' tendencies and abilities instead of being limited to one that might not be ideal for some students.

Several important findings may be drawn from thoroughly examining earlier research on active learning techniques and how they affect students' reading abilities. The research under consideration presents a wide range of active learning techniques and how they affect reading abilities. These tactics include buddy reading, modelling, co-teaching, educational games, and guided oral reading interventions. This variety emphasises how adaptable and versatile active learning strategies are regarding literacy growth. These studies are carried out in many settings, including Jordan, Egypt, the Netherlands, and the United States. The diversity of geographical regions emphasises how active learning methodologies may be applied globally and tailored to various educational environments.

The study designs used in the studies range from quasi-experimental to experimental to observational. This methodological variety broadens our understanding of the effectiveness of active learning strategies. The research samples' demographic makeup varies, including pupils with various grade levels, linguistic origins, and cognitive capacities. This variety enables a detailed knowledge of how different student demographics are affected by active learning methodologies. The effectiveness of active learning techniques is evaluated in the research using a variety of outcome measures. Standardized examinations, observations, interviews, surveys, and evaluations of academic performance are some of these indicators. A full examination of the development of reading skills is made possible by the varied assessment instruments. Positive outcomes linked to adopting active learning methodologies are a common theme throughout research. Reading aloud, oral reading fluency, listening comprehension, speaking, and writing abilities are just a few of the reading-related skills these techniques have been demonstrated to improve. The beneficial effect is shown across a range of circumstances and age groups. The studies highlight the practical applicability of active learning techniques in academic contexts. For educators and decision-makers looking for practical ways to enhance kids' reading abilities and overall literacy development, they provide insightful information. The results of these earlier studies have influenced the current study in several ways, most notably in showing the effectiveness of active learning techniques in improving reading abilities. They also emphasise the value of developing techniques specifically for various age groups and learning environments.

The current study differentiates itself by concentrating on underachieving pupils in a distant location during the COVID-19 epidemic, which provides a unique and difficult educational situation. The essential issue of reading illiteracy and its possible effects on academic and psychological well-being are discussed in the study. The emphasis on offering a variety of active learning tactics in the current study is in line with the practical requirements of Arabic language teachers, enabling them to choose strategies that best suit the skills and interests of their students. The results of the earlier research support the efficacy of active learning techniques in enhancing several aspects of reading abilities. They provide an important basis for the current study, which advances previous work by addressing the difficulties brought on by the COVID-19 epidemic and the special requirements of low-achieving kids in a distant location. The current study's use of several active learning techniques has applications for Arabic language teachers and adds to the continuing conversation on literacy development.

### **3. METHODS**

The current study employed a one-group pretest-posttest quasi-experimental study design to explore the effect of active learning on developing reading-aloud skills for low-achieving second-grade students of their native language, the Arabic language. The selected study design fits the nature and purpose of the study in the context of developing reading skills in L1.

### 3.1. Population and Sample of the Study

The population for this study consisted of all low-achieving second-grade students in an Arabic language class at Fatima Al-Zahra Mixed School in Al-Hussainiya District, Jordan, during the academic year 2021-2022. The total population comprised 170 male and female students, out of which 20 students were purposefully selected as the sample based on their grades (less than 60%) in the Arabic language course. The participants were selected with the approval and willingness of their parents to participate in the study. All students had completed the reading tasks and received grades based on the rubric. The student's scores on the rubrics were used in the statistical analysis. All the participants received instruction to improve their oral reading skills using active learning strategies in the "Our Beautiful Language" class.

### 3.2. Study Tools

Two tools were used to evaluate the students' reading skills:

#### 3.2.1. Rubric for Assessing Students' Levels of Oral Reading Skills

To examine the impact of active learning strategies on improving oral reading skills for low-achieving second-grade students, the researchers reviewed the related theoretical literature and units in the second-grade textbook that focused on oral reading skills. The study used a rubric consisting of 17 items developed by Al-Najar (2018) to assess students' levels of oral reading skills before and after using active learning strategies (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Rubric for assessing students' levels of oral reading skills.

| No. | Performance criteria   | High   | Medium  | Low   | Very low (1 point)   |
|-----|--|--|---|---|--|
| 1   | Reading diacritic letters aloud  | (4 points)   | (3 points)  | (2 points)  | Reading all the diacritic letters aloud with four or more errors           |
| 2   | Reading a syllable aloud   | Reading all the diacritic letters aloud without errors                     | Reading all the diacritic letters aloud with one or two errors            | Reading all the diacritic letters aloud with three errors                 | Reading all the syllables aloud with three errors                          |
| 3   | Reading diacritic words aloud  | Reading all the syllables aloud without errors                             | Reading all the syllables aloud with one error                            | Reading all the syllables aloud with two errors                           | Reading all the diacritic words aloud with three or more errors            |
| 4   | Reading diacritic sentences aloud  | Reading all the diacritic words aloud without errors                       | Reading all the diacritic words aloud with one error                      | Reading all the diacritic words aloud with two errors                     | Reading all the diacritic sentences aloud with three or more errors        |
| 5   | Reading a paragraph aloud with proper expression   | Reading all the diacritic sentences aloud without errors                   | Reading all the diacritic sentences aloud with one error                  | Reading all the diacritic sentences aloud with two errors                 | Reading a paragraph aloud with proper expression with 64% or less accuracy |
| 6   | Pronouncing "al" with sun and moon letters   | Reading a paragraph aloud with proper expression with 90% to 100% accuracy | Reading a paragraph aloud with proper expression with 75% to 89% accuracy | Reading a paragraph aloud with proper expression with 65% to 74% accuracy | More than five errors  |
| 7   | Distinguish between the different forms of nunation (Fath, Kasr, and Dhamm).   | Two or fewer errors.   | Three to four errors  | Four to five errors   | More than five errors  |
| 8   | Distinguish between the different forms of "ta" and "ya," i.e., tied "taa", open "taa", and "ya" at the end of the word. | Two or fewer errors.   | Three to four errors  | Four to five errors   | More than five errors  |
| 9   | Reading with proper expression based on the  | Two or fewer errors.   | Three to four errors  | Four to five errors   | Reading with proper expression based on                                    |



| No. | Performance criteria  | High  | Medium   | Low  | Very low (1 point)   |
|-----|---|---|--|--|--|
|     | meaning of the text   |   |  |  | the meaning of the text with 69% or less accuracy                  |
| 10  | Paying attention to punctuation while reading.  | Reading with proper expression based on the meaning of the text with 90% to 100% accuracy | Reading with proper expression based on the meaning of the text with 80% to 89% accuracy | Reading with proper expression based on the meaning of the text with 70% to 79% accuracy | 10 Four or more errors   |
| 11  | Pronouncing conjunctive and disjunctive Hamza   | One error   | Two errors   | Three errors   | Four or more errors  |
| 12  | Reading text aloud with proper speed  | One error   | Two errors   | Three errors   | Reading text aloud with the proper speed with 69% or less accuracy |
| 13  | Following correct reading habits (way of holding books, sitting in the correct position, borrowing the book, communicating with colleagues) | Reading text aloud with the proper speed with 90% to 100% accuracy                        | Reading text aloud with the proper speed with 80% to 89% accuracy                        | Reading text aloud with the proper speed with 70% to 79% accuracy                        | Four or more errors in reading habits                              |
| 14  | Visually analyzing words to identify their parts  | One error in reading habits   | Two errors in reading habits   | Three errors in reading habits   | Four or more errors  |
| 15  | Pronouncing short vowel marks and long vowels   | One error   | Two errors   | Three errors   | Five or more errors  |
| 16  | Reading out loud clearly  | One error   | Two or three errors  | Three or four errors   | Reading out loud clearly with 69% or less accuracy                 |
| 17  | Pronouncing text without deleting, substituting, or adding letter/s.  | Reading out loud clearly with 90% to 100% accuracy  | Reading out loud clearly with 80% to 89% accuracy  | Reading out loud clearly with 70% to 79% accuracy  | Five or more errors  |

### 3.2.1.1. Rubric Grading

The students were required to read a specific text aloud to evaluate their oral reading skills. One of the researchers and a teacher were responsible for completing the rubric by assigning a score to each student for each of the 17 skills used to assess their level of oral reading skills. The researcher who participated in completing the rubric in the current study was a female teacher working with a non-governmental organization in Jordan called "Mercy Corps." This organization aimed to assist students with various learning difficulties in poor and remote areas. Another teacher who participated in completing the rubric held a bachelor's degree in special education and had five years of experience in primary and special education. Using the rubric, the two reviewers worked together to assign grades to each student based on their oral reading performance. The rubric had a maximum possible score of 68 and a minimum score of 17 (see Table 1).

### 3.2.1.2. Content Validity of the Rubric

To ensure the content validity of the rubric, the initial version was reviewed by a panel of expert faculty members from Jordanian universities. The panel members were asked to rate the relevance of each question to the rubric's objective and to review the language and content of the rubric for clarity, appropriateness, and item formation. The comments and feedback from the panel members were taken into consideration.

### 3.2.1.3. Construct Validity of the Rubric

To assess the construct validity of the rubric, a pilot study was conducted with 20 students who were not part of the main study. Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated for each item in the rubric and the total score of the rubric to ensure its internal consistency (Table 2).

Table 2 displays the correlation coefficients calculated for each item in the rubric and the total rubric score. The correlation coefficients varied across the rubric items, ranging from 0.525 to 0.807. However, all the coefficients showed statistically significant relationships at ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ) between each rubric item score and the total rubric score. These results confirm the internal consistency of the rubric items.

**Table 2.** Pearson's correlation coefficients for each rubric item with the total score.

| Question | Correlation coefficient value | Significance level | Question | Correlation coefficient value | Significance |
|----------|-------------------------------|--------------------|----------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| 1        | **0.636                       | 0.0                | 10       | **0.636                       | 0.0          |
| 2        | **0.739                       | 0.0                | 11       | **0.807                       | 0.0          |
| 3        | **0.781                       | 0.0                | 12       | **0.698                       | 0.0          |
| 4        | **0.718                       | 0.0                | 13       | **0.770                       | 0.0          |
| 5        | **0.589                       | 0.0                | 14       | **0.525                       | 0.0          |
| 6        | **0.652                       | 0.0                | 15       | **0.636                       | 0.0          |
| 7        | **0.667                       | 0.0                | 16       | **0.774                       | 0.0          |
| 8        | **0.698                       | 0.0                | 17       | **0.636                       | 0.0          |
| 9        | **0.756                       | 0.0                |          |                               |              |

Note: \*\*statistically significant.

### 3.2.1.4. Reliability of the Rubric

To assess the reliability of the study tool, internal consistency coefficients were calculated using Cronbach's alpha equation for the rubric items. The pilot study, which included 20 students, calculated Cronbach's alpha coefficients. The calculated value of Cronbach's alpha was 0.832, indicating the high reliability of the rubric for the study. Furthermore, to ensure the accuracy of assessing students' oral reading performance using the rubric, the completed rubrics were divided into four classes based on students' grades: high, medium, low, and very low. One completed rubric was randomly selected from each group, and an external reviewer reviewed these four completed rubrics to ensure the accuracy of the grading process. The level of accuracy achieved was 95%, which is considered acceptable for the study's purposes.

### 3.2.2. Active Learning Strategies to Enhance Students' Oral Reading Skills

Based on a review of educational literature (Oostdam et al., 2015) and previous studies (Al-Najar, 2018; Asmawati & Malkan, 2020) relevant educational content and active learning strategies were selected for the current study. To ensure the validity of the proposed educational materials, the content and teaching methods were reviewed by the same panel of experts who reviewed the rubric used in the study.

### 3.3. The Procedure for Implementing Active Learning Strategies

1. Determining the general objective: The current study aimed to develop the oral reading skills of second-grade students at through active learning strategies.
2. Selecting educational content and identifying active learning strategies to achieve the study's objectives.
3. Preparing a list of essential oral reading skills that the students in the study sample struggled with. These skills had a negative impact on the participants' grades at the end of the first semester. A total of 17 oral reading skills were selected. After determining the skills, the researchers chose the necessary tools and strategies to facilitate active learning, as outlined in Table 3.
4. Obtaining the necessary permissions from the school administrators and the participants' parents to conduct the current study.
5. Determining the timeline for conducting the study: The study spanned seven weeks, starting on 2-10-2022 and ending on 21-12-2022.

6. Implementing active learning strategies to teach each skill from the selected oral reading skills. The educational intervention consisted of 30 training sessions, as presented in Table 3.
7. Conducting the pre- and post-test. The test involved asking each student to read aloud a specific text based on the researchers' instructions. One of the researchers and a teacher were responsible for completing the rubric by assigning a score to each student for each skill among the 17 skills used to assess their oral reading abilities.

**Table 3.** The educational content: Oral reading skills, tools used in the training session, and strategies employed in the training session.

| Number of training sessions | Aim of the training session  | Tools used in the training session   | Strategies used in the training session  |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|
| 1                           | Acquainting and informing the students about the objectives of the study.  |  |  |
| 2                           | Pronouncing diacritic text without deleting, substituting, or adding a letter or letters   | Blackboard<br>worksheets<br>cubes<br>drawings<br>school book<br>smartphone<br>stories<br>cards<br>notebook | Visiting guest                           |
| 3-5                         | Pronouncing "al" with sun and moon letters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distinguish between the different forms of "ta" and "ya," i.e., tied "taa", open "taa", and "ya" at the end of the word.</li> </ul>  |  | Learning by playing<br>Telling the story |
| 6-7                         | Distinguishing between the different forms of nunation (Fath, Kasr, and Dhamm).  |  | Peer education<br>Visiting guest         |
| 8-9                         | Pronouncing conjunctive and disjunctive Hamza  |  | Learning by playing<br>Telling the story |
| 10-16                       | Pronouncing short vowel marks and long vowels<br>Reading diacritic words aloud <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paying attention to punctuation while reading</li> </ul>   |  |  |
| 17                          | Reading diacritic sentences aloud.   |  |  |
| 18-20                       | Visually analyzing words to identify their parts.  |  |  |
| 21-24                       | Reading syllables aloud  |  |  |
| 25-30                       | Reading a paragraph aloud with proper expression.  |  | Peer education                           |
| 1-30                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visually analyzing words to identify their parts</li> <li>• Reading text aloud with proper speed</li> <li>• Reading out loud clearly</li> </ul> Following correct reading habits, such as holding books, sitting in the correct position, borrowing the book, communicating with colleagues, and cooperating with others. |  |  |

### 3.4. Study Design

The chosen research design was pre-experimental, specifically utilizing a one-group pretest-posttest design, as illustrated in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Pre-experimental design.

| Group | Pre-test | Independent variable | Post-test |
|-------|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| EG    | O1       | X                    | O2        |

The symbols in Table 4 correspond to the study design elements as follows:

- EG: Experimental group.
- O1: Pre-test (students' scores in the rubric before the implementation of active learning strategies).
- O2: Post-test (students' scores in the rubric after the implementation of active learning strategies).
- X: Independent variable (use of active learning strategies), while the dependent variable was the students' level of oral reading skills.

### 3.5. Data Analysis

To tackle the initial research question, the mean and standard deviation of students' rubric scores were utilized to portray their oral reading skill levels prior to the implementation of active learning strategies. In addressing the second research question, the mean and standard deviation of students' rubric scores were employed to illustrate

changes in their oral reading skills before and after the incorporation of active learning strategies. Additionally, a paired sample t-test was conducted to scrutinize discrepancies in students' oral reading skill levels before and after the utilization of active learning strategies. To evaluate the reliability of the rubric instrument, Pearson's correlation coefficients were computed by examining the association between each rubric item and the overall rubric score based on students' responses in the pilot study. Cronbach's alpha formula was employed to confirm the reliability of the research tool by calculating internal consistency coefficients for the rubric items.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Oral Reading Skill Levels of Second-Grade Students

In response to the initial research question, which inquired about the oral reading skill levels of second-grade students before the introduction of active learning strategies, the means, standard deviations, rankings, and proficiency levels of participants' oral reading skills were computed and presented before the implementation of active learning strategies, as depicted in Table 5.

**Table 5.** The means, standard deviations, ranks, and levels of participants' oral reading skills before the application of active learning strategies.

| Number | Planning competencies   | M    | SD   | Rank | Level |
|--------|---|------|------|------|-------|
| 17     | Pronouncing text without deleting, substituting, or adding letters  | 3.80 | 0.52 | 1    | High  |
| 1      | Reading diacritic letters aloud   | 1.90 | 0.55 | 2    | Low   |
| 2      | Reading a syllable aloud  | 1.90 | 0.55 | 2    | Low   |
| 13     | Following correct reading habits, such as the way of holding books, sitting in the correct position, borrowing the book, communicating with colleagues, and cooperating with others | 1.90 | 1.07 | 3    | Low   |
| 14     | Visually analysing words to identify their parts  | 1.80 | 0.89 | 5    | Low   |
| 16     | Reading out loud clearly  | 1.55 | 0.69 | 6    | Low   |
| 15     | Pronouncing short vowel marks and long vowels   | 1.40 | 0.50 | 7    | Low   |
| 7      | Distinguish between the different forms of nunation (Fath, Kasr, and Dhamm).  | 1.35 | 0.49 | 8    | Low   |
| 6      | Pronouncing "al" with sun and moon letters  | 1.25 | 0.44 | 9    | Low   |
| 3      | Reading diacritic words aloud   | 1.20 | 0.41 | 10   | Low   |
| 11     | Pronouncing conjunctive and disjunctive Hamza   | 1.20 | 0.41 | 10   | Low   |
| 12     | Reading text aloud with proper speed  | 1.20 | 0.41 | 10   | Low   |
| 4      | Reading diacritic sentences aloud   | 1.15 | 0.37 | 11   | Low   |
| 5      | Reading a paragraph aloud with proper expression  | 1.15 | 0.37 | 11   | Low   |
| 8      | Distinguishing between the different forms of "ta" and "ya," i.e., tied "taa", open "taa", and "ya" at the end of the word.   | 1.15 | 0.37 | 11   | Low   |
| 9      | Reading with proper expression based on the meaning of the text   | 1.11 | 0.31 | 12   | Low   |
| 10     | Paying attention to punctuation while reading.  | 1.10 | 0.31 | 13   | Low   |
|        | Overall mean  | 1.54 | 0.34 |      | Low   |

Table 5 illustrates that the students' levels of oral reading skills prior to the implementation of active learning strategies ranged between  $M = 1.10$  and  $M = 3.80$ . Overall, the students had a low level of oral reading skills, with a mean of 1.54 and a standard deviation of 0.34. Item number 17, "pronouncing text without deleting, substituting, or adding letters," received the highest score ( $M = 3.8$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ), indicating a high level of proficiency. On the other hand, item number 1, "reading diacritic letters aloud," received a low score ( $M = 1.9$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ). The lowest-scoring item was number 10, "paying attention to punctuation while reading," with a low score ( $M = 1.1$ ,  $SD = 0.31$ ). The high score in item 17 suggests that the participants did not have learning disabilities but rather struggled with oral reading skills due to the educational challenges associated with the transition to distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As seen in Table 5, the lowest scores in basic oral reading skills which were ranked 11 are "reading diacritic words aloud," "reading paragraphs aloud with proper expressions," "Distinguishing between the different forms of "ta" and "ya," i.e., tied "taa", open "taa", and "ya" at the end of the word.," and "Reading with proper expression based on the meaning of the text" can be attributed to the mode of education during their first-grade studies, which relied on distance learning during the pandemic. Based on the researchers' observations and communication with

the participants' parents, these students faced technical and financial difficulties accessing educational technologies. Many did not have computers or smartphones, and internet coverage was poor in their areas. Additionally, the participants lacked training in using electronic educational platforms, leading to frustration, anxiety, and concerns when dealing with such platforms (Rasmitadila et al., 2020). Furthermore, the design of digital educational content did not consider the characteristics and preferences of learners at this age, who tend to respond better to engaging and visually appealing educational materials (Aljaraideh & Al Bataineh, 2019). These findings align with previous studies highlighting weaknesses in word recognition, reading, analysis, and synthesis skills among primary school students, particularly second graders. Difficulties in mastering oral reading skills among students in the primary stage have also been reported.

#### 4.2. Oral Reading Skills Before and After the Application of Active Learning Strategies

To address the second research question, which states: "Are there statistically significant differences, at a significance at ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ) between the mean scores of oral reading skills before and after the application of active learning strategies for second-grade students in remote areas?", the means, standard deviations, and the results of paired t-tests, examining the differences in participants' levels of oral reading skills before and after the implementation of active learning strategies based on the rubric scores were calculated as illustrated in Table 6.

**Table 6.** The means, standard deviations, and the results of paired t-tests.

| The dependent variable          | Score   | Mean | Standard Deviation | Average difference | Freedom Degree | t-value | Sig  |
|---------------------------------|---|------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|---------|------|
| Levels of oral reading skills 2 | Students' scores in the rubric before the use of active learning strategies | 1.54 | 0.34               | -2.37              | 19             | 29.614  | 0.00 |
|                                 | Students' scores in the rubric after the use of active learning strategies  | 3.91 | 0.19               |                    |                |         |      |

Table 6 demonstrates that there were significant differences ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ) between the means of participants' rubric scores before and after the implementation of active learning strategies, which measured their oral reading skills ( $t(19) = 29.614, p < 0.05$ ). In the post-test, participants scored higher ( $M = 3.91, SD = 0.19$ ) compared to their scores before the use of active learning strategies ( $M = 1.54, SD = 0.34$ ). These results indicate that students' oral reading skills improved by implementing active learning strategies in their education. This finding aligns with previous studies that have demonstrated the usefulness of active learning tactics in teaching the Arabic language (Asmawati & Malkan, 2020).

The findings of this study also align with the principles of constructivism, which emphasize the active role of students in constructing their thinking patterns, focusing on social interaction, and mutual dependence in knowledge development. The significant improvement in students' oral reading skills through active learning strategies can be attributed to the characteristics of learners. Second-grade students benefit from active learning methods such as guest visits, learning through play, storytelling, and peer education. Teaching oral reading using active learning strategies enhances students' enthusiasm, generates suspense, promotes peer interaction, and creates a fun learning environment.

The significant improvement in students' oral reading skills due to active learning strategies can be attributed to various factors. These include proper planning for implementing active learning strategies, selecting appropriate methods for each training session, providing accurate instructions and rules, testing games before using them with students, preparing students mentally for participation, and incorporating active learning activities into classroom time. Furthermore, continuous evaluation of the strategies, valuable suggestions from researchers, and consistent and systematic communication between teachers and parents contribute to the significant variation in students' oral

reading skills. Additionally, students' active roles in the learning process during training sessions enhance their motivation, self-confidence, interest in reading, and social interaction.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research that has demonstrated the effectiveness of active learning strategies in general and in teaching reading skills specifically (Al-Ja'afari, 2018; Al-Khawaldeh & Obeidat, 2019; Hadawiyah, 2021).

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study aimed to examine the impact of active learning strategies on the development of second-grade students' oral reading skills and reading habits, such as book handling, correct posture, borrowing books, communication with peers, and cooperation. The participants were low-achieving second-grade students in Arabic language classes who were taught using active learning strategies, including guest visits, learning through play, storytelling, and peer education.

The study results revealed that the students' initial level in all assessed oral reading skills, except for "pronouncing text without deleting, substituting, or adding letters," was low. However, the results demonstrated that students' oral reading skills improved significantly by implementing active learning strategies in their education. Based on these findings, it is recommended to prioritize teaching basic skills in Arabic language instruction, particularly for students in the first three grades. The application of active learning strategies is essential for developing oral reading skills in primary-stage students. Mastery of oral reading skills is crucial for students' reading proficiency, and weaknesses in these skills can lead to academic failure and negatively impact various aspects of their lives.

The study's conclusions suggest prioritizing the instruction of fundamental skills. The study emphasizes the importance of prioritizing teaching Arabic basics, especially to pupils in the first three grades. The development of pupils' oral reading abilities during these formative years can have a long-lasting favorable effect on their reading ability. Active learning techniques, including guest speakers, play-based learning, storytelling, and peer tutoring, enhance kids' oral reading abilities. Educators can consider including these practices in their lesson plans to improve students' reading ability. For students who do poorly, early intervention is also advised. Recognizing that low-achieving pupils may require more help and intervention to enhance their oral reading abilities, particularly in the second grade. These kids can quickly catch up and improve with early identification and tailored treatments. According to the study, correct posture and book handling should be stressed since they are crucial to paying attention to reading habits. Teachers might include lessons about these practices to encourage good reading habits from a young age. Encourage Communication and Book Borrowing: Encourage pupils to take out books from the library and talk to their friends about their reading. These pursuits can encourage a love of reading and advanced reading practices. Although most oral reading abilities considerably improved, the study found that participants had trouble "pronouncing text without deleting, altering, or adding letters. Additionally, it suggests that educators pay close attention to this facet of oral reading and offer focused teaching and practice. The significance of oral reading abilities to academic performance and different elements of students' lives is highlighted by recognizing the wider impact. Correcting these weaknesses as soon as possible is critical since they might have detrimental effects.

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