Oral Reading Fluency Model:
An Investigation of Reading-aloud Strategies, Assessment
Methods and Factors Affecting Students' Oral Reading Fluency
in Private Schools in the UAE

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نموذج طلاقة القراءة الشفهية:
دراسة استراتيجيات القراءة بصوت عال ، وأساليب التقييم والعوامل التي تؤثر على
طلاقة القراءة الشفهية لدى الطلاب في المدارس الخاصة بدولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة

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by

ZAINAB RASHED ALDHANHANI

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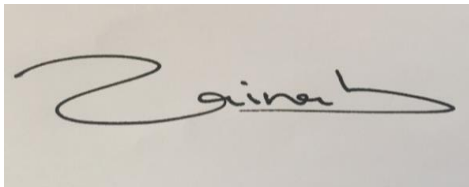**The British University in Dubai**

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Abstract

Oral reading fluency skill is considered to be the bridge to reading comprehension. However, it has been neglected in public schools in the UAE despite the fact that different theories (including behaviorism, information processing model theory, automaticity theory, and Ehri and McCormick's word learning theory) have shed light on this skill. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate this skill in private schools, which focus on teaching and assessing oral reading fluency. This study has four aims: (1) to explore reading-aloud techniques used to build and improve students' oral reading fluency, (2) to investigate assessment techniques used for evaluating students' oral reading fluency, (3) to investigate factors affecting students' oral reading performance, and finally (4) to create a model that presents and illustrates best teaching practices that are used to address students' oral reading fluency skill. According to the consulted literature, few studies have been found on oral reading fluency, in particular, in the UAE context. Therefore, this research addressed the gap in the literature in the UAE and Gulf Countries Council (GCC).

This study adopted a sequential exploratory mixed methods design. The data were collected in two phases. The first phase focused on the qualitative data, which were gleaned from document analysis, classroom observations, and interviews in two private schools in Fujairah city. The second phase focused on the quantitative data. Therefore, a questionnaire was administered to all private schools in five cities. One hundred ninety-three teachers responded to the survey. The results of the first phase showed that there was great emphasis on teaching and assessing oral reading fluency. Various reading-aloud techniques and assessment methods were used to address oral reading fluency. Moreover, various factors were found to affect students' oral reading fluency. Concerning the survey, the results confirmed the data that was obtained in the first phase. Those results were used to build a model to address students' oral reading fluency skill that will be proposed to the MOE in the UAE.

الملخص

مهارة طلاقة القراءة الشفهية تعتبر الجسر الذي يوصل للاستيعاب. لكن القراءة الشفهية تم تجاهلها في مدارس التعليم العام بدولة الإمارات على الرغم من النظريات المختلفة التي قد ألقت الضوء على هذه المهارة كالنظرية السلوكية ونموذج إدخال المعلومات والنظرية التلقائية وكذلك نظرية تعلم الكلمات التي قدمها ايري ومكورميك. ولذلك، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى فحص المهارة في المدارس الخاصة التي تركز على تدريس وتقييم طلاقة القراءة الشفهية. هناك أربعة اهداف لهذه الدراسة: ١ ـ اكتشاف أساليب القراءة الجهرية المستخدمة لتطوير وتحسين مهارة الطلاقة في القراءة الشفهية لدى الطلاب، ٢ ـفحص أساليب التقييم المستخدمة في تقييم أداء الطلاب في طلاقة القراءة الشفهية، ٣ ـ فحص العوامل المؤثرة على أداء الطلاب في طلاقة القراءة الشفهية ٤ ـ وأخيراً تصميم نموذج يوضح أفضل طرائق التدريس المستخدمة في تدريس هذه المهارة. وبناء على الدراسات المقروءة في هذا المجال وعلى وجه الخصوص في السياق في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة فانه وجد القليل من الدراسات في هذا الموضوع. وعليه فهذا البحث يسد الفجوة المعرفية في الإمارات ودول مجلس الخليج.

تبنت هذه الدراسة مزيجاً من مناهج بحثية اكتشافية متتالية. وقد تم جمع البيانات على مرحلتين. المرحلة الاولى ركزت على بيانات نوعية والتي تم جمعها من تحليل المستندات وملاحظات الفصول والمقابلات الشخصية في مدرستين خاصتين في مدينة الفجيرة. المرحلة الثانية ركزت على البيانات الكمية. وعليه فإن الاستبيان قد أعطي للمدارس الخاصة في خمس مدن مختلفة داخل الإمارات العربية المتحدة. مائة وثلاث وتسعون معلماً/معلمة أجابوا المسح الميداني. أظهرت النتائج للمرحلة الاولى تأييدا قويا لتدريس وتقييم طلاقة القراءة الشفهية. وعلاوة على ذلك، العديد من العوامل قد اثرت على طلاقة القراءة الشفهية لدى الطلاب. وقد تم التأكد من النتائج التي تم تحصيلها من خلال المسح الميداني مما ساهم في بناء نموذج يشتمل على طرق التقييم واعطاء التعليمات لكل جلسة لمخاطبة مهارة الطلاقة الشفهية للقراءة لدى الطلاب.

Acknowledgment

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List of Definitions

In this part, the definitions of some key terms are presented to clarify them throughout the paper. These terms are defined based on their importance to the study.

- Fluency: based on the dictionary meaning, fluency is "the quality or condition of being fluent, in particular (Oxford University 1984). It is also defined as the ability to speak or write a particular foreign language easily and accurately and the ability to express oneself easily and articulately" (National Reading Panel 2000). Another definition for fluency is "the ability to read a text accurately, quickly, and with expression" (Armbruster et al. 2009).

- Reading fluency is "the ability to read with accuracy, proper speed, and meaningful expression" (National Reading Panel 2000).

- Oral reading fluency is "the ability to read aloud connected text quickly, accurately, and with expression" (National Reading Panel 2000).

- Reading strategies is a broad term used to "describe the planned and specific actions that help readers translate print to meaning. Strategies that improve decoding and reading comprehension skills benefit every student, but are essential for beginning readers, struggling readers, and English language learners" (Reading horizons 2018).

- Reading-aloud strategies are instructional strategies that involve reading out loud text. They "encourage students' engagement with text" (Morrison & Wlodarczyk 2009).

List of Abbreviations

The acronyms in this part are chosen based on their frequent occurrence in the study. The following lines present them according to their appearance in this research paper.

UAE: United Arab Emirates

UAQ: Umm Al Quwain

RAK: Ras Al Khaimah

MOE: Ministry of Education

ADEC: Abu Dhabi Education Council

GCC: Gulf Counties Council

ORF: Oral Reading Fluency

WCPM: Words-Correct Per-Minute

DIBLES: Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills

CBM: Curriculum-Based Measurement

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Chapter Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the study and why oral reading fluency matters. It also describes the problem and rationale for the study. Research purpose and significance are clearly stated. Finally, the organisation of the chapters of this thesis is provided.

1.2. General Background about Education in the UAE

United Arab Emirates (UAE) is one of the developing countries which is highly concerned about its educational system. Therefore, the UAE tries to cope with the changes around the world through continuous, planned changes in its system. In 2015/2016, the education system of the UAE has been changed massively, and that reform continues to flow until the present moment. In order to achieve Vision 2021, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai announced eight pillars of development in the education system, which are;

- *"to be among the top 20 countries with the highest performance in the Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) test 2*

- *to be among the top 15 countries with the highest performance in Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)*

- *to ensure that all schools (public and private) in the UAE have high-quality teachers;*

- *to ensure that all schools (public and private) have highly effective leadership*

- *to ensure that 90 per cent of students in the ninth grade of public and private schools have a high proficiency in Arabic*

- *to increase the high school graduation rate to 98 per cent*

- *to provide early years education to 95 per cent of children aged between four and five through public and private preschool provisions*

- *to eliminate the need for Emirati students to complete a foundation course to qualify for university entry"* (Ministry of Education 2017).

Therefore, the educational system of the Ministry of Education (MOE) and Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) were unified to standardise teaching and learning efficiently as a result of directives from President Sheikh Khalifa, Ruler of UAE, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid, Vice President and Ruler of Dubai, and Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. The curriculum of the new Emirati School Model is basically built upon developing students' problem solving and critical thinking skills with the integration of information technology and innovation in the teaching and learning processes. The values of teamwork and collaboration among students are highly emphasised. Hence, the new Emirati School Model has been applied to both public and private schools across the country during the 2018-2019 academic year. The purpose of applying the new Emirati School Model is stated by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid:

"The prime goal is to enable all schools across the country to operate within a homogeneous framework to generate graduates as per best international standards and who can meet aspirations and expectations of the UAE people" (Ministry of Education 2017).

The purpose of this reform is to provide innovative education for all age groups in order to meet future labour market demand, which is stated in the Ministry of Education (MOE) vision 2021. The MOE seeks to provide equal educational opportunities for all to create a society that is driven by science,

technology, and innovation (*Ministry of Education 2017*). Significantly, a whole reform is created in the curriculum for all subjects including math, science, biology, chemistry, physics, Arabic, English and history. Moreover, new subjects have been added to the curriculum such as innovation and design. In terms of English teachers, native speakers from various countries have been recruited to teach students in high schools. In the year 2016/2017, more native speakers of English were recruited to teach English in kindergartens and other grades (*Ministry of Education 2017*).

The English subject in all grade levels has been reformed to include new skills that teachers have to focus on and incorporate in testing. For instance, students in public schools are being assessed on their speaking and listening skills in English, which were not part of the assessment in the past. In the past, students had only English written exams, but since 2016 lots of things have changed. However, regarding fluency, it is only being assessed during speaking tests. There is no oral reading fluency assessment in public schools. Accordingly, it is not a focus in the English programme.

In terms of schools, like any country, the UAE has both public and private schools. The public schools are monolingual, government-funded and free of charge for citizens. Basically, the medium of instruction is Arabic. English is being emphasised as a foreign language. The private schools are bilingual, which means that many of them are internationally accredited. However, students need to pay fees for their own learning. Hence. English is the medium of instruction in those schools but the Arabic and Islamic subjects are being taught in Arabic, and they are similar to those taught in the public schools. Further, the curriculum in private schools is varied depending on the school. For instance, some schools follow a British curriculum. Other schools follow American or Indian curriculum.

1.3.   Oral Reading Fluency Matters

Reading is a complex activity that involves different linguistic and cognitive challenges. Interestingly, reading fluency has become a key topic of importance in the ongoing reading instructions debate (Lahmann, Steinkrauss & Schmid 2017; Rasinski 2014; Rasinski 2000; Tracey & Morrow 2012). It is known that the ultimate purpose of reading fluency is to improve reading comprehension. Therefore, developing students' reading fluency is essential. In fact, oral reading fluency is one of the reading components that is defined by the ability to read a text aloud accurately, quickly and with expression (Rasinski 2014; Rasinski & DiSalle 2017). As noted in the literature, oral reading fluency is considered to be a prerequisite for comprehension and reading proficiency (Rasinski & DiSalle 2017; Rasinski 2014; Rasinski 2009). It also helps educators and teachers to ensure having independent readers. Furthermore, oral reading fluency not only promotes academic success but also "facilitates promotion within the workplace" (Osborn 2007). Intriguingly, there is an increase in demand in relation to the twenty-first century workplace. However, there is still a concern over students' reading performance, which remains at the forefront of our education (Osborn 2007; Rasinski & DiSalle 2017; Rasinski 2014).

Usually, fluent readers have the ability to understand the text meaning without decoding word by word. They sound like native speakers of English when they read aloud. They can read quickly while understanding the meaning of the text. Fluent readers read aloud confidently and effortlessly without hesitation (Rasinski 2009). Furthermore, Rasinski and DiSalle (2017) claimed that fluent readers have good reading fluency in which they use different intonation, stress some words and raise their voices when it is needed (Rasinski & DiSalle 2017). Consequently, they speak in a way that makes the audience understand and comprehend. On the other hand, readers, who are struggling with oral reading fluency

are likely to have difficulties in accuracy, automaticity, prosody, comprehension, and even silent reading (Blachowicz, Lems & Rasinski 2012; Rasinski 2014). Interestingly, many studies showed that non-fluent readers take up too much time and consequently a quite significant mental capacity to comprehend the text (Tracey & Morrow 2012). It is also hard for them to recall information. Accordingly, non-fluent readers do not like reading and have a negative attitude toward reading (Lahmann, Steinkrauss & Schmid 2017; Rasinski & DiSalle 2017; Tracey & Morrow 2012).

Significantly, there is a big emphasis placed on oral reading fluency at the early stage of school by Early Reading Expert Panel (2003) and Centre for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (2003). Apparently, there are many reading educators, who advocate integrating an equilibrium reading programme that has various reading techniques that suit different levels and abilities (Centre for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement 2003; Early Reading Expert Panel 2003; Rasinski & DiSalle 2017; Rasinski 2014; Rasinski 2009). The importance of oral reading as a source of input cannot be denied in the development of critical skills such as speaking (Rasinski 2014). Therefore, developing students' oral reading fluency should be taken into account in any reading programme. We live in an era in which people should read quite often in order to cope with the changes around the world. Hence, developing and measuring students' reading fluency regularly could result in building effective reading habits in the new generation (Lahmann, Steinkrauss & Schmid 2017).

1.4.   Problem Statement and Rationale

Based on the researcher's experience over the last ten years observing high school students during their examination periods, particularly during English exams, students spend much time decoding word by word and trying to understand the meaning of each word. When the students meet difficult words, they get stuck and, they do not know what to do. They ask for help. It is clear that primary and preparatory

students in public schools have a deficit problem in oral reading fluency, which affects them later in upper grades and college life. In 2016/2017, the researcher attended some reading classes in grades seven, eight and eleven. It has been found that students were not fluent readers. They stopped a lot when they read. They were trying to spell words without having a sense of understanding what they read.

On the other hand, students in private schools were better readers. Their oral reading fluency was far higher than those in public schools. When the researcher asked some teachers in both sectors, public and private schools, and looked at the curriculum, it was found that reading fluency is being taught in private schools only. It was neglected in public schools. Interestingly, in western countries, students have to master oral reading fluency by the end of grade three (Rasinski 2014). However, students in the upper grades in public schools in the UAE still have problems with oral reading fluency. Furthermore, in the United States, reading fluently is a significant skill that all students must master in order to graduate from high school (Huddle 2014). This situation triggered the researcher's interest in investigating this significant issue, which received almost no attention in the UAE public schools that follow the MOE curriculum. Additionally, this topic received little focus in the literature that has been conducted in the UAE and Gulf Countries Council (GCC).

It is noteworthy that there is currently a massive emphasis on reading skills in the UAE as this skill has come to be considered as one of the 21st-century skills. 2016/2017 was called the year of reading. Therefore, oral reading fluency should be addressed in schools. There is a plethora of studies that has been conducted on improving students' oral reading fluency and assessing their performance. More recent studies on reading fluency were extended to the use of technology (computer software, internet, iPads, and tablets) inside and outside classrooms in different countries and contexts to improve students'

oral reading fluency (Bryan 2011; Christner 2009; Coleman 2008; Field 2007; Furman 2015; McKenna 2006). Nevertheless, investigating factors that could influence students' oral reading fluency is essential to understand the whole issue, which might eventually lead to better performance in reading.

However, based on the consulted literature, a few studies were conducted in the UAE context on improving students with special needs' reading fluency skills and reading techniques (Al Jaffal 2014). However, no research has yet been conducted about the factors that could affect students' oral reading fluency or the assessment techniques that are used to assess students' oral reading fluency in the UAE context. Moreover, almost no research was found about the use of technology in improving reading fluency although the UAE public schools are well equipped with technological tools; smart-boards, tablets, and Wi-Fi, which could be utilised to improve teaching instructions and students' oral reading fluency. Therefore, investigating this issue is very significant, and is anticipated to add more value to the research in the UAE context and the literature.

1.5. Research Purpose

There are many studies, which have investigated oral reading fluency in American and European contexts. However, there are limited if any, studies conducted in the GCC contexts, in particular, the UAE context. Therefore, there is a real need for studies that investigate how reading fluency is being addressed and measured in UAE private schools, which focus on teaching this skill. This study has a four-fold purpose: (1) to explore the reading-aloud strategies that teachers use to build and improve students' oral reading fluency, (2) to investigate the assessment methods used for assessing students' oral reading fluency, (3) to investigate the factors that affect students' oral reading fluency, and finally, (4) to build and create a model that presents and illustrates the best teaching practices that are used to address

students' oral reading fluency skill. Therefore, the following questions are created to address the research purpose:

- What are the reading strategies that are used to build and improve students' oral reading fluency?

- What are the assessment methods that are used for evaluating students' oral reading fluency?

- What are the teachers' perspectives related to the factors that affect students' oral reading performance?

- What comprehensive teaching-assessment model can be developed to build and enhance oral reading fluency?

1.6. Overview of Research Methodology

To answer the questions mentioned above, this study adopted a sequential exploratory mixed methods design. Accordingly, the design focused mainly on qualitative data. This design also allowed the researcher to use more instruments. Using a variety of instruments allowed the researcher to understand the problem more holistically and enhanced the accuracy of the results. This study had two phases. In the qualitative phase, document analysis, classroom observation, and interviews were used respectively. The researcher needed to understand how oral reading fluency was being taught and assessed and what factors affected students' oral reading fluency. The second phase involved circulating an online questionnaire to all private schools across five emirates: Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain (UAQ), Al Fujairah, and Ras Al Khaimah (RAK). The quantitative data was used to support and validate the qualitative data. It also enhanced the generalisability of the findings. Finally, based on the findings, a model was created about the best teaching instructions for oral reading fluency and the assessment techniques that should be used to assess students' oral reading fluency.

1.7.   Significance of the Study

Educators from different disciplines, including cognitive psychology, developmental psychology, and education, have been interested in the reading filed (Rasinski 2014). Therefore, studying reading theoretically and practically is essential for proposing instructions and implications. In terms of teaching and learning English as a second language, reading is the most studied skill in the field of language learning and a considerable amount of research has been carried out on its instructions and assessments (Blachowicz, Lems & Rasinski 2012; Rasinski 2014). It is crucial for students to build and develop their reading proficiency, which would allow them to improve other skills, such as speaking and writing (Rasinski 2012). Notably, oral reading fluency is a key skill, which is also recognised to be a bridge between decoding and comprehension. However, it has been neglected in many English programmes. In fact, this skill should be taught at all school levels (Rasinski 2014; Rasinski & DiSalle 2017; Schumm 2006).

Tindal et al. (2016) and Rasinski (2014) stressed the role of fluency on comprehension. They believed that fluency as a skill feeds into comprehension, which is the ultimate goal of reading. Moreover, according to Rasinski and DiSalle (2017), 90% of comprehension problems are due to the deficiency in oral fluency. Thus, students, who have poor reading fluency in their early stage of academic life will likely have problems in later academic stages. For this reason, it is essential to build and develop literacy skills in the early learning stage (Rasinski 2014). In fact, ample research has been conducted on oral reading fluency in the United States and Europe in the last decades (Mountford 2007; Mustafa et al. 2009; Musti-Rao, Lo & Plati 2015; Mraz et al. 2013; Opitz & Rasinski 2008; ÖZbek & Girli 2017; Rasinski 2014; Rasinski & DiSalle 2017). However, much less is known about oral reading fluency and factors that can affect students' oral reading fluency in the UAE and GCC.

In response, the present study provided an overview of the instructional reading strategies for oral reading fluency and the assessment techniques employed in private schools. It also gave details about the factors that affect students' oral reading fluency. Furthermore, based on the consulted literature, all of the studies conducted on oral reading fluency investigated the effects of one or two oral reading-aloud strategies on students' oral fluency. Others examined the effectiveness of certain assessment measures. A few studies investigated one or some factors that affect students' oral reading fluency. It is worth mentioning that there is no study covering the three areas that this study covered, which are; teaching strategies for oral reading fluency, assessment techniques and factors that affect the oral reading. Accordingly, no studies have been found to suggest or provide a comprehensive model that supports and builds oral reading fluency skill. Hence, this study addressed the gap in the literature concerning different issues related to oral reading fluency. It would add extra knowledge to the growing literature in oral reading fluency in the Arab world (Al Jaffal 2014; Hussien 2014) and the UAE.

Many studies recommended integrating reading fluency as a part of an effective reading programme. One of the goals of this study is to propose a comprehensive model for teaching and assessing students' oral reading fluency for the MOE in the UAE. Consequently, the results of this study might also provide some guidance and recommendations for policymakers and curriculum designers about the significance of integrating reading-aloud strategies into English reading programmes. Moreover, this study is unique because it would help the English teachers in public schools to help students become fluent skilled readers. This research would provide an insight for those teachers about successful reading-aloud strategies that have been used in the UAE private schools. To sum up, this is a preliminary study in the UAE private schools. It aims to create a pathway to more advanced research in the future.

1.8. Organisation of Thesis

Chapter one provides a general outline of education in the UAE and background of the study. In addition, the chapter presents the problem statement, research purpose, and significance of the study. It ends with an overview of the methodology. The second chapter presents the theoretical underpinning and the literature review. It also illustrates a background for oral reading fluency in relation to the research questions. It includes an analysis and evaluation of other work related to this study. The third chapter demonstrates the methodology of the research. It deals with the selected methods and instruments that were suitable for the investigation of the research questions. This chapter also describes the pilot study, data analysis, validity and reliability, and lastly the ethical considerations. The fourth chapter demonstrates the findings from each tool separately. The fifth chapter discusses the analysis of the data; strengths and weakness in relation to the literature and the research questions. At the end of the chapter, a comprehensive teaching-assessment model is developed to build and enhance students' oral reading fluency. The final chapter starts with a conclusion. It also states the challenges and limitations of the study. Finally, some recommendations for further studies, policymakers, curriculum designers, and teachers are provided.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2. **Chapter Overview:**

This chapter presents the learning theories that formed the basis for this study. Four main theories are clearly presented and discussed, which are behaviourism, information processing model theory, automaticity theory and, finally, Ehri and McCormick word learning theory. The significance and relation of these theories to this study are discussed. Understanding these theories helps in constructing the pillars for identifying the best reading-aloud approaches and the assessment techniques for oral reading fluency. Furthermore, this chapter discusses the literature on oral reading fluency including the teaching strategies, assessment techniques, and the factors that affect students' oral reading fluency.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

2.1.1. Introduction

Defining theory before discussing the main theories of this study is vital to provide the researcher with the basic concepts and direct the research toward the essential questions. Based on the English online Oxford dictionary (1984), a theory is "a supposition or a system of ideas intended to explain something, especially one based on general principles independent of the thing to be explained". A theory is also defined as "a set of principles on which the practice of an activity is based" (The Oxford University 1984). So, when educators want to understand something, they go back to theories to test them and make sense of the research data.

In education, Tracey and Morrow (2012), defined theory as "a well-documented explanation for a phenomenon related to teaching and/or learning. This explanation (i.e., theory) then becomes a part of the body of content knowledge that constitutes the field" (p.4). Theories in education are used to explain

different phenomena such as learning difficulties, behaviours, attitudes, language, and cognitive problems. For this reason, theories are significant for optimal classroom instruction. Therefore, the ultimate purpose of reading theories is to help teachers and educators to enrich and enhance their instructions, approaches, and practices to boost students' potential performance.

Considering the underlying theory in a research project is significant. Theories increase the researcher's awareness of interconnections of research data. Therefore, the theoretical framework explains how a particular theory is related and connected within a study. It also allows the researcher to present an understanding of theories and main concepts (Creswell 2005). Tracey and Morrow (2012) believed that understanding those reading theories and stages of reading allows educators, instructors, and teachers to determine the right instructions and practices that suit different learners. Therefore, discussing the theories that are related to the topic is critical for the study to ensure that the research problem is addressed appropriately.

One of the good references for reading theories is a book called "Lenses on Reading: An Introduction to Theories and Models" by Tracey and Morrow (2012). Tracey and Morrow believed that theories are the lenses for individuals to view the world. Their book presents major theories and models that are related to each skill of reading. Those theories explain the process of learning to read with a variety of instructional choices. According to Tracey and Morrow (2012), there is a strong connection between theories and practice. In fact, reading theories contribute to teachers' knowledge and experience. They drive and inform teachers' instructions and practices. Collectively, it is well-known that knowledgeable teachers can help students to reach their potential levels. Consequently, teachers have to use a wide range of instructions and methods to help students progressing in reading. Those instructions must suit learners' levels, work with different abilities and intellects and stimulate students' interests. Evidently, different theories formed the theoretical foundation of this study which are behaviourism,

information processing model theory, automaticity theory, and Ehri and McCormick word learning theory. Each theory is presented and explained in details and how they are related to both oral reading fluency instructional strategies and the previous studies in the literature.

2.1.2. Behaviourism

Behaviourism is one of the most well-known theories that focuses on the changing of behaviour over a period of time. In behaviourism, information is transferred and conveyed from a knowledgeable person, teacher, to a less knowledgeable source, student (Zuriff 1985). Additionally, behaviourism can inform literacy instructions meaningfully. It leads teachers to use specific strategies and assessments methods. In essence, it is a very important theory that is associated with direct instructions and implications for reading that could improve the students' achievement (Tracey & Morrow 2012). Interestingly, three basic behavioural theories contribute to behaviourism; classical conditioning, connectionism, and operant conditioning. These three theories focus on breaking down the complex task into smaller components. Tracey and Morrow (2012) claimed that reading components are categorised into five categories, which are visual discrimination, auditory discrimination, left-to-right progression during reading, vocabulary and finally, comprehension. These components have some sub-skills. For example, for auditory discrimination, there are sub-skills including phonics, sight words, and blending. Each one of these sub-skills requires a response and feedback. To elaborate, the teacher asks a student to pronounce a word. If the student does it correctly, then the teacher needs to give quick feedback. However, if the student pronounces the word incorrectly, the teacher should correct the student's pronunciation. This can happen by providing sufficient chances to pronounce the word many times until the student masters it. This is strongly related to oral reading fluency whereby feedback is a requirement to help students improve their reading fluency. It is also emphasised by Rasinski (2014), Padak and

Rasinski (2008) and Rasinski and Padak (2000). They believed and insisted on the significance of providing students with appropriate guidance and feedback to help them build their reading fluency. Furthermore, the role of feedback in teaching and assessing reading fluency was stressed by many other researchers (Cummings, Park & Schaper 2013; Dewey et al. 2015; Özbek & Girli 2017). Needless to say that those studies, which have been conducted to investigate the effect of software applications on students' reading fluency, focused on the role of immediate feedback embedded in those applications to users (Musti-Rao, Lo & Plati 2015).

Significantly, guided reading, direct instruction, practice, and the repeated reading approaches for LaBerge and Samuels (1974) are examples of the most influential reading strategies that are emphasised by a behaviourism perspective (Tracey & Morrow 2012). Usually, the guided reading strategy is used more with younger students: kindergarten to grade two levels. In direct instruction, the teacher knows the sub-skills that students need to develop. Therefore, the teacher is responsible for the students' learning by finding out their strengths and weaknesses. Then, the teacher can start teaching and building learners' reading sub-skills directly and explicitly to students as phonics, sight words, high-frequency words and blending words. The teacher has to provide students with lots of practice to acquire the previous sub-skills. This was also stressed by Rasinski (2014), Padak and Rasinski (2008) and Rasinski and Padak (2000). Padak and Rasinski clearly stated that to start teaching the basic reading skills at an early level is essential to building a good foundation for reading skills. Al-Kharusi (2014) claimed that using direct instructions and practice helped students greatly to increase their potential reading fluency. It is worth mentioning that teachers' knowledge is potentially important to building students' reading skills. As stated previously, behaviourists believe that information is transferred from a knowledgeable person to a less knowledgeable source. Moreover, the behaviourism theory focuses on

measuring the change in behaviour objectively. With respect to oral reading fluency, students must be assessed on reading skills, such as phonics, fluency, and comprehension. It is the teacher's job to set measurable behavioural objectives to assess students.

Moreover, the bottom-up approach to reading is another strategy that was influenced by behaviourism (Tracey & Morrow 2012). This approach can be described as a linear process. For instance, the student recognises letters, then words including sight and high-frequency words and finally, phrases and sentences. Phonics is one of the reading sub-skills that can be taught through this approach. Students first need to learn and master letter identification and sounds before starting to read a sentence or text. In this approach, word-recognition is considered a response and the printed words are stimuli. This process requires recalling and recognition abilities. Further, phonics in the audio-lingual learning technique usually focuses on the repetition and drill as a method that allows the students to listen and hear how a word or text should be read. During this method, knowledge is processed as a series of sequenced continuous phases. To elaborate, the brain receives the smallest data, sounds, and processes them into words and sentences. The input, in this process, is sounds, and the output is phrases, sentences, and finally, comprehension. It is worth mentioning that the repeated reading method is highly associated with the bottom-up approach.

However, the behaviourism theory views the learner, reader, as a passive recipient of information in the text. Readers' knowledge and experience do not matter in this theory. Readers are only responding to stimuli. Only perceptual information and the decoding process are significant to this theory. Needless to say that behaviourists place great attention on the final product or the output, regardless of the processes in learners' brains. Therefore, behaviourism is criticised harshly for this issue. Behaviourism also receives tough criticism because it does not explain how the mind interferes in the processing of information. As a response to the previous shortcomings, there was a major shift towards a cognitive

sciences paradigm. However, this study does not focus on the cognitive processes or what happens in the learner's brain. It focuses on the strategies and assessment techniques that can change an observable behaviour, which is oral reading fluency. Therefore, this theory is strongly related to this study.

To sum up, the behaviourism theory sheds light on two aspects of oral reading fluency: reading strategies and the assessment techniques. The main strategies promoted by behaviourists to build students' oral reading fluency are guided reading, direct instruction, practice, repeated reading, and bottom-up approaches. Concerning the assessment technique, behaviourists believe that students' oral reading fluency must be assessed to measure the change happening. They also view observing students and giving proper feedback as an important stimulus in the learning process.

2.1.3. Information Processing Model Theory

In the cognitive science paradigm, scientists and psycholinguists began to focus on how a language could be built and developed in students' brains. One of the cognitive processing models is called the "information processing model". Based on the information processing model (Slavin 2002), reading fluency is addressed through various systems that lead readers to engage in specific skills, such as recognising letters and sounds rapidly and retrieving knowledge that is stored in the long-term memory. Interestingly, according to this model, the brain has a specific capacity for daily tasks. If the students use a significant portion of this capacity and amount of time to read and decode words, then a small capacity and less time will be left and devoted to meaning and comprehension. Thus, if the students learn to read fluently at an early stage, then a big portion of the brain's capacity will be devoted to making sense of the meaning of the text.

According to this model, there are three types of memories: sensory memory, short-term memory, which is also called working memory, and long-term memory. When readers see pictures or printed

words in a text their sensory memory retains the data. When they read, the information is stored in short-term memory for thirty-seconds approximately. Notably, information cannot stay too long in the short-term memory, which has a limited capacity for information. Readers forget the information quickly if they do not encode by rehearsing the information. If they rehearse, in this case, they read aloud many times, information will move into the long-term memory, which has unlimited capacity over a long period of time. Significantly, this theory promotes reading practice, repeated reading, readers theatre, and rhyming methods as a way to encode data, in this case, recognition of letters, sounds, sight words, and high-frequency words. Additionally, this theory also addresses the significance of teaching oral reading fluency skill. It states that the faster students are in reading, the better they are in comprehension (Slavin 2002). Therefore, teachers have to help students improve their memories by motivating and allowing them to practice to encode data into their long-term memory. Significantly, Musti-Rao, Lo and Plati (2015) in their study about assisted reading, mentioned the role information processing model and how technology helped students to progress in word recognition and automaticity.

However, this model as the behaviourism theory received some criticism. For example, this model views the human mind like a computer or machine, which processes information. Readers receive input or information, i.e. a text. Then, they process the text by reading it and finally, they deliver the output or behavioural response, which the behaviourism theory focuses on. Although this model believes that humans are like computers, it sheds light on the three types of memory and how to address any issue considering them, which is clarified earlier. It also tells us that older children have a greater capacity in working memory (Slavin 2002). Therefore, building oral reading fluency should begin at an early level. According to this model, the best methods for building oral reading fluency are repeated reading, assisted reading, and reading practice.

2.1.4. Automaticity Theory

Automaticity theory is one of the most recognised theories in reading fluency (Rasinski 2006; Samuels 2007) that focuses highly on word recognition. It clarifies the link between fluency and reading proficiency. Based on the automaticity theory (Samuels 2007), reading fluency is identified as the ability to decode and comprehend a text at the same time (Samuels 2007). Reading has many sub-skills such as recognising letters, associating sounds with the letters, blending, segmenting, chunking, skimming, and scanning. However, there are three basic processes that all readers go through during the reading of a text, which are decoding, comprehension, and attention (Samuels 2007; Tracey & Morrow, 2012). Interestingly, the last one, attention, refer to how much focus and energy readers give to a text when they process the information for comprehension. The more attention one gives to decoding, the less attention one gives to comprehension. Therefore, Samuels (1974) designed a repeated reading strategy based on the automaticity theory. The repeated reading strategy helps students in reducing the capacity for attention and cognition given to decoding a text. Accordingly, the capacity allocated for attention and cognition for higher level processes, such as reading comprehension, will be increased. Figure 1 represents the role of automaticity theory in the working memory of both fluent and less fluent readers.
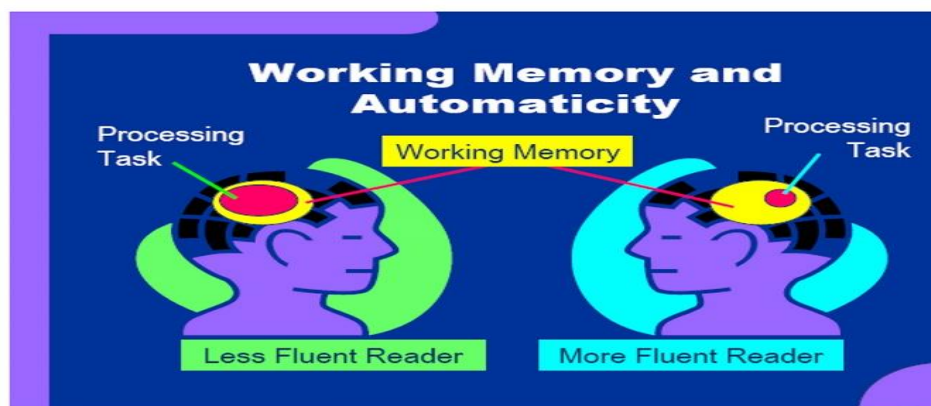
Figure1: The role of automaticity theory in working memory of both fluent and less fluent readers

(Adams 2012)

Notably, LaBerge and Samuels (1974) theory of automaticity is a bottom-up serial stage model of reading. This means that readers should master the lower level processes to reach to the higher level processes. LaBerge and Samuels (1974) believed that teachers should ensure that students recognise all the letters in the early stage of reading through repeated practice. Then, the students can focus on the sounds that the letters make, which are developed later at the blending stage. Consequently, LaBerge and Samuels (1974) emphasize the role of repeated reading as a strategy to develop and improve fluency and comprehension. The readers theatre approach is also another strategy that is stressed by LaBerge and Samuels. It involves repeated reading, but with expression, which is viewed as a sign of comprehension. It is noted in the consulted literature that the automaticity theory helps to find those who have problems in reading speed (Pikulski & Chard 2005). The remedy for those people is always about giving attention to texts. The automaticity theory does not believe that readers have a deficit in memory. It is about a lack of attention given to texts. It also promotes using easier texts as a remedy with students, which will help them developing their automatic reading (LaBerge and Samuels 1974; Samuels 2007). There are other strategies emphasised by the automaticity theory, which are paired reading, choral reading, modeling reading and assisted reading by recorded audio texts approaches. The key to all these approaches is practice, which improves the speed of reading. Significantly, the roles of drilling, repetition, and error correction are vital in this theory. Additionally, Samuels (1979) recommended that teachers should use a rubric to evaluate students' reading progress until they use more advanced strategies such as metacognition strategies. The metacognition strategies allow students to think about their thinking before, during, and after they read texts, which will develop their comprehension skills. Also, this theory recommends using self-assessment and peer assessment techniques to help students finding out their own strengths and weaknesses.

On the other hand, this theory does not shed light or explain how prosody, a significant component of reading fluency, can be improved. Therefore, it is criticised for neglecting prosody. Also, though this theory encourages teachers to use easier texts with struggling readers, it does not discuss the readability and the suitability of texts for certain levels. Finally, since this method relies on practice and drilling, therefore, it takes a lot of class time to ensure students' success. However, teachers are tied to the course syllabus to deliver on time. Therefore, it is not practical for many teachers. Notably, numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the effects of the repeated reading, assisted reading, and reading practice approaches. They relied highly on the automaticity theory as the main theory related to their research (Al-Kharusi 2014; Berg & Lyke 2012; Kay et al. 2013; Musti-Rao, Lo & Plati 2015; Rowen et al. 2015; Rubin 2016).

2.1.5. Ehri and McCormick Word Learning Theory

Ehri (1995) word learning theory is another widely recognised theory in the field of reading fluency. Her theory presents the reading stages that students go through to achieve reading fluency. Ehri (1995) identified four stages for the development of reading words, which are pre-alphabetic (preschool), partial-alphabetic (kindergarten), full-alphabetic (first grade), and consolidated-alphabetic (second grade). However, later Ehri and McCormick (1998) identified one more phase, which is automatic-alphabetic (beyond second grade). Each of these stages has its own characteristics, which are used to develop instructional implications for students to read words fluently. It guides teachers in their reading instructions and informs their practices. For example, in the pre-alphabetic phase, the teacher has to focus on letter recognition and phonics awareness. In the partial-alphabetic stage, the teacher should model to students how to blend sounds in words. In the third phase, full-alphabetic, students re-read the text multiple times and practice pronouncing various sounds to encode them. Notably, the first three phases

focus on building knowledge of letters, sounds, graphemes, phonemes, and phonics. Concerning reading-aloud strategies, they are used more in the consolidated-alphabetic phase to move students to the advanced stage. It is worth mentioning that during the automatic-alphabetic phase, students develop automaticity and speed in reading familiar and unfamiliar words (Ehri 2005).

Moreover, Ehri (2002) and Ehri and McCormick (1998) highlighted different aspects of reading fluency. For example, they promote using various reading methods that provide precise instructions that suit each student's level such as assisted reading, modeled reading and repeated reading approaches (Pikulski & Chard 2005). The reading instructions must also encourage continuous reading practice to increase students' knowledge of alphabets and sight/high-frequency words. It also concentrates on assessing students' reading fluency regularly by observing and giving them the support they need to move from one stage to another (Ehri 2002; Pikulski & Chard 2005). Furthermore, Ehri pointed out that some students, who have problems moving from one stage to another, need knowledgeable teachers, who can support the success of building and developing their reading skills. She also claims that a classroom environment with printed words is significant to improve students' vocabulary knowledge (Cardoso-Martins, Rodrigues & Ehri 2003). In fact, Ehri (2002) has made a considerable contribution to the reading field by breaking down each phase and defining them in great detail. Many of the previous studies have considered this theory in their research because they believe that Ehri's reading theory represents a comprehensive coherence framework for teaching how to read effortlessly and fluently (Lahmann, Steinkrauss & Schmid 2017; Pikulski & Chard 2005; Rasinski 2014).

2.1.6. Summary of Theories

   To sum up, all the theories as mentioned earlier are relevant to the building and development of oral reading fluency. They place great attention on teaching and mastering oral reading fluency. They believe that oral reading fluency should be taught from the beginning of the reading acquisition process. Therefore, the previous theories recommend that educators and teachers should use a wide range of reading-aloud methods to address students' oral reading fluency such as reading practice, repeated reading, choral reading, assisted reading, paired reading and readers theatre. Teachers also should measure students' fluency at an early stage using different methods: observation, rubrics, peer assessment, self-assessment, correction, and feedback. If students' fluency is below the average grade level, then, teachers should start to identify the causes and factors that lead to this issue. Moreover, teachers should adapt their fluency instructions and look for alternative interventions, instructional strategies, to address problems that learners might have (Rasinski 2014). Needless to say, the key to building and developing oral reading fluency is practice. Besides, teachers should engage students in various reading-aloud techniques and motivate them to read aloud.

2.2. Fluency

   Fluency is a concept that has generated much controversy. It has been defined in different ways. Some scholars and educators have defined fluency as someone's ability to speak like a native speaker and produce a fluent discourse (Pawley & Syder 1983). Others believed that fluency is an automatic speech production that needs no effort and attention (Schmidt 1992). On the other hand, Marinac (2008) defined fluency as the ability to speak or talk with few pauses. Similarly, Gorsuch (2011) recognised fluency as a spoken language competence. Housen, Kuiken, and Vedder (2012) and Pawley and Syder (1983) defined fluency as the ability to produce or speak a second language with similar speed to native

speakers. The speech production must be without hesitation and pausing. A more recent view of fluency is from Lahmann, Steinkrauss, and Schmid (2017), who defined fluency in a broad perspective. According to them, fluency referred to oral proficiency. It is known to be a significant characteristic of speech production in the first language (L1) or mother tongue. Thus, it was considered to be a sign of mastering a second language (L2) (Lahmann, Steinkrauss & Schmid 2017).

The previous definitions shed light on speaking fluency. However, there is a reading fluency skill, which is no less important than the speaking fluency. It is worth mentioning that there are four main components of reading skill, which are (a) phonemic and phonological awareness, (b) vocabulary (c) fluency and (d) reading comprehension. Consequently, reading fluency is a critical step to success in reading comprehension (Lahmann, Steinkrauss & Schmid 2017; Rasinski 2014). This study focused on oral reading fluency.

2.2.1. Oral Reading Fluency

Defining oral reading fluency has been an issue for many educators and scholars. The reason for that is that oral reading fluency involves identifying a host of different aspects in a fixed time, such as the number of: correct words, incorrect words, pauses, repetition of words or phrases, and the mean length of utterance (Rasinski 2014). However, based on current research perspectives, there is a common definition for oral reading fluency, which is the ability to read aloud a text accurately with natural speed (Rasinski 2015; Rasinski 2009; Rasinski & DiSalle 2017; Samuels 2007). Hence, it is necessary to note that Rasinski (2015), Padak and Rasinski (2008) and Samuels (2007) identified three main components of oral reading fluency, which are accuracy, automaticity, and prosody. Defining those three terms is important to understand how oral reading fluency should be addressed.

Accuracy is decoding words accurately. First and foremost, for fluent readers to read accurately, they must identify individual words. This identification requires learning the alphabetic principle, which involves letters (graphemes) and sounds (phonemes). Moreover, decoding isolated words, such as sight words, high-frequency words, and irregular words is important. Mastering the previous knowledge allows accurate word identification, which happens instantaneously (Padak & Rasinski 2008; Rasinski 2014).

Automaticity, on the other hand, refers to recognising and decoding words effortlessly (Rasinski 2014; Samuels 2007). It depends on the students' knowledge of alphabetic principles and vocabulary (Ehri & McCormick 1998). Reading becomes automatic once readers master accuracy. Therefore, automaticity and accuracy are closely related. It is proven that readers' cognitive load is reduced as automaticity and accuracy are increased. Consequently, the cognitive resources will be devoted to comprehension. It was also believed that the more errors students make in reading accuracy, the less textual information they grasp (Lahmann, Steinkrauss & Schmid 2017). Hence, both accuracy and automaticity enhance effective reading comprehension. It is also reported that automaticity or accuracy alone is not sufficient to determine students' oral reading fluency (Padak & Rasinski 2008; Rasinski 2014). For instance, students might read separate words accurately and rapidly. However, when they read a connected text, they might find it difficult to read at the same level of accuracy and speed. Moreover, reading too quickly might not allow students to comprehend (Rasinski, Rikli, & Johnston 2009). In fact, to reach a proper level of text comprehension, students should have accurate word recognition (Samuels 2007).

The last component of fluency is prosody, which refers to reading smoothly with expression and intonation that presents the meaning and comprehension of connected text (Rasinski, Rikli, & Johnston 2009). In some studies, prosody is called expression. Prosody involves reading with the pitch, tone,

volume, and rhythm. It also includes chunking words or phrases together and emphasising certain phrases (Padak & Rasinski 2008). Numerous studies have proven that reading orally with expression helps the reader to build and develop his/her own comprehension skills, the meaning of the text, and speaking skills (Rasinski 2014; Rasinski, Rikli, & Johnston 2009; Whalley 2017). It is worth mentioning that though a positive relationship between prosody and comprehension was reported in those studies as mentioned earlier, the reliability data for measuring students' prosody was an issue. In fact, there is no valid and reliable measure created yet to measure students' prosody (Haskins & Aleccia 2014; Sarris & Dimakos 2015). On the other hand, there are some available valid and reliable measures for both accuracy and automaticity (Rasinski 2004).

Based on the above information, it can be concluded that oral reading fluency is an important skill because it indicates the proficiency level of reading (Padak & Rasinski 2008; Rasinski 2014). Fluency frees the reader's attention and cognitive power to focus on the meaning (Slavin 2002; Tracey & Morrow, 2012). The faster a reader processes a text, the easier it is to understand the overall meaning of it. Moreover, being a fluent reader facilitates the process of using prior knowledge to create new meaningful knowledge (Slavin 2002). Therefore, oral reading fluency is a key skill that must be in place for efficient reading to occur.

2.2.2. Oral Reading Fluency and Reading-aloud Strategies

To experience good reading comprehension, the reader must be exposed to a variety of reading-aloud strategies. Interestingly, several studies have shed light on the most promising reading instructions for improving oral reading fluency and other reading skills. Those instructional practices are meant to make students fluent readers and increase their automaticity and speed. Hence, students should be exposed to a variety of texts and given a chance to read aloud (Padak & Rasinski 2008). Encouraging

students to engage in reading-aloud extensively inside or outside school increases their accuracy, automaticity, and their overall reading achievement. The following sections illustrate a brief description of some of the highly effective reading strategies that involved the reading-aloud approach used in different classroom levels and showed extremely positive impacts on students' oral reading fluency (Padak & Rasinski 2008).

2.2.2.1 Repeated Reading

There has been widespread agreement that the repeated reading approach is the most frequent method used to develop and improve students' reading fluency in different perspectives (Padak & Rasinski 2008; Rasinski 2014; Samuels 1979). In fact, studies on oral reading fluency were dominated by research on repeated reading. It is found to be highly effective as it is promoted by many scholars and popular educators in the reading fluency field such as Rasinski (2014) and Samuels (1979). This approach allows students to read aloud the same text many times until they master reading it. The essence behind this technique is that it increases accuracy, word recognition (sight words), and speed (Samuels 1979). However, this strategy cannot be used with first graders, who have not yet developed knowledge of the alphabet and sounds fully (Ehri 2002; Pikulski & Chard 2005). It is important to note that the repeated reading strategy can be conducted in different forms of reading, such as paired reading, reading together, recorded passages, choral reading, and antiphonal reading (Rasinski & Padak 2000).

2.2.2.2 Reading Practice

One of the important steps that needs to be taken into account is practice. It is known that practice makes perfect, and, therefore, the more someone reads, the better reader he/she will become (Rasinski & Padak 2000). Reading practice is not about practicing reading the same text as in repeated reading. It is about reading more and more various texts. Therefore, teachers need to encourage students to read not

only in school, but also after school. They have to assign students to read certain tasks to ensure that they practice some reading at home. For example, some schools use online reading websites in which they check if the students read the assigned readings after school or not. Hence, increasing reading practice or what it is also referred to as independent reading practice can improve oral reading fluency and comprehension skills too. Repeated reading is essential to those, who have difficulties in fluency, but for others allowing them to practice reading different texts is significant not only for students' fluency, but also for their knowledge (Rasinski 2009; Rasinski & DiSalle 2017).

2.2.2.3. Modeling

Plenty of studies have found that modeling is a vital approach to improve students' fluency (Rasinski 2014; Rasinski 2009). Students might not recognise what it means to be fluent readers. Many students think that reading fluently means to read rapidly, which is not right because reading speed indicates only the automaticity (Rasinski 2014). Therefore, students need to listen to a fluent, expressive reading by fluent readers (Rasinski & Padak 2000). This method increases students' phonological awareness and helps them to understand the meaning of texts. In this approach, the teacher either reads to students or the teacher uses audio files, videotapes or other electronic devices that model the reading for the students.

2.2.2.4. Assisted Reading

Research into fluency has proved that assisted reading improves students' oral reading fluency (Rasinski & Padak 2000). In this strategy, the reader gets an opportunity to read a text while listening simultaneously to a fluent reading of the same text (Meeks & Austin 2003; Blevins 2001). This method helps the readers to decode words successfully, which later helps them in word recognition and automaticity. Moreover, assisted reading presents to the reader how to read with expression. Notably,

this strategy can be validated in different forms. For instance, the teacher reads to the whole class. Pre-recorded or audio texts can also be used in which students read a text while listening to them. Another form is that a fluent partner (who is also called a reading coach) reads to students inside and outside the classroom, (Rasinski & Padak 2000). Teachers can implement this strategy with the whole class or with those students, who are non-fluent readers.

It is worth mentioning that technology has a vital role in the assisted reading strategy. A high number of studies have shown that computers can provide explicit reading instructions to students (Alsulami 2016). For instance, when an application for reading is applied, it tells the user what to do, such as listen and repeat or listen and read aloud (Al Dhanhani 2014). Software and applications also offer direct feedback to users and help them to practice reading many times. For example, an application might say: well done, great job, and excellent when the user completes reading a story. Furthermore, plenty of software and applications attract the user with audio sounds and animations. In this decade, many studies successfully reported the usefulness of iPads in improving students' oral reading fluency (Musti-Rao, Lo & Plati 2015; Özbek & Girli 2017). Therefore, tablet devices have become increasingly popular in the realm of education. Notably, the characteristics of iPads; simplicity of usage, size, weight, touch-screen design and applicability in classrooms make them a good choice for increasing students' achievement and improving performance (Al Dhanhani 2014; Özbek & Girli 2017). There are also different features that make tablet devices beneficial for improving students' oral fluency (Kay et al. 2013). For instance, audio capabilities in e-books help the listener to experience the native speaker intonation. It is worth mentioning that although integrating technology in reading classes and reading instructions has great benefits, there are still some disadvantages in using it (Al Dhanhani 2014; Alqahtani, Hosp & Hua 2016; Alsulami 2016). For example, students must receive proper clear guidance before teachers employ any technological aids. Otherwise, students might not use it efficiently. Students,

users, must be aware of the operation of the device or the application they are using (Alqahtani, Hosp & Hua 2016). Also, students must be supervised during the use of technology as some students might not follow directions and use the tool for something else (Al Dhanhani 2014). Sometimes, students can get distracted in a certain activity which means that they will waste time (Alsulami 2016; Al Dhanhani 2014). Therefore, teachers must set a time limitation for any activity that involves any technological aids. Additionally, with respect to Alsulami's (2016) study on first graders, she found that students' results in reading had improved, but there was less communication between students. The reason was that each student had an iPad. Alsulami recommended in her study that teachers must take into consideration the purpose of employing certain technology in a class.

2.2.2.5. Rhyming Poetry

Interestingly, Rasinski et al. (2016) and Rasinski and Padak (2000) suggested the rhyming poetry strategy for improving students' reading fluency through enhancing their phonological awareness. In fact, poetry has been found to be effective for developing students' phonics through learning about common orthographic patterns, word families, and phonograms. Integrating a rhyming poetry approach in the classroom motivates students to learn and explore the language in a relaxed, joyful way. Teachers can read a poem to the students. Then, teachers with students can read it chorally. This process can be repeated multiple times until the students master reading the poem. Then, the teacher can introduce another poem or even a song. "Research using poetry with elements of rhyme has been found to help students become conscious of orthographic features, and this consciousness leads to enhanced word recognition, fluency, and comprehension" (Rasinski et al. 2016, p.169). Similarly, reading song lyrics is a powerful method to increase and enhance students' phonological awareness (Patel & Laud 2007). Patel and Laud explored impacts of using song lyrics on students' reading fluency and their motivation to read

aloud. In their experimental study, the lyrics of some popular songs were used as an intervention to strengthen students' fluency. It is worth noting that the students had to read the same lyrics repeatedly. Three middle school students participated in the study; one was a sixth grader, and the two were seventh graders. To measure students' fluency rates, the WCPM test was used. Additionally, the teacher took notes of students' errors and documented them. Students' prosody was assessed through the teacher's observation. Notably, the students were involved in the evaluation process through writing on a bar chart the number of errors they had and the total time they spent on reading a specific number of words in passages. The results were positive, and the students were happy about using song lyrics as a method to increase their fluency and motivate them.

2.2.2.6. Readers Theatre

Further, Rasinski et al. (2016) and Young and Rasinski (2009) emphasised another approach called the "reading theatre or readers theatre approach" to improve students' reading fluency. In the theatre activity, students read a particular script or scenario, poem or play, many times to act it out in front of an audience. Students can rehearse independently or with the guidance of teachers, who model the reading to students until they are able to perform fluently and expressively. Usually, this activity is performed by two or more students. It can be formal or informal. The actors can dress in costumes or not, depending on the nature and purpose of the activity. Rasinski et al. (2016) noted that to make students fluent readers, they must be provided with an abundance of opportunities to practice reading (Mountford 2007). Interestingly, the reading theatre approach involved repeated reading, modeling, and practice to master oral reading fluency (Padak & Rasinski 2008).

2.2.2.7. Choral Reading

Choral reading is also found to be useful for developing students' oral reading fluency (Padak & Rasinski 2008). It is also called unison reading. During this strategy, the teacher expressively reads aloud a short text, poem or speech to the students and they have to follow the text that the teacher reads. Then, a group of three or more students reads in unison the text assigned by the teacher (Moskal & Blachowicz 2006). Also, the whole class can participate in the activity and read along with or without the teacher. Using patterned books for choral reading is good because the repetitive style of those books allows students to join in confidently. Significantly, this reading along procedure has been shown to increase students' confidence and enjoyment in reading because it reduces their shyness and panic of making mistakes when they read aloud independently. Furthermore, it helps students feel successful as readers (Moskal & Blachowicz 2006). Notably, this method involves modeling, practice, and repeated reading. When the teacher reads to students with expression, then the teacher is modeling to the students. The students get the chance to listen to the teacher's sound, stress, duration, and intonation. When the students read after they hear the teacher, then they practice reading.

2.2.2.8. Paired Reading

Paired reading is a simple research-based reading strategy that is used to boost reading fluency and accuracy at different grades (Padak & Rasinski 2008). It is also called a partner reading approach. Every student benefits from this strategy, not only struggling readers or those diagnosed with dyslexia (Topping 2014). The paired reading approach is used to improve students' listening and speaking skills, as well as, their motivation to read (Padak & Rasinski 2008; Topping 2014). Students work together independently under the supervision of teachers. In this strategy, two students read aloud to each other a sentence, or a paragraph, which depends on both text and students' levels. Usually, one of the students

is less fluent or less confident in reading aloud alone than his partner. This method can be conducted in different ways (Padak &Rasinski 2008). For instance, the less fluent student reads aloud in tandem with the fluent reader, or the less fluent student reads alone, and whenever he/she makes a mistake, the fluent reader corrects the mistake and continues reading. It depends on teachers' objectives and plans. It is significant that the paired reading strategy is an ideal way to increase students' confidence and self-esteem (Berg & Lyke 2012).

2.2.2.9. Summary of the Reading-Aloud Strategies

No doubt, the previous approaches are good examples of how teachers can build and improve students' English oral reading. In fact, those approaches work at all levels from grade one to grade twelve. They also work within teaching a first and second language. Therefore, high school students should be provided with opportunities to read aloud so that teachers can assess them and find out who has difficulties and needs to improve (Meeks & Austin 2003; Rasinski & Padak 2000). The teacher's role cannot be neglected in those methods. It is a must for the teacher to provide students with appropriate immediate or delayed formative feedback. The teacher has to coach students during fluency instructions (Rasinski 2009; Rasinski & Padak 2000). Otherwise, it might result in students repeating mistakes and therefore reinforcing them, which will lead to adverse outcomes. Interestingly, it is noted in the literature that at the beginning of any remedial programme for students with reading difficulties, teachers should provide them with texts that match or that are below their abilities to build firstly their confidence in reading. Providing students with the same text and giving them the chance to read it repeatedly is a promising approach that is proven to help students, particularly those with learning difficulties, in building their oral reading fluency (Padak & Rasinski 2008; Wallot, Van Rooij & Hollis 2013). Finally,

teachers must encourage all students to engage in comprehensive, independent, reading inside and outside of classrooms to increase learners' reading performance.

2.2.3. Oral Reading Fluency Assessment

Reading is the gateway to knowledge in different subjects. Oral reading fluency is the key skill in reading which has proven to be highly correlated with comprehension (Rasinski 2014; Rasinski 2004). Therefore, it is important to measure fluency in a reliable way that helps examiners, teachers, and practitioners to easily distinguish between fluent and non-fluent readers (Rasinski 2004; Tindal et al. 2016). A comprehensive reading programme should integrate reading assessments that measure students' skills at the beginning, throughout, and at the end of the reading programme. The importance behind assessing students' oral reading fluency is to help the teacher to determine the fluency instructions that works best for students' needs and abilities. Also, assessing students informs teachers and directs them to make new decisions about creating, modifying or integrating new fluency approaches to stimulate students' interests and motivation to read. Moreover, reading assessments provide teachers with information about the skills that students have and have not achieved. The assessments inform teachers about the students' levels. Teachers, then, can monitor students' progress and performance and move them to the next level. It is worth mentioning that the assessment of oral reading fluency should start early during the academic year through the teacher's observation. There are three fundamental aspects of oral reading fluency that need to be assessed; accuracy, automaticity, and prosody. The assessment of fluency should reflect the previous aspects, which also includes assessing; (1) numbers of syllables, (2) speech rate, (3) mean length of runs, (4) the frequency of silent and filled pauses, (5) tone in reading, (6) smooth delivery of phrases, (7) communicating meaning through speeding up or slowing down, and finally (8) pace of reading (Al-Kharusi 2014; Rubin 2016). In fact, due to those multiple aspects of

fluency, the assessment of oral reading fluency has been neglected, in particular, the assessment of prosody (Rasinski 2004; Samuels 2007; Tindal et al. 2016). The following presents and defines some of the widely recognised assessment tools for oral reading fluency, which are Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM), which includes a test called CBM Oral Reading Fluency (ORF), Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBLES), which also includes a test called DIBLES Oral Reading Fluency (ORF), observations, field notes, and rubrics.

There are different tools to measure oral reading fluency (Gregory & Diller 2014; Hudson, Lane & Pullen 2005; Rasinski & Padak 2005). Hudson, Lane, and Pullen (2005) identified various names of oral reading fluency tests that are used for different levels. The main goal of those assessments is to inform instruction. Those assessments are AIMSweb Standard Reading Assessment Passages (RAPs), Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), Gray Oral Reading Test, Fourth Edition (GORT-4), National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Fluency Scale and Reading Fluency Monitor by Read Naturally. Although those assessments have different names, they have almost the same procedure for evaluating students' oral reading performance. Students have to read aloud a passage or a list of words over a period of time. Based on the consulted literature (Samuels 2007; Thornblad & Christ 2014) the most popular and widely used assessments in the literature are Curriculum-Based Measurements (CBMs) and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBLES).

CBM is a method for measuring students' academic skills in math, reading, writing, and spelling. Based on research, it has good reliability and validity (Thornblad & Christ 2014). CBM in reading has two types of measures that are drawn from the curriculum. For the first measure, which is called the maze task, students read a passage aloud or silently for three minutes. Basically, it is used to measure understanding and comprehension. The students have to select one of three words to replace the missing

word so that it restores meaning to the text (Cummings, Park & Schaper 2013). In the second type, students read a passage aloud for one minute. The number of correct words is used as the index for CBM passage reading. This task is easy to administer and score, which is known as oral reading fluency or ORF. It is conducted at regular intervals and started from first grade through eighth grade (Thornblad & Christ 2014).

DIBLES is designed to measure students' acquisition of early literacy skills (Dewey et al. 2015). It is designed based on curriculum measurement. It evaluates students' progress and provides feedback on the best instructional objectives and outcomes to speed up and enhance students' development (Dewey et al. 2015; Samuels 2007). DIBLES Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) is a standardized test that was developed by the University of Oregon and that measures students' accuracy, speed, and automaticity. It is administered to students individually starting mid-first grade through sixth grade (Cummings, Park & Schaper 2013). It has specific criteria to evaluate students. It also has a risk levels chart that illustrates the number of words that students need to read for one minute by the end of each grade. It is noteworthy that this test is administered three times in a year; autumn, winter, and spring. For this reason, it takes up a large amount of the classroom time, six-minutes per student, which teachers find to be overwhelming (Rasinski 2009; Rasinski 2004; Rasinski & Padak 2005).

CBM ORF is almost identical to the DIBELS ORF. There is no significant difference between them. In those two assessments, Reading Assessment Passages (RAPs) are being used. RAPs are field-tested and validated (Hudson, Lane & Pullen 2005). Furthermore, they are designed based on the curriculum measurement to assist the teachers in their instructional strategies and monitor the student's development and performance. Both CBM ORF and DIBELS ORF measure five areas; initial sound fluency, letter naming fluency, phoneme segmentation fluency, nonsense word fluency, and oral reading fluency (Dewey et al. 2015; Samuels 2007).

Notably, the score of those oral reading fluency assessments, which are a one-minute timed reading of a text is called Words-Correct Per-Minute (WCPM). The WCPM score is compared to certain norms and benchmarks to determine the student's level if it is, for example, above the benchmark, at the expected benchmark, below the benchmark, or significantly below the benchmark (Rasinski & Padak 2005). Interestingly, because we live in a digitalised era where technology occupies a large part of our lives, there is much software (Hudson, Lane & Pullen 2005) that is created to measure and assess oral reading fluency such as Jamestown Timed Reading Plus (secondary struggling readers), Great Leaps Reading (grades k-12) and QuickReads (grades 2-4).

Further assessments used to assess students' oral reading fluency are observations, field notes, and rubrics (Rasinski 2004). Obviously, the teacher's observation is the first main resource to measure students' fluency. It helps teachers to assess students' progress early. Before starting any formal assessments, the teachers can diagnose students informally by observing them during class time. Teachers can observe students' speed, pauses, mispronounced words, and expression. Moreover, taking notes is not less important than observation (Rasinski 2004). After observing students, teachers might take notes on students' performance and keep them to monitor their progress over a year. Concerning using a rubric, many educators recommended using it to assess students' oral reading fluency, particularly prosody (Rasinski 2004; Rasinski, Rikli, & Johnston 2009). Prosody is associated with readers' decoding skills. It also presents the readers' understanding of texts. Using a guided rubric that includes evaluation of a reader's voice; rise and fall, expression, and phrasing words in the text are important. Rasinski, Rikli, and Johnston (2009) developed fluency scales to determine students' fluency including prosody. The Multidimensional Fluency scale incorporates smoothness, phrasing, and pace to measure students' prosodic reading.

2.2.3.1. Summary of Oral Reading Fluency Assessment

Significantly, many studies have found that assessing students' fluency is useful to find the sources of difficulty that they have (Rasinski & Padak 2005). It also enables teachers to determine the effective instructions and techniques that are needed to improve students' fluency. However, because of the subjective nature of oral reading fluency assessment, it is neglected in reading programmes and schools for many reasons (Meeks & Austin 2003). Fluency assessment is a time-consuming test, and that is why teachers find it difficult to conduct. Further, developing students' expressive reading requires more effort than just reading. Consequently, there is no focus on expressive reading, which plays a significant role in fluency and comprehension development (Rasinski et al. 2009).

2.2.4. Factors Affecting Students' Oral Reading Fluency

It is well established that studying the factors that affect students' oral reading fluency and their academic reading achievement level is important in order to take action and do something about those factors to help students maximise their reading competencies and skills. However, there are some factors that can be controlled, and other complex factors that cannot be handled by the school, such as the socioeconomic status of the students, ethnicity, gender, and physical disabilities (Hermosa 2002; Limbrick, Madelaine, & Wheldall 2011; Van Dijk 2018). Notably, numerous research studies have been conducted to investigate reading fluency instructions and assessments, but a few studies were carried out on the factors that impact students' reading fluency.

Rasinski (2014), who is very interested in the area of building reading fluency, has presented many significant factors. He believed that building a strong foundation for fluency is a key factor that influences students' reading. For example, students, who have no phonemic awareness, will likely have

problems with reading fluency and so on. Also, Rasinski and Padak (2000) pointed out the role of the school environment in developing students' oral reading fluency. They claimed that the classroom environment should be rich with printed words. The environment should stimulate and motivate students to read. The genre and the level of the textbooks should match all the students' interests and levels. Furthermore, Rasinski and Padak (2000) strongly believed that assessment time could affect students' reading performance. Therefore, the assessment should be conducted periodically to monitor students' progress and determine the best instructional strategies to use.

Significantly, other scholars, educators, and researchers were interested in studying those factors that could affect students' reading performance. For instance, some educators believed that environment, whether home or school (York et al. 2011), teachers' experience and attitude (Rasinski 2014), time of the assessment (Piper & Zuilkowski 2016), the type of genre being read, the nature of language orthography (Hussien 2014), and texts levels (Cummings, Park & Schaper 2013; Wallot, Van Rooij & Hollis 2013) can influence students' oral reading fluency performance and development. More research is discussed and presented thoroughly in the related studies section.

2.3. Relevant Work

2.3.1. Oral Reading Fluency

Oral reading fluency (reading-aloud) has been a topic of debate for years. Authors have an interest in different aspects of fluency and how to develop and improve each aspect (Padak & Rasinski 2008). Samuels (2007) emphasised the importance of developing reading skills. He focused on the repeated reading strategy to improve students' overall fluency and comprehension too. He also stressed the role of reading-aloud. A more recent figure in reading fluency is Rasinski (2014), who is an educational psychologist. He pointed out the role and importance of reading fluency in developing comprehension

skills. The previous educators considered oral reading fluency as an indicator of reading proficiency (Fuchs et al. 2001). Consequently, various scholars and educators (Griffith & Rasinski 2004; Rasinski & Padak 2000) emphasised the role of integrating different reading techniques that can improve students' reading fluency. Rasinski (2014) identified many strategies for improving students' oral reading fluency as well as overall fluency and comprehension at different levels.

Based on American common core standards, students must master reading competency, including fluency, by grade five (Rasinski 2014). However, many students in the UAE public secondary schools have difficulties in oral reading fluency, which likely affect their comprehension and speaking competencies, too. How to make students fluent readers? Teachers can play a critical and significant role in this process by implementing different teaching strategies. Accordingly, it is important to investigate strategies that teachers use in order to know if these strategies are suitable and work with students or not. The following lines present studies that are related to the three investigated issues; reading strategies, assessment techniques, and finally, factors that affect students' oral reading fluency.

2.3.2. Studies on Teaching Strategies for Oral Reading Fluency

Reading-aloud strategies have proved their effectiveness in English reading fluency in many studies that have been conducted in first and second language acquisition (Jiang 2016). Therefore, recent research has provided considerable knowledge about various reading techniques and their great results on students' performance. For example, a recent study on integrating technology as an assisted reading strategy to improve oral reading fluency has been conducted by Özbek and Girli (2017). Özbek and Girli adopted a mixed methods research to determine the effectiveness of a tablet computer-aided intervention programme for reading fluency. There were only three participants; two boys and one girl, from grades three and four and five. They were selected because they had a learning disability and low reading fluency

level compared to the grade level. Therefore, they were receiving special education services. For the quantitative part of the study, the authors used an experimental design. The independent variables were pre-listening, repeated reading, performance feedback, and reward techniques using tablet computers. On the other hand, the dependent variables were words read correctly per minute and reading mistakes. The researchers also conducted interviews to explore the perception of the participants and their parents too as a qualitative tool. Interestingly, during the experimental design, the students had the chance to listen to the model reading on the Apple iPad, and then they read the same text three times. During those three times, the students' readings were recorded. A WCPM test was used to assess students' reading. Notably, twenty-three narrative texts were used in the study, and they were selected based on the student's grade level. The outcomes of the study indicated that the tablet computer-aided intervention programme had a positive impact on the students' reading fluency. Additionally, the students and parents had a good impression and an optimistic attitude towards using the tablet computer-aided intervention programme. They believed it was an enjoyable and enthused experience.

Another study on computer-assisted instructions (CAI) for building oral reading fluency was conducted by Musti-Rao, Lo and Plati (2015). Musti-Rao, Lo and Plati claimed that one of the most considerable advantages of CAI is that it provides explicit instructions and embedded feedback that allow the users to practice independently. The researchers also adopted an experimental design in which they used an application called "sight words: kids learn app", which included three-hundred sight words in the full version. The application models the correct pronunciation for the users. It also allows users to record their reading multiple times and receive immediate feedback on their reading performance. The results indicated that students' achievement in sight words recognition was increased. However, concerning oral reading fluency in passages, the result was not significant. Thus, it is important to note

that the sight words were taught in isolation from the text in the study. Nonetheless, reading sight words is one component of oral reading fluency. Reading text should be taught in a text format, not as separate words (Rasinski 2014). Furthermore, the study sample was very small: six students, but only three students had the treatment. A similar study was carried out by Reichenberg (2014). Reichenberg conducted a study using iPads to improve second-grade students' reading comprehension skills. The author used a quasi-experimental design in which a pretest/posttest was used. The experimental group was taught using an eBook on Apple iPads. The control group was taught using the same book in a printed version. The results showed that the experimental group had better scores in reading comprehension than the control group. Furthermore, Kay et al. (2013) examined the effects of "phonics awareness", an iPad application, on improving three students' oral reading fluency. This application taught students only about pronouncing separate words as well as segmenting. The progress of the students was measured and assessed through the use of a Word Correct per Minute (WCPM) test. The researchers found that there was a notable improvement in students' scores which was not very significant as the scores varied. Hence, the authors recommended in their study that more research in different contexts should be conducted in order to test the potentiality of various iPad applications. Additionally, iPads could be used as an extra tool to help students develop their oral reading fluency.

Regarding the repeated reading approach, it is apparent from the literature that this approach is dominating the reading fluency field. For example, Rubin (2016) investigated three Mexican American elementary students' development in oral reading fluency (ORF) of Spanish English Language Learners (ELL). The participants had learning difficulties in math and reading, but the author focused only on improving the students' oral reading fluency. Rubin used a popular programme in literature called the Intervention programme to develop students' fluency at different levels: elementary, preparatory and

high schools. In that programme, the students had to read three selections that focused on phonics, sight phrases, and oral reading passages for sixty seconds. Apparently, the programme focused on two strategies; repeated reading and correcting students' mistakes. The intervention was used daily for seven to eight minutes with each student. The students then were assessed twice in September 2014 and May 2015. Significantly, the findings showed great results in students' oral reading fluency performance. The author concluded his study stating the importance of integrating repeated reading in any reading programmes because it can help both regular students and students with learning difficulties.

Moreover, Al-Kharusi (2014) investigated the impact of the repeated reading strategy on reading fluency, accuracy and speed rate in Oman through a quasi-experimental design followed by interviewing participants. The treatment, which was the repeated reading technique, was used for eight weeks with the experimental group. The post-test results showed that students in the experimental group had better results in reading fluency than the control group. Therefore, Al-Kharusi recommended integrating the repeated reading strategy into the Oman English curriculum. Similarly, Gorsuch and Taguchi (2008) conducted a similar study on EFL and found the same results. A very interesting study that used different forms of repeated reading is from Berg and Lyke (2012), who conducted action research on fifth and sixth grades students in Northern Illinois. Berg and Lyke were interested in improving students' reading fluency rate (oral reading). They used the repeated reading strategy as an intervention with thirty-eight students for ten weeks. Notably, the teacher during the intervention used various forms of repeated reading; modeling, partner reading, choral reading, error correction, and feedback. The results presented a significant change in students' scores. Accordingly, the researchers recommended the repeated reading strategy for teachers to use during reading lessons.

Concerning rhyming poetry strategy, it is believed that incorporating short poems allows students to read for pleasure (Flores-Saldana 2016). Therefore, students build their confidence in being successful readers. Integrating a daily dose of poetry will strengthen students' reading fluency for all students at different levels. For instance, Calo, Woolard-Ferguson, and Koitz (2013) introduced to her second-grade students a model called "Fluency Idol". The purpose of introducing this model was to improve students' oral reading fluency. The Fluency Idol approach is based on using a variety of poems that motivate students to read. In fact, the idea of this model is inspired by a popular TV show called "*American Idol*". The teacher selected a poem each week and asked the students to read it aloud multiple times and act it out at school and home to their peers, friends, and family. At the end of the week, the teacher prepared the classroom environment to make it like a performance stage. While the students were reading the poem aloud one by one and acting it out, the teacher was taking notes of their performance. The results of this study showcased great effects on students' oral reading fluency including rate and automaticity along with comprehension. The students and their parents had a positive impression of the Fluency Idol model. Notably, the Fluency Idol approach integrated other strategies than rhyming poetry. The model emphasised repeated reading, practice, modeling and reading theatre strategies. A similar study to this was conducted by Marcell and Ferraro (2013), who also used the same model, but with different poems. Both of those studies also showed a huge effect on the students' motivation to read and improve themselves.

For reading theatre, or a readers theatre approach, a very good study was conducted by Black (2016). Black investigated the effectiveness of the readers theatre approach on students' reading fluency rate and reading comprehension. Black (2016) adopted a quasi-experimental design to find out if using a readers theatre approach on a weekly basis: three to four times per week with both high, and low

achievers, who have reading disabilities, would or would not increase fifth-graders' reading performance. Only two classrooms, which had fifty students, twenty-five in each, participated in the study. The treatment, a readers theatre approach, was implemented for nine weeks. A pretest-posttest comparison group design was conducted before and after the treatment. Two tests were used: (a) DIBELS to measure students' reading fluency and (b) the Standardized Test for Assessment of Reading (STAR) to measure students' reading comprehension. A *t*-test was used to analyse the results of the pre-and posttest scores. The results for the oral reading fluency test between the control and experimental groups was significant. However, for the reading comprehension test, there was no significant difference between the groups. Yet, students, who participated in the experimental group showed better results than those in the control group.

Faatz (2009) conducted a similar study using the readers theatre approach to improve her four students' (who were classified as below grade level) reading fluency and comprehension. The researcher used the readers theatre approach for five weeks. Also, two tests were used to assess students' fluency and comprehension, which were; Rasinski's Multidimensional Fluency Scale and the Comprehension Rubric for Story Retellings. Equal to Black's (2016) study, Faatz (2009) found that students had slight progress in the fluency scale, but again for comprehension results, not all students improved their comprehension scores. Therefore, Faatz confessed that there were some factors that affected the students' fluent reading fluently and comprehension of the texts. One of the factors was motivation. The students did not have any motivation to read, and the researcher did not address that before the study. Another significant factor was modeling. Faatz (2009) admitted that students were not exposed to sufficient modeled reading and explicit instruction. Therefore, their performance was not as expected. Notably, the duration of the study and the sample size was not big, only four students, who were receiving the intervention and for five weeks only. Accordingly, the results cannot be generalised to the entire school

population. This study recommended that teachers should provide students with adequate modeling practice and explicit instruction. Conducting a similar study with a larger sample size is important for further research. Moreover, students' motivation to read is necessary for their success in reading fluency and comprehension.

Regarding the choral reading, Rowen et al. (2015) conducted a project using a mixed methods design on twenty-one third-grade students to investigate the effect of choral reading theatre (CRT) on students' reading fluency including accuracy, automaticity, prosody, and comprehension. Rowen et al. (2015) believed that accuracy and word recognition play a significant role in leading students to construct and make meaning of texts. Therefore, they decided to investigate this issue through their CRT project, which was completed over a four-week sequence. Before starting the project, diagnostic assessments were administered to the third graders to find out about their previous knowledge related to the topic. Also, the students were tested on some vocabulary related to the topic. The teacher modeled the reading for the students and the students read, sang in unison and acted out the script. The teacher sat with each group reading the text aloud for them. The students had to practice and read aloud after the teacher. The results of both qualitative and quantitative numerical data showed a significant positive increase in students' reading rate and word recognition. Additionally, the prosodic reading of the students was clearly improved. There is another recent mixed methods design study by Zorella (2017), which was conducted on choral reading, particularly the impact of choral reading on thirty-one seventh graders' comprehension skill. Though the study investigated the effects of choral reading on students' comprehension performance, the result of the study showed, from the interviews, that the students had improved their reading fluency skills.

With respect to the paired reading strategy, Schneider (2007) investigated the effect of the paired reading strategy on students' reading fluency and comprehension skills. Three participants participated

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With respect to the paired reading strategy, Schneider (2007) investigated the effect of the paired reading strategy on students' reading fluency and comprehension skills. Three participants participated

in the study, who were below average in reading. The paired reading approach was used as an intervention over a five-week period. The results presented that the students' reading fluency and comprehension skills were improved, which indicated the effectiveness of the paired reading approach. However, since there were only three participants, the generalisability of the data is weak. Similarly, Gerdes (2000) studied the effect of two reading strategies: paired reading and repeated reading on elementary students, third graders. The results showed a positive impact on students' reading fluency and comprehension. Moreover, the results demonstrated a positive effect on building healthy self-concepts in students. Students were relaxed during both reading activities. Therefore, Gerdes recommended integrating both paired reading and repeated reading strategies into the curriculum. Notably, the number of participants was small: four boys and one girl to generalise the data.

2.3.2.1. Summary of the Studies on Teaching Strategies for Oral Reading Fluency

All of the previous studies depended heavily on using different instructional reading-aloud strategies, but most of the instructions focused on repeated reading and practice as a method to develop students' oral reading fluency and comprehension. Apparently, most of the instructional strategies relied on more than one type of instruction. For instance, repeated reading is usually related to reading practice. Also, the reading theatre approach is connected with practice and repeated reading. Choral reading is also associated with repeated reading and practice. Significantly, modeling instructions is very essential for students' success. Therefore, modeling is associated with all types of instructional reading strategies. Finally, for those students, who are struggling in reading, it is essential to provide them with the assisted reading they need to help them progress and succeed.

2.3.3. Studies on Oral Reading Fluency Assessment Methods

Assessing students' oral reading fluency is a critical step to developing reading fluency, and to making sure that students have sufficient fluency to comprehend texts (Griffith & Rasinski 2004; Padak & Rasinski 2008). Also, the measurement of reading fluency provides teachers with information about specific reasons that cause students to be disfluent readers. Significantly, identifying causes of certain problems helps the teachers to find out about the best practices and strategies, which can help and improve the students' performance (Rasinski 2004; Rasinski & DiSalle 2017; Rasinski & Padak 2005). Hence, some problems can be related to learning difficulties, which require special education services. Therefore, assessing students' reading skills from an early stage, kindergarten through high school is important to build students' thinking skills and prepare them for the unexpected future. Furthermore, the National Reading Panel (2000) recommended that teachers assess fluency regularly. Many tools can be used to measure students' oral reading fluency such as DIBELS including WCPM, observation, and rubrics. Those tools have proven their effectiveness in assessing students' oral reading fluency. Nonetheless, it is essential to investigate the assessment strategies (Spinelli 2012) that teachers use to assess students' oral reading fluency in order to deliver effective oral reading techniques. The following lines illustrate some studies from the previous section, oral reading strategies that have used some tools to assess students' oral reading fluency. The studies are presented based on the type of tool; DIBELS, observation, and rubrics. Notably, some studies have used more than one tool to measure students' oral reading fluency.

2.3.3.1. DIBELS: WCPM Measure

For an assisted reading approach, in Özbek and Girli's (2017) mixed methods research to determine the effectiveness of a tablet computer-aided intervention programme for reading fluency, they

have used, for the quantitative part of the study, a WCPM test to assess students' oral reading fluency. Also, a daily observation was used to evaluate students' progress in reading fluency. For Black's (2016) study, two tests were used, but for oral reading fluency, DIBELS was used to measure students' reading rate, automaticity, and word recognition. Additionally, a *t*-test was used to analyse the results of the pretest and posttest scores of students' reading-aloud. Moreover, Rowen et al. (2015), conducted a mixed methods design study on twenty-one third-graders to investigate the effect of choral reading theatre (CRT) on students' reading fluency. Rowen et al. used different tools to assess the oral reading fluency and comprehension. One of the tests was the WCPM test.

Rubin (2016) also used the WCPM test twice in September 2014 and May 2015 to measure students' reading rate and automaticity. The students had to read three texts for sixty seconds for each passage. The results of the pretest and posttest were analysed by using a t-test to measure the difference before and after using the Intervention programme. For the computer-assisted instructions (CAI) study for building oral reading fluency conducted by Musti-Rao, Lo and Plati (2015), DIBELS ORF was used to measure students' sight words and reading fluency. The WCPM was calculated before and after the experiment. Moreover, Al-Kharusi (2014) investigated the impact of the repeated reading strategy on reading fluency, accuracy and speed rate in Oman through a quasi-experimental design. The researcher also used WCPM to measure students' accuracy and speed rate.

Jani, Huckvale, and Howell (2013) focused on speech patterns, stuttering frequency, and stuttering duration. Consequently, they used a Real-Time Analysis to assess students' performance. Real-Time Analysis is a measure that is also used to measure various aspects of fluency, and disfluency in great detail such as hesitation, word repetition, phrase repetition, pauses and so forth. Apparently, the Real-Time Analysis is very similar to DIBELS, but DIBELS is a recent measure that is used widely for

assessing students' oral reading fluency. Moreover, in the same year, Kay et al. (2013) used also DIBELS, in particular, the WCPM test in their study to measure and assess the students' progress after using "phonics awareness", an iPad application, to improve the students' oral reading fluency. Berg and Lyke (2012) also used the WCPM test to measure the oral reading fluency of thirty-eight third, fourth, and fifth graders in Northern Illinois after using multiple reading-aloud strategies for eleven weeks including repeated reading, choral reading, modeling, practice and assisted reading. Finally, both Calo, Woolard-Ferguson, and Koitz (2013) and Marcell and Ferraro (2013) used DIBELS ORF to measure the effect of using the rhyming poetry approach on students' oral reading fluency.

2.3.3.2. Observation

Rowen et al. (2015) as mentioned previously used multiple tools to assess the students' oral reading fluency. Another tool that was used was classroom observation, in which field notes were taken. Notably, the classroom observation was used daily to observe students' performance. Then, teachers take notes on students' weaknesses and their progress throughout the project. Rowen et al. believed that along with observing students, keeping a daily record of students' progress is a significant and valuable tool for teachers to monitor students' performance and to update their instructional strategies to engage and fit the students' needs and levels.

Spinelli (2012) believed that using a variety of classroom assessment techniques provides teachers with a whole clear picture of students' progress and performance. Checking on students' speech fluency during classroom activities and interaction is significant. Therefore, ensuring the usage of daily classroom observation is obligatory for teachers to use with other assessment tools including taking notes and using different types of tests. In Faatz's (2009) study, which was mentioned previously in oral reading strategies, different tools were used to assess the students' fluency and comprehension.

Significantly, in the beginning, the author observed her students and took field notes on their performance. Then, she kept a record of her students' performance.

2.3.3.3. Multidimensional Fluency Scale (MFS): Rubric

Concerning the usage of a rubric as a tool, both Black (2016) and Faatz (2009) also used DIBELS ORF to measure the effects of their approach on students' reading fluency and comprehension too. They also used a rubric, RMFS, to measure students' prosody and contextual meaning of texts. Black and Faatz claimed that prosody and students' understanding should be measured by using a rubric that presents students' progress and level, which cannot be assessed through measuring the number of correct words, pauses, and hesitation. Faatz's (2009) also used different tools to assess her students' fluency and comprehension. For reading fluency rate, a running reading record and an audiotape were used regularly to record students' performance in reading-aloud texts. Moreover, Rasinski's Multidimensional Fluency Scale (MFS) was used to assess the students' rate, phrasing, pace, intonation, and pauses. MFS was also used to measure expressive reading and comprehension. In fact, the scale was a rubric (1-4) to rate reader fluency in the previously mentioned areas. The students' results were illustrated by using tables that indicated their performance level before, during and after the treatment. Interestingly, Faatz triangulated the data gathered from the three assessments tools; observation, the running reading record, the audiotape recordings, and the MFS to assess students' reading thoroughly. Significantly, in terms of measuring and assessing prosody and expressive reading, a rubric is found to be the best tool that educators developed for assessing students' expressive reading (Faatz 2009; Xu 2015; Yoon 2009).

2.3.3.4. Summary of the Studies on Oral Reading Fluency Assessment Methods

Interestingly, most of the current and previously consulted research has used DIBELS ORF to assess students' oral fluency including students' rate, accuracy, phrasing, pace, intonation, smoothness,

and pauses. (Cummings, Park & Schaper 2013; York et al. 2011). Also, a specific measure of DIBELS is called ORF or Word Correct per Minute (WCPM), and was found to be highly used in the consulted literature. Moreover, besides the rubric that DIBELS provides, there are checklists to measure students' reading performance including word recognition. Also, the DIBELS provide a scale measure, a rubric that has criteria to monitor students' progress throughout the year. Though those measures are important, teachers' observations and taking notes are also significant tools to assess students' performance and progress. Interestingly, regardless of the instructional reading methods teachers use, oral reading fluency can be measured using the same tools. Moreover, the previous studies indicated the reliability and validity of those tools that have been used to measure students' fluency. In fact, those tools gained credibility in the literature. However, concerning assessing students' prosody, there is still an issue with the credibility and validity of using rubrics (Haskins & Aleccia 2014). To sum up, students' reading fluency should be monitored regularly throughout an academic year to support them and use the most appropriate reading instructions that matches their interests and levels. Also, reading fluency can be assessed by using more than one tool. It depends on the teachers' purpose and the outcomes that they want to test and evaluate.

2.3.4. Studies on Factors That Affect Oral Reading Fluency

Reading is the basis of almost all processes of learning. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the previous and current studies that have shown the factors that are affecting students' oral reading fluency negatively to avoid them in the future and ensure that our students are provided with the best reading instructions and assessments they need to succeed. Though some of the factors that have been found are beyond the control of schools as was stated in some studies (Geske & Ozola 2008; Van Dijk 2018), this study focused more on the factors that schools can control and handle. The factors that are

found are: (1) having a strong foundation of literacy skills, (2) students' motivation to read, (3) level of texts, (4) genre, (5) classroom environment, (6) anxiety, (7) teachers' knowledge, (8) parents, (9) home environment, (10) practice, and finally, (11) physical health. The following studies present these factors.

One of the recent studies, (Van Dijk 2018), investigated the influence of students' characteristics on early elementary oral reading fluency including grades one, two and three in a North-eastern state. The researcher used a three-step sequential model to analyse two thousand six hundred and forty-nine students' characteristics on their ORF scores. It was found that the students' characteristics such as gender and their basic foundation of English skills can affect their oral reading fluency. For gender, the results presented that girls performed better than boys in the ORF test. Also, the students with a good basic foundation of phonics awareness and word recognition performed better than those, who did not receive a good foundation of English literacy skills.

Rowen et al. (2015) pointed in their study at one of the most significant factors that affect students' reading fluency: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to read and students' attitude towards reading-aloud. Usually, students are driven by their extrinsic motivation in which they focus on the grades they need to get. However, students' intrinsic motivation is the most important for them. Therefore, teachers should address students' intrinsic motivation by providing them with a wide range of different texts such as poetry, novels, plays and short stories that would engage and attract their attention and interest. Using various types of texts and genre could change the students' negative attitudes towards reading-aloud. Therefore, the teachers must make the reading fun for the students.

Cummings, Park, and Schaper (2013) pointed out in their study a significant factor that had an impact on students' oral reading fluency scores, which was passage effect (level of difficulty). Their study was conducted from grade one through grade six. For each grade, there were certain passages,

drawn from DIBELS Next; Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills–Next Edition that students had to read over a period of time. The study suggested that the passages should be developed to match students' capabilities and levels. Similarly, Wallot, Van Rooij and Hollis (2013) recommended in their study that the level of a text should be taken into consideration during the assessment of students' reading fluency. It is impractical to use texts that are higher than the students' abilities and levels. Moreover, the genre should be considered during the assessment. The students must have knowledge about the assessed topic.

Interestingly, Devaney, Foord, and Anne (2012) conducted a case study in a mid-western suburban town in the US to investigate the factors that affected four high school English second language learners' (ESL) reading fluency. It was found that the students' motivation to read, their anxiety about making mistakes and their peers' comments when the students read in the classroom had an effect on the students' performance. Therefore, Devaney, Foord, and Anne recommended that teachers should motivate the students to read and support them. Moreover, the teachers should create a positive classroom environment and build rapport among students so no one in the class would be afraid of making mistakes. A similar interesting study has been conducted by Tysinger, Tysinger, and Diamanduros (2010). They examined the relationship between social anxiety and students' performance in reading fluency and comprehension. The number of the participants was forty-two students from fourth, fifth, and sixth-grade students. The DIBELS ORF and WCPM were used in the study to measure reading fluency. Though Devaney, Foord, and Anne (2012) found that anxiety affected students' reading fluency, in contrast, Tysinger, Tysinger, and Diamanduros (2010) found that anxiety did not affect students' reading fluency, but it affected students' comprehension. Furthermore, there is a study more recent than the previous two studies about the impacts of anxiety, but on the oral narrative speech of students in Iran (Sanaei, Zafarghandi & Sabet 2015). Interestingly, this study revealed the same findings as the Devaney, Foord,

and Anne (2012) study. The findings illustrated that classmates commenting on students' oral reading could affect their oral fluency, though the findings were not that significant. Unfortunately, there are always some students, who try to make fun of their peers whenever they make mistakes i.e. pronouncing words incorrectly in speaking and reading. This hindered other students from trying to speak and read aloud.

York et al. (2011) also investigated the factors that can affect students' reading fluency. The study revealed that teachers' knowledge and coaching had a great impact on students' achievement in oral reading. For teachers, who did not focus on building awareness of sounds, sight words and blending, their students seemed to have difficulty in reading fluency. Significantly, York et al. believed and recommended that integrating technology into the reading assessment helps the teachers to manage students' data and report the results easily. Meanwhile, technology helps to build and improve students' reading fluency because it provides the students with opportunities to listen to instructions, questions and immediate feedback, which support students' learning.

Duursma, Augustyn, and Zuckerman (2008) published an interesting article about the importance of reading aloud to children. In their article, they mentioned some factors that affect students' oral reading fluency and comprehension. They believed that parental education, students' socioeconomic status, and ethnicity had a great impact on literacy skills including oral reading and speaking skills. Also, they highly emphasised the role of parents at home with their children. Students, whose parents read to them at home, seemed to be more fluent. Also, the role of the home environment in which parents encourage their children to read and retell the stories had a positive impact on students' reading-aloud performance. Notably, a similar study was conducted by Geske and Ozola (2008) to investigate the reasons behind the low level of reading literacy among primary school students in fourth grade. They found the same results

as in the Duursma, Augustyn, and Zuckerman (2008) research. It is important for parents to read aloud to their children to help them read fluently and comprehend texts easily. Also, students at the elementary levels should be exposed to a variety of reading-aloud techniques, modeling, and practice to help them grow their reading skills.

Lastly, Hermosa (2002) identified many factors that can affect learner reading and these factors emerge from two main domains, which are psychosocial development (motivation to read, reading interest, readability, reading readiness, emotional problems and family issues), physical and physiological development (mostly health problems: hunger, illness and malnutrition, visual and hearing problems). It is understandable that students with health problems are likely to have academic problems. Thus, more current research studies (Cummings, Park & Schaper 2013; Piper & Zuilkowski 2016; Wallot, Van Rooij & Hollis 2013; York et al. 2011) tried to understand why many young and adult learners with good health still have some difficulties in reading.

2.3.4.1. Summary of the Studies on Factors That Affect Oral Reading Fluency

The previous studies showed many factors that could influence reading fluency including having a strong foundation of literacy skills, students' motivation, level of texts and genre, classroom environment, anxiety, teachers' knowledge, parents, home environment, and finally physical health. Hence, some factors have different levels of effects on students' reading fluency. Moreover, the context of a study can affect the results of that study (Creswell 2005). For example, what affects students in the US (Devaney, Foord, & Anne 2012) might not affect students in Iran (Sanaei, Zafarghandi & Sabet 2015). The number of participants in a study can affect the results of the study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017). Some studies have been conducted on a small number of the population (Devaney,

Foord, & Anne 2012), while other studies had a larger number of participants (Tysinger, Tysinger, & Diamanduros 2010). Accordingly, the outcomes would be clearly different. Therefore, the results of the previous studies could not be generalised wholly to people, who studied English as a second or foreign language (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison 2017). However, further research in other contexts would give more insight to this issue as this study has investigated the impacts of the previous factors in the UAE private schools.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3. Chapter Overview:

This chapter presents an overview of the theoretical underpinning of the research approach and design. The study's context with a detailed description of the participants and the site of the study are presented. Moreover, the instruments utilised for both the qualitative and the quantitative approaches are illustrated and described in depth. For instance, documents analysis, classroom observations, interviews, and questionnaire are presented in an orderly way. Furthermore, this section provides in-depth information about the pilot study, data analysis procedure, validity and reliability of the instruments and finally ethical considerations.

3.1. Theoretical Underpinning

Designing and developing a methodology is one of the most basic steps to successfully conduct research that addresses its objectives and questions. There are five features for a research design that should be taken into consideration before conducting research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Guba 1998; Merriam 2009; Scotland, 2012). These features are the ontology, epistemology, research paradigm, research methodology, and the methods used to collect data. Epistemology is "the study of *knowledge*, of how we know what we know. Whereas ontology and metaphysics are about reality, epistemology is about how human consciousness can interact with that reality" (Merriam 2009, p.9). These principles inform a researcher as to which method to use in order to make the work coherent and compelling.

Furthermore, defining a research paradigm is necessary to select the most suitable methodology to carry out a study. A research paradigm refers to a systematic process or beliefs and ideas about how to collect data (Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Scotland, 2012). Being aware of our own belief system, our ontology, and epistemology assumptions enables us to understand our positions in relation to the knowledge we view and what methodological strategies are needed to address the objectives of a study (Scotland, 2012). Hence, identifying the philosophical underpinning is a vital stage in clarifying the implemented research approach, which supports the credibility of the research findings (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Merriam 2009). According to Guba (1998), the research paradigms can be characterized according to their; ontology; what is the reality, epistemology, how we know something, and methodology; how we go about finding it out. Thus, there are three main common paradigms, which are positivism, constructivism, and pragmatism (Creswell 2007; Guba 1998; Scotland, 2012). The positivism paradigm believes that there is one single reality, which can be known and measured. Accordingly, quantitative methods are used to measure reality. The constructivism paradigm stresses that there is no single reality or truth and that reality needs to be understood and interpreted. Thus, qualitative methods are used to gain multiple realities.

Identifying the research approach, i.e., qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods is an important step to present the study's nature and features (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Merriam 2009). Concerning the qualitative research, many researchers have attempted to define it; thus all of the definitions are mostly similar (Creswell 2007; Creswell & Plano Clark 2007; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Guba 1998; Merriam 2009). Generally, qualitative research is an inquiry approach used for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon. The researcher asks participants questions to collect data to understand the phenomenon. This type of research increases the knowledge of people or situations of that phenomenon.

Therefore, it provides information that can be used for a social change (Merriam 2009). The nature of qualitative research is subjective, which means that different people view and perceive the truth differently. So, people would have different perspectives. The truth is determined by the researcher's experiences and interactions with other people. Hence, multiple truths can be presented. In this study, the researcher used various methods such as document analysis, observations, and interviews to interpret the meaning of the data using personal reflections and previous studies. Thus, this research involved the researcher's biases and beliefs.

On the other hand, quantitative research is an inquiry approach used for describing trends or explaining the relationship between variables (Creswell & Plano Clark 2007; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). In this type of research, the researcher attempts to explain phenomena by collecting numerical data and analysing those data using statistical methods. Randomisation sampling technique can reduce subjective bias. The results of the quantitative research tell if there is a difference between the variables, but not necessarily the reasons behind it, though, the results can be generalisable (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009).

A mixed methods study is a methodology for conducting a single study that involves collecting data from both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Creswell 2005). This approach uses different methods to focus on the same phenomenon. They provide the same data, which is a piece of superior evidence for the results. Due to the downsides of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, a mixed-methods approach was selected to bridge the gaps in the research questions of this thesis and fulfill them (Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). Moreover, a mixed-methods study obtained data through multivariate methods that could not be obtained by either the qualitative (constructivism) or the quantitative (positivism) research methods. Another reason for using the mixed research approach was

to complement one set of results with another and expand a set of results. Generally, it provided comprehensive, rich data and enabled a deep understanding of the study from more than one perspective (Creswell 2005). The mixed methods design also enabled the researcher to understand the problem deeply and capture the whole image of the issue being investigated (Creswell 2005; Creswell & Plano Clark 2007; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). Notably, the mixed methods design is used in different fields such as social science, psychology, and education. Hence, it promotes the conduct of excellent educational research (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009).

Most of the studies that investigated students' oral reading fluency were conducted using empirical research, whereby different methods (quantitative or qualitative) were used and implemented based on the type of research question (Cummings, Park & Schaper 2013; Fuchs et al. 2001; Rubin 2016). For this research, the mixed methods approach was the most suitable approach to address the research questions; which were complex. Accordingly, some questions were addressed using more than one method (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). The mixed methods design helped the researcher to investigate how oral reading fluency was being taught and assessed in private schools. It also helped to generalise the data obtained from the qualitative part of the study to a larger sample to see if the obtained data are implemented in other private schools or not. The mixed methods approach increased the validity and reliability of the collected data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Muijs 2004). Consequently, it could raise the credibility of this research, which was conducted in the UAE context. Furthermore, the results of this mixed method study helped the researcher greatly to create the model for teaching and assessing oral reading fluency.

It is noteworthy that there are three aspects that differentiate the type of mixed methods design. First is the priority given to either the quantitative or qualitative data collection. Second is the sequence

of collecting the quantitative or qualitative data. The third one is the data analysis techniques used to either combine the analysis of data or keep the two types of data separate. The following diagram is adapted from Fraenkel and Wallen (2009). It illustrates the characteristics of mixed methods design and how they are applied to a study.
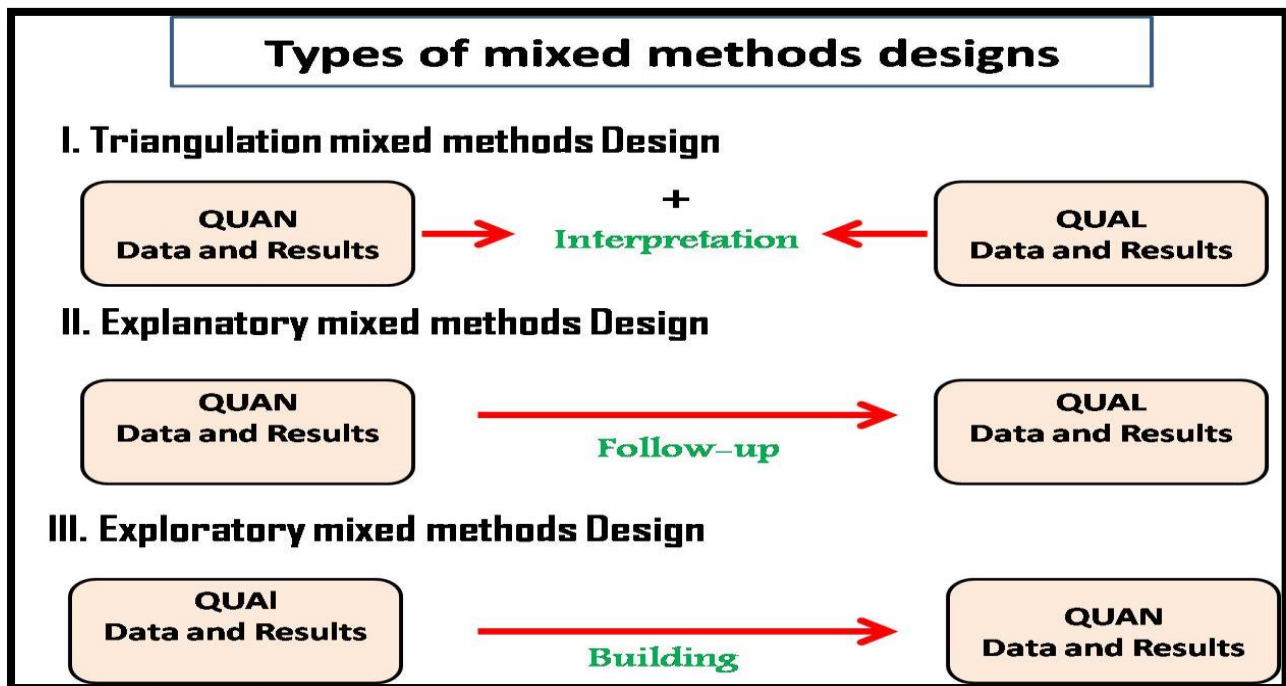
Figure 2: A Sequential Mixed Method Design (adapted from Fraenkel and Wallen 2009)

Overall, the research questions of this study were in line with the sequential exploratory design. The sequential exploratory design has two phases, which are usually implemented to identify essential themes or variables of a particular phenomenon and the relationships among them (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). The purpose of this two-phase study was to explore the participants' practice and experience of teaching and assessing oral reading fluency through document analysis, classroom observation, and interviews. It also investigated the factors that affect a student's oral reading fluency to address and tackle the oral reading fluency through the interviews. The researcher adopted the sequential exploratory design

with the intention of using the qualitative data to develop a questionnaire for the second phase of the study. The research emphasised the qualitative (QUAL) data rather than quantitative (QUAN) data because it gave the researcher deep thick information about the investigated issue. Accordingly, more weight and priority were placed on qualitative data. Meanwhile, it was intended to administer the survey to a larger sample (Muijs 2004) to see how other private schools in the UAE address the investigated issue. Notably, both phases facilitated creating the comprehensive model for teaching and assessing oral reading fluency.

3.1.1. Research Paradigm and Study Purpose

Pragmatism is an American philosophy from the early 20th century that refers to the knowledge (truth) that comes from the experience, actions or situations rather than specific criteria or conditions (Cherryholmes 1992; Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Scotland 2012). This paradigm entails that reality is continuously renegotiated, interpreted, and reconstructed. This paradigm uses the mixed methods design to investigate issues and solve problems comprehensively (Scotland, 2012). Research questions or hypotheses are essential for selecting the research paradigm because they help the researcher to look for the needed data through using the most appropriate tools (Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Merriam 2009; Scotland, 2012). Therefore, this study adopted the pragmatism paradigm/philosophy because it indicates that the researcher does not know where the value of data comes from. Consequently, it allows the researcher to use whatever works to fulfill the research questions (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Tashakkori & Teddlie 2002). Notably, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods complemented each other and added value to this research. The following lines present the purpose of the study and how it is related to the pragmatist philosophy.

Oral reading fluency is a significant skill that has been neglected in various curriculum and educational systems including the UAE public schools. This study has a fourfold purpose; (1) to investigate the use of reading-aloud strategies in private schools in the UAE, (2) to investigate the assessment techniques used for oral reading fluency, (3) to investigate the factors affecting the student's oral reading performance, and finally (4) to build and create a model that presents and illustrates the best teaching and assessment practices that are used to address students' oral reading fluency skill. In this study, the researcher believed that constructing the meaning of the proposed topic mentioned above can help in proposing a model for the Ministry of Education in the UAE about teaching and assessing oral reading fluency. However, pragmatism not only focuses on constructing the meaning of a phenomenon, but it also focuses on the extent to which that meaning can affect the values of the research (Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Tashakkori & Teddlie 2002). Therefore, investigating this study qualitatively in two private schools might not have value in other private schools across the five emirates. Consequently, the quantitative data, questionnaire, which was built upon the qualitative data for a larger sample, enhanced the meaning of the research in other private schools in the UAE.

The essence behind using pragmatism is to investigate the problem by employing all possible methods to address the research question (Cherryholmes 1992; Tashakkori & Teddlie 2002). For this reason, the researcher believes that using a mixed methods approach will help to address the research questions to have a better comprehension of the issue, which is teaching and assessing oral reading fluency. Adopting pragmatism facilitated the creation of a model for teaching and assessing oral reading fluency. This model will be proposed to the Ministry of Education (MOE) in the UAE. Furthermore, the results of this study suggested some recommendations for policymakers and curriculum designers about the significance of integrating reading-aloud strategies into the English program. This study provided

insight for the English teachers in the public schools into the successful reading-aloud strategies that have been used in private schools. Significantly, this study expands upon the results of the literature to the UAE context, which is an entirely new and different context.

3.1.2. Research Approach

During the past decades, different types of research methods; qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods, were used to investigate students' oral reading fluency from different perspectives. This study investigated three aspects of oral reading fluency: reading strategies, assessments methods, and factors that affect students' oral reading fluency. Therefore, adopting the mixed methods approach helped to achieve the research objectives. As stated earlier, the sequential exploratory design was adopted in this study. Significantly, the mixed methods study informs the research methods and the research instruments (Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Merriam 2009). The next lines present the research questions and a summary of the instruments used to answer them, followed by a description of the study's sites, participants and research tools.

3.1.2.1. Research Questions

Research questions are generated and formulated based on the researcher's topic of interest. According to Creswell (2005), the research questions derive from the general purpose statement to more focused, specific questions. The research questions guide the researchers towards their objectives and address the research problem (Cuba 2002; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). Further, the research questions should be clear and focused. In science and social science, the research questions should have reputable data that allows for strong arguable questions (Creswell 2005; Cuba 2002). They can be answered by using multiple resources. Oral reading fluency is selected as a topic of interest because of its importance in an English reading programme. However, it is neglected in the public schools in the UAE as has been

observed. Nevertheless, the private schools in the UAE are focusing on building and improving the students' oral reading fluency. The researcher was interested in how oral reading fluency was being addressed and tackled in private schools. Therefore, the following questions were formulated based on the topic.

1. What are the reading strategies that are used to build and improve students' oral reading fluency?

2. What are the assessment methods that are used for evaluating students' oral reading fluency?

3. What are the teachers' perspectives related to the factors that affect students' oral reading performance?

4. What comprehensive teaching-assessment model can be developed to build and enhance oral reading fluency?

The previous questions were addressed by using multiple instruments in the first phase except for the second question, which was answered mainly during the interviews. Intriguingly, the fourth question was answered based on the data that were collected after completing the two phases of the study. The following table summarises the instruments, methods, participants and data analysis for each question of the study.

Research Questions	Instrument	Qualitative/ Quantitative	Sample/ Participants	Data Analysis
1 & 2	Document Analysis	Qualitative	Students' textbooks for grade 4 and 9 lesson plans	Qualitative Content Analysis
1 & 2	Observation	Qualitative	14 (observations from different grades)	Qualitative Content Analysis
1 , 2 & 3	Interviews	Qualitative	14 (4 interviews with teachers from each grade	Qualitative Content Analysis
1, 2 &3	Survey	Quantitative & Qualitative	privates schools in 5 emirates	Descriptive Statistics + Qualitative Content Analysis

Table 1: Instruments, methods, participants and data analysis for the research questions study (Author)

3.1.2.2. Site Selection Procedures:

The research setting, context, is seen as the physical, social, and cultural site (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017). Hence, in qualitative research, the researcher observes the participants in a natural setting (Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). This kind of research is called on-site research. On-site research refers to the physical movement of the researcher to a particular place to gather information related to research questions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Slavin 1993). Researchers elect field sites for a wide range of reasons. Those reasons could be theoretical, ideological, and interpersonal or combined pragmatic reasons *(Creswell 2005). Thus,* the most important consideration for a research site is to identify the reasons for the selection (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). Also, the site should represent the participants or the sample of a study. Accordingly, choosing the wrong site could have a detrimental effect on the study. So, for the current study, the researcher selected the sites, two schools, where oral

reading fluency was being taught and assessed. Choosing those schools was a difficult and sometimes overwhelming task for the researcher.

As stated earlier in the study approach, this study had two phases. The first phase of the data collection, the qualitative data, took place in two private schools in Fujairah city in the UAE. Fujairah is a small city and yet based on the information provided by the MOE it has twelve private schools. After getting permission to conduct the study from the MOE, three schools were visited many times to get their approval to observe English reading classes and conduct interviews with the English teachers, who taught cycles one and two students. However, one school agreed and allowed the researcher to collect the required data. Then, the researcher proposed to another four different schools and one school agreed to welcome the researcher. Other private schools in Fujairah were far from the researcher's workplace. Hence, it was hard to visit and ask them for their approval since the researcher could not get permission to leave work. The maximum leaving hours were only two, considering the trip time to those schools, which takes more than an hour for the one-way trip. The initial plan was to collect qualitative data from three schools. However, with the constant refusal of the visited schools and their sensitivity towards the study, it was decided that two schools were enough to collect the essential data. Accordingly, the selection of the schools was based on their willingness to support the research.

The two selected schools had students from kindergarten to grade twelve. One school followed the American curriculum, and the other followed two curriculums; British and Indian. The Institutional Licensure Administration manages both schools under the supervision of the MOE. However, the direct management of those two schools was led by the principals of the two schools. Intentionally, the researcher selected the sites where oral reading fluency was being taught and assessed. Notably, the sites were accessible to the researcher and somehow near to the researcher's workplace, which facilitated, to some extent, the researcher's journey. For the site of the second phase of the study in which quantitative

and qualitative data was collected, the researcher asked the MOE to send an e-survey to the private schools English' teachers, who taught cycles one and two students in the seven emirates. However, for some unknown reasons, the MOE circulated the online survey across five emirates only, which were Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain (UAQ), Al Fujairah, and Ras Al Khaimah (RAK).

3.1.2.3. Participants

It is crucial for the success of a study to consider at an early stage how and where the participants will be identified and participated in the research (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Merriam 2009). Thus, based on the investigation of the current study, it was found that the public schools in Fujairah were not focusing on teaching and assessing reading fluency until the year 2016. Accordingly, the focus of this study was on private schools, which taught and assessed oral reading fluency. According to many well-known authors, one school is enough for collecting qualitative data (Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Merriam 2009). However, the researcher was very enthusiastic about collecting rich data about the investigated issue in order to create a questionnaire that was distributed to the private school's English teachers, who taught cycles one and two across the five Emirates in the second stage of collecting the data, which was used to create a model for teaching and assessing oral reading fluency. Consequently, the study took place in cycles one and two, grades one to nine, of the selected private schools. In the beginning, the study intended to focus on grades two, four, six and eight English teachers. Grades three, five, and seven were not selected because they were close to the previous grades mentioned above, respectively, and the data would, therefore, be alike. However, due to the schools' decisions and the prepared schedules for the researcher's observations and interviews, a grade from each cycle in each school was observed, and the teachers of the observed classes were interviewed.

Grade one was not in the initial plan to be observed because students cannot yet read at that stage. However, the researcher was informed, when she sat with the principals of the two schools that early literacy skills such as reading sight words and blending words with emphasis on the phonological awareness and sounds were taught in kindergarten. Consequently, the students started reading in grade one. Remarkably, all the teachers, who were observed and interviewed were from different ethnicities and cultures. Male and female English teachers were observed and interviewed.

To have consistency in the data collection, the target participants for the questionnaire were also English teachers in cycles one and two in the five emirates. Notably, the English teachers in private schools were from different countries such as the UK, India, Pakistan, Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. The anonymity of school sites and participants was protected. There was no description of the school and participants in any way that would allow internal or external personnel to identify any of them. Instead, letters were used to refer to the interviewees and observed classes.

3.1.2.4. Sampling Frame and Methods

One of the key steps in conducting research is to create a sampling plan, which identifies the sampling frame and the sampling method (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). The sampling frame is a listing process of every member of the population, using the sampling criteria to define membership in the population. The sampling method refers to the process by which a number of people is selected to represent a larger group, which is known as the target population (Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). There is a difference between a population and a sample. The population is all the people or items with the characteristic a researcher needs to understand (Creswell 2005; Creswell & Plano Clark2007). The target population is an entire set of individuals or elements, who meet the sampling criteria (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Slavin 1993). A sample is a smaller collection of units, from

a population, that is used to find out the truth about that population (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). Another concept that needs to be defined and clarified is that members of the sample are called subjects or participants (Creswell 2005).

There are two types of sampling approaches, which are probability, random, samples and non-probability samples. Each type has its sub-approaches. For example, simple random samples include a systematic random sample, stratified random sample, multistage sample, multiphase sample, and cluster sample (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). In contrast, non-probability samples include a convenience sample, purposive sample, and quota (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). It is noteworthy to mention that the sampling process comprises of several stages such as defining the population of concern, determining the sample size and implementing the sampling plan for data collection. The following paragraphs explain the sampling frame and sampling methods in relation to this study thoroughly.

The first phase of the study investigated the students' oral reading fluency in private schools in Fujairah city. So, the sampling frame was all private schools, twelve schools, in Fujairah. Therefore, this study focused on non-probability samples. The purposive sample was used and implemented to collect accurate data that represents the population (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). Based on the nature of qualitative research, the first phase of this study, the purposive sampling technique was adopted (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009) to collect information that meets the study purpose and objectives. Sampling aimed to explore and build meaning from participants. Therefore, generalisation, extending the findings from a sample to a larger population, in qualitative research was not a guiding criterion (Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Meriam 2009).

Seven schools were visited to get permission to conduct the study. However, only two schools agreed to welcome the researcher. Due to the researcher's work issues, the other five remaining schools

in Fujairah were not visited. Yet the sample had to determine the much-needed data. For this reason, once the researcher obtained the required information and the data started to repeat from other participants, then data saturation was achieved. Therefore, the participants and the sample size were selected in terms of adequacy and appropriateness (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Meriam 2009). Consequently, the researcher selected English teachers in private schools to gain in-depth data and knowledge about the strategies that were being used to build, improve and assess the student's oral reading fluency. Cycles one and two had a greater emphasis on the students' reading fluency than cycle three. Accordingly, English teachers in these two cycles were selected for classroom observations and interviews.

In terms of sample size for the qualitative part, the number of observed classes was fourteen; eight classes from school A and six classes from school B. Consequently, the same number of interviews was conducted. Based on the thoughts of different well-known authors in the field of conducting research, one participant is adequate to conduct a qualitative study if it addresses the purposes of the study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Meriam 2009). So, fourteen observed classes with the same number of interviews were suitable for the qualitative part of this study.

Regarding the quantitative part of the study, the second phase, in which an online questionnaire was circulated targeting all the private schools across the five Emirates, the sample size is determined by the type of quantitative study conducted, and data analysis techniques (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Lavrakas 2008; Rea & Parker 2005; Slavin 1993). The target population, an entire set of individuals or elements, who met the sampling criteria (Slavin 1993), was all of the private schools across the five emirates. The reason behind targeting all the private schools was to get more responses since access to the participants in those schools was not easy. The number of private schools obtained in the five emirates

was sixty-four (n=64), and the number of the English teachers was six hundred and sixty-one (n=661) including cycle three English teachers, which were not the target. The information provided by the MOE was not as clear as the researcher had wished. However, this study did not focus heavily on the number of participants as the focus was more on confirming the information found during the first phase of the study and generalise it to a larger sample. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2009), a sample of 100 participants is sufficient for descriptive analysis. Notably, the number of obtained responses for the survey was one hundred and ninety-three (n=193).

3.2. Data Collection Instruments

This study adopted a sequential mixed methods design (exploratory), which focused mainly on the qualitative data and allowed the researcher to use more instruments as needed (Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). Using different instruments allowed the researcher to understand the problem more holistically and enhance the accuracy of the results. Hence, the quantitative data supported the validity and reliability of the qualitative data (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). In this study, there were two phases. The first phase was the qualitative phase in which documents (lesson plans, and the student's English textbooks), classroom observations and interviews were used respectively. The study sought to understand how oral reading fluency was being taught and assessed and what factors could affect the student's oral reading fluency. The second phase was administering the online questionnaire to all private schools across the five Emirates: Sharjah, Ajman, UAQ, Al Fujairah, and RAK. The next lines introduce and discuss the tools used in the current research respectively. The following diagram was created by the researcher to present the phases with more detail.

Summary of the Sequential Mixed Methods Design

Phase I : Qualitative Research

Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative Findings
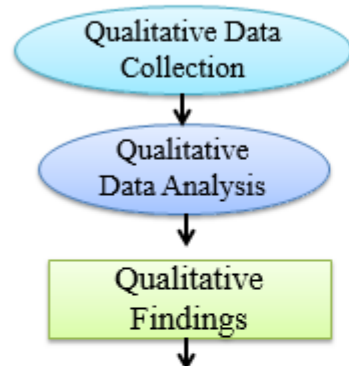
- Document Analysis: A grade-four student's English textbooks and lessons plans
- Classroom observations
- Semi-structured interviews

- Qualitative content analysis

- Themes for all of the research questions covered

Phase II : Quantitative Research

Quantitative Data Development+ extra Qualitative data

Quantitative + Qualitative Data Analysis

Quantitative +Qualitative Findings

- Online questionnaire, which has both quantitative and qualitative questions.
- Administered to all private schools in five emirates.
- Descriptive statistics
- Qualitative content analysis

- Generalizability of data
- Creating a model for teaching and assessing oral reading fluency

Figure 3: A Sequential Mixed Method Design (Author)

3.2.1. Qualitative Document analysis:

Document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to construct meaning of the investigated topic (Bowen 2009). It refers to a systematic process in which printed, or electronic documents are reviewed and evaluated in certain areas (Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). It requires that data must be examined and interpreted to elicit meaning and develop empirical knowledge about it (Merriam 2009). To elaborate, the document analysis involves reading, skimming, scanning, and interpretation. Textbooks, newspapers, essays, magazines, pictures,

articles, cookbooks, songs, political speeches, novels, advertisements, and pictures are sorts of human communications presented in documents. Accordingly, some documents were selected to obtain meticulous information about the students' oral reading fluency. Those documents were lesson plans of the observed reading classes and the students' textbooks in particular the textbooks for grade four in the two schools.

Document analysis is valuable for collecting qualitative data. It is a valid research method that helps in policy evaluation and reform (Bowen 2009). The purpose of the document analysis is to create a model and generalise the collected data to a larger sample (Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Merriam 2009) in the second phase of this study. Therefore, predefined themes were prepared for the documents analysis as it was prepared for the observation to facilitate gathering information from different sources (Bowen 2009) employed in this study. Those themes were related to the research questions: reading-aloud instructions and assessment methods. It is worth mentioning that the document analysis works best when it is used in combination with other qualitative research methods to understand a phenomenon comprehensively from multiple sources of evidence (Bowen 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Hodder 2001). Therefore, for this research study, the documents analysis was used along with classroom observations and interviews to seek convergence and corroboration of the student's oral reading fluency (Hodder 2001; Rapley 2007).

By investigating and examining data collected through different methods, the researcher verified the findings (Bowen 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Merriam 2009). Hence, it reduced the impact of the investigator's potential bias that could exist in the qualitative study (Bowen 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Hodder 2001; Merriam 2009; Rapley 2007). It was found in the literature that documents analysis can produce extensive descriptions of a phenomenon (Bowen 2009; Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen

2009; Merriam 2009). Consequently, in this study, the document reviews were designed to identify the fluency reading instructions for oral reading fluency and how it is assessed. The student's textbooks and the lesson plans were both used to find out about the oral reading instructions or activities and the assessment methods that were implemented in reading classes. Notably, the student's English textbooks are the main source of instructional materials and contents for delivering lessons to students (Cunningsworth 2005). The textbooks allow the researcher to understand the underlying beliefs about how reading fluency takes place inside the classroom. Most importantly, the student's English textbooks give insight into how reading instructions are articulated to effectively enhance students' oral reading fluency (Cunningsworth 2005). It is worth mentioning that the teacher's guide was used to assist the investigation of students' textbooks to clarify any vague or unclear instructions and, at the same time, to find more about reading-aloud strategies and assessment techniques. However, the teacher's guide was used but not to a great extent since the access to it was a bit complicated.

Thus, documents analysis has both pros and cons that the researcher should be aware of. One of the benefits of the document analysis is to uncover meaning and develop an outcome which might involve understanding of the issue being investigated, and this is the immense value of the documents analysis (Bowen 2009; Merriam 2009; Rapley 2007). It helps to gain deeper insight into the issue. Moreover, the documents analysis increases the validity and credibility of a study, but results of the documents analysis should be triangulated with other findings from other sources in order to verify the findings and corroborate the evidence (Bowen 2009; Creswell 2005; Merriam 2009; Rapley 2007). The documents analysis alone might not provide sufficient details to answer a research question. Furthermore, the document analysis consumes less time comparing it to other qualitative tools such as interviews (Bowen

2009; Merriam 2009). Usually, the documents are available and accessible to the researchers (Bowen 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Merriam 2009). However, for this study, it was hard to obtain all of the lesson plans for the observed classes. Bowen (2009) believed that the absence or difficulty in obtaining the documents needed for analysis might suggest something about the people participating in a study. Therefore, the researcher tried to investigate this issue and found that some participants were extremely sensitive about providing their lesson plans because they believed that their careers might be affected negatively. The researcher was able to dispel those misconceptions of the participants in a professional and ethical manner. Besides, the document analysis has served mostly as a complement to the classroom observation. The selection of the documents might involve a researcher's bias and affect the authenticity and representativeness of the chosen documents (Bowen 2009; Merriam 2009). Thus, the lesson plans obtained were not selected by the researcher, but were based on the schedule prepared for the researcher to observe the reading classes. Significantly, the purpose of the documents analysis should be taken into consideration during the analysis process (Bowen 2009; Rapley 2007), and therefore, the researcher had her own checklist guide to examine the documents.

As mentioned earlier, there are two kinds of documents that were used: the student's English textbooks and lesson plans. The student's textbooks are one of the most important elements of teaching and learning English (Griffith & Rasinski 2004; Khine 2014; Ornstein, Pajak & Ornstein 2015; Tankersley 2003). The quality of textbook contents affects the learning process as they are used as main references for information (Khine 2014; Tankersley 2003). For this reason, international organisations such as UNESCO have a completed strategy for analysing textbooks (Khine 2014). However, this study did not evaluate the students' textbooks, but investigated the instructions or the activities and assessments for oral reading fluency. To develop students' oral reading fluency, it is important to provide the students with opportunities to read aloud several times. Therefore, using different reading-aloud strategies and

rich textbooks that address different levels is required to foster students' reading fluency (Padak & Rasinski 2008; Rasinski 2014). Significantly, the students' English textbooks for grade four in both schools have been selected, explored and analysed to point out the reading-aloud strategies and the assessment methods. The selection of grade four textbooks was based on the advice of the Director of Studies (DoS) and some experts.

Notably, the textbooks in both schools were addressed to learners of English as a Foreign Language. The necessity to analyse the textbook was imposed by the fact that qualitative research requires robust data collection methods and records of the research procedure (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Merriam 2009). Consequently, the analysis of the textbooks would yield insight into how oral reading fluency was addressed. It was, therefore, important to explore activities imposed by the textbooks and understand the pedagogy that was used to promote oral reading fluency. Moreover, the teachers' guidebooks in both schools were explored to find out if there were other techniques that were suggested by the English programmes and not included in the students' textbooks. Also, the teachers' guidebooks in both schools were investigated to clarify any ambiguity faced in the students' textbooks.

Furthermore, some lesson plans were obtained for further investigation. Lesson plans present instructions that should be demonstrated in a class (Cameron 2001; Harmer 2007). They should include the goals, objectives, activities, media, and assessments techniques (Harmer 2007). Notably, the lesson plans show how the outcomes of the English programme are presented in real classes. Thus, the lesson plans and the students' English textbooks alone were not a sufficient source to investigate oral reading fluency. Accordingly, the documents analysis along with the observation provided rich, detailed data about the issue. The observation data confirmed what was obtained from the textbooks and the lesson plans. Interestingly, the observation data expanded on the results of the document analysis. In essence,

this study was looking at the pedagogy of oral reading fluency from two documents resources; primary and secondary sources, observations and interviews to have a clear image of the investigated issue.

Two checklists were created by the researcher to guide her through the investigation of the documents. The checklists were used to investigate reading-aloud instructions and assessment techniques that were used for oral reading fluency. Hence, there are few differences between the checklist guide used to analyse the student's textbooks and the lesson plans. The textbook guide has a title at the top of the page followed by some introductory details, such as the grade level, name of the textbook, authors, publisher, year of publishing and type of books: language book or workbook. The body of the guide has the variables: reading-aloud strategies and oral reading assessment techniques. For each variable, some key items are given a letter to facilitate taking notes during the analysis process. These are also written on the guide page. There are three columns in the body of the guide. The first column presents the variables. The second column illustrates the page number and details about the investigated variables. Finally, the third column is for comments. One row is added for miscellaneous; any valuable point that the researcher did not think of. The following completed form presents the guide that was used to investigate the student's English textbooks for grade four in school A.

Checklist Guide for Students' Textbooks		

Name of the book: Longman Person Cornerstone, language book grade 4 **Publisher** : Person **year of publication**: 2009 **Authors**: Anna Uhl Chamot, Jim Cummins, and Sharroky Hollie

Variables/ themes	Student's Textbook Page: Description And Details	Comments
A: Reading strategies	**F + D** the instruction on page 11 said: "listen. Then read each word aloud". Furthermore, on the same page, there was another activity in which the instruction said: "Work with a partner. Take turns. Read the sentences".	Scan the page and attach a copy
B: Assessment strategies	**C** there was a text at the end of each unit that students have to read aloud. i.e. in unit one page 63, the instruction said: "listen to the sentences. Pay attention to the groups of words. Read aloud". There were three factual sentences that students had to listen to. Then, read them aloud. Additionally, on the same page, there was instruction for a text that contains hundred-thirty words. Notably, the number of words in each line of the passage was stated. The instruction said: "work in pairs. Take turns reading the passage below aloud for one minute. Count the number of words you read".	Scan the page and attach a copy
Miscellaneous	Not all instructions were clear in the students book! The teacher's guidebook is used to clarify the instruction in students textbook. The teacher's guidebook has more reading aloud strategies for building fluency. Also, it describes how to use WCPM test.	Attach a copy of some fluency strategies.

Reading strategies:
A: Modeling: i.e. Teacher or student reads to whole group or teacher reads to small group
B: Assisted Reading, i.e. using audio tapes, CDs, tablets, computer, etc.

C: Choral reading i.e. reading together
D: Repeated reading
E: Reading Practice: independent reading
F: Pair reading i.e. partner reading
G: Rhyming poetry
H: Reader's theatre

Assessment strategies:
A: Observation
B: Rubric
C: WCPM

Figure 4: Checklist guide for analysing the students' English textbooks (Author)

The checklist guide for the lesson plans also has a title at the top of the page followed by grade level, lesson plan title, time, duration and boys/girls class. The body of the checklist also has two variables: reading-aloud strategies and oral reading assessment techniques. For each variable, there are the same key terms or sub-variables as in the checklist for the textbooks. There are five columns in the body of the guide. The first column presents the variables and the last column presents comments. The three columns in the middle represent the parts of a lesson. It is important to mention that no software was used to analyse the documents. They were analysed traditionally using a paper and pen method. The following is an example of one completed checklist that was used to investigate a lesson plan for grade 4.

Checklist Guide for Lesson plan

Grade Level: 4   Day/Date: Mon 19-2-2018   Time: 7:50-8:40   Class Duration: 50 min   Students No. 34   Boys/Girls Class: Mix
School: A

Variables/themes	First part of the lesson	Middle part of the lesson	The last part of the lesson	Comments
A: Reading strategies	**A:** the teacher began the reading activity by displaying the difficult words in the passage. Then, the teacher read the passage with articulation and pronunciation.	No more reading aloud	Nothing	Scan the page and attach a copy
B: Assessment strategies	No assessment related to oral reading fluency was found.	-	-	Ask the teacher
Miscellaneous	Technology is integrated to improve and develop students' oral reading fluency i.e. videos on YouTube.			There is no consistency between the plan and what happened during the observation.

Reading strategies:
A: Modeling: i.e. Teacher or student reads to whole group or teacher reads to small group
B: Assisted Reading, i.e. using audio tapes, CDs, tablets, computer, etc.

C: Choral reading i.e. reading together
D: Repeated reading
E: Reading Practice: independent reading
F: Pair reading i.e. partner reading
G: Rhyming poetry
H: Reader's theatre

Assessment strategies:
A: Observation
B: Rubric
C: WCPM

Figure 5: Checklist guide for analysing lesson plans (Author)

3.2.2. Observation

Observation is one of the greatest tools to study a phenomenon which takes place in a natural context. Classroom observation is a fundamental tool that a researcher can primarily use to gather data about the subject matter in question. It is defined as a formal or informal process in which an observer, a teacher, an administrator, or a researcher takes notes or records the instructor's teaching practices and the student's actions on a specific issue (Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Meriam 2009). Classroom observation has been used for a long time to assess the quality of teaching instructions and materials delivered to the students (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). It is also used to measure and judge the

consistency between the textbooks standards, plans, and the authentic delivery of the materials (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Slavin 1993). Therefore, in this study, classroom observation has been selected as a strategic, methodological framework in order to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the pedagogical strategies and approaches that teachers have been employing in their classrooms to improve students' oral reading fluency. It is also used to increase the researcher's understanding of how data obtained from document analysis derived from lesson plans and students' textbooks can be more deeply understood and more effectively applied to real-life educational scenarios and practices.

Usually, the classroom observation takes place in a classroom or other learning environment. Therefore, the classroom observation was selected as a tool to obtain an in-depth knowledge of the instructional practices that the teachers used in their classrooms to improve the student's oral reading fluency (Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). Furthermore, classroom observation leads to improved understanding of how the instructions can be modified or implemented as good models for improving education (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). It is important to point out that the findings from the observational research have provided a coherent, well-substantiated knowledge base about effective instructional practices for teaching and that they contributed to instructional theories (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Meriam 2009; Slavin 1993). Significantly, there are different roles that the observer can take during classroom observation. These roles are participant observation, non-participant observation, naturalistic observation and simulation (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Merriam 2009). This study adopted both non-participant observation and naturalistic observation. The non-participant naturalistic observation allowed the researcher to record things that happen naturally in the classroom. Accordingly, the researcher was a complete observer, no participation or involvement during the class activities. It was

good to apply a non-participant naturalistic observation because it did not affect the action of the teachers or the students.

The researcher used a checklist guide, which identified the types of reading-aloud strategies such as repeated reading, choral reading, and modeling strategies, and the assessment techniques such as rubrics, observations, and WCPM tests. The checklist has some preliminary details such as grade level, day and date, time, class duration and the number of students. The body of the checklist has a table that consists of seven columns and four rows. The first columns represents the variables in addition to a row for miscellaneous. The next five columns illustrate the class time divided into five periods; each period is ten minutes. The final column is for comments. Letters that represent the sub-variables, written under the table, were used to fill the checklist. The following form represents a completed checklist that was used during classroom observations.

Checklist Guide for Classroom Observations

Grade Level: 3 Day/Date: Tuesday 20-2-2018   Time: 8:45-9:30   Class Duration: 45min Students: 33   Boys/Girls Class:: Girls
School A

Variables/ themes	0-10 mins	11-20 mins	21-30 mins	31-40 mins	41-45/50 mins	Comments
A: Reading strategies	pre-taught new words, discussed sequencing words and the meaning and importance of punctuation marks for expressive reading **A**: modeling the new vocabulary	**A** The teacher reads the text for the students in its entirety. **C**: read together /low level group **D**: low level	-	-	-	The beginning of the class is devoted for reading aloud and fluency but the rest for comprehension activities Many strategies are integrated in one class
B: Assessment strategies	-	Observation followed by Immediate feedback				
Miscellaneous Notes						

Reading strategies:
A: Modeling: i.e. Teacher or student reads to whole group or teacher reads to small group   Assessment strategies:
B: Assisted Reading, i.e. using audio tapes, CDs, tablets, computer, etc.   A: Observation
                                                                                B: Rubric
C: Choral reading i.e. reading together   C: WCPM
D: Repeated reading
E: Reading Practice: independent reading
F: Pair reading i.e. partner reading
G: Rhyming poetry
H: Reader's theatre

Figure 6: Checklist guide for classroom observations

Furthermore, a paper and pen method was used for taking notes along with the checklist for any new data. In the initial plan of this research, the schools' principals, teachers, and students would be asked for their permission to videotape the observed classes to support the taken notes. However, this was not approved. Therefore, to avoid losing data and facilitate the analysis process, the researcher reviewed the notes and completed the checklists and modified them directly after conducting the observations. Fourteen classrooms' observations (n=14) were completed. Those observations were conducted in English reading classes in a variety of grades from grade one to grade nine in two different private schools.

As with any tool used in research, there are some limitations to the classroom observation. For example, a researcher's bias can interfere with the drawing of valid conclusions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). Hence, the classroom observations were conducted using a checklist that guides the researcher during classroom observation. The checklist was prepared based on the research questions and literature reviews. It was sent to some experts to get feedback, comments, and approval. Furthermore, the completed checklists were sent to the observed teachers along with the interviews responses to get their confirmation of the collected data. Another limitation of the observation is that the observer might affect the teacher's and students' performance because they know they are being observed (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Meriam 2009; Slavin 1993). Therefore, they could perform better than in the regular daily classes. This could be a threat to the validity and reliability of the collected data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Meriam 2009; Slavin 1993). Thus, the information about the purpose of the observation was not informed either to principals of the schools or the observed teachers to avoid affecting the teachers' performance and the data collection (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). Furthermore, the number of observations and the actual amount of time that is required to obtain the data

needed from each observation can be a limitation of the observation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Meriam 2009; Slavin 1993). Consequently, fourteen observations were conducted to enhance the reliability and validity of the obtained data. Once, the data started to repeat itself, the saturation level was achieved and therefore, the data was reliable and valid. It is worth mentioning that classroom observation was a complementary tool for the information obtained from the document analysis to ensure the accuracy of findings (Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Meriam 2009). It increased the researcher's understanding of how the data obtained from the document analysis was applied in real practice.

3.2.3. Semi-structured In-depth Interviews:

Kvale (1983) stated that the purpose of the qualitative research interview "is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to the interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena" (p.174). Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) believed that the interview is used to uncover people beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions of specific topics, which is entirely appropriate in the qualitative naturalistic inquiry. It is also used in educational settings to explore and construct a broad meaning of how an issue is being applied and assessed (Merriam 2009; Opdenakker 2012). Moreover, the interview allowed the participants in this case, English teachers, to express their experience of the investigated topic freely. Consequently, the interview provided in-depth, reliable and qualitative data.

There are multiple ways that the interview can be conducted through to collect data. These include face to face interviews, phone interviews, and internet interviews, which could be conducted by using a variety of online applications (Opdenakker 2012; Wengraf 2006). This study adopted both face to face interviews and phone interviews, but it relied more on face to face interviews. Some of the advantages of the face to face interview are consideration of the voice, intonation, and body language of the

interviewee (Merriam 2009). Those cues can add more information and meaning to their responses. Face to face interviews also allow the interviewer to record the interview for note-taking support, undoubtedly with the consent of the interviewee (Merriam 2009; Opdenakker 2012; Wengraf 2006). Thus, the interview is more time consuming (Merriam 2009). While the phone interview is flexible, it can reach more participants. However, it is hard to create a good interview atmosphere and get some cues as in the face to face interview, but it depends on what the interviewer looks for (Creswell 2005; Opdenakker 2012; Wengraf 2006). In this study, most of the interviews were conducted face to face according to the English teacher interviewees', schedules to create a good interview ambiance. They were conducted in different places at the schools that were selected based on the teachers' decisions and preferences. Also, phone call interviews were used when the time was not convenient for some of the interviewees. The questions of the interview were open-ended; therefore, the researcher asked the participants for permission to use the audio recorder to avoid the loss of data during the process of taking notes.

Interviews are categorised into three types: structured interview, semi-structured interview, and unstructured interview based on their purpose. According to the qualitative nature of this study, the semi-structured interview was chosen as the last main source for obtaining accurate information and insights into the student's oral reading fluency. It was a good method to collect in-depth information systematically from several teachers as it allowed the interviewer to ask supplementary questions for clarification (Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Wengraf 2006). The interview questions focused on the questions of the study, provided earlier in the methodology, which were about the teaching strategies, the assessment techniques, and the factors that affect students' oral reading fluency. The interview questions were designed to be open-ended questions, a characteristic of the semi-structured interview (Opdenakker 2012; Wengraf 2006). Interviewees were asked a series of open-ended questions

in the same order and wording. Furthermore, the semi-structured interview was a flexible tool. Therefore, the researcher invited the participants to add any relevant information that they thought was valuable and necessary. Notably, the interview questions were developed ahead based on the research questions and literature review. The following lines present the interview questions guide.

Interview Questions

Section one: This interview is being used to collect data for a research paper. The purpose of this interview is to explore oral reading strategies (reading aloud), factors affecting students oral fluency and assessment strategies used for oral reading fluency in private schools in Fujairah city. All personal information that you provide will be held in a strict confidence.

Conditions of Participation
- I recognize that by completing the interview, I agree to be a part of the study.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time and my data will then be excluded from the analysis.
- I understand that my participation will remain confidential.
- I understand that the results of this study may be published.

Section two: Tell us a little bit about yourself: *(opt = optional)*

1. Age (opt):
2. Years of experience: 1-5   6-10   11-15   more than 16
3. Curriculum; **American/British**
4. Nationality:
5. Teaching Grade:

Section three: questions

- *Reading-aloud Strategies*
1. How many reading classes do you have per week? And how often do you focus on oral reading fluency?
2. What reading strategies do you use to improve students' oral reading fluency?
3. What is your overall opinion of these strategies that you mentioned on students' reading fluency?
4. Do you think there is a direct link (or correlation) between oral reading fluency and a student's reading comprehension?

- *Assessment Methods*
5. How do you assess and evaluate students' oral reading strategies? Any tools?

- *Factors Affecting Students' Oral Reading Fluency*
6. From your point of view, what things (factors) affect students' oral reading fluency?

7. Would you like to add or say something?

Debriefing: Thank you for your valuable time. If you are interested in a copy of the results, let me know and I will email it to you. For further inquiries, please email me at 2015121019@student.buid.ac.ae .

Figure 7: Interview questions

Overall, the interview had three sections. Section one of the interview guide was for welcoming and explaining the study purpose and ethical procedure of the interview. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher, interviewer, thanked the participants for sharing their experience. The researcher assured the participants' confidentiality and anonymity. Section two had some demographic questions about the teachers, which included the grade level, years of experience, and country. The third section included seven questions that were divided into three themes: reading-aloud strategies; assessment methods and the factors that affect students' oral reading fluency. Finally, the interview ended with closing questions and debriefing.

3.2.4. Questionnaire

Having finished the document analysis, classroom observations and interviews, the data obtained assisted in refining and redesigning the survey's questions, which were solely prepared by the researcher. Lavrakas (2008) defined a survey as a way of collecting data about specific characteristics, actions, attitudes or views of a large group of people. Others believed that surveys are used to assess or evaluate the effects of specific treatments, programmes or a strategy (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). Consequently, designing a survey is a complicated task (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Rea & Parker 2005). It requires meticulous planning as well as developing the questions (Rea & Parker 2005). Therefore, the survey in this study was designed with the help of Rea and Parker's (2005) comprehensive guide for designing and conducting survey research. Nevertheless, the survey needed a lot of time and effort to prepare.

There are different types of surveys. These types are categorised based on the instrumentation and the span of time involved (Lavrakas 2008; Rea & Parker 2005). For instrumentation, the surveys include questionnaires and interviews. As for the span of time used, the surveys are classified into cross-sectional surveys and longitudinal surveys. This study adopted a cross-sectional survey to collect data

from English teachers at just one point in time. The researcher undertook an online survey because of various factors which included the convenience of the participants (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Lavrakas 2008). It also permitted great access to distant and inaccessible participants (Lavrakas 2008). It had no cost since there was no need to print it (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Lavrakas 2008; Rea & Parker 2005). Significantly, the survey alone was not sufficient to investigate the student's oral reading fluency. Using a mixed methods design in this study added credibility to the research outcomes (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009).

It is important to point out that before starting the actual procedures of collecting the data, a first draft of the questionnaire was created based on the results of the pilot study, observation and interviews, and the literature review. Thus, the final version of the questionnaire was developed and refined after conducting the qualitative part of the study, the first phase, due to it depending heavily on the results of that phase. The final version of the survey contained demographic data and four sections. The questionnaire started with the study title followed by the study purpose, conditions of participation and demographic questions as recommended by Rea and Parker (2005). The demographic section was about age, nationality, years of experience and levels they teach, curriculum and city. The demographic data was not accounted for in this thesis study. However, it provided useful data to make some interpretation in the analysis of the findings as well as future studies, which will focus, for example, on the curriculum and teaching grades. The remaining sections of the study were created based on a Likert scale.

Overall, the survey had three sections that included thirty questions with the demographic questions. The first section had four parts, which were about the overall use of reading-aloud techniques, the frequency of using various oral reading strategies, teachers' perception of integrating technology in their reading fluency instructions and finally listing other reading-aloud techniques. The second section

had two parts, which were about the factors that the teachers believed might affect the students' oral reading fluency. The third and final section also had two parts about the types of assessment method used to measure the students' oral reading such as a rubric, observation, and DIBELS: WCPM test. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the statements in each section, which were graded in most of the statements from 1 to 5 were; 1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral/undecided, 4 agree and 5 strongly agree. Some other parts also used the five-point Likert scale, but with different measuring points that suited the statements. The measuring points started with 1 never, 2 rarely, 3 sometimes, 4 very often and 5 always. It is worth mentioning, in each section, there was an open-ended question that asked participants to add any more valuable point that was related to the section. The questionnaire ended with a debriefing (see Appendix 1). The following lines show the survey questions.

3.3. Data Collection Procedures

To address the research questions, different tools were used in the sequential exploratory mixed methods design. The study started and focused significantly on multiple qualitative tools and ended using one quantitative tool. The following lines present the procedures that were taken to collect the obtained data from the document analysis, observation, interviews and the questionnaire respectively.

3.3.1. Documents Analysis Procedures

Before getting schedules from both schools to conduct classroom observations and interviews, the researcher began to look at the students' English textbooks by asking friends and acquaintances to get their childrens' (who were studying in the two visited schools) textbooks. At the beginning of the exploration of the textbook process, different textbooks from different grades were explored. Thus, after consulting with some experts and the DoS of the programme, grade four English textbooks in both schools were selected for exploration. Before starting the actual investigation of the textbooks, overviews

were obtained concerning the books' publishers, years of publication, themes, book introduction, and contents of the textbooks. Reading-aloud strategies and assessment methods of oral reading fluency were investigated in the students' textbooks. Disappointingly, the teacher's guidebooks were not received for further investigation. However, it was possible for the researcher to get online access to the teacher's guidebook in school A. Concerning the teacher's guidebook in school B, a sample of one unit was accessible online. Also, reading-aloud strategies and assessment methods of oral reading fluency were investigated in the teacher's guidebook in both schools. Therefore, the teacher's guide was not investigated thoroughly but as a complementary document for the investigation of students' textbooks.

The lesson plans were received when the classroom observations were conducted especially when the researcher walked into the classes. Also, the lesson plans were obtained from different levels in two formats: hard copies (papers) and soft copies (electronic documents; word documents). They were analysed to investigate two areas: reading-aloud strategies and assessment methods. The lesson plans were also analysed to investigate how written documents, students' textbooks and lesson plans are implemented in real life practice. Notably, the researcher could not get all of the lesson plans of the observed classes due to the sensitivity of the teachers towards their job security. A total number of 9 lesson plans were received--five lesson plans from school A and four from school B. Moreover, some of the lesson plans were similar in their strategies. Therefore, some parts of the lessons were selected from both cycles, one and two, to show the areas explored and how they were presented. A checklist was used for the document analysis that focused on oral reading strategies and the assessment methods. The checklist was meant to help the researcher to analyse the documents qualitatively and control her bias to focus on the investigated issue. Notably, notepad and a pen were used to analyse the documents.

Moreover, some unclear points were highlighted for further investigation during classroom observations and interviews.

3.3.2. Classroom Observation Procedures

The researcher visited and engaged with the principals of the two schools, (who had previously and graciously agreed to allow the researcher to conduct her study in their schools), about the objectives of the research and the target participants. The schools' leadership and teacher coordinators prepared a schedule for the researcher to visit and observe English reading classrooms and to conduct interviews with the schools' English teachers. The principals of the schools were asked for permission to videotape the classes, but unfortunately, this potential facet of the research was not approved. The researcher did not select specific male or female teachers for classroom observations or interviews, both of which were conducted based on a schedule that was prepared in advance by the schools' leadership and teacher coordinators.

The initial plan for the research was to observe sixteen reading classes (n=16) from different levels ranging from grade one to grade nine with specific emphasis on grades two, four, six and eight. However, due to the schools' decisions and preferred arrangements, the researcher was able to observe fifteen reading classes (n=15). Hence, one of the classes was not included in the data analysis since the teacher of that class was not comfortable about being observed. The researcher respected the teacher's position and informed her that this class would not take part in the study. Each class lasted forty-five to fifty minutes in both schools.

According to the pre-arranged schedule and protocol, when the researcher visited the schools to observe the classes, she walked into the classes saying no more than "Hi, Good morning". During most of the classes observed, the researcher sat at the back of the classroom, ostensibly to be less distracting

to the teacher. However, in two classes, front seats in School A were designated for the researcher to occupy and conduct her observations. The researcher remained in place until the end of all the classes. After each class, the researcher thanked both the teachers and the students and left the classrooms immediately. Nine of the teachers being observed willingly provided the researcher with their lesson plans. However, in the case of the other classes, when the researcher asked the teachers for a copy of their lesson plans, they seemed to be uncomfortable with this request and despite saying that they would provide later, they did not provide them..

A checklist was used during the classroom observations. This was prepared in advance of investigating the oral reading fluency methods and the assessment techniques during the reading classes. In addition to this, the researcher used a notepad and a pen to write down any additional notes of things that she observed and deemed to be potentially useful for later study. Various grades were observed in Schools A and B. The following table represents the number of classes visited and the grades in each cycle in both schools.

Cycles	Grades	Numbers of the observed classes in School A	Numbers of the observed classes in School B
Cycle One	One	1	0
	Two	1	1
	Three	1	1
	Four	1	1
	Five	1	0
	Six	0	1
Cycle Two	Seven	1	1
	Eight	1	1
	Nine	1	0

Table 2: Number of visited classes in each cycle in both schools

According to the table, there are six grades in cycle one and three grades in cycle two. The total number of the visited classes were fourteen (n=14); nine visited classes in cycle one and five visited classes in cycle two.

3.3.3. Interview procedures:

The researcher conducted most of the interviews face to face after classroom observations directly in different parts of the schools; classrooms, teachers' rooms, and the playground. They lasted between fifteen and twenty minutes long. Fifteen interviews were conducted; however, one of the interviews was not considered in the data analysis because the interviewee seemed nervous and unwilling to respond to the interview questions. Also, three of the interviews were conducted by phone because of the teachers' schedules. The researcher asked the interviewees about a convenient time to have a phone interview. So, the phone interviews were arranged in advance and did not last more than thirty minutes. The selection of participants was based on their willingness to be a part of the study. As stated in the observation, the researcher talked to the principals of the schools about the study purpose. The school principals and teacher coordinators prepared a schedule for the researcher to observe and conduct the interviews with English teachers. It is important to mention that the researcher did not select male or female teachers for the interview or observation, but it was conducted based on the arranged schedule that was prepared for the researcher.

The researcher started the interview by thanking the interviewees for the time they allocated. Then, the researcher informed them about the research goals. Next, the researcher read the conditions of participation and clarified any questions that the interviewees asked about the research objectives and the confidentiality of the provided data. After that, the researcher proceeded by asking the questions. At the end of the interview, the researcher thanked the interviewees for their participation and contributions

to the study and asked them to sign the consent form. For those interviews conducted by phone, the consent form was sent to the interviewees by email to sign and forward back to the researcher. The researcher used a pen and paper to record everything the interviewees said. When the researcher asked the interviewees for permission to use an audio recorder, all of them refused except two teachers, who were from Jamaica and South Africa. The researcher wrote a draft of each interview and sent it to the interviewed teachers' emails on the same day as the interview to confirm their answers. The researcher got a few responses after several days, but also got some responses after two to three weeks. Five teachers did not reply to the researcher's emails. The researcher categorised and classified the interviewees' responses according to the three themes that were based on the research questions. Then, the researcher identified the fundamental points that serve the study's purpose. Hence, some interviewees did not provide detailed or sufficient data. Consequently, the excerpts taken from the interviews' transcripts were selected based on the clarity of the information provided.

3.3.4. Questionnaire Procedures

The initial plan to collect the survey data was to circulate and administer the questionnaire through a paper-based method via hand. The idea behind this was to mitigate any potential access-related issues via the Internet and ensure that teachers could complete the survey without interruption. However, after visiting many schools in Fujairah and presenting to them the approval document from MOE granting authorisation to circulate and collect the survey, they did not allow the researcher permission or access to the English teachers to administer the survey by hand stating that they could not complete any survey unless it was sent to their email from the MOE. Therefore, it was decided to create an online survey using Google Docs website. The link was supposed to be administered to schools through the Ministry of Education Research Office (MOERO). However, after contacting the MOERO, they refused to distribute

the link due to their data governance policies. Thus, the MOERO requested the researcher to send them the survey in electronic format to create an e-survey using their own website. Within two weeks, the MOERO designed and circulated the link to all private schools across the five Emirates. Notably, the link was not circulated until the researcher checked the questions and approved the format of the survey. The questionnaire's link was up for eight weeks. The private schools' teachers were notified by the MOERO every two weeks to complete the questionnaire. After eight weeks, the MOERO sent the researcher the responses in an Excel file.

3.4. Data Analysis

Unquestionably, data analysis is the most crucial part of research because it summarises the results of the research. Before defining data analysis, there are three significant components, which must be understood. Firstly, analysis means to describe data with tables, graphs, or narrative and the description is transformed into information (Shamoo & Resnik 2003). Secondly, coding refers to the process of organizing data into chunks before comprehending the information (Creswell 2005). Finally, interpretation means to add meaning to the information by making comparisons and finding connections (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017). Fraenkel and Wallen defined data analysis as "an interactive and continuously comparative process that involves reducing and retrieving a large amount of written and sometimes pictorial information" (2009, p.434). Data analysis involves the interpretation of data gathered through the use of different forms of analytical and logical reasoning to identify specific patterns and trends. The form of the analysis is determined by the specific qualitative approach taken and the form of the data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Shamoo & Resnik 2003; Slavin 1993). Therefore, it is essential to ensure that the analysis of research findings is precise and appropriate (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009).

In qualitative research, the purpose of the data analysis is to reduce and make sense of vast amounts of data received in order to shed light on the research questions (Shamoo & Resnik 2003). Therefore, data analysis is an ongoing and iterative process in which the obtained descriptive data is analysed, processed and transformed almost simultaneously into explanations and interpretations (Shamoo & Resnik 2003). Moreover, the analysis involves identifying common patterns within the responses critically to achieve research objectives (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Shamoo & Resnik 2003). On the other hand, in quantitative research, statistical analysis is used to summarise and describe quantitative data. The analysis of data involves interpretation of numbers, figures, and tables to find relationships or rationale behind them (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Shamoo & Resnik 2003; Slavin 1993). It is important to point out that the findings from both qualitative and quantitative studies should be compared to the literature review and discussed critically (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017) in order to support the quality of the research outcomes.

As mentioned previously, this study adopted a mixed methods design in which three qualitative data collection methods were used along with one quantitative tool. Therefore, a variety of analysis styles is usually used with mixed methods designed based on the purpose and instruments used. The analysis of this research was connected to the research questions. Based on Fraenkel and Wallen's (2009) recommendation for exploratory research, data should be analysed separately using parallel mixed methods. Consequently, the results were built upon each other and triangulated to understand the whole picture of the investigated topic, in this case, students' oral reading fluency and create a survey for the second phase of the study. Also, the results from the two phases were used to build a comprehensive teaching-assessment model to build and enhance oral reading fluency. The following lines illustrate how each instrument in this research was analysed and interpreted.

3.4.1. Documents Analysis

The documents including the students' English textbooks and the lesson plans were analysed through content thematic analysis to figure out how oral reading fluency was being addressed in the school textbooks and the teachers' practices. Clues for reading fluency instructions were investigated and reported using qualitative content analysis to present reading-aloud strategies and assessment techniques in both the students' textbooks and the lesson plan. Notably, the analysis of the students' English textbooks and lesson plans followed the same format in which they were analysed according to two themes: reading-aloud strategies and assessment methods.

3.4.2. Observation Analysis

The observation is perfectly suited to serve the purpose of this study as a second instrument. The observation was selected as a tool to observe and obtain factual data about the oral reading strategies and the assessment methods that were used in the reading classes. As such, the analysis of the obtained data was totally qualitative. Themes were also used to categorise the items in the observation checklist based on the research questions. The themes that were used included reading strategies and assessment methods. Significantly, the observation notes were sent to the teachers in order to confirm the collected data to avoid any bias during the interpretation process. Furthermore, the observation analysis was also used to confirm the collected data from the documents analysis and to check if there was consistency between the documents and the actual practices.

3.4.3. Interview Analysis

Creswell (2005) believed that qualitative content analysis is the best tool to analyse interviews. In this study, qualitative content analysis was used, in which themes were used to identify the variables from the interviews. The qualitative analysis was used to analyse the data. Moreover, each question of

the interview served as a predefined theme. The data was organized through an appropriate heading given to each question. Notably, the qualitative data was analysed traditionally without using any electronic software.

3.4.4. Survey Analysis

Regarding the quantitative data, which was used to enhance the study with a second source of data, SPSS software was used to provide descriptive statistics including the frequency and the percentage for the items that were measured through the five-point Likert scale. The frequency and the percentage show how often the respondents gave each response. Statistics data helps the researchers to draw a conclusion from the results. Pertinent predefined themes were used to analyse each item of the survey; accordingly, an appropriate heading was given to each one of them. Hence, there were three open-ended questions in the survey. The open-ended questions were analysed traditionally using the interpretive thematic analysis. For example, the first open-ended question sought to investigate more reading-aloud techniques and how the teachers used them in the classes. The participants have mentioned lots of similar strategies that had different names. Those strategies were categorised into basic concepts, according to what was found in the literature such as reading practice, repeated reading, assisted reading, choral reading, reading theatre, individual reading, modeled reading and finally reading with the help of technology. Also, the second open-ended question was about listing and explaining any other factors that the English teachers believed had an impact on a student's oral reading fluency. Some of the mentioned factors were similar to those stated in the survey. Those responses were excluded from the analysis to avoid the repetition of data. The researcher classified similar responses. Then, those factors were categorised by their significance and occurrences in the responses. The third and final question about the assessment techniques was analysed similarly using thematic interpretive analysis.

3.5. Piloting the Study

Many definitions have been used widely in the literature for defining a pilot study. However, most of them agreed that the pilot study is an initial small-scale study that is applied on a small size of population (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Simon 2006; Slavin 1993). The latter is also called a "feasibility" study (Simon 2006). The purpose of the pilot study is to test the validity and reliability of the research instruments through refining and fixing them after the study if there is a need (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Simon 2006; Slavin 1993). The obtained feedback from pilot studies has very significant value for conducting the actual research procedures (Simon 2006). For example, piloting the studies helps researchers to test the mechanisms and the procedures. The sample size and selection can also be estimated and identified by piloting the study (Simon 2006). It also helps to inform the researcher about the likely outcomes (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017). Accordingly, piloting the research is an essential step to increase the quality of the research. Furthermore, it is essential to report the findings of the pilot studies in detail as was argued by Simon (2006).

Choosing the mixed methods design for investigating students' oral reading fluency had various research tools namely: a document analysis checklist, an observation guide checklist, a semi-structured interview, and a questionnaire. In this research, the pilot study had two phases; testing the qualitative instruments and the quantitative instrument. In particular, before administering the instruments, many procedures were taken into consideration such as ensuring that the instructions were comprehensive, checking the validity and reliability of the items as well as checking the wording of the questions and statements (Simon 2006). For the qualitative phase, the pilot study was conducted on four English teachers in two private schools in Fujairah city, to test the document analysis checklist, the observation

checklist, and the semi-structured interview questions. Those two schools were the same schools where the actual research was conducted. The pilot study also intended to explore more about the reading fluency instruction, assessment techniques and the factors that affect student's oral reading fluency. The exploration of the previous variables helped the researcher to refine the questionnaire that was designed, based on the literature, at the beginning of planning the research. So, four English reading classes were observed. Those four English teachers, who taught the observed classes were interviewed face to face directly after the observation. One of the reasons behind conducting the pilot study for the current research was mainly to assess and evaluate the items of the qualitative tools; document analysis, observation, and semi-structured interviews. Hence, the sample size for testing the qualitative instruments was sufficient (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Simon 2006). The obtained data along with the feedback was used to identify any ambiguous items in the survey and add more valuable items before piloting the survey. Moreover, it provided the researcher with more ideas and approaches that were not foreseen before conducting the pilot study.

The second part of the pilot study was testing the questionnaire after the completion of data collection in first phase of the study. After the modifications made to the survey from the first part of piloting the study along with the experts' feedback, the survey was administered to twenty-one English teachers including the four observed teachers by email. The sample size was not expansive due to the willingness of the English teachers in those two schools to participate in the pilot study and provide their feedback on the survey's items. Regarding their responses to the survey, these were incorporated in the reliability test and executed on the SPSS software application. However, the reliability was not high. Therefore, some items of the survey, in the assessment section, were omitted in order to increase the reliability of the survey items. Those items were: self-assessment, peer assessment and providing

feedback. The collected feedback from those twenty-one teachers was used to refine and finalize the survey items. Notably, the received feedback was not more than complimentary comments except for one comment, which was made about section one of the survey that had four parts. The first part had a statement, which was 'teacher reads aloud to the students' and the second part of the same section indicated the statement. Accordingly, the researcher deleted one of them and changed the first statement to "I use reading-aloud techniques with my students".

It is recommended that the researcher should invite the participants to add more questions or items to the instruments (Simon 2006). Another significant suggestion by Simon (2006) is to administer well-structured, designed instruments in order to increase the validity of the items. Consequently, the drafts of the document analysis checklist, observation checklist, semi-structured interview and the questionnaire of this research were sent to six experts in the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages in education to double check the appropriateness and the validity of the research instruments and detect the possible flaws in the instruments before piloting them. The consulted experts examined the three tools. The experts were from different backgrounds, but most of them had experience in teaching English in the UAE context. The following table represents the demographic data of the consulted experts.

No.	Gender	Major	Region
1	Female	Teaching English	UAE
2	Female	Teaching English	UAE
3	Female	Teaching English	England
4	Male	Teaching English	Jordan
5	Male	Teaching English	Ireland
6	Male	Math and Science	Sudan

Table 3: Demographic data of the consulted experts

Furthermore, Simon (2006) claimed that the pilot study should represent and report all of the comments and feedback received about the instruments. Those comments can determine if the items yield the kind of data that is needed. The following lines show more details about the received feedback from the participants and experts before conducting the pilot study. Significantly, the received feedback and comments were taken into consideration. Subsequently, adjustments were made, and the actual data collection and procedure was started thereafter. Overall, the adjustments that were made were minor.

Concerning the documents analysis; lesson plans and students' textbooks, the initial plan was to obtain and analyse the lesson plans and the students' textbooks before conducting the observation. It was manageable to obtain the students' English textbooks and analyse them before the observation. However, the lesson plans were only provided once the researcher walked into the classes to conduct the observations. At the beginning of the study, the researcher had a checklist that was prepared (based on consulting Cameron and Harmer works of teaching English to second language learners), in particular the development and preparation of a good lesson plan. Cameron and Harmer pointed at many indicators

for evaluating lesson plans such as clear goals, objectives, instructions, activities, media and assessment methods. Those areas were included in the initial checklist. Moreover, the students' textbooks provide both the learner and the teacher with materials and techniques that secure a successful language teaching outcome. Based on Ornstein, Pajak, and Ornstein (2015) and Ansary and Babaii (2002), some elements should be taken into account for designing English textbooks. Some of these elements are goals, content and sequencing, presenting material, assessment or evaluation. However, the study only explored and investigated the reading-aloud instructions and the assessment methods. Nevertheless, the checklist included an overview of the textbooks.

When the researcher tried to analyse the students' English textbooks for grade four, it was found that the initial checklist had extra details. The researcher consulted with the two English teachers, who participated in the pilot study, and two supervisors from the MOE. The purpose of the study and the initial checklist were discussed. Based on the feedback of the experts and the observed teachers, the checklist was amended and restricted to focus on the required area in order to save the time of analysis and increase the quality of the outcomes. The purpose of lesson plans analysis was not to evaluate them, but to explore and investigate reading instructions and assessment methods. Moreover, one of the experts believed that the title of the student's textbooks, year and place of publication, and the name of the publisher or organisation should be mentioned. All of the previous feedback was taken into consideration. The checklist was amended as it was presented earlier in the chapter. It is worth mentioning that qualitative content analysis was used to analyse the documents and explore the investigated issue.

Regarding the observation checklist, there were a few things to add. For instance, the title of the lesson was not in the initial observation guide. Also, there were two checklists made for the observation in which the reading techniques and assessment strategies were both on separate pages. It was

recommended to add them to one page to facilitate the note-taking process. Moreover, some of the experts stated that some questions and words were incorrectly structured. For instance, the "length of the observation" was replaced by the "duration". For the notes section, the supervisor from the MOE mentioned to add "when" and "how many times" a particular strategy was used. However, it was not a focus in the qualitative phase to count the time a particular strategy was used. One of the techniques that was stated in the checklist guide was "modeling; audio tape". It was received that this statement was similar to another statement at the beginning of the guide "a teacher reads to whole students or a small group". Both of the techniques provided modeling to students. So, the use of audio tape was added to the assisted reading strategy in which the teacher uses audio tape to support students' reading.

Concerning the semi-structured interview, one of the consulted experts stated a few comments. One of the recommendatory comments was that the question order needed to be changed slightly. One of the interview questions, which was added at the end of the interview after the pilot study, was about the number of reading classes in a week. In fact, three experts believed that this question should be first after the demographic inquiries. Also, another comment made about one of the interview questions was "do you think oral reading fluency has an effect on a student's reading comprehension skills". One of the experts asked if this question was a part of the study. This question was not a target of the study. Nevertheless, it could support the investigation of the research and enhance the research results as it was claimed in the literature that the fluency affects the student's reading comprehension (Rasinski 2014; Rasinski 2009; Rasinski & Padak 2005). Therefore, this question was not deleted.

Regarding the questionnaire, there were also a few amendments revealed, which required to be addressed. For the first part of section one, which was a general question about the use of reading-aloud techniques, the response to that statement was a binary choice; yes or no. However, a note was provided

regarding the optional responses stating that there were other optional responses in between. Consequently, a change was made to the options by using the five-point Likert scale. The respondents had more options starting from "never" and ending with "always" as valid responses. Another suggested comment was about being specific to the statement. For instance, regarding section three, which was about the factors that could affect the student's oral reading fluency, one of the statements was "students have some health problems related to pronunciation or mental abilities". This statement was modified to "student's health might affect his/her oral reading fluency (i.e. articulation, visual, and hearing problems)". Moreover, as mentioned earlier, some of the statements made about the assessment methods of oral reading fluency were deleted to increase the reliability of the survey items.

3.6. Validity and Reliability of the Instruments:

The concepts of reliability and validity are both rooted in the positivism paradigm, quantitative research (Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Merriam 2009; Zohrabi 2013). However, both terms are used also in interpretivist paradigm, qualitative research, and mixed method research. In the mixed methods study, the validity can be measured by using a convergent approach from both quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). The reliability and validity are significant to demonstrate trustworthiness, confirmability, and credibility in a mixed methods research (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Merriam 2009). Both concepts are fundamental features in the evaluation process of any instrument for good research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017). Reliability is the extent to which measurements are repeatable (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). It refers to the consistency of a measure and stability of the findings. Validity refers to the extent to which a tool (questionnaire or test) measures what it purports to measure (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). It is concerned with the appropriateness and meaningfulness of research components

and truthfulness of the findings (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017). It is important to mention that a reliable measure (tool) is not necessarily a valid measure, however, if a measure is unreliable, then it cannot be valid (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Zohrabi 2013). Employing several methods for collecting empirical data provides significant insights into the research topic (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). It extended the level of knowledge gained to the credibility of the results (Bowen 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). For this study, the two concepts are thoroughly clarified in the documents analysis, the classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and the questionnaire.

In this study, the document reviews were designed to investigate the reading instructions for oral reading fluency and how it was assessed. The lesson plans of the observed classes and the students' textbooks were both used to find out about oral reading instructions or activities and the assessment methods. Those areas were relevant to the research questions, which had an effect on the truthfulness of the findings and therefore the credibility of the outcomes (Hodder 2001; Rapley 2007; Zohrabi 2013). Also, as for the validity, clarity, and the reliability of the document analysis, it is important to note that the documents analysis was used in combination with other qualitative research tools, classroom observations and interviews, to seek convergence and corroboration of students' oral reading fluency (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Hodder 2001; Merriam 2009; Rapley 2007). This increased the credibility of the document analysis and reduced the impact of the investigator's potential bias (Bowen 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Hodder 2001; Merriam 2009; Rapley 2007). The selection of the documents might involve a researcher's bias and affect the authenticity and representativeness of the chosen documents (Bowen 2009; Merriam 2009). Thus, the obtained lesson plans were not selected by the researcher. It was based on the schedule that was prepared for the researcher to observe the reading classes. The

purpose of the documents analysis was considered in this study as was recommended by Bowen (2009) and Rapley (2007). Therefore, a checklist was created to guide through the investigation process. Creating the checklist and following it reduced the researcher's bias and raised the validity of the instrument (Bowen 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Hodder 2001; Merriam 2009; Rapley 2007). The findings of the lesson plans analysis were sent to the observed teachers to get their confirmation and receive any valuable feedback as was recommended by many researchers including Zohrabi (2013), Fraenkel and Wallen (2009), Rapley (2007), and Hodder (2001).

To ensure the validity and reliability of the non-participant observations, the researcher prepared a checklist draft that focused on the reading instructions and the assessment techniques for oral reading fluency before conducting the actual classroom observations. Initially, four classroom observations were conducted as a part of piloting the study. Accordingly, the checklist was amended after the observations based on the observed teachers' and experts' comments to ensure its credibility. Further, to verify the results, the "member-checking", a method to triangulate data (Creswell 2005; Merriam 2009), was not only used in the pilot study, but was employed during the actual data collection process in which the notes of the observed classes and the responses to the interview questions were sent to the participants to confirm the obtained data (Zohrabi 2013). Interestingly, Merriam (2009) and Creswell (2005) pointed out that data collection procedures increase the reliability of the findings. The researcher has gone through different stages and steps to ensure the truthfulness and dependability of the checklist before conducting the actual observations (Zohrabi 2013). Further, the collected data from piloting the observation was also used to modify the initial interview's questions prepared by the researcher.

For the semi-structured interviews, the researcher followed the same steps that were followed in piloting and checking the checklist for the observation. As mentioned earlier the data collected from the

documents analysis and the classroom observations were used to create and modify a draft of the interview questions. This combination process of the gathered data added to the credibility of the interview questions (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Merriam 2009; Zohrabi 2013). The interview questions were related to the research questions, which also increased the validity and reliability of the questions (Iphofen 2018). A member-check method (Zohrabi 2013) was employed in this study by sending the modified draft of the interview to the six experts and the interviewed English teachers for a double check. Furthermore, as recommended by many researchers and scholars, interview protocols were created and followed during piloting the interview as well as the actual interview (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Iphofen 2018). There are lots of points that need to be considered in order to ensure that interviews are valid and reliable as argued by Iphofen (2018). For instance, the time and place of the interview should be convenient for the participants. Also, the participants should be informed about the study purpose before conducting the interviews (Iphofen 2018; Merriam 2009). In this study, the interviewees were informed thoroughly before the beginning of the interviews about the study purpose, conditions for participation and withdrawal from the study.

The last research instrument was the questionnaire, which has been created by the researcher herself. Concerning the validity and the reliability of the questionnaire, it was piloted to twenty-one English teachers in the two schools by email. The English teachers were asked not only to complete the questionnaire, but also to add any valuable feedback (Zohrabi 2013) that would ultimately enhance the quality of the questionnaire. Their valued comments and responses have been taken into consideration. Further, regarding the piloting of the questionnaire and the received responses, it seemed that the questionnaire measured what was intended to be measured and that there was consistency and steadiness in the responses. The same results were obtained repeatedly when the questionnaire was re-administered.

Moreover, the Cronbach's alpha was calculated using SPSS with the help of a specialist in IT. The Cronbach's alpha was .78, which is considered to be adequate for the reliability of the survey items. It was noteworthy that the reliability of the survey could have been improved by making the instructions and items clearer and more easily followed and understood (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Creswell 2005; Zohrabi 2013). Consequently, a copy of the survey was sent to the same six experts, who have checked the observation checklist and the interview questions. The survey items and contents were checked and refined based on the teachers' and experts' comments. Further, to improve the reliability and the validity for the actual administration of the questionnaire, the conditions of administration were taken into consideration (Creswell 2005; Lavrakas 2008; Rea & Parker 2005; Zohrabi 2013). For instance, the questionnaire was administered at the same time to all private schools across the five emirates. The participants were given the same amount of duration, eight weeks, to respond to the survey. Moreover, the purpose and conditions for participation were clearly stated at the top of the survey.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are extremely significant to assure the quality of a study, to protect participants and researchers, and to protect intellectual and property rights (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). Ethics are the standards of conduct that distinguish between right and wrong (Iphofen 2018) and determine the difference between acceptable and unacceptable actions while conducting research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). The significance of ethical consideration lies in the essence of pursuing true knowledge by creating trust and mutual respect between the researcher and all participants. Furthermore, the research ethics diminishes the chance of fabrication of the data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). Therefore, many authors and studies explicitly insisted on maintaining research ethics

throughout the stages of a study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Meriam 2009). There are some key ethical issues to consider before, during and after conducting a study. These issues are informed consent, deception, need for debriefing, right to withdraw, confidentiality, and safety and risk (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Creswell 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen 2009; Iphofen 2018). This study adhered to all the ethical procedures for data collection in order to prove that ethical practices and fairness were utilised in this research. For example, ethical permission was obtained from BUID (see Appendix 2) and the MOE; Academic Research Office (see Appendix 3). The researcher also obtained permission from the private schools' principals and teachers. The selection process of the participants was fair and based on the willingness of the participants to take part in the study. Significantly, the study purpose was explained and clarified to the participants from the very beginning of the study. It is important to point out that the participants were provided with an informed consent form (see Appendix 4) that described the purpose and benefits of the study. The consent forms were signed after the interviews. Moreover, the conditions of participation were described at the beginning of the interviews and for the online questionnaire, the conditions of participation were written at the top of the survey as was recommended by Lavrakas (2008) and Rea and Parker (2005).

Furthermore, the names of the schools and teachers were removed from the obtained lesson plans for the documents analysis. The interviews were conducted based on participants' schedules. The participants were fully informed regarding the procedures of the research project and any potential risks as argued by Iphofen (2018), Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2017) and Fraenkel and Wallen (2009). Audio and video records were not used without participants' agreements. The researcher removed audio records for interviews after uploading data into a soft copy, which was securely protected with a strong password. Freedom was given for the participants to withdraw from the study at any time as advised also

by Iphofen (2018), Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2017), and Fraenkel and Wallen (2009). The researcher maintained and assured the confidentiality of the participants' names and their records throughout the whole study. Moreover, codes for the participants were created and used to facilitate the data collection and analysis procedure and to avoid misconduct (Iphofen 2018). Interestingly, Iphofen (2018) noted that it is significant to consider the benefits that subjects or individuals, might gain out of participating in a study. Notably, during the meeting with one of the schools' principals, he asked the researcher about the contribution of this study to his school. Therefore, a report was written about the latest best practices of oral reading instructions and assessment techniques. It was submitted to the school principal by hand after collecting the required data.

Chapter 4: Results

4. Chapter Overview

Oral reading fluency is a significant topic which is neglected in the UAE English reading programme in public schools. This study investigates students' oral reading fluency in schools within the private sector. The investigation delves into the reading strategies which are used to build and improve the students' oral reading fluency, the assessment methods or tools and the factors affecting students' oral reading fluency. The purpose of this investigation is to develop a comprehensive teaching-assessment model to build and enhance oral reading fluency. This chapter will present the results of the document analysis, classroom observations, interviews, and the survey. Data was collected at various stages throughout the study.

In summary, the researcher began by analysing a grade-four student's English textbooks. Then, reading classes in two different private schools in Fujairah city were observed, and the lesson plans were obtained on the day of observation. After the classroom observations, interviews were conducted with the observed English teachers, mostly after the classroom observation. The final stage was administering the online survey, which was created based on the results of the first phase, across five emirates. The results are presented according to the data collection stages.

4.1. Documents Analysis

The documents analysis is divided into two main sections; the analysis of the students' textbooks and the analysis of the lesson plans. Furthermore, the analysis is split based on the schools; school A, which followed an American curriculum and school B, which followed a British curriculum. The documents analysis is meant to answer the first two research questions, which are:

- What are the reading strategies that are used to build and improve students' oral reading fluency?

- What are the assessment methods that are used for evaluating students' oral reading fluency?

The analysis is organized based on the above research questions, which focus on reading-aloud strategies and assessment techniques.

4.1.1. Analysis of the Student's Textbooks:

As mentioned previously, it is important to note some general information about the textbooks before investigating them. Therefore, the following sections present an overview of the students' textbooks in both schools A and B independently, in addition to the reading-aloud strategies and the assessment methods respectively.

4.1.1.1. Overview of the English Textbooks in School A

The textbooks used in School A were titled Pearson Longman Cornerstone. They were published by Pearson in 2009. Pearson Longman Cornerstone textbooks are designed to help English learners master the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS). In essence, they are intended for elementary English learners and struggling readers in grades one to five (Chamot, Cummins & Hollie 2008). The multi-level Cornerstone programme concentrates on developing students' language acquisition, reading fluency, reading comprehension, oral, and written communication skills. Three authors participated in preparing Pearson Longman Cornerstone textbooks: Anna Uhl Chamot, Jim Cummins, and Sharroky Hollie.

In the observed classrooms, two textbooks were provided to the students, which were the language book and the workbook. The language book contained six different concepts or units, and each unit focused on one main idea that connected learning of key concepts and academic words as was clarified in the book's content. The content of the language book is explicit but intensive at the same

time. Each unit contained a variety of texts, such as literature (play, poem, fable, myth, short story, and personal narrative) and informational texts, such as social studies, science, photo essay, magazine article, biography, newspaper article, instructions, poster, and business letters. It is worth mentioning that each unit followed the same format and consisted of three main parts for each text. The first part was about preparing students to read. The second was about the big question and reading strategy. The last part had three sub-sections: learning strategy, grammar, and writing. Most significantly, there were extra notes and instructions on the side of the pages. The workbook's content had the same organisation and activities for each skill presented in the language book. Overall, the students' language book focused on building strong foundational reading skills, such as phonemic awareness, fluency with text, vocabulary, and comprehension. Furthermore, both textbooks were aligned to Common Core State Standards in which one of the key outcomes was to "read aloud grade-appropriate imaginative/literary and informational/expository text fluently, accurately, and with comprehension, using appropriate timing, change in voice, and expression" (Chamot, Cummins & Hollie 2008). The Cornerstone programme targeted the student's ability to decode and make sense of unfamiliar or unknown words in a text.

4.1.1.2.   Reading-aloud Strategies in School A Textbooks:

The purpose of the first part of each unit was to prepare students to read, which covered three areas: keywords, academic words, and phonics. Assisted reading through audio files was found in unit one pages 8 and 9 (Appendix 5). For instance, the first activity in the keywords section was to listen to the new keywords in sentences. Then, students had to repeat the sentences with the teacher as was stated in the teacher's guide. For the academic words, students had to listen to an audio CD. The words were also written in sentences and provided in the language book page 10 (Appendix 6). The individual reading practice and paired reading strategies were used with the phonics part; the instructions on page 11 stated: "Listen. Then read each word aloud". Furthermore, on the same page, there was another activity in which the instructions stated: "Work with a partner. Take turns. Read the sentences". The following picture shows the previous activities on page 11.
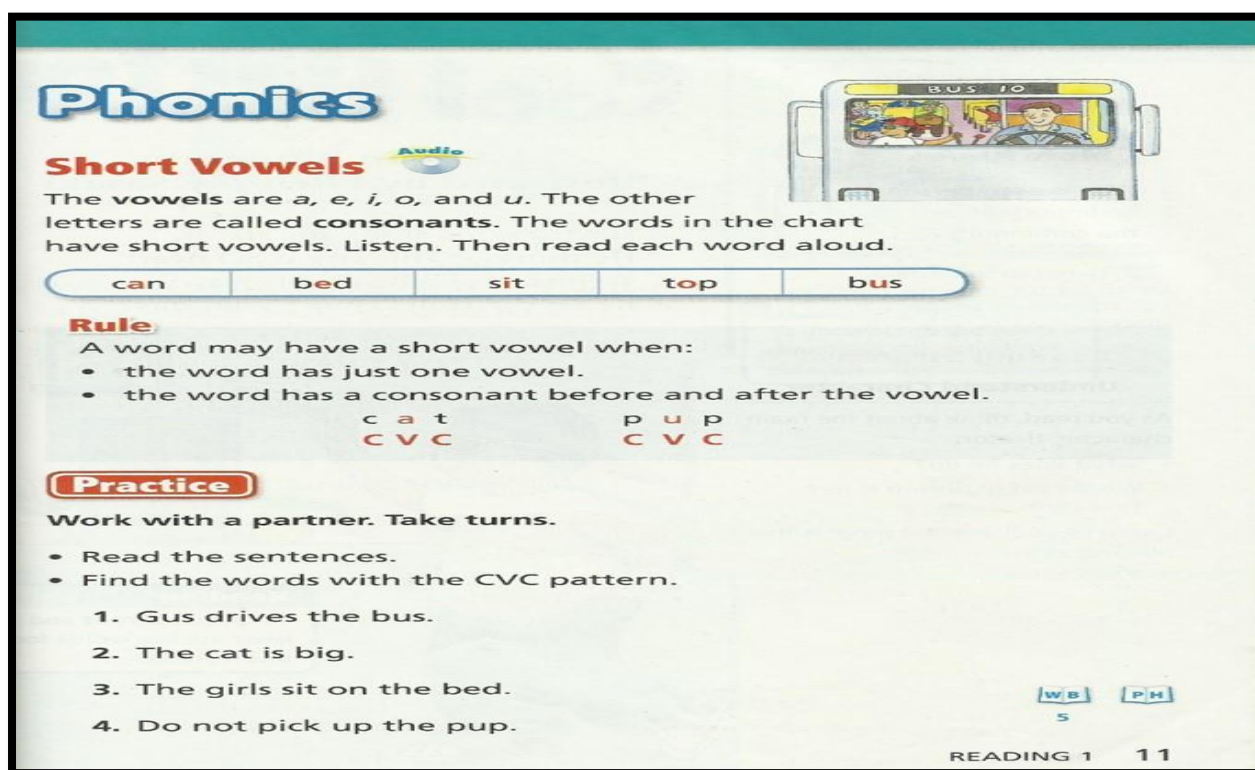
Figure 8: Activities on page 11 from the student's language book

Moreover, starting reading the main text, there was instruction on page 12 about the modeling reading strategy. It stated: "Listen as your teacher models the reading strategy" as illustrated in the following picture.
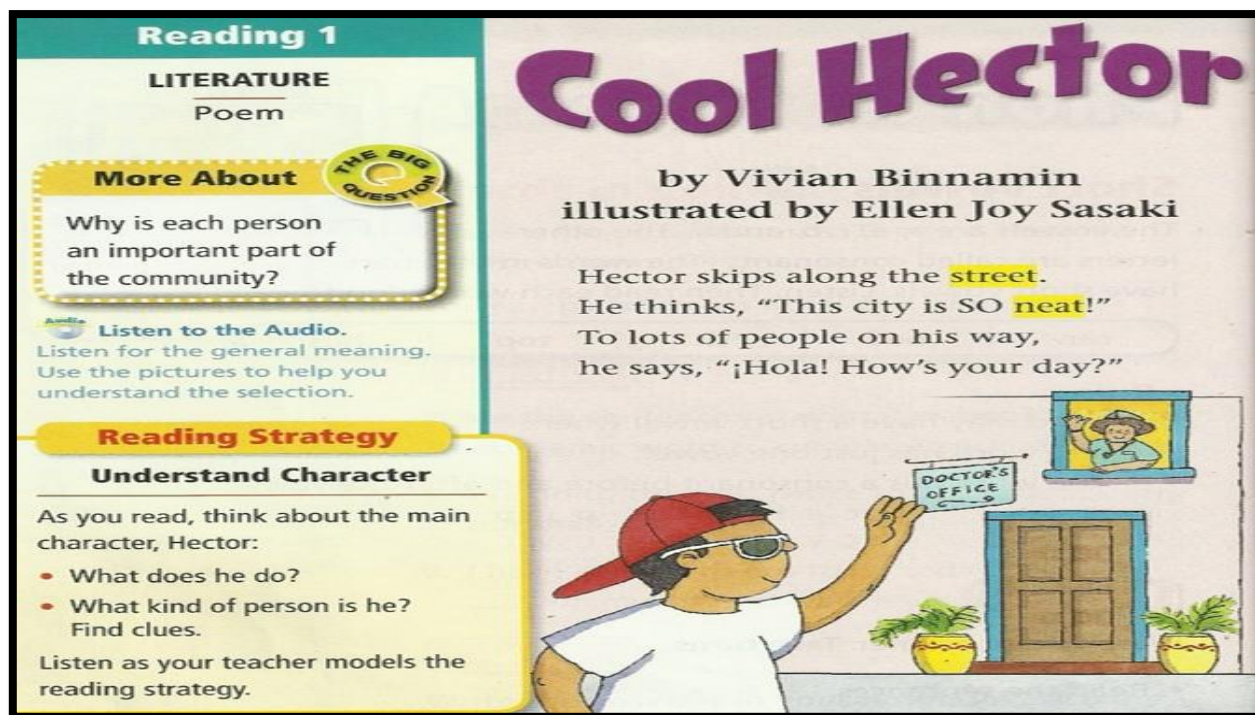
Figure 9: language book, page 12

The third part of the same reading text consisted of three sections as mentioned earlier: learning strategy, grammar, and writing. There were no direct instructions for reading-aloud provided in those three sections. However, there were some instructions that indirectly involve reading-aloud (i.e. reading questions, sentences, and texts). For instance, in the grammar section on page 35 (Appendix 7), the instructions of the "Apply" activity stated: "Work with a partner. Ask and answer the questions. Use simple present in your answer". In the activity, the questions were written for the students to read aloud as it was emphasised by the teacher's guidebook. Significantly, paired reading was highly stressed by

the teacher's guide. Concerning the writing part, there was an activity called "Publish: in each writing section. For example, the instructions for the publish activity on page 62 (Appendix 8) stated: "Make a clean copy of your final draft. Share it with the class". In this activity, students had to read their work in front of the class. This type of activity was observed in one of the classes in which students were assessed on their reading-aloud of texts they had written. In fact, this activity was used for two purposes as stated by the interviewed teachers. The first goal was to practice reading in front of an audience (i.e. students). The second was to assess students' oral reading fluency and take notes of their performance for formative assessment. The learning strategy section focused on silent reading. Remarkably, after each unit in the language book, there was a page called "Put It All Together", which had extra activities including text for students to read aloud and test themselves. That page was presented in the assessment method section. Moreover, in the language book, as a part of the reading instructions, different types of technologies were exposed to the students. These technologies included listening to audio instruction, watching videos on the Longman Cornerstone website and answering the questions on the site as was stated on page 3. Also, a computer was used to present a poster on page 3. Listening to audio stories or texts was presented in unit one page 12. For the student's workbook, there was no instruction for using technology to assist a student's reading even for the phonics section.

On the other hand, the students' workbook had the same six units with almost the same areas of focus: keywords, academic words, phonics, comprehension, reader's companion, learning strategies, grammar, spelling, and writing. In the students' workbook there were no instructions or activities that guide students directly to read aloud in the classroom. However, the workbook encourages practicing reading aloud at home through the provided instructions in different sections of a unit. For example, on page 5 unit one phonics section, there was instruction, which stated: "list two more CVC words with each vowel. Read your words to a family member". On page 10 of the same unit on the grammar section,

the instructions stated: "Write two sentences. Use *was* and *are*. Read sentences to a family member". Furthermore, for the academic words activity on page 24, the instructions stated: "Use the academic words. Write a story about a special day. Read your story to a family member". Most of the book's pages had the previous instructions, which encouraged students to read aloud to a family member. The following picture shows the previous instructions on pages; 5, 10 and 24 respectively.
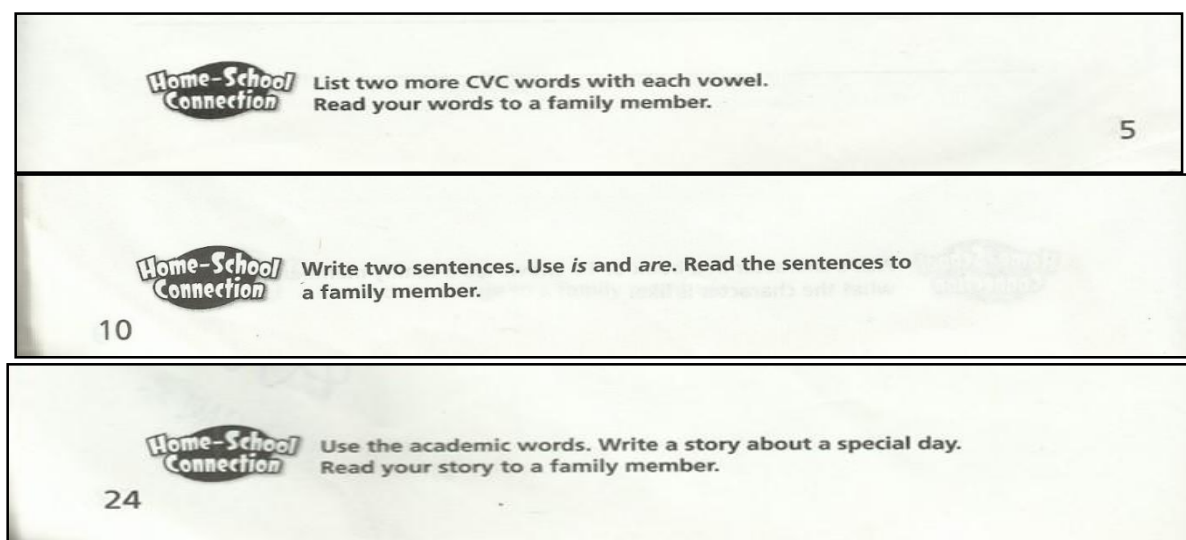
Figure 10: pages 5, 10 and 24 from student's workbook

The teacher's guidebook contained step-by-step instructions, lesson plans and a variety of activities to attract the students' attention. The guide was available online not only for teachers but also for the researcher to explore through the link: http://media.pearsoncmg.com/intl/elt/cornerstone/tx_teacher_ebooks/CS_3/ebook.html. In the guide, each unit and lesson plan had objectives with focus on the English Language Proficiency Standards. The teacher's guide had some oral reading fluency activities at the end of the book. Those activities involved using different reading-aloud techniques such as paired reading, echo reading, listen and read, choral

reading, modeled reading, and readers theatre. The following picture shows some of the mentioned activities.

Longman Cornerstone   Level B, Unit 3

DAILY ORAL READING FLUENCY ACTIVITIES

Lesson 1
Speed Drill
List vocabulary words and words to know from Unit 2 on a word wall. Have students read the wall with speed and accuracy. Record the words they have difficulty with, and have students write the words in their personal thesaurus for review.

Lesson 2
Paired Reading
Have students work in pairs. Each student reads from exercises 1 and 2 on *Student Book* page 110 alternating words. When the words have been read through once, have students reverse roles so each student has a chance to read each word. For students having little difficulty, words have them read the additional words on *Student Book* page 111.

Lesson 3
Echo Reading
Read one sentence from one of the stories on *Student Book* pages 112-113 with appropriate intonation and pacing. Have a student try to imitate your reading model. Continue until the student can imitate an entire story.

Lesson 4
Listen and Read
Have students listen to the *Audio Program* while they silently read the sentences on pages 114-115 in the *Student Book*. After students have had a chance to read silently, have them read aloud. Encourage students to pay attention to intonation, pace, and accuracy.

Figure 11: Teacher's guidebook

4.1.1.3.   Assessment methods in School A Textbooks

With regards to the assessment, Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM) was the primary technique used. The language book contained a text at the end of each unit whereby students had to read aloud. For instance, in the language book unit one page 63, the instructions stated: "Listen to the sentences. Pay attention to the groups of words. Read aloud". There were three factual sentences that students had to listen to, then read them aloud. Additionally, on the same page, there was instruction for a text that

contains a hundred and thirty words. Notably, the number of words in each line of the passage was stated. The instructions stated: "Work in pairs. Take turns reading the passage below aloud for one minute. Count the number of words you read". After the passage, there were further instructions for the students, which stated: "With your partner, find the words that slowed each of you down. Practice saying each word. Then, take turns reading the text again". For this activity, there was a peer partner checklist in the teacher's guide. That checklist was designed for students to evaluate their partner's reading. The following pictures show activity on page 63 and the peer partner checklist from the teacher's online guidebook.

Figure 12: Activity on page 63 from the language book

Figure 13: a peer partner checklist from the teacher's online guidebook

Again, the WCPM assessment technique was used in the student's workbook. It also had an activity for assessing the student's oral reading fluency at the end of each unit. For example, in unit one page 37, there were instructions followed by a text containing eighty words. It had the same format as the text in the language book page 63. At the end of each line of the text, the number of words was stated. The instructions were as follows: "How fast are you? Use a clock. Read the text aloud 'my family'. How long did it take you? Write your time in the chart. Read three times". Interestingly, there was a rectangle below the passage that was divided into three squares for the students to record their reading times. The following picture illustrates the activity on page 37.

Fluency

Use with Student Book page 63.

How fast are you? Use a clock. Read the text about *My Family*. How long did it take you? Write your time in the chart. Read three times.

I like it when my family gets together on weekends	10
We talk, laugh, and play games. There is plenty of	20
food to eat. There is plenty of noise! You can tell that	32
everyone is happy to be together.	38
Sometimes, we celebrate a special day. For my	46
grandmother's birthday, we all work together to plan	54
her party. We put up streamers, make a cake, and get	65
a gift. We all sing the birthday song, too. Our family	76
celebrations are so special!	80

My Times

Figure 14: Student's workbook, page 37.

Investigation of the teacher's guidebook demonstrated that there was a high level of emphasis on assessing the student's oral reading fluency in which WCPM and a rubric were used. The student's performance was compared to reading norms, which were designed according to each grade level and provided in the teacher's guide. Noticeably, the teacher's guide discussed the development of reading fluency, the WCPM test and how to use it to assess the student's oral reading fluency along with rubrics. The following picture illustrates a fluency rubric from the teacher's guidebook.

Rubric Describing Oral Fluency

Ability Level	Description
4	Student consistently reads with appropriate speed, phrasing, expression, and accuracy
3	Student often reads with close to average speed, phrasing, expression, and accuracy; attends to punctuation
2	Student often reads in short phrases but sometimes word for word; sometimes ignores punctuation; low expressivity
1	Student reads haltingly word for word; frequent long pauses between words; frequently ignores sentence boundaries
0	Student is unable to associate English sounds and spellings; cannot recognize words, word and sentence boundaries, punctuation

Figure 15: Rubric from the teacher's guidebook for Longman Person Cornerstone

Overall, the English textbooks in school A focused highly on reading-aloud strategies and the student's ability to read aloud fluently. The Pearson Longman Cornerstone encouraged independent reading practice to help students build reading fluency and confidence as an extra text provided after each unit. A variety of reading techniques were suggested in the guide for teachers to follow. Concerning the use of technology, it was involved in the textbooks in which audio and video stories and texts were used. Significantly, the textbooks emphasised highly on assessing the student's oral reading fluency in which Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM) and rubric were used. The student's performance was

compared to reading norms, which were designed according to each grade level and provided in the teacher's guide. Noticeably, the teacher's guide discussed the development of reading fluency, the WCPM test and how to use it to assess the student's oral reading fluency along with rubrics.

4.1.1.4. Overview of the Textbooks in School B

The textbooks were Macmillan English 4 and published by Macmillan in 2006. The authors of the textbooks were Mary Bowen, Louis Fidge, Liz Hocking, and Wendy Wren. The textbooks were combining L1 and L2 language learning methodology. Thus, the Macmillan programme is designed mainly for second language learners. The author of the Macmillan programme claims that their programme provides students and young learners an opportunity to get exposure to rich language that would allow them to move gradually towards native-speaker fluency in both oral and written English. The Macmillan programme consists of three textbooks for students, which are the language book, practice book, and fluency book (containing embedded audio and video). The Macmillan English fluency book has 18 episodes to help children listen and speak English in attention-grabbing ways. The fluency book offers additional practice for parents to help their children develop natural intonation when speaking English. Notably, the fluency book was not used in the observed classes. However, the students were given a novel to read in each grade. Moreover, the Macmillan English also provides students with digital books, which contain audio and interactive activities with automated scoring. Furthermore, the Macmillan English programme provides teachers with a guide, which has the scope and sequence for each level, and letters to parents about the course, which are written in both English and Arabic. The teacher's guide has extra materials for classroom use such as worksheets, project activity sheets, flashcards, and posters. Moreover, the teacher's guide contains some reference materials to help teachers

in planning their lessons. Notably, in school B, the guide was available for teachers online. It was not accessible to the researcher, but a sample of it was available online on the Macmillan English website.

4.1.1.5. Reading-aloud Strategies in School B Textbooks:

Regarding the language book, it had nothing related to reading-aloud strategies. The book instructions and activities focus on comprehension, finding answers from some texts, vocabulary, language building, grammar, spelling, and writing. However, the scope and sequence of the language textbook stated that for each theme there was a text or story in the fluency book. There were eighteen themes, units, in both textbooks and each theme had six lessons. Each theme started with a text followed by the previously mentioned activities. At the end of each theme or unit, there was an extra text for reading enrichment, an extension text as it was called in the scope and sequence of the book. There was no explicit instruction for the text. It was only stating "reading for enrichment" followed by the title of the text. Hence, on the page, there were two boxes; the red box stated "reading extension" and the green box stated "historical information text" and it has a "headset symbol". This was repeated at the end all of the themes but with different types of text such as "poem", "information chart", "facts", "short story", "natural history information", "play/fable", and "biography". Notably, audio files at the beginning of each theme were used for listening to both the main text and the extension reading text as stated in the previous paragraph. On the other hand, in the fluency books, there were audio tracks and videos for students to listen and watch while reading. The students were encouraged to read accurately with the intonation they hear from the audio tracks. The online teacher's guide had more instructions and details for the teachers to follow and use. For instance, for unit one lesson one: reading, instructions ask teachers to read aloud to students and model the reading for them. Instructions also stressed the practice reading

and repeated reading strategies. Audio files and videos were provided to assist students. Also, paired reading and choral reading were highly encouraged to use with the students. The following picture is captured from the online teacher's guide that illustrates some of the reading fluency instructions.

Figure 16: online English teacher's guidebook for grade four unit one

Concerning the practice book, the activities had the same design as in the language book. The activities included: comprehension, finding answers from a text, vocabulary, language building, grammar, spelling, and writing. No activities were mentioned for the extended reading in language book. As far as the fluency book was concerned, it was designed to develop children's natural intonation in speaking English. There was an 18-episode adventure story that was written in a narrative but mainly in dialogue formats. The fluency books were not provided to the students in school B. The students only had the language and practice books in addition to a story that differed in length depending on the grade level. However, it was possible for the researcher to obtain some samples of fluency books units for grades one to four through the Macmillan English website. The fluency book for grade four contained an extensive amount of reading-aloud instructions such as reading aloud together, reading with the teacher and reading practice. Concerning the online teacher's guide, exploring the sample of things related to the practice book, it did not focus on reading-aloud instructions, but the focus was on understanding meaning and comprehension.

4.1.1.6.   Assessment methods in School B Textbooks:

For the assessment of reading fluency in the language book, nothing concrete was found even though the teacher's guide emphasised reading aloud accurately with intonation and using different reading-aloud techniques. Thus, it did not guide the teacher to use any tools, such as WCPM test or a rubric to assess student oral reading fluency. Also, no assessment tools were presented in the practice book. All of the activities were designed to assess the student's vocabulary knowledge, comprehension, language building, and writing.

Generally, there was no focus on oral reading fluency presented in the student's textbooks in School B. There was no direct instruction for students to read aloud or any assessment methods to assess the students' reading fluency. All of the activities were to assess students' understanding and comprehension. However, exploring fluency books, which was investigated through the Macmillan English website, showed that there were some reading-aloud techniques provided. However, the fluency books were not provided to students in the school. Furthermore, the type of technology used by the textbooks was only audio files for the reading texts.

4.1.2. Analysis of Lesson Plans for the Observed Classes

The following lines represent an overview of the plans received from each school and some quotes that were related to the investigated areas: reading-aloud strategies and the assessment methods.

4.1.2.1. Overview of the Lesson Plans in School A

In general, the lesson plans in school A were prepared weekly by the English teachers with the help of the teacher's guide. The weekly lesson plans included a plan for five days. It is worth mentioning that school A used Longman Person Cornerstone textbooks for grades one to five, while Longman Person Keystone textbooks were used for grades six to nine. The lesson plans received for grades one, two, three, four, and nine included the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts/A Correlation of Person Longman Cornerstone and Keystone Books on the first page. The standards comprised of the four English skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing.

4.1.2.2.   Reading-aloud Strategies:

Grades one, two, three, four and nine weekly plans presented the common core standards, which had reading fluency standards on the first page of the plans. According to the plans for grades one and two, which were very similar, almost all of the reading-aloud strategies were done by teachers, who modeled the reading for the students. The act of reading aloud dealt with recognising sounds and reading separate words that focused on certain sounds. Reading-aloud strategies were only found in the vocabulary and reading lessons. For example, in the vocabulary lesson for grade three, the lesson plan stated that after the teacher introduced the new vocabulary to the students, the whole class had to repeat the words after her. The following picture is captured from the lesson plan of grade three.

10 m	**Guided Practice: (We Do)** Make a 3 column chart on the board and categorize the spelling words based on the long a sound ex: Final e, ai, ay. Point out to students that ay is often but not always at the end of a word while ai is often in the middle of a word. Ex: gray and drain. Point out that the remaining words have the short a sound.	☐ Pair Work ☐ Independent ☐ Inquiry Based
10m		
	Cooperative Practice: (We Do) Introduce the vocabulary words for the Story "Because of Winn Dixie". Teacher will say the word, students will repeat the word. Teacher will use the word in a sentence and discuss the meaning of the word. Repeat for each vocabulary word.	
	Independent Practice: (You Do) **Differentiation:** High: Slide 22-35 Words positive, advanced, peculiar and talent.	

Figure 17: grade three's vocabulary lesson

For grade three reading comprehension lesson, the direct instructions activity stated that the teacher read the story aloud. No instruction was written about students reading the text. However, during

the observation, some students read the text. When the teachers were asked about it, they believed that textual reading depended on the level of the new vocabulary in relation to the students. For lower achieving students, it is incumbent upon them that they master reading and distinguishing between different sounds, sight words, and high-frequency words. Therefore, for the lower achieving students, the overall focus is on reading separate sounds and words. However, for high achieving students, short texts are given to them so that they can progress to the next level.

For grade nine's weekly plan, the first lesson of the unit, which was reading and comprehension, stated in the "objectives and 21st-century skill" row/section that "students will be able to pronounce literary and academic words probably". For the lesson warm up, it was recommended to "play the CD, have students listen and repeat. If you are not using the CD, read the keywords aloud. Write the literary words and academic words on the board and ask students to say them aloud and use them in context". With respect to the "differentiated learning" activity, for the lower achieving students, it stated that "with a volunteer, model a brief dialogue and say the word. Help students connect to words already in their oral vocabulary". The second lesson of the plan was to review and practice. One of the "objectives and 21st-century skill" was that "students will be able to read the short story loudly". The rest of the lessons consisted of grammar and writing, and there was no instruction to read aloud except for the word study, the teacher asked students to say the word. The following picture is captured from the previous lesson.

Prior Learning	Literary Words: dialogue, theme. Academic Words: academic, policy, principle, tradition.
	Build Background: Students learn about scholarships. Reading Strategy: Drawing Inferences. Connection to the big question: A girl earns a scholarship but almost loses her award.

	Objectives & 21st Century Skill	Warm-up/ Review	Main focus of the lesson	Differentiated Learning		
				LA	MA	HA
Lesson 1 Unit 5- Reading 2 I. Reading Comprehension: Selection : " The Scholarship Jacket" By: Marta Salinas Pacing: 2 classes	• Students will be able to identify the discrimination the character, Marta, faces, and how it affects her. • Students will learn more about the genre of the text: Short Story • Students will be able to pronounce literary and academic words properly.	Remind students that the Big Question is "What is the human spirit?" Vocabulary: Listening and speaking: literary Words Play the CD. Have students listen and repeat. If you are not using the CD, read the key words aloud. .-Write the literary words and academic words on the board and ask students to say them aloud and use them in context.	Vocabulary: Literary Words & Academic Words E Text : P. 304-306. Understanding the genre: Social Studies Article Build Background: Students will learn about scholarships.	LA: With a volunteer, model a brief dialogue and say the word .Help students connect to words already in their oral vocabulary. MA :Clarify the abstract concept of theme by connecting to students' understanding of message and main idea. HA: Have students list themes from other works they have read. Use these examples in the Learn Literary Words lesson.		

Figure 18: Grade nine lesson plan

Notably, some technological aids were embedded within the lesson procedures and the reading activities to assist students' reading. For instance, video links from *YouTube* were used in different classes: reading, writing, and grammar for students to watch and listen. The weekly lesson plan for grade nine had two sections consisting of resources required and technology integration. For resources required by section/row, the technology had an audio CD track, e-book, and reader's theatre. For technology integration, computers, projectors, the Pearson website, PowerPoint presentations and e-pens (Appendix 9) were used.

4.1.2.3. Assessment Methods

Grades one, two, three and four's weekly plan did not refer to any read-aloud task. Most assessments were used to assess a student's reading comprehension. Similarly, in grade nine, for the weekly plan, the assessment section presented only workbook activities that students needed to complete.

Overall, the lessons' objectives were clearly stated and the lesson content related directly to the stated objectives. The lesson plans showed that there was a focus on reading fluency. The plans were basic and similar for all classes of the same grade. Remarkably, there were many technological tools presented in the plans such as audio CD track, e-book, and reader's theatre to build students' oral reading fluency. As per the assessment techniques, the lesson plans did not clarify any assessment for oral reading fluency. The observed interviewed teachers stated that it was not a focus of everyday class. Instead, there were specific regular dates for examining students' oral reading fluency and comprehension too.

4.1.2.4. Overview of the Lesson Plans in School B

Overall, the lesson plans in school B were designed and written by the English teachers with the subject coordinator. They also used the teacher's guide when they planned. Notably, the lesson plans were prepared daily, however school A, prepared the plans weekly with the same format. According to the lesson plans received, the beginning part of the plans showed the teacher's name, subject, day and date, class and section, number of students and the context/topic, which was reading in all of the lesson plans. Furthermore, 'skills to develop, smart learning objective, teaching and learning resources' were included in the plan. The main body of the plans was divided into three sections: starter, teaching and learning activities, and plenary including an assessment to check on the progress of learning, learning outcomes, home learning and self-evaluation of the lesson.

4.1.2.5.   Reading-aloud Strategies:

With respect to the reading-aloud strategies for the second-grade lesson plan, it was mentioned in the "specify skill to be developed" row at the beginning: "begin to read, with support, very short simple fiction and non-fiction texts with confidence and enjoyment". There was also another row for a "smart learning objective". In that row, it was stated that "by the end of the lesson, students will be able to read the text with limited support and sequence the story". In the teaching and learning activities part, the initial activity was a modeled reading by the teacher, and the students had to follow the passage using their index fingers. Also, students were asked to underline the difficult words so that the teacher would clarify them before they started group reading. In the group reading activity, the teacher called out some students to read aloud a part of the passage they were studying. While they were reading, the teacher had to clarify the pronunciation of difficult words. Then, students had to read the text again silently and sequence the story on the given worksheet. Also, there was an activity in the same section called "meeting individual and group learning need". In that activity, the teacher had to sit with different groups divided based on their levels: high achievers (high-achieving students), middle achievers and low achievers. The learning objectives for each level were stated. For instance, it was stated for high achievers that "children are able to read the text independently with fluency and expressions and are able to answer the inferential questions. They sequence the story independently". On the other hand, for low achievers, it was stated that "children are able to read the keywords and are helped to understand the text. They are able to answer factual questions based on the story and are assisted to sequence the story". For more details on the previous plan and its content, see Appendix 10.

For grade four's lesson plan, the "specify skill to be developed" row stated: "Identify a variety of purposes for reading and choose reading materials appropriate for those purposes". While for the

"SMART learning objective" row, it stated: "At the end of the lesson the students will be able to: (1) read the passage confidently with fluency and diction, and (2) demonstrate the ability to respond to literal questions". In the starter section, it stated: "the teacher introduces the topic by asking what do the words *USE ME* on a bin mean?". There were also other questions related to the text. Then, there was a pre-reading task, which said: *Teacher plays the video related to cleaning the park followed by asking a few questions…*" The rest of the plan did not present any reading-aloud strategies. In teaching and learning activities, it stated: "Group Activity, I can lend a helping hand, PEER ASSESSMENT (Mixed ability group)". There was no further explanation about the activity. For the detailed plan, see Appendix 11.

Integrating technology as a part of reading instructions also appeared in the lesson plans. As for technology integration in grade two's lesson plan, there was a row/section called "teaching and learning resources (ICT & others)" at the introductory part of the plan. In that row, all types of materials for use were added. There was a *YouTube* link for the story "The Ant and the Dove". The teacher used the link at the beginning of the class to allow students to listen and watch the story with English subtitles as it was observed. For grade four's lesson plan, the teacher also started the lesson using a *YouTube* video that was related to the lesson. The students had to watch and listen to the video as a pre-requisite to the reading task. A computer and data-show were used to present some pictures of the new vocabulary to the students. Also, at the end of the lesson, students were assigned the task of watching a link on *YouTube* with their parents and to list three new words they learned in the video they watched. Students were also asked to follow the *ReadTheory* website and read a story independently. The following figure shows some parts from the lesson plans that represent the previous section about integrating technology as a part of reading-aloud techniques.

Context/Topic:The Ant and the Dove.- Reading	
Specify skill to be developed	**2Re3 Begin to read, with support, very short simple fiction and non-fiction texts with confidence and enjoyment.**
SMART Learning Objective	By the end the lesson students will be able to : Read the text with limited support and sequence the story.
Teaching & learning resources (ICT & others)	ICT, /Flash cards, White board, notebook, and ICT Worksheet. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFXgePGHrso
Cross curricular links / Links to life / community / World / UAE	M.E.P. : being helpful. Relate the story to your own life. Has such an incident happened to you. Where you helped and someone helped you in return.

	Pre reading task: Teacher plays the video related to cleaning the park followed by asking few questions like. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ip7yppOAyPw What is the video about? Name few parks in the UAE?
2. Teaching & Learning Activities:	
2a. Development of learning (10mins)	Group Activity: 'I can lend a helping hand' PEER ASSESSMENT (Mixed ability group)

Home Learning	Carry out a research about composting. How does composting help soil? Students watch the following link with their parents. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dRXNo7Ieky8 2. List three new words you learned in the passage. **Resource** Read a story book. Follow Readtheory.org
Self-evaluation of lesson	

Figure 19: Integrating technology in reading instruction

4.1.2.6.   Assessment Methods

For section three of the grade two plan, plenary, there was a row called "assessment to check on the progress of learning". In that row, it was written that "students assess their own reading skills" (Appendix 10). Thus, it was not clear how students would assess themselves. While for grade four's lesson plan, the assessment row stated that, "students are assessed on the task given in the worksheet,

self-assessment, which was checked through the ability to focus and understanding and completion of questions" (Appendix 10). No assessment related to oral reading fluency was found. When the researcher asked one of the observed teachers about the assessment of the oral reading fluency, she said: "we do not assess oral reading fluency daily as reading comprehension though we give the students the opportunity to read aloud. We usually integrate different techniques daily but not the assessment. We have a certain day [sic] to evaluate the student's oral reading fluency, and we inform parents about it but we observe students daily, and we know how good they are". Overall, there was no clear information about the assessment of oral reading fluency presented in the lesson plans.

In summary, the lesson plans in school B highlighted that there was a great focus on oral reading fluency. However, there was less focus in the plans with respect to upper grades beginning with grade six and above, which is normal, as it was believed by many scholars that in the upper grades, students should have mastered reading fluency with the exception of those students with learning difficulties or special needs. Also based on the classroom observations conducted, there was no consistency between what was observed and what was written in the lesson plans. Moreover, there were more reading-aloud techniques observed than what was written in the plans. It seemed that the teachers were not following the lesson plans to the letter. When the English teachers were enquired about this, they said: "*the plan is a tool to guide us, teachers, in the class but we do not have to follow it step by step. The level of students is different in each class, and in one class we have multiple abilities. Each teacher adapts the plan and activities according to her students' levels or goes with it if it is appropriate for the students' levels. The most important thing is to achieve the goals of the lesson and make sure that the students understand and achieve them*". As far as technology is concerned, only *YouTube* links, audio files, CDs, computer and data show were utilised.

4.1.3. Summary of the Documents Analysis: Students' Textbooks and Lesson Plans

There were some differences between the two analyses when comparing the results of the analysis of student textbooks in both schools and the analysis of the lesson plans. For instance, School A textbooks, Longman Person Cornerstone, and Longman Person Keystone demonstrated a great emphasis on reading-aloud strategies, which included both reading words and texts. Also, the textbooks contained some activities, which integrated technology to address issues in reading fluency. Furthermore, there were assessment texts for students at the end of each unit in both students' language books and the notebooks in which the WCPM test was activated to assess students' performance on oral reading fluency. Thus, the lesson plans did not present more than reading separate words in the lower grades. Upper grades (such as grade nine weekly plan) demonstrated much focus on reading aloud.

Concerning students' textbooks of Macmillan English in School B, there was no inherent focus on reading-aloud strategies nor assessment of oral reading fluency. However, the lesson plans demonstrated a focus on reading-aloud strategies and using technology to improve students' performance in reading. Furthermore, some of the aforementioned assessment techniques presented were covered in other materials. It is worth mentioning that the lesson plans did not present or provide significant details about the procedures of reading-aloud strategies. Generally, based on the contrast between the strategies in the students' textbooks and lesson plans, some questions have been asked during the interview, which was conducted after classroom observations.

4.2. Observation Findings

Classroom observation is a powerful tool that can increase the researcher's understanding of how data obtained from document analysis derived from lesson plans and students' textbooks can be more deeply understood and more effectively applied to real-life educational scenarios and practices. The classroom observation was conducted in two schools following two different English curricula: British and American. Notably, classroom observation is used to answer the first two research questions, which are:

- What are the reading strategies that are used to build and improve students' oral reading fluency?

- What are the assessment methods that are used for evaluating students' oral reading fluency?

The following paragraphs represent the findings for reading strategies and the assessment techniques in both cycles: cycle one, which starts from grade one to grade six and cycle two, which starts from grade seven to grade nine. Significantly, in each cycle, there are two main areas of focus that are being studied: reading strategies and the assessment methods. It is worth mentioning that only one class demonstrated a summative assessment technique, which was used to measure and evaluate the students' reading fluency officially. However, the other classes demonstrated other formative assessment methods to assess and enhance students' oral reading fluency casually.

4.2.1. Reading-aloud Strategies

Based on the observations, there were more reading-aloud strategies used in cycle one than in cycle two. Generally, in each school, the teachers had their own strategies that they used with their students in all classes. Some classes followed identical procedures and activities. The following lines describe some part of the observed lessons in which those reading and assessment techniques were applied.

4.2.1.1. Cycle One Reading Strategies

In School A, the teachers used most of the reading strategies that the teachers in School B employed. In both cases, the teachers read aloud to the students in grades one, two and three. The teachers modeled the reading to the students. In other grades, the teachers only read the problematic words in passages. However, in the case of the low-level students, the teachers sat with them in a group and read together. Other techniques that were widely used included: (a) students read together after the teacher such as in grades one and two, (b) a single student reads, models the reading to the whole class, which was observed in grades two, three, four, five and six and finally (c) one group of low-level students read together and repetitively, taking into account that they were only in grade three. It is worth mentioning that most of the reading-aloud techniques were implemented approximately during the first 30 minutes of the classes.

To elaborate further, the teacher in grade three in School A during the first 10 minutes pre-taught new words and discussed sequencing words, the meaning, and importance of punctuation marks for expressive reading. The teacher, notwithstanding the fact that the students were only in grade three, seemed to be successfully conveying some rudimentary yet important elements of semantic and linguistic nuance. Subsequently, the next 10 minutes were spent reading the text for the students in its entirety. When she finished, she assigned the students to groups to read together and answer the given questions. At the same time, the teacher worked directly with the lower-performing level group in the class and had them read along with her. She read a sentence and the students repeated after her in unison. After she finished, the teacher asked the students to read aloud a part of the story independently. She corrected each student's pronunciation mistakes. Then, she discussed the story with them. After that, the students were asked to answer the questions in their books and underline the passages where they found their

answers. The teacher was clearly observed successfully demonstrating the use of modeling, paired reading, reading practice, repeated and choral reading techniques.

In grade five at School A, during the first 10 minutes, the teacher started the lesson by showing the text on the board and asking the students about a picture accompanying the text. The students then were directed to engage in a brainstorming activity followed by a discussion. Then, the teacher played a computer-generated audio of the text and asked the students to listen carefully and follow the text in their books. The teacher used the audio recording as a reading model for the students. During the next 10 minutes, four of the students were asked to read a part of the text individually. Each time the students read, the teacher stood close to the students to support their readings by means of quick, corrective immediate feedback. The teacher advised the students to use their minds as quickly as possible to break down, chunk, the difficult words whenever they met them. In another part of the same lesson, 15 minutes before the class ended, the students read the questions aloud to other students. They also read the answers using the textbook. It was noteworthy, in School A, that all the observed classes were using texts from their textbooks.

Notably, in School A, the teachers used the Internet to connect to an online website that had the same story the students had in their textbooks. The teachers in grades one and two read the story (the text) to the students. After each part of the story was read, the teacher proceeded to enter a discussion with the students and ask them various questions. At the end of these exercises, the teacher asked some of the students to stand and read from the board. The website had some nice interactive activities that were attractive to the students. Noticeably, in school A, there was a corner in many of the cycle one classes for an audio recorder and iPad. When the researcher asked one of the teachers about the corner, she stated that there were multiple uses for it. One of them allows the students to read stories from the

iPad and record their readings during their break time or the reading class itself. Sometimes, the teachers would give the students a text to read in the corner. Other benefits of this "tech-corner" included helping solve math problems, learning vocabulary for both English and Arabic, and finally as a reward for students allowing them to play games or do whatever they like.

Regarding the observations in School B, most of the teachers in cycle one used paired reading, repeated reading, group reading or choral reading, the teacher reading to the whole class and individual students reading to the whole class. For instance, in grade one, after the teacher pre-taught the new vocabulary, during the second 10 minutes of the class, she asked the students to pay attention to her face, voice and reading. She modeled the reading twice for the students. When she finished, she asked the whole class to read the text in pairs, with each of the paired students taking turns. The teacher asked the pairs to read the text loud enough so that they could hear each other but not so loud as to disturb their classmates performing the same assignment. The students were asked to correct their partner's mistakes. The students were then given 7 minutes for reading in pair activity. When the students finished, the teacher chose some students to stand and read together the first paragraph of the story. Then, she did the same with some other students until the text was read in its entirety. That activity lasted for around 10 minutes. The rest of the class was devoted to comprehension activities such as answering questions related to the text and gap-fill activities. Basically, in this class, the teacher used three techniques: modeling, paired reading, and group reading.

With respect to the repeated reading technique, the lower level students in grade two were asked during the first 10 minutes to read the text two times together after the teacher modeled the reading for them. Then, the teacher asked them to read the questions--with some colourful cards given to each group consisting of different questions--and the teacher subsequently had the students answer the questions in

their respective groups. For each group, one student read the questions aloud and other students answered them. The teacher used modeling and repeated reading approaches. It is worth mentioning that in School B, all the observed reading classes were using texts printed by the teachers of these very classes. Textbooks were most underwhelmingly used with the exception of what was observed in grade four. When the teachers were asked about it, they said: "*the texts in the books are sometimes too hard for many students to understand. We try to choose texts that suit most of the students if not all*".

In cycle one classes for enhancing the reading strategies and assisting students' reading performance, the teachers used online video stories from the websites, *YouTube* and Online Story. For example, in school B grade two, after the teacher pre-taught the new vocabulary, she asked the students to watch and listen to a story on *YouTube* called "The Ant and the Dove". Then, some students were asked to stand and read together the first part of the story, followed by another group of students to continue the reading and so forth. In another class at the same school, the teacher almost carried out the same methodology, but used a story from the website, *Online Story*. The teacher asked some students after hearing the story to stand and reread the story along with the video while the other students listened and used their fingers to follow the story. These technological aids were used to assist students' reading and provide them with a standard reading model. Most of the students if not all, in many classes, had the chance to read aloud at the class. Also, many students received feedback.

To sum up, there were many reading-aloud strategies that teachers employed. However, before starting using those various techniques, it was observed that the teachers began their classes by identifying and exploring the problematic words. The teachers explained those new words and modeled the pronunciation for the students. Sometimes, the teachers asked the students to chunk the difficult words and try to spell them. Concerning the reading-aloud strategies in cycle one, there was a small

difference between the reading-aloud strategies that were used in grades one, two and three, and grades four, five and six. In grades one, two, and three, the teachers modeled the reading, the whole text, to the students. On the other hand, in grades four, five and six, the teachers only read the hard words in passages. Notably, there was an exception for below level graders. The teachers modeled the whole text for them. Sometimes, a single student reads, models the reading to the whole class; this was observed in different classes but mostly with grades four, five and six. Concerning the choral reading strategy, the whole class read together after the teacher. Sometimes, one group of low-level students read together and repetitively. Also, the students were engaged in a repeated reading activity. In other classes, the students were engaged in a paired reading activity. Notably, the teachers used audio recordings and online video stories from different websites to model the reading to students and, at the same time, to assist students' reading. It is worth mentioning that most of the reading-aloud techniques were implemented approximately during the first 30 minutes of the classes but for grades four, five and six, they were implemented during the first 20 minutes.

4.2.1.2. Cycle Two: Reading Strategies

As it was observed, there were fewer reading-aloud strategies used in cycle two. More attention was given to comprehension rather than fluency, but there were still some reading-aloud techniques applied, such as reading practice, individual reading-aloud, and modeling in which a single student was reading to the whole class. For example, in grade seven in School A, after reviewing the previous lesson at the beginning of the class, two students were asked to stand in front of the class and read a text shown on the board with expression for the students. The text was a bit long. The two students took turns reading the text. Then, the teacher asked another two students to continue reading the text. When the students finished, some questions were presented on a website that was related to the texts. The questions seemed

challenging and hard to answer. Notably, the lesson was not a new lesson, but a follow-up class to the previous lesson as the teacher stated at the beginning of the class "we *are going to continue reading about…*" The first part of the class, approximately 10-15 minutes, was dedicated to reading and the rest was for comprehension and completing a written assignment.

With respect to grade seven in School B, at the beginning of the class, the teacher pre-taught the vocabulary. Before asking the students to read the text silently, she distributed a worksheet to the class (which was composed of six groups with five students in each group) and asked the students to fill out the worksheets. The teacher joined the lower-level group and asked them to read one by one. The teacher corrected the students' pronunciation while they were reading. After that, she requested them to answer the questions on the worksheet. Some hints were given to the students when they struggled to find the answer. It was evident to the researcher that the teacher was using individual reading-aloud, practice and modeled reading strategies in her class.

As per grade eight in both schools, the teachers requested some students to read a part of the given text aloud to the other students after asking and explaining some concepts. One class read from the board, and the other class read from the textbooks. Then, the teachers discussed with the students each part that the students read independently. For the detailed task, the teachers asked the students to read silently and answer the questions in their textbooks.

In the case of grade nine in School A, the text was shown on the board for the students to read before the researcher entered the classroom. The teacher started directly by asking one student each time to read a part of the story. There were some difficult words that the students miss-pronounced. To remedy this, the teacher modeled the correct pronunciation in real time as the students read. Both the teacher and the students discussed and analysed each paragraph separately by means of referring to the characters,

events and key components of the story. Notably, the lesson did not end on the same day, but instead, students were informed that they would be continuing the reading tasks in the next session.

With respect to the observed classes in cycle two, the teachers relied more on using the internet and websites focused on reading comprehension and testing students' understanding and knowledge. One of the websites observed to be integrated into the lessons in grades seven, eight and nine in School A was related to the students' textbooks. The text presented on the board was the same text the students had in their textbooks. The teacher asked one of the students to read a part of the text to the class, and the other students had to follow along with their friends reading in their own books. Then, the teacher asked the students to answer some questions about the textual selection that was read aloud. Some technological aids were used to assist students, who did not bring their textbooks as stated by the teachers interviewed by the researcher. Moreover, this particular approach was used to break up the daily routine of using only textbooks garnering greater student attention. The teachers were using technology in cycle two less than cycle one. After the observation, one of the teachers during the interview said: "*The students at this level need to focus more on the comprehension rather than fluency*". It is worth mentioning that not all students in one class had the chance to read aloud during the reading classes. Few students got the opportunity to read aloud and received feedback from the teachers or peers.

To conclude, there were fewer reading-aloud strategies used in cycle two because the attention was given to comprehension rather than fluency. However, there were still some reading-aloud techniques employed. Notably, before engaging in reading-aloud activities, the teachers pre-taught the vocabulary. Then, the students were given a chance to read aloud individually and model the reading to their classmates. The teachers only modeled the correct pronunciation for the words that the students mispronounced. Additionally, there were few students, who got the chance to read aloud. In contrast to

what was found in cycle one, less technology was used in cycle two. The purpose of using it was to break up the daily routine and attain students' attention.

4.2.2. Assessment Methods

There were some assessment methods and tools which were used during the classroom observation. Most of the methods were formative assessments. The teachers provided students with immediate feedback, which included pronunciation corrections and verbal compliments to increase reading proficiency as was described earlier in the reading strategies section. The teachers provided delayed feedback before the end of the class by writing the difficult words on the board and then modeled the pronunciation. Additionally, some teachers advised the students to use their minds as quickly as possible to break down and chunk the problematic words to facilitate reading them. Concerning peer feedback, in grade one, the teacher asked the whole class to read the text in pairs. The students were also asked to correct their partner's mistakes. Furthermore, in School B grade four, at the beginning of the class, the teacher showed the students the results of their reading performance on the *ReadTheory* website, which the students were actively availing themselves with, before starting her lesson. Through this site, the teachers can check whether or not their students had indeed read the assigned task and answered the corresponding questions. However, it was not clear how the teachers could assess the students' oral reading fluency through this website. All of the previous assessments were meant to be formative assessments.

Concerning the summative assessment, at school A cycle one grade three, the primary goal of the lesson was assessing the students' reading fluency. The teacher was only evaluating the students' fluency. The teacher previously asked the students to prepare and write a text about what they did over the weekend. The teacher used a rubric to evaluate student fluency. The students were, in turn, asked to come

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to the front of the class and read what they wrote. They were asked to read with expression and intonation. Problematically, the very rubric used to evaluate the students' oral reading fluency was not clear to the researcher and lacked the details of a clearly defined and concise methodological approach. From the scant details that the researcher was able to observe, the students were evaluated on the following criteria: (1) speaking in a loud voice; (2) articulating words clearly; (3) reading with expression; and finally, (4) reading with fluency. Grades assigned to this rubric's criteria were: (1) needs improvement, (2) good, and (3) excellent. See Appendix 12. It is worth mentioning that there were no other summative assessments observed.

4.2.3. Summary of the Observation Findings:

Reading methods differed significantly at times from one grade to another. For example, most of the teachers, who read and model for their students were in grades one, two and three. They also used repeated reading, group reading with low-level students, and choral reading with all students. For grades four, five and six, the teachers relied more on the students themselves to read to the whole class, along with paired reading. Moreover, with students at lower levels, the teachers employed paired and repeated reading techniques. A pertinent conclusion could be drawn that students of a younger age require more deliberate, hands-on support in reading on the part of the teacher. That indicates why the previously mentioned strategies were most suitable for them. On the other hand, in the case of students at age 9 (grade four) and above, they were able to perform well independently. Consequently, the teachers used other techniques such as a student reading to a group or whole class, paired reading, and group reading.

Concerning cycle two (the previous description of various parts of the observed classes), it seemed that the students read aloud throughout the initial periods of the classes. The students mostly read aloud to other students. The job of the teacher was to correct and model the native or native-like

pronunciation of the more difficult words. Furthermore, with respect to the pedagogical methods, those employed in various schools were similar in most of the classes. For instance, teachers in School A were using similar academic strategies and approaches. This applied for school B as well. Hence, the techniques that were used with cycle two students were widely used in the literature too, not only for cycle two students but even with higher level students.

Moreover, the English teachers in cycle one used stories from *OnlineStory*, *YouTube* and other websites to assist the students in reading the texts, grab their attention, and at the same time, give the students a chance to listen to native speakers as reported by the teachers during the interviews. On the other hand, the teachers were using technology in cycle two less than cycle one. As stated previously, the classroom observations were intended to observe reading classes in accordance with the focus of this paper and the researcher's agreement with the principals and the subject coordinators to not go beyond attending regular reading classes. As a result, observing summative assessment techniques was limited. There were specific dates for conducting oral reading fluency tests. However, the researcher observed one class in which a summative assessment technique was used to measure students' oral reading fluency, which was a rubric.

4.3.   Interview Findings

The purpose of the interview was to explore reading-aloud strategies, the assessment methods or tools that are used for assessing oral reading fluency and the factors affecting students' oral fluency in private schools in Fujairah city. Therefore, the interview addressed the following research questions:

- What are the reading strategies that are used to build and improve students' oral reading fluency?

- What are the assessment methods that are used for evaluating students' oral reading fluency?

- What are the teachers' perspectives related to the factors that affect students' oral reading performance?

The researcher conducted the study in two schools that had different curriculums: American and British. The focus was on cycles: one and two. Generally, the interview had three sections. Section one was for introducing the topic. Section two was for collecting information about teachers' backgrounds. Section three had the interview questions, which were divided into three sub-headings; reading-aloud strategies, assessment methods and the factors that affect students' oral reading fluency. The interviews started with the first section which was about introducing the research purpose and conditions of participation.

4.3.1. Section Two: Teachers' Backgrounds

The main purpose of this section is to collect general data about the interviewed teachers. The researcher interviewed teachers in two schools. During this part of the interview, the researcher informed the interviewees that the first part (section one), which was about age, nationality and years of experiences, was optional and they did not have to respond to it. However, all the teachers were happy to answer them. Eight teachers were interviewed from school A in which the ages ranged between thirty to forty-eight years. Four of the interviewed teachers had six to ten years of experience. Two of the teachers had experience between eleven to fifteen years, one teacher had experience less than five years, and another teacher had experience more than sixteen years. Overall, most of the interviewed teachers were very experienced. They had different backgrounds and cultures. Two teachers were from Jamaica, three teachers from South Africa, one from Pakistan, one from the Philippines, and one from Jordan. Those teachers taught more than one grade. The following table summarises the demographic data for the interviewed teachers in School A.

Interviewees	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5	Teacher 6	Teacher 7	Teacher 8
Age	34	37	32	32	37	39	28	48
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Female
Years of experience	6-10	6-10	6-10	6-10	11-15	11-15	3	18
Country	South Africa	South Africa	Jordan	Jamaica	South Africa	Philippines	Pakistan	Jamaica
Teaching Grades	6, 7, 8	4, 5 Phone interview	1, 2, 3	7, 8 , 9	3, 4	6 , 7, 8	1, 2, 3	2,3,4 Phone interview

Table 4: Demographic data of the interviewed teachers in School A

It is clear from the table that the teachers were experienced, and had various backgrounds. Most of the teachers were females. There were only two male teachers.

For the second school, school B, the researcher interviewed six teachers. Their ages were between thirty to forty-two years old. Three of the interviewed teachers had experience between six to ten years. One teacher had experience between eleven to fifteen years. Two teachers had less than five years' experience. They were from various backgrounds and cultures too. Four teachers were from India. One was from England, and the last one was from America. They also taught different grades and each teacher taught more than one grade. The following table summarises the demographic data for the interviewed teachers in School B.

Interviewees	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5	Teacher 6
Age	30	40	39	42	31	37
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Years of experience	8	15	15	17	9	13
Country	India	India	USA	India	India	England
Teaching Grades	1, 2	5, 7	3, 4, 5	8 , 9	2, 3	5, 6 , 7 Phone interview

Table 5: Demographic data of the interviewed teachers in School B

Obviously, the teachers in School B were experienced too and they were from different countries, but most of them were Indians. No male teachers were interviewed in this school.

4.3.2. Section Three: Interview Questions

4.3.2.1. Reading-aloud Strategies

4.3.2.1.1. How many reading classes do you have per week? And how often do you focus on oral reading fluency?

Overall, the primary goal of this study is to provide the ministry of education (MOE) with a model for teaching and assessing oral reading fluency. Consequently, this question gives an idea about the number of reading classes that students in each cycle should have in public schools. It also provides a clear picture of the focus and attention given to oral reading fluency. The following lines present some of the quotes that are taken from the interview transcripts.

The eighth interviewee (School A):

"Well, mainly there are two guided reading sessions for cycle one. Regarding oral reading fluency, I incorporate it daily into my classes. Honestly, I do not leave it to one or two classes. I cannot tell you

that I do it once or twice. I do it in all classes repeatedly. For instance, I observe students when they read in their seats. I also ask them to read a certain sentence or paragraph (independently, with a partner, in groups, or a whole class reading). I ask them to read instructions for me as well. Some students do it fluently, but others do not. That is why some students, for example, ask me "Miss, can you read it for us?" I oftentimes do this so that they can understand what reading fluency is all about, not necessarily "fast reading"; since some think that if I am reading fast, then I am reading well; but no observation of punctuation marks is being done while reading, no expression, so I model it often for them. I focus on reading fluency in my daily activities".

With respect to cycle one, there are two main reading sessions. It becomes apparent that the interviewee places great attention on oral reading fluency. She incorporates it daily in all classes, not only in the reading ones. She also observes students and asks them to read not only passages but also to read instructions. The interviewee is aware that oral reading fluency is not about speed, but also about expression and attention to punctuation marks.

The fourth interviewee (School A):

"There is one reading class per week in cycle two. I focus on fluency, but not that much because most of my students are fluent. I focus more on developing reading comprehension skills. But for those, who are reading slowly and have some difficulties in reading and pronunciation, I usually give them extra reading texts and ask them to practice at home. Actually, sometimes not always, I give the text that students are going to read in the class previously to those students, who cannot read well to read it at home. So, when they come to school, they have the confidence needed to read and answer the questions. Uh.., there is a website that the students need to enroll themselves in to be able to read different stories to improve their fluency and comprehension skills".

Concerning cycle two in school: A, there is one main reading class. The teacher does not focus much on fluency. He claims that his students are fluent. Therefore, he focuses on comprehension skills. However, for those, who are struggling in reading, he encourages them to practice at home. Interestingly, the teacher tries to increase the struggling readers' confidence by giving them the text they are going to read in the class ahead of time.

The first interviewee (School B):

"There are two reading classes per week in cycle one. For each cycle, the students get a story or a novel, depending on the grade level, to improve fluency and comprehension skills. They have to read throughout the semester. I ask my students daily to read a short paragraph, about two to three sentences, of the novel. We discuss it at the beginning of the class. So, reading fluency is basically done daily. While I am listening to the students, I mean the students' reading, I correct their mistakes while they are reading".

Concerning cycle one in school B, students also have two reading classes per week. Regarding the focus of fluency, the teacher believes that it is essential to focus on it daily.

The fourth interviewee (School B):

"We have one reading class per week in cycle two. Well, regarding the focus given to fluency, I believe it depends on the age of students and their levels too. For example, the younger the students, the more reading classes they should have, but if the students are fluent, then I focus more on comprehension. Actually, many students are not fluent, so I usually put them in groups and sit with them to read together".

With respect to cycle two in the same school: B, students also have one reading class per week. Interestingly, the interviewee states that many of her students are not fluent. Therefore, she groups them according to their levels. Moreover, the teacher claims that the focus given to fluency depends on the age of students. Even though her students' age is above 12 years, they are still not fluent readers. Accordingly, she tries to improve their fluency by implementing the choral reading approach.

Overall, according to the interviewees' responses in both schools: A and B, all the teachers, who teach grades: one to six state that they have two main reading classes per week. On the other hand, the teachers, who teach grades: seven to nine, have one reading class per week. For school A, the students have a website to read stories daily in school or at home. The students in both schools have to read something daily. For school B, the students in all grades get a novel with the textbooks at the beginning of the year. They have to read a part of it daily. Regarding the second part of the question, it seems that the teachers, who teach cycle one, focus more on reading fluency, in all the English classes not only in

the reading ones because they believe that their students need to develop their reading fluency skill. Concerning other grades, cycle two, there was more focus given to comprehension skills rather than fluency because the teachers claim that at those grade levels, most of the students have developed good fluency skills. Therefore, the focus on the reading fluency depends on the student's level and age.

4.3.2.1.2. What reading strategies do you use to improve students' oral reading fluency?

Exploring the reading strategies that the teachers use in private schools is very critical to this study. The primary aim of this open question is to help the researcher to create a teaching-assessment model for oral reading fluency. The model includes reading-aloud techniques for building and developing oral reading fluency skill. Those reading-aloud techniques, which are included in the model, are transferred from private to public schools in the UAE. Therefore, this question would give English teachers, in public schools, a deep (or broad) background about best practices to build and improve students' reading fluency. The following are some quotes that highlight some of the best techniques that the English teachers in private schools use.

The fifth interviewee (School B):

"Well, first before starting reading, I always pre-teach the new vocabulary, I ask students about meanings and pronunciation. Then, I ask them to read the text aloud….I usually ask students to read in pairs "buddy reading" and in a group of five or six depending on the number of students. Sometimes, I ask the students to stand individually and read the text for their classmates. I correct them, while they read. More importantly, I encourage and motivate students to read and not to worry about making mistakes, even if they make some. I sometimes try to give my students some websites, if they are willing to study after school hours and after they finish their homework, to practice different reading skills. Actually, when I see that some students are doing a good job, I give them extra activities. Sometimes, I ask them to go to the library and pick up a book they like and read it in class".

The interviewee, a four-grade teacher, uses pair reading, choral reading, individual reading aloud and reading practice techniques. However, before employing the previous strategies, she pre-teaches the

new vocabulary including the pronunciation of each word. Notably, the teacher cares about encouraging and motivating students to read aloud.

The fifth interviewee (School A):

"I always start with what the student knows whether it is letter sounds only or two letter words. I am pleased when they are able to read those words whether it is just two letters or three letters words. I always congratulate and praise them. They are very young, and they need encouragement. Sometimes, actually not quite often, if we have an important poem or a part of a poem in the lesson that the students need to memorise, we recite it together through the rhyming technique. I also use a computer, the Internet, and different websites. For example, the students have a screen. It is like an interactive whiteboard. The students read along with a text that is being read aloud. I have also used a recorder, where I record the student reading and then play it back so he/she can listen to her/himself reading. All the technological tools that I am currently using are computer-based".

The interviewee starts her reading classes by reviewing and teaching sounds and words before engaging students in the reading-aloud activity. Rhyming poetry and the choral reading techniques are used with poetry. Also, the assisted reading approach is done through the help of technology, which helps to improve students' oral reading.

The third interviewee (School B):

"Sometimes, I use the choral reading strategy with my students; the whole class reads text aloud from the board. Sometimes, I ask the students individually to stand up and read separately and other times together. Usually, when the students are stuck on a word, I give them immediate feedback. Sometimes, I let them finish reading to see which words they have problems in pronouncing, and then ask them to try and chunk the words to read them. So, I delay my feedback to give them a chance to correct their own mistakes. Yes, also, sometimes, phonetic word sounds are best learned when heard in a video or an audio file. I download some videos from YouTube on certain sounds that students mispronounce. These videos are played during the class. They highlight the sound being taught. My students like watching videos and imitating them. Sometimes, during the class, I enroll the students for an online reading programme called read theory. The students get a text to read and answer questions under the text. Usually, texts are in pdf format".

According to the interviewee, she uses a variety of reading-aloud techniques such as the choral reading, the individual reading and the assisted reading, which is conducted with the help of technology including videos, audio files, and online websites.

The third interviewee (School A):

"With my lower level students, I ask them to sit together in one group and have them read together, and repetitively. I also have my other students read in the reading level groups to build their confidence, as well as, have them learn high-frequency words and sight words. I use videos with subtitles with my students, and I encourage them to watch similar stories or movies with subtitles at home. We also have in the class a corner that has a CD player with an audio recorder. It is useful because the students can record themselves reading and hear their reading back again".

The teacher uses two reading-aloud strategies, which are the choral reading and the assisted reading. The students get the chance to read while they listen to a modeled reading. They can record themselves and correct their own mistakes through the usage of the CD player and the audio recorder, which are available at the classroom.

The seventh interviewee (School A):

"For my students, grades one to three, in the beginning, there are some basic strategies that I use to develop their reading fluency at certain levels. Then, I use more complex ones. For instance, I ask them to look at the picture and try to guess the meaning of words from the context. Then, I ask them about sight words/high-frequency words. I read it aloud if they are new to them. Then I ask them to repeat after me. Another strategy I use is that I ask my students to look at the first letter of the word they cannot read. In the unknown word, I ask them to look at small words they can see, for example, the word "small" has the sight word "all". I ask the students to read on and come back – when the child comes to the unknown word they read to the end of the sentence to see if the context of the sentence helps them to read the unknown word".

It seems that the teacher depends on explaining and modeling the pronunciation of the new vocabulary to students. She also uses the repeated reading approach.

The second interviewee (School B):

"Sometimes, I take my students to the computer lab, which is, sometimes, hard to arrange. The student uses a computer to log in to the ReadTheory website. This website has online reading activities for all levels starting from grade one till grade twelve. I use this website to improve my students' reading abilities and comprehension. It is a funny and interactive tool that can be used in school or at home to practice reading independently. Actually, there is another website, which I like the most and it improves my students' fluency, which is called StoryOnline. This website gives the students a chance to listen to a native speaker telling a story with animation and sound effects. It also provides me, as a teacher, with guided lesson plan activities to use in my class".

Actually, the interviewee uses two websites to develop students' reading skills. The first one, *ReadTheory*, is used to allow students to practice reading individually and independently. The second website, *StoryOnline*, provides students with modeled reading.

Overall, the above quotations present and reflect on the teaching methods that have been implemented in two private schools in Fujairah city. The majority of the participants use a range of strategies. They do not focus or stick to one technique as they stated. Additionally, it seems that the teachers have many standard methods that they use in both schools. The teachers use: the model reading; reading practice; repeated reading; rhyming, with less frequency, individual reading aloud; one student reads to the whole class or one group, assisted reading; watching a video and following the subtitles, paired reading; one high-level student reads with a low-level student, and choral reading; one group of students or the whole class reads the text together. It is worth mentioning that the teachers, who teach lower grades, concentrate on building students' phonics awareness, high-frequency words, blending and chunking skills as a foundation for building students' reading fluency skill. Intriguingly, the interviews uncover some techniques that the teachers used in integrating the technology to assist and enhance the students' reading skills. In fact, several tools clearly emerge. For instance, the teachers in school B use a website called "*ReadTheory*". The teachers claim that this website shows a high impact on students' reading skills. Furthermore, some of the technological tools that the teachers use are audio recorders, computers, iPads, *YouTube* videos, and online stories.

4.3.2.1.3. What is your overall opinion of these strategies that you mentioned on students' reading fluency?

The goal of this open question is to understand teachers' views about the strategies they use in their reading classes. It is critical to know if those teachers believe that those strategies are effective or

not for building and improving students' oral reading fluency. The following are some of the excerpts that highlight teachers' thoughts.

The first interviewee (School B):

"Yea, sure they help the students to improve their reading. For instance, for the assisted reading approach, using the audio recorder helps the student to work independently at times to practice their fluency through recording their voices and hear them back to evaluate their reading. It also makes the students more confident about their reading abilities. I had before some shy and unconfident students, who were afraid to read aloud. However, when they read alone and record themselves, it helps them to improve their oral reading fluency and be more comfortable and confident to read aloud in front of their classmates".

With respect to the above response, it becomes apparent that the assisted reading approach improves students' oral reading and increases their confidence to read aloud. It allows them to practice reading independently and evaluate their reading.

The fifth interviewee (School B):

"Generally speaking, they improve their pronunciation, sound awareness, their understanding of (the meaning of) words and comprehension skills as well. They guess the meaning of the unknown words easily from the context. My fluent students are good at comprehension skills too. They can read fast and answer questions. They are more confident and have less fear of making mistakes. From my experience, I think integrating technology in reading instructions supports reading fluency as some of the computer games or words or sounds are repetitive, and the students are able to hear and see it simultaneously. For instance, the background, colours, and sounds of an online game or an application can affect students' attention positively and attract and engage them to finish the game or the activity that they need to finish. I remember now some iPad applications that I used with my grade one and two students to teach them vocabulary about animals and their environments. The students acquired many words with the correct pronunciation. That application allows them to hear the words many times as they click on it".

The interviewee thinks that reading-aloud strategies improve students' pronunciation, sound awareness, and understanding of words. They also improve students' comprehension skills and increase their confidence in reading aloud. Moreover, the interviewee believes that integrating technology in reading-aloud instructions attracts students' attention, engages them, and improves pronunciation.

The second interviewee (School A):

"Well, I believe that technology is the demand of 21ˢᵗ-century life skills. Online visualization of vocabulary and texts has a clear impact on learners' brains. They stimulate the brain and students thinking. I am pursuing my master's degree in educational technologies, and I know that research shows how technology can change our own life. From my experience, I use lots of videos with my students to allow them to watch stories with subtitles that they need to read as they listen to the story. Actually, this attracts my students more than reading a story in the textbook. Students are more engaged with animation and sounds.

It is evident from the teacher's response that she is very keen on using technology as a part of the reading instruction. She also believes, like the fifth interviewee in school B, that technology stimulates the students' thinking and engages them in reading activities.

The seventh interviewee (School A):

"The strategies that I use help my students to read through the sound of words. My students now use their knowledge of sounds and sight words to read. They have developed automaticity and accuracy in reading. When they stand to read, you can see and feel how they are proud of themselves. Also, the students enjoy reading, when they see it is attainable. That is why I think that teachers should select the most suitable and most interesting texts to their students".

Interviewee 7 believes that the repeated reading and modeling reading approaches, which are stated in the previous section, help students to read automatically and accurately.

The eighth interviewee (School A):

"Indeed, they are very useful to build students' fluency as I said before…I know my friends told you about using videos and iPads in their reading instruction, but it is difficult for me to use them. I started my career 17 years ago, when technology was nearly non-existent in the classroom, so I fall back onto ways that do not involve technology. However, the only device that I have used, but I am not sure if you are interested in, is a recording device. I like using it in my class because the students can hear back their reading, find out their mistakes, and learn from it".

The teacher claims that the strategies she uses, are useful to build students' fluency. Notably, she has no background in employing technology in reading-aloud strategies, but she uses a recording device to allow students to listen to their mistakes and correct them.

The third interviewee (School B):

"Honestly, they improve students' comprehension skills and reading fluency, which includes pronunciation and speed. But, sometimes, they are time-consuming. We have a curriculum to finish. So, sometimes I tend to focus on comprehension skills more than fluency. My fluent students are eager to read aloud for their classmates. They have high-level of self-esteem and confidence. As mentioned earlier, an online reading programme is being followed by the students. They read a passage online and choose the correct answer from alternatives. What nice about this website is that many students do not consider it as work or a task when it is to be done on a computer or a laptop. This makes them more involved. Many of them enjoy reading this way".

The third interviewee also believes that reading-aloud techniques have positive impacts on students' reading fluency and comprehension skills. It is also believed that reading-aloud strategies can build students' self-esteem and confidence. Additionally, integrating the *ReadTheory* website increases students' interests to read and involves them.

To sum up, the above excerpts present a mixed picture of teachers' thoughts and beliefs of the reading strategies they mention. According to their views, they believe that those reading-aloud strategies have positive impacts not only on students' fluency skills but also on students' comprehension skills. The teachers also believe that those reading techniques can develop and improve students' pronunciation, phonological awareness, accuracy, reading speed, confidence, speaking skill, and comprehension. However, some teachers believe that some of those techniques are time- consuming and, therefore, they focus on comprehension rather than fluency due to curriculum restriction. Furthermore, based on the responses, it is obvious that most teachers use some technological aids in their reading instructions to help students improve their oral reading fluency. Some participants have some experience in using technology. They are enthusiastic about integrating their techniques to improve students' reading performance. One of the interviewees mentions games, audio stories, and other applications, on computers and iPad, which present repetitive language for users. It is believed that the characteristics of those games, stories, and application can affect students' attention positively. Moreover, one of the

interviewees has no background in using technology to improve reading fluency. However, she uses an audio recorder to make students confident and fluent readers.

4.3.2.1.4. Do you think there is a direct link (or correlation) between oral reading fluency and a student's reading comprehension?

This question is not related directly to the research questions. However, there is an argument about the significance of oral reading fluency skill. It is perceived that it is not important for students. However, based on the literature, one of the most significant benefits of the oral reading fluency skill is that a larger capacity of a student's brain will be devoted to comprehension if a student becomes a fluent reader. Many studies have shown that oral reading fluency skill has a positive effect on comprehension skills. Hence, this question investigates teachers' points of views concerning this issue, which might give inspiration and insight for the policymakers and curriculum coordinators at the MOE to consider reading-aloud approaches as a part of the English reading programme in the future. Also, as mentioned previously, this study intends to propose a comprehensive teaching-assessment model to the MOE in the UAE about oral reading fluency. Therefore, to convince the MOE, the researcher needs to collect some evidence about the significance of oral reading fluency. The following demonstrates some of the teachers' perceptions of oral reading fluency and comprehension skills.

The sixth interviewee (School A):

"Yes, I believe that, when the students concentrate on becoming fluent, they usually read word by word and they try to decode all of the words they face. However, they forget to read for meaning and understanding. It is different when they are able to recognise words and read them fluently, and when they just try to decode words."

The teacher believes that the lack of reading fluency affects students' comprehension skills. Disfluent readers do not focus on making meaning, but they focus on decoding word by word.

The fourth interviewee (School A):

"Indeed, oral reading fluency improves students' comprehension abilities and thinking skills."

It seems that the fourth interviewee thinks that there is a positive relationship between oral reading fluency and comprehension skills. He does not provide details about what he claims.

The third interviewee (School B):

"Definitely, when students are fluent, they grasp the meaning of what they are reading better. If there is insufficient fluency, usually the meaning of the sentence is lost by the time the student has reached the end of the sentence".

Significantly, the third interviewee's (in school B) view coincides with the previous two interviewees' views in school A. She believes that students understand the meaning of text better when they are reading fluently. Focusing on decoding words leads students to lose the meaning of the text they read.

The fifth interviewee (School B):

"Yes, of course! It is one of the skills that can help students to acquire other reading skills. If students improve their reading fluency, their comprehension skills will improve accordingly. If they are not fluent readers, this will usually cause problems in understanding a text, because they are not really reading with understanding, but just 'calling words' ".

Moreover, the fifth interviewee, in school B, has the same opinion as her colleague in the same school.

Overall, the teachers have definite views and perceptions about oral reading fluency and comprehension skills. Based on the above excerpts, it is clear that the teachers believe that once students have acquired oral reading fluency skill, they can spare more of their brain's capacity for comprehension. Therefore, most students, who are fluent readers, have better comprehension skills. This clarifies the importance of integrating oral reading fluency into a reading programme.

4.3.2.2. Assessment Methods

4.3.2.2.1. How do you assess and evaluate students' oral reading fluency? Any tools?

The purpose of this question is to investigate the assessment techniques that the teachers use in two private schools in Fujairah. It is known that the assessment techniques have a significant impact on the delivery of effective reading instructions. Results of students' assessments help teachers to find out whether or not their instructions are suitable to make students fluent readers. Therefore, it is important to investigate the methods and tools that are used to measure students' oral reading fluency skill. The following presents some quotes about the assessment methods and tools.

The second interviewee (School B):

"As for formative assessment, we depend on daily observation, but for the summative assessment we are currently using a checklist, a rubric, to assess students' fluency in reading, but for comprehension, we assess them based on their answers to questions, which are prepared for the text they read aloud. Uh, I had other experience with assessing students' reading fluency. The school where I was working in Abu Dhabi, we used DIBELS, but it was withdrawn later. I do not know why".

According to the above response, there are two types of assessment methods for oral reading fluency: formative and summative. Notably, observing students is used as a formative assessment, and rubrics are used as a summative assessment.

The third interviewee (School B):

"Now, at the end of each unit and, sometimes, monthly, we (teachers) use a rubric sheet that has some criteria that students need to achieve. Before, we used the WCPM test, but honestly, it took time. It was not practical for us. We are super busy to conduct it. But, in the past, when I worked in the USA, I used DIBELS, as well as, fluency tests from Journey's and Cornerstone's textbooks. They were accurate, precise".

It is seen that the teacher uses rubrics to assess students' oral reading fluency. However, with respect to the teacher's experience, it is not included in designing the survey questions because the experience is outside the UAE context.

The sixth interviewee (School A):

"In our daily classes, we observe the students' reading development. For the end of each unit, we use rubrics more than the WCPM test, which consumes much time. We have some criteria that we evaluate students on. Also, we use differentiated worksheets made to suit the needs of students and their interests as well. Various texts are also used to assess students' fluency and comprehension at the same time."

The sixth interviewee uses three assessment techniques: daily observation, rubrics, and the WCPM test. Also, various texts and differentiated worksheets are used to assess students' oral reading fluency.

The second interviewee (School A):

"In the daily classes, we observe students and correct them. During the school examination period, the coordinator of the subject gives us a reading rubric. Each student is assessed individually on reading skills including pronunciation, prosody, speed, hesitation, and comprehension. Actually, for the comprehension test, we ask the students some questions after they finish reading the text aloud."

The teacher employs three assessment techniques: observation, correcting students and rubrics.

The first Interviewee (School B):

"I assess my students almost every day by walking around, listening to them, giving them feedback, and encouraging them to read daily. For the school's records, we usually conduct reading and speaking tests for the students to assess their fluency. We inform the parents before the test. We also prepare a text with multiple choice questions to assess the student's comprehension skills as well. So, it is one complete test that has fluency and comprehension".

According to the first interviewee in school B, the teacher employs two assessment techniques: observation and rubrics. She focuses intensely on assessing students' fluency daily by observing them and giving them feedback. The teacher mentions reading and speaking tests, but without precise details.

The fifth interviewee (School A):

"Well, I am currently using a rubric with the students. However, before when I was working in the UK, I used the PM bench-marks reading test and Probe, a reading test, which gives more information than the PM benchmark".

Also, the fifth interviewee uses a rubric like her colleagues in the same school. With respect to the interviewee's past experience in using the PM bench-marks reading test and Probe, they are not added to the survey question. They are used outside the UAE context.

The above quotes present some tools and techniques that the teachers use to assess students' fluency. Most of the teachers use observation as the first tool to assess students' reading performance. Using observation is considered as a formative assessment. For the summative assessment, which is conducted at the end of each unit or a month, rubrics are used very often to assess the oral reading fluency skill. However, the teachers, who teach the American curriculum, use the WCPM test with their students. Concerning the WCPM test, it is believed that it is time-consuming. For this reason, it is neglected.

4.3.2.3. Factors Affecting Students' Oral Reading Fluency

4.3.2.3.1. From your point of view, what things (factors) affect a student's oral reading fluency?

This question is related directly to the third research question, which investigates the factors that affect students' oral reading fluency positively or negatively. It is important to understand those factors, which could be reduced or reinforced in the future to ensure having fluent readers. Many teachers have similar answers to this question. The following lines present some of the teachers' responses.

The eighth interviewee (School A):

"Parents could be a factor that affects students' oral reading fluency. For example, if students have someone at home, who reads to them regularly and models the reading with correct pronunciation, this will help them a lot. The more students practice at school and home, the better they will become. If students are not allowed to practice fluency on a regular basis, this will also affect their fluency. It is not something that must be done every once in a while, but regularly, meaning a few times per day. The last factor that could affect students' oral reading fluency is physical problems or disabilities. For example, if a student has hearing or speech problems, this could directly affect his/her reading abilities. Some young students have problems with pronunciation when they start kindergarten. Those students have to sit with a speech therapist to help them".

 The interviewee states various factors, which are parents, practice reading at home and school, and health

problems, which includes hearing and speech problems.

The fifth interviewee (School B):

"Parents are not being trained on how to help and support their children reading at home. They do not encourage children to read. They also do not read to them. Reading a story for children before bedtime is important and efficient. However, few parents do that."

Also, this teacher, who is from the same school as the previous interviewee, believes that parents,

who read and encourage their children to read, have a positive influence on students' oral reading fluency.

The third interviewee (School B):

 "Some teachers do not read or model the reading nicely or with expression to their students. Also, their, accents such as the "…" accent (sorry to say this) could affect building reading fluency at early grades."

Clearly, the teacher in school B claims that teachers reading can affect students' reading fluency.

Surprisingly, it is believed that teachers' accent could also affect students' reading fluency.

The seventh interviewee (School A):

"Parental engagement has a big role in improving students' fluency, especially at home. They have to read to their children. I send the texts that the students are going to study to parents every week. Thus, a few parents help and read to their children".

Moreover, the seventh interviewed teacher in school A thinks that parents should read to their children at home to develop their reading fluency skill.

The second interviewee (School A):

"Textbook levels definitely affect reading fluency. Most students that I work with are too young for the grade that they are in. The textbooks are too difficult for their level".

The previous quote reports textbook levels should match students' levels to build and improve their fluency.

The fifth interviewee (School A):

"Well, I am afraid to say this, and I do not want to offend anyone, but the improper foundation of teaching sounds to students can affect their fluency. Students often confuse similar looking words like no and on, or now and won. Also, some students are pressured to read beyond their ability and level. They are given hard texts, which decrease their, motivation, interest and confidence to read".

Besides the textbooks levels factor, the fifth interviewee adds another significant factor, which is the improper foundation of teaching sounds. A strong foundation of teaching sounds is crucial to make students better readers. It affects their motivation to read.

It can be seen from the above responses that there are common factors that affect students' reading fluency. It is believed that parents have a big role in developing their children's reading fluency. According to the eighth and seventh interviewees in school A, and the fifth interviewee in school B, students, to whom their parents read at home, seem to be fluent and confident. Therefore, practicing reading aloud at home is a significant factor that enhances students' reading abilities. Moreover, the third interviewee in school B and the fifth interviewee in school A believe that the improper foundation of teaching sounds can affect students' fluency. For instance, teachers' accents and the way they model the reading can affect students' oral reading fluency. Surprisingly, the second teacher in school A, who was pursuing her master's degree, believes that textbook levels have a clear impact on students' reading

fluency. The assigned reading texts should match the students' interest and level. Students' motivation to read is affected by the level of texts. Additionally, it is reported that some students are afraid to read aloud. They seem anxious about it. However, the reason for that is not stated. Finally, students might have some health problems that affect their reading fluency. Overall, the previous findings are used to develop a section in the survey that focuses on the factors.

3.2.4. Final Comments Made by the Interviewees

4.3.2.3.2. Would you like to add or say something?

The question is added to the interview questions because some participants might add some interesting or valid points that the researcher is not aware of. Those points could be used to build a comprehensive teaching-assessment model for oral reading fluency. As far as the issue of fluency is concerned, some of the participants but not all had the following to say:

The sixth interviewee (School B):

"In the past 17 years of teaching, I have seen a lot of changes within teaching reading. Recently, there has been a big push in the British curriculum to introduce phonics early in Fs1, pre-primary when the students' age is three years. I believe that this is affecting children when they are reading as they are forgetting to look at developing their reading skills. Due to the push in phonics children are relying on sounding out phonetically rather than other reading skills that will help them develop fluency such as learning high-frequency words or chunking big words into small words. When the child comes to the unknown word, they look for clues - starting with the first letter, looking for small letter combinations in a bigger word example - butterfly - but, her and fly. However, when children sound out, they lose the meaning of what they have read. Not only students' fluency is affected, but also their comprehension".

The previous teacher does not agree with the idea of teaching reading fluency in Fs1, which affects students reading fluency. She believes that focusing too much on teaching sounds, will impinge on other reading skills such as learning high-frequency words and chunking. Therefore, both reading fluency and comprehension skills will be affected negatively.

The first interviewee (School B):

"Well, it would be great to spread the culture of reading and educate parents about the importance of reading a book or a story for their children on a regular basis. Reading is not about fluency and comprehension only, but it is also about building students' personalities and knowledge. What reading can do is beyond what we can imagine. It is critical for people to be able to read about things that are happening around the world".

According to the first interviewee in school B, she views reading as a very significant skill that should be taken into account. She suggests that parents should know that reading to their children regularly is significant. The interviewee believes that, beyond the academic purpose of reading, it develops students' personalities and knowledge.

The fourth interviewee (School B):

"This year is Zayed Year for reading, which shows that the country is aware of the significance of reading. I hope to see more reading competitions in English that encourage and motivate students to read more. I feel that many students do not like reading and they do not read at home".

Also, the fourth interviewee has a similar view to her colleague. She thinks that reading competitions should be held to encourage and motivate students to read.

The seventh interviewee (School A):

"I think oral reading fluency should be taught from an early stage like from grade one to six, but not from the kindergarten. Another point that I want to mention is that the assessment techniques should be clear and precise. I like using DIBELS, fluency tests from Journeys and Cornerstone. I know they take time, but they are useful to measure reading fluency and comprehension skills."

It seems that the seventh interviewee believes that teaching oral reading fluency should begin in grade one. She also prefers using DIBELS to assess students because it provides accurate results.

The first interviewee (School A):

"In my opinion, the major factor that affects reading fluency is early foundation skills. If these are put into place in the early years, kids will be able to read fluently and with confidence. Looking at a word and reading it by decoding the sound only does not work well in the long run. You know we cannot always pronounce sounds as they are. We have silent letters and vowels. Therefore, building a strong foundation of literacy skills is fundamental."

The teacher claims that having a strong foundation of reading skills is crucial to helping students in the long run. Learning to read is not about sounds only, but about mastering other knowledge such as vowels and silent letters

The second interviewee (School B):

"Look, reading fluency is important, and I am not against it, but here the school always asks us to cover the course syllabus, which makes it hard to give the students the opportunity to read aloud and receive feedback every day."

Considering the comment of the second interviewee in school B, it seems that the teacher is aware of the importance of reading fluency, but she does not provide students with opportunities to read every day. This indicates that the teachers are under a good deal of pressure.

Taking the above final comments of the interviewees into consideration shows how much teachers are aware of the issue being investigated. They advocate that students have to read at school and home. They also believe that oral reading fluency skill should not be neglected. Moreover, the teachers think highly of parental involvement in the reading process. One critical point that is stated by one of the interviewees is to spread the culture of reading and motivate students to read. In fact, concerning this point, the ministry of education (MOE) and the whole country are aware of the importance of reading. That is why there is such a large amount of focus on reading lately. The UAE declared the year 2016 as the reading year, which is still now being promoted. Furthermore, according to the sixth interviewee in school B and the first interviewee in school A, they believe that teaching reading should not rely too much on phonics and sounds. It should focus on other skills such as teaching high-frequency words, sight

words, and chunking. These skills would make students better readers. Moreover, based on the seventh interviewee in school A, she believes that teaching reading fluency should not begin too early.

4.3.2. Summary of the Interviews Findings

The interview is used to gather data about reading-aloud techniques; the assessment methods and tools are used for measuring oral reading fluency and the factors affecting students' oral fluency. Concerning the focus on oral reading fluency, there is a clear emphasis on teaching and measuring it at cycle one rather than cycle two. Overall, the teachers have definite views and perceptions about oral reading fluency and comprehension skills. They believe that acquiring oral reading fluency skill improves comprehension skills. They stated that fluent readers have better comprehension skills than less fluent readers. This shows the significance of oral reading fluency. Also, the interviews reveal a wide range of reading-aloud techniques. Some of the reading-aloud methods are modeled reading, reading practice, repeated reading, rhyming poetry, individual reading aloud, assisted reading with technology, paired reading, and choral reading. Generally, the teachers believe that those previous reading-aloud methods have positive impacts on students' reading fluency and comprehension skills. They believe that employing different reading-aloud techniques develops and improves students' pronunciation, phonological awareness, accuracy, reading speed, confidence, speaking skill, and comprehension. However, some teachers believe that some of those techniques are time- consuming. Furthermore, some technological aids are used to help students improving their oral reading fluency.

With respect to the assessment techniques, in particular, the formative assessment of oral reading fluency, observation is used by all interviewed teachers. For the summative assessment, rubrics and WCPM are used very often to assess the oral reading fluency skill. Concerning the factors affecting

students' oral reading fluency, there are some factors that the interviews reveal. These factors are parents, practice reading aloud, an early foundation of teaching literacy, motivation to read, textbooks levels, anxiety, health problems, and teachers' accents which is not included in the survey. Finally, according to the final comments made by the interviewees, it is apparent that the teachers are aware of the issue being investigated. They believe that oral reading fluency skill should not be neglected.

4.4. Survey Findings

The survey is designed to address three of the research questions, which are:

- What are the reading strategies that are used to build and improve students' oral reading fluency?

- What are the assessment methods that are used for evaluating students' oral reading fluency?

- What are the teachers' perspectives related to the factors that affect students' oral reading performance?

The survey covers mainly the reading-aloud strategies, the factors that can affect a student's oral reading fluency, and the assessment techniques used to assess students' oral reading fluency. The survey starts with demographic questions followed by three main sections. The survey has an open question in each of the three sections although the survey is meant to confirm the data collected in the first phase. Thus, in order to build a comprehensive teaching-assessment model for developing oral reading fluency, the open questions might give a better insight for the researcher. The quantitative results along with qualitative findings are presented in each section. A total of a hundred and ninety-three (n=193) English teachers completed the survey across the five emirates; Sharjah, Ajman, UAQ, RAK, and Al Fujairah. The following lines present the demographic data findings that are related to age, nationality, teaching grades, curriculum, years of experience, the city and the findings of the four main sections accordingly.

4.4.1. Demographic Data Findings:

Demographic data is important to know and understand the population and the participant's background and knowledge. Based on the obtained results, a total of 193 participants completed the demographic part of the survey, and the vast majority of them were from Sharjah and Ajman with 42.5% and 36.8% respectively. The participants were also of different nationalities, but the majority of them with 55.4% were Indian English teachers. The second most frequent nationality was Egyptian with 9.3%. Furthermore, more than half of the participants 50.3% are between 30-39 years old and more than a quarter of them, 25.4 per cent, were between 40-49 years old. Notably, 19 participants were 50 years old and above. For more details, look at demographic tables and figures in the appendix 13.

Regarding the curriculum, the survey mentioned three curriculums, which are American, British and MOE. However, it gives an option to state other curriculums. Consequently, there are four other curriculums stated by the participants, which are Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), Indian, Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE), and International Baccalaureate (IB). A total of 76 participants with 39.4% taught a British curriculum. While 64 participants (33.2%) taught the CBSE curriculum. Further, a total of 40 participants are teaching both American and MOE curriculum with 10.4% for each. For more details, look at demographic tables and figures in the appendix 13.

In terms of teaching grade, most of the participants taught cycle one students (1-6 grades) with 63.2%. A total of 71 participants out of 193 taught cycle two students (7-9 grades). For the experience level, it seems from the following table (1) that most of the participants were experienced teachers. A total of 61 out of 193 English teachers had experience between 6 and 10 years. At the same time, 38 and 39 participants had experience between 11 and 15 years and over 16 years respectively.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
				Years of Experience	
Valid	1-5 years	55	28.5	28.5	28.5
	6-10 years	61	31.6	31.6	60.1
	11-15 years	38	19.7	19.7	79.8
	16 years or above	39	20.2	20.2	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table 6: Years of Experience

To sum up, the participants were from different backgrounds, but most of them were from India. Furthermore, more than half of the participants (50.3%) were between 30-39 years old. Also, the majority of the respondents taught a British curriculum and CBSE curriculum. Slightly, more than a quarter of the participants had experience between one to six years, but other participants had more years of experience.

4.4.2. Section One Findings: Reading-aloud Strategies

4.4.2.1.   Part one

This part has four questions about the use of some reading-aloud techniques and about the significance of integrating technology in reading fluency instructions. This part is created to determine whether the reading-aloud strategies, observed in the two schools, are implemented or not in other private schools across the five emirates in UAE. The first statement in this section is "I use reading-aloud techniques with my students". The respondents had to tick the statement that is most true for them through a five-point scale ranging from "never" on the left end and with "always" on the right end. The following tables present the responses of a hundred and ninety-three (n=193) English teachers.

The frequency of : I use reading-aloud techniques with students					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Sometimes	30	15.5	15.5	15.5
	Very often	62	32.1	32.1	47.7
	Always	101	52.3	52.3	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table 7: The frequency of using reading-aloud techniques with students

As can be seen from the table (A), in terms of the usage of reading-aloud instructions, more than 52.3% of the respondents indicate that they always use reading-aloud techniques in their classes. Also, more than 32.1% select that they "very often" use reading-aloud strategies. Remarkably, none of the participants choose "rarely" or "never". Overall, the results of this question indicate that all participants have used reading-aloud instructions with their students.

4.4.2.2. Part Two

Part two of this section is about the frequency of using some of the reading-aloud instructions that are used widely in the observed two schools in Fujairah city as well as the consulted literature. There are eight statements in this section, which are: (1) modeling: i.e. a teacher reads to students; (2) reading practice i.e. a student is given a chance to read and practice; (3) repeated reading by the student i.e. read the text many times until mastering it; (4) pair reading i.e. a student reads to his partner; (5) choral reading i.e. students read together a selected text; and (6) reading theatre i.e. students perform a show in front of

an audience; (7) rhyming poetry i.e. students read aloud a poem with rhythm or beat; (8) assisted reading i.e. read a text while listening simultaneously to a fluent reading for the same text. The participants had to tick the statement that is most true for them through a five-point scale again ranging from "never" on the left end and with "always" on the right end. The following tables present the frequency of the responses for each of the statement as mentioned earlier.

The frequency of "modeling: i.e. a teacher reads to students"					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Rarely	6	3.1	3.1	3.1
	Sometimes	47	24.4	24.4	27.5
	Very often	69	35.8	35.8	63.2
	Always	71	36.8	36.8	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table 8: The frequency of "modeling: i.e. a teacher reads to students"

The frequency "reading practice i.e. a student is given a chance to practice reading aloud"					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Never	2	1.0	1.0	1.0
	Rarely	2	1.0	1.0	2.1
	Sometimes	46	23.8	23.8	25.9
	Very often	78	40.4	40.4	66.3
	Always	65	33.7	33.7	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table 9: The frequency "reading practice i.e. a student is given a chance to practice reading aloud"

The frequency of "repeated reading by a student i.e. read the text many times until mastering it"					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Never	4	2.1	2.1	2.1
	Rarely	16	8.3	8.3	10.4
	Sometimes	61	31.6	31.6	42.0
	Very often	68	35.2	35.2	77.2
	Always	44	22.8	22.8	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table 10: The frequency of "repeated reading by a student i.e. read the text many times until mastering it"

The frequency of "pair reading i.e. two students read to each other"					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Never	3	1.6	1.6	1.6
	Rarely	14	7.3	7.3	8.8
	Sometimes	76	39.4	39.4	48.2
	Very often	77	39.9	39.9	88.1
	Always	23	11.9	11.9	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table 11: The frequency of "pair reading i.e. two students read to each other"

The frequency of "choral reading i.e. students read together a selected text"					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Never	8	4.1	4.1	4.1
	Rarely	30	15.5	15.5	19.7
	Sometimes	64	33.2	33.2	52.8
	Very often	53	27.5	27.5	80.3
	Always	38	19.7	19.7	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table 12: The frequency of "choral reading i.e. students read together a selected text"

The frequency of "reading theatre i.e. students perform a show in front of an audience"					
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Never	9	4.7	4.7	4.7
	Rarely	23	11.9	11.9	16.6
	Sometimes	97	50.3	50.3	66.8
	Very often	50	25.9	25.9	92.7
	Always	14	7.3	7.3	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table 13: The frequency of "reading theatre i.e. students perform a show in front of an audience"

The frequency of rhyming poetry i.e. students read aloud a poem with rhythm (beat).					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	3	1.6	1.6	1.6
	Rarely	8	4.1	4.1	5.7
	Sometimes	85	44.0	44.0	49.7
	Very often	71	36.8	36.8	86.5
	Always	26	13.5	13.5	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table 14: The frequency of rhyming poetry i.e. students read aloud a poem with rhythm (beat).

The frequency of assisted reading i.e. read a text while listening simultaneously to a fluent reading for the same text					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	15	7.8	7.8	7.8
	Rarely	23	11.9	11.9	19.7
	Sometimes	77	39.9	39.9	59.6
	Very often	49	25.4	25.4	85.0
	Always	29	15.0	15.0	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table 15: The frequency of assisted reading i.e. read a text while listening simultaneously to a fluent reading for the same text

Based on table (2) results, a total of 71 participants out of 193 indicate that they always model the reading to their students. Additionally, 69 English teachers very often read to their students and 47

teachers "sometimes" read to their students. None of the respondents indicates that he/she "never" reads to their students. However, a minority of participants, 6 teachers, which accounts for 3.1 per cent indicate that they rarely read to their students.

When asked about "reading practice" technique, a total of 65 respondents indicate that they "always" use this strategy with their students (accounting for 33.7% of all participants). Moreover, a total of 78 respondents out of 193 state that they "very often" give a chance to students to practice reading aloud (accounting for 40.4% of all participants). However, only 4 out of 193 participants indicate that they "never" and "rarely" use this technique with the students (accounting for just 2% of all participants). Two of those participants are from cycle one and two from cycle two.

In response to the repeated reading technique by the students, 44 out of 193 English teachers state that they always use this technique. Additionally, 68 out of the 193 participants very often use the same technique and 61 participants out of 193 of the same population indicate that they sometimes use the repeated reading technique with the students, which accounts for 31.6 per cent. Only a small number of respondents, 4, indicate that they "never" use the repeated reading technique with the students, which accounts for 2.1 per cent. Those participants are from both cycles.

Regarding paired reading, a significant number of the respondents, 77, which accounts for 39.3% state that they "very often" apply paired reading with the students. While around the same number of responses (n=76) indicate that they "sometimes" use the same strategy in the classroom. Only 3 participants, which accounts for 1.6 per cent state that they "never" use paired reading. In summary, this result shows that the paired reading strategy is used in private schools, but at different rates.

For choral reading, table (6), the most significant portion of the population with 33.2 per cent states that they "sometimes" use choral reading. While 27.5 per cent and 19.7 per cent selected "very

often" and "always" accordingly. On the other hand, just 8 participants (accounts for 4.1 per cent) indicate that they "never" use choral reading with their students. At the same time, a slightly bigger portion, 30 participants (accounts for 15.5 per cent) indicate that they "rarely" use the same strategy in the classroom.

In response to reading theatre strategy table (7), a significant majority of the respondents, 97 out of the 193 participants, present that they "sometimes" use reading theatre strategy. This accounts for 50.3 per cent of all participants with a total of 4.7 per cent of the respondents, who never use reading theatre technique with the students. However, 50 respondents, more than a quarter of the population, state that they "very often" use this strategy with the students.

Based on table (8) results, a total of 26 participants out of 193 indicate that they always use the rhyming poetry strategy with their students. Additionally, 71 English teachers very often use the rhyming poetry strategy with their students and 85 teachers "sometimes" use it. Three of the respondents indicate that he/she "never" use the rhyming poetry strategy with their students. Also, another minor number of the participants, eight teachers, which accounts for 4.1 per cent, indicate that they rarely use the rhyming poetry strategy.

Finally, when asked about the "assisted reading" technique, table 9, a total of 29 respondents indicate that they "always" use this strategy with their students (accounting for 15% of all participants). Moreover, a total of 49 respondents out of 193 state that they "very often" use this strategy (accounting for 25.4% of all participants). However, only 15 out of 193 participants indicate that they "never" and "rarely" use this technique with the students (accounting for just 7.8% of all participants).

The above findings conclude that the eight techniques mentioned in the survey are used in other private schools in the five emirates. Thus, the usage rate of each strategy is different among the English

teachers. Additionally, the number of respondents, who did not use some of the mentioned strategies is minor.

4.4.2.3.   Part Three:

The first phase of the study, the qualitative phase, found that technology is used highly in reading-aloud strategies. Therefore, this part investigates the use of technology in reading-aloud strategies to build and improve a student's oral reading fluency. It focuses on the perceptions of the English teachers in private schools about integrating technology in reading classes to build and enhance students' oral reading fluency. It has four statements that asked respondents to select the most accurate response for them.

Respondents had to rate the extent to which they agree or disagree with four prepared statements in their classroom. The statements are integrating technology (i.e. internet, computer, and iPad) in my fluency instruction/strategies (1) improves a student's pronunciation, (2) improves a student's desire and motivation to read, (3) increases a student's confidence and (4) helps a student to read accurately and at a good speed. Tables of frequency are created to indicate the number of responses and valid percentage (look at appendix 14). Thus, the following figure, bar graph, shows the number of responses for each statement. One hundred and ninety-three (n=193) participants completed this section.
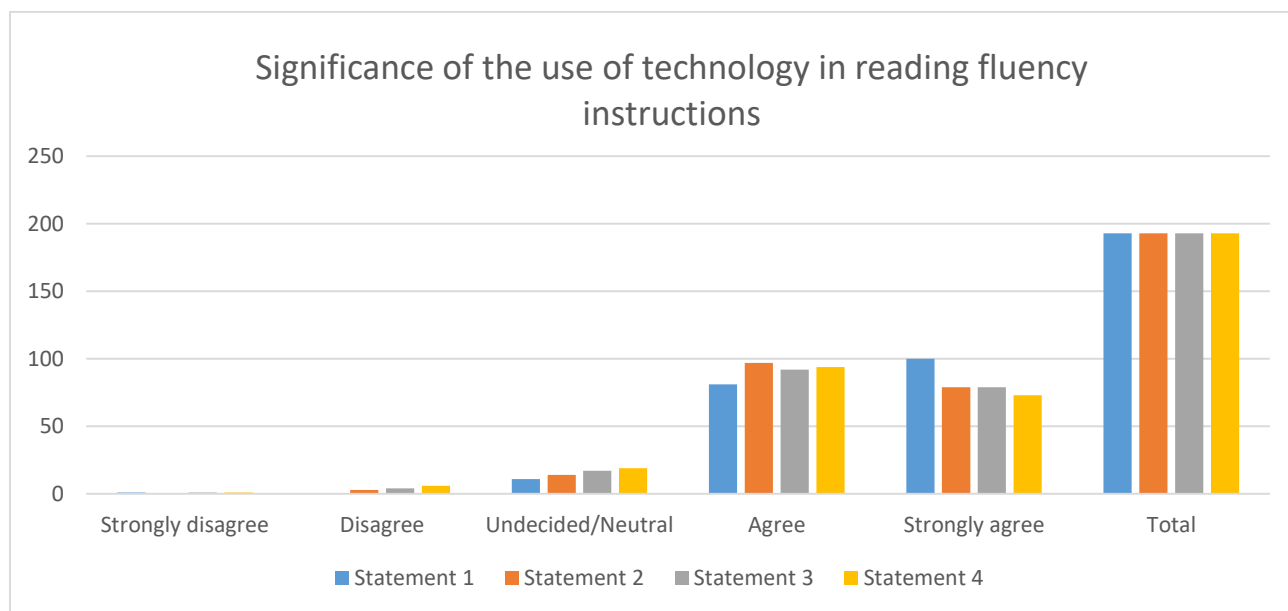
Figure 20: Significance of the usage of technology in reading fluency instructions

According to figure (2), a total of 100 participants out of 193 indicate that they strongly agree that integrating technology in fluency instructions improves students' pronunciation, which accounts for 51.8 per cent. Also, a large portion out of the same population, 81 respondents, agree with the same statement. Regarding technology and a student's motivation to read, 79 participants strongly agree with the statement and 97 participants agree, which accounts for 40.9 % and 50.3% respectively. In terms of the use of technology in fluency instructions and a student's confidence, 79 English teachers strongly agree that technology can increase a student's confidence to read and learn. At the same time, a significant number 92 out of the 193 English teachers agree with the same statement. On the ability of technology to help a student to read accurately and at a good speed, a total of 73 participants strongly agree with the statement and another significant number, 94 participants, agree with the same statement. For more details on the descriptive statistics for each statement see appendix 14.

Overall, most of the respondents have a positive perception about the use of technology for building and improving students' oral reading fluency. The number of participants, who strongly disagree or just disagree with the statements is very small, practically insignificant. The number of participants, who are undecided or neutral is insignificant too. Hence, some participants indicated in the coming part, part four open-ended question, that they do not have internet access or a computer in the classroom. The availability of technology can affect the responses of the population in this section. Moreover, 19 participants were 50 years old and above. Those participants might not be aware of utilising technology for fostering students' oral reading fluency as one of the interviewed teachers said.

4.4.2.4. Part Four:

Part four presents the responses to the open-ended question about reading-aloud instructions. It seeks to investigate more reading-aloud techniques and how the teachers used them in their classes. There are one hundred and sixty-five (n= 165) participants out of one hundred and ninety-three (n=193), who answer this part. According to their responses, it seems that the teachers in the five emirates including Fujairah city, where the qualitative findings of the observation and interviews are gathered, are aware of different reading-aloud techniques. They also do not depend only on the textbooks, but use other sources to improve students' oral reading such as "reading the newspaper, reports, students' own writings, and other supplementary texts" as stated in the survey. The participants have mentioned lots of similar strategies but under different concepts with a few explanations. Those strategies are: role play, reading in chains or what is called the Popcorn reading strategy, Kagan reading, Round Robin, reading with music and songs, and finally, individual reading-aloud. Hence, many types of technology are mentioned and how they are used to boost students' reading fluency. Significantly, getting the clarification for how those strategies are implemented in the classes supports creating a comprehensive teaching-assessment

model for oral reading fluency at the end of the discussion chapter. The following paragraph clarifies how the previous strategies, which are not mentioned in the survey, are used in classrooms.

The first strategy is role play, which is expressed by using a variety of concepts such as dramatisation, conducting interviews, scene play, dialogue reading, poetry performances and readers theatre. One of the teachers stated: "*the performance of the text particularly if it is a play (but also) where pupils are sometimes reading and acting simultaneously or paired together so that one person reads the dialogue of a character as the other acts out the stage directions*". Another participant stated: "*drama activities are used with the reading-aloud process in which the students act a portion of the text such as conscience alley, freeze frame and thought tracking for the characters*". The second strategy is reading in chains or what is called the Popcorn reading strategy. A participant explained this method and stated: "*students read one sentence of a passage at a time and we go around the room*". This kind of reading involves reading or reciting poems as indicated by some of the respondents. The third strategy is individual reading aloud, which includes reading various things such as difficult words, words family, daily newspapers, reports, research work, articles, stories, and poetry. One of the methods in which an individual reading aloud is activated in a class is "*students read in the order in which they are sitting*". *Other ways were: "(a) asking a student to read the chapter in the front of the class, (b) asking a student to read a story or poetry or a newspaper to another class, (c) asking students to read aloud their writings, and finally, (d) making students to read a paragraph one by one in the seating order or just read to the next punctuation mark*". Interestingly, some participants mentioned other strategies, but without clarification such as Kagan reading, Round Robin, and reading with music.

Moreover, according to the responses to the open-ended question, it seems that most of the participants have used technology to improve students' oral reading fluency. They have used devices

such as laptops, computers, tablets, smart-board, various websites, audio aids, visual aids, speakers, audio recorder, mobile devices, projector, and language lab as in some schools. Some participants have used computers and tablet games that focus on reading fluency, in particular reading difficult words. The projector is used to present the text, game and other activities. For the usage of the iPads, one participant responded: "*there are lots of iPad applications for reading like Reading Eggs, Learn To Read, Reading A to Z, Short Stories for Kids, Kids' Stories, Little Stories, and The Dream.*" Smart-boards are also used to present and show texts from different sources with audio aids that help students in listening and improving their pronunciation. For example, it is stated that: "*internet and smart-boards are the active sources of helping students to enhance their abilities and skills of reading and get the fluency in the reading tasks*". Further usage of smart-boards is "*displaying videos on the smart-board that were related to the same group age and asking the students to try to create something similar and present it in class*".

The teachers have used the previous devices "*to help students in listening to a modeled reading, recording their readings while listening to the audio text, and finally listening to their own recorded readings*". Moreover, for audio-visual aids, a teacher said: "*news feeds, sports comments, video-playback, stories, song movies audio, and movies are used to improve students reading skills*". A participant also stated: "*students watch and listen to audiovisual stories, real-life conversations, interviews, etc in the class to expose themselves to clear speaking and reading*". It is noteworthy that 10 participants have language labs where they used the previously mentioned tools.

Furthermore, various websites are used to enhance students' reading fluency. Some of the websites that are widely used among the English teachers are *RazKidz, Literacy planet, Hartland, Online stories and Crosswords, Picture Composition, BBC news,* and *ReadTheory*. The majority of the participants have mentioned websites without clarifying how they use them. However, one participant

did provide a brief explanation by stating: "*www.readtheory.org. – students sign up on this site, and their reading level is tracked by the teacher*". Another participant responded: "*in order to improve their overall reading fluency skills, we always advise them to listen to online BBC news and newspapers*". Additionally, other participants have used sources from the internet like stories from *YouTube*, online reading apps, audiobooks websites, and online audio dictionaries. Obviously, according to the responses received, the teachers believe that those websites help students with listening skills, the pronunciation of words and decoding texts. There are other types of technology that are used but without sufficient details such as PowerPoint presentations, Pearson MyPedia software, online curriculum, and English novel readers from the internet.

4.4.3. Section Two Findings: Assessment Methods

The previous section focuses on respondents' perspectives on the frequency of using eight reading-aloud techniques. This section sheds light on the assessment techniques that are used to measure and assess a student's oral reading fluency. This section has two parts that the participants had to answer. Part one has three statements indicating the usage of three significant tools used in the observed two schools in Fujairah city and the literature as well. These tools are rubrics, DIBELS tests i.e. the words correct per minute (WCPM) test, and observation. This section seeks to determine whether the aforementioned tools are actually implemented in other schools or not. The second part of the section is an open-end question about other assessment methods that the teacher might use in the classroom.

4.4.3.1. Part One:

This part has three tools prepared for participants. They had to select the response that they believe to be the most accurate about the assessment techniques they use to assess students' English oral reading fluency through a five-point scale ranging from "never" on the left end and with "always" on the right end. The following frequency tables summarise the findings of each of the assessment tools separately.

I use a rubric		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Never	3	1.6	1.6	1.6
	Rarely	8	4.1	4.1	5.7
	Sometimes	40	20.7	20.7	26.4
	Very often	75	38.9	38.9	65.3
	Always	67	34.7	34.7	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table 16: assessment method: I use a rubric

I use DIBELS: words correct per minute (WCPM)		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Never	10	5.2	5.2	5.2
	Rarely	21	10.9	10.9	16.1
	Sometimes	64	33.2	33.2	49.2
	Very often	61	31.6	31.6	80.8
	Always	37	19.2	19.2	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table 17: assessment method: I use DIBELS: words correct per minute (WCPM)

	I observe my students				
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Never	1	.5	.5	.5
	Rarely	9	4.7	4.7	5.2
	Sometimes	32	16.6	16.6	21.8
	Very often	71	36.8	36.8	58.5
	Always	80	41.5	41.5	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table 18: Assessment method: I observe my students

Based on the results of table (9), 67 English teachers (34.7%) state that they "always" use a rubric for assessing students' oral reading fluency and 75 English teachers (38.9%) state that they "very often" use a rubric for the assessment. Only 3 participants, an insignificant number, indicate that they "never" use a rubric, which accounts for 1.6 per cent. The outcome of table (10) presents that a total of 61 out of 193 respondents very often use the DIBELS: WCPM test to assess students' oral reading fluency and 64 participants out of the same population sometimes use the same test. Only 5.2 per cent of the population indicate that they "never" use the DIBELS: WCPM test with the students. Further, on table (11), 80 respondents out of 193 indicate that they always do an "observation" to assess students' oral reading fluency and 71 of the same population state that they "very often" observe their students, (that accounts for 41.5 % and 36.8 % accordingly).

The previous results indicate that observation is the most frequent assessment tool that is used among teachers with 80 participants out of the 193, who "always" use it, which accounts for 41.5 per cent. When the same population is asked about the rubric as an assessment tool, 34.7%, and 38.9% "very often" and "always" use the rubric accordingly. For the DIBELS: WCPM test, it is still used by the

participants. A total of 37 out of 193 respondents, which accounts for 19.2 per cent, always use the DIBELS: WCPM test and 61 respondents out of the same population very often use it, which accounts for 31.6 %.

4.4.3.2. Part Two:

The open-ended question is about listing any assessment techniques and explaining how they were used. The main objective of this question is to find out more about those assessment techniques that were used in private schools across the five emirates. This question strengthens and adds more valuable data besides the qualitative tools that are used in two private schools in Fujairah city. A total of 168 out of 193 respondents completed this part. Significantly, according to the received responses, the English teachers seem to give sufficient attention to assessing students' reading fluency. Some teachers have mentioned the same methods mentioned in the survey by adding a few details. Others have stated that they do not use more than the assessment techniques mentioned in the survey. Other teachers have mentioned more assessment techniques but without indicating how or in what ways they use them. The following lines demonstrate some of the major techniques extracted from the survey responses.

The most frequent assessment technique is giving immediate verbal feedback. The teachers use this technique daily with the students. "*Students are given opportunities to read aloud after giving clear instructions about clarity and tone. Immediate verbal feedback is given with opportunities to improve performance*". Another teacher also said: "*I use oral feedback every day. All students take roles in reading whether it is a drama, story or poetry, as I help in the pronunciation of difficult words by encouraging the shy ones and praising the week*".

The second mentioned assessment technique is keeping records of students' performance. This assessment is linked with the usage of the observation as a tool, which is mentioned in the survey. It is

stated: "*observing students and taking notes of students' performance; good and weak areas and recording them in their portfolios. Language Lab read-aloud activities that are recorded and assessed by teachers and peers are kept in students' portfolios*". Another teacher said: "*regularly, I prepare a list of words, which are commonly pronounced incorrectly. I ask the students to read them. Then, I give oral feedback to the students and I record it in their assessment portfolios*".

Moreover, 30 teachers use the self-assessment technique with their students. It is demonstrated by a teacher, who said: "*I ask students to read and correct their own mistakes using the audio dictionary. I ask them to record every new word in their notebooks too*". Another common assessment among teachers was peer assessment. It is stated that: "*students read to their partners, who evaluate them in the form of 'what went well' and 'even better if' is also used*" as quoted by a grade four teacher.

Diagnostic assessment is popular too. It is said: "*I give an oral and written assessment before we start our journey as evidence of what I did/did not know, then I give the same assessment after. This is within a two-week span, thus the students do not recall the first round nor do they attain the first round of examination for study/cheating strategies. It is more personal for me to see and evaluate where the student is and where he/she was, so that I can determine if my teaching styles need to be readjusted*". Interestingly, the assessment of reading-aloud is tied to reading comprehension. It said: "*a child is asked to read aloud a passage and the teacher records errors. Then the child is asked to orally answer comprehension questions about the passage*".

As stated earlier, there are many assessment techniques that are mentioned but without details. Some of those are frequently used, which included: reading competition, dictation, formative assessments, pronunciation test, criterion-referenced assessment, reading running record, oral reading test, word reading efficiency test, read aloud grade-level unseen passage, exam criteria for reading and

speaking fluently, summative assessments, read a minute and talk a minute, PM Benchmarks, students assessment in alignment with the common core standard, work-integrated assessment, spelling bee test, reading assessments every 3 months, individual reading in the library record, just a minute –speech, weekly oral and written test of the new concepts and listen and correct (pronunciation).

In addition to the assessment techniques, many of the respondents stated the areas of the assessment, which included: voice modulation, stress, intonation, pause according to punctuations, clarity in reading, pronunciation, articulation, expression, comprehension, and knowledge of phonetic sounds and quickness. One teacher responded by saying: "*accuracy of pronunciation while reading, the expressions according to texts, use of punctuation and also the pace in which the children are told to be natural. Like if they are reading something they must read the text properly to make it clear whether it is a question, a request, or an order*". This indicated that teachers were aware not only of the assessment tools but also of what to assess.

4.4.4. Section Three Findings: Factors Affecting Students' Oral Reading Fluency

The previous section sheds light on the assessment techniques that are used to assess a student's oral reading fluency. This section focuses on the factors that affect a student's oral reading fluency. This section has two parts that the participants had to answer

4.4.4.1. Part One:

This part of the question is about rating the extent to which English teachers agree or disagree with six statements about some factors that could affect students' English oral reading fluency. This question gives an insight about the English teachers' perceptions of those factors in the five emirates. The statements again are formed based on the interviews of the English teachers in the two schools in Fujairah city and the literature review. The statements are (1) students are not motivated to read aloud,

(2) students do not have a strong foundation of English reading skills i.e. phonics awareness and sounds, (3) parents do not read to their children, (4) in general, my students find the texts in the textbooks difficult to read, (5) students have anxiety about reading aloud, and (6) students' health might affect their oral reading fluency (i.e. articulation, visual, and hearing problems). Frequency tables are created to present the frequency and the valid percentage of those six statements. For more details, on the tables of the frequency look at appendix 15. However, the following figure illustrates the number of responses for each statement on a five-point scale.
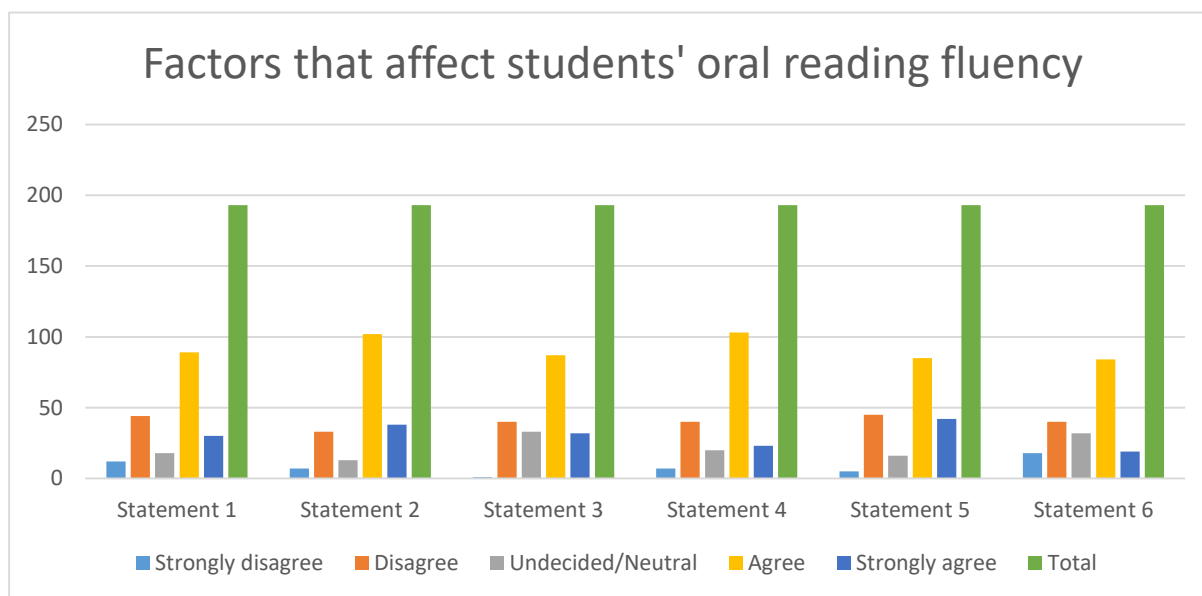
Figure 21: Results of the factors affecting students' oral reading fluency

From the graph above we can see that a total of 89 respondents of the population agree with the first statement, students are not motivated to read, which accounts for 46.1 per cent. Additionally, a few participants, who account for 15.5 per cent agree with the same statement. The numbers of participants, who strongly disagree and disagree with the statement were 12 and 44 respectively. Generally, the

number of respondents, who strongly agree and agree with the statement is larger than those, who strongly disagree and disagree.

About the second statement, students do not have a strong foundation of English literacy skills, a total of 102 respondents out of the 193 agree with the statement and 38 participants strongly disagree, which accounts for 52.8% and 19.7% accordingly. However, a small number strongly disagree and disagree with the statement, which accounts for 17.1% and 3.6% correspondingly.

For the third statement, parents do not read to their children, 40 participants disagree, and only one participant strongly disagree with the statement, which accounts for 20.7 % and .5% respectively. At the same time, 33 out of the 193 participants are undecided/ neutral about the same statement, which accounts for 17.1 %. Generally, more than half of the participants, 119, strongly agree and agree with the statement.

When asked about the fourth statement, my students find the texts in the textbooks difficult to read, a large portion of the English teachers agree with this statement (n=103), which accounts for slightly more than half of the population 53.4%. Also, 23 participants strongly agree with the statement. While less than a quarter of the participants disagree, which accounts for 20.7 per cent. Overall, the number who agree with the statement is larger than those, who do not agree.

The fifth statement is about students having anxiety about reading aloud. Notably, 60 participants disagree with the statement, which accounts for 31.1% and 33 participants strongly disagree, which accounts for 17.1%. On the contrary, 63 participants agree, which accounts for 32.6 % and 19 participants strongly agree, which accounts for 9.8%. It is evident that the number of respondents, who

are undecided/neutral for the statement is not a significant number. However, the number of participants, who disagree and strongly disagree is larger than those, who agree and strongly agree.

For the last statement, students have health problems that affect their oral reading fluency, the number of people, who agree is almost the same for the people, who disagree with the statement, which accounts for 30.1% and 30.6 % accordingly. Thus, 36 respondents are undecided/neutral for the statement, which accounts only for 18.7 per cent. For more details about the descriptive statistics for this section, see appendix 15.

In summary, the previous responses mostly agreed with the statements made about the factors affecting students' oral reading fluency except for two statements. Concerning the last two statements, which are about students having anxiety about reading aloud and students having health problems that affect their oral reading fluency, it seems that there is an argument about them. For students having anxiety about reading aloud, most of the participants disagree about the statement. Regarding students having health problems that affect their oral reading fluency, some participants are undecided/neutral but regardless of them, the rest of the participants divide into two camps; half agreed and the other disagreed.

4.4.4.2. Part Two:

The open-ended question is about listing and explaining any other factors that the English teachers believe have impact on students' oral reading fluency. Some teachers stated long answers and others listed short answers. Thus, some of the mentioned factors are similar to those stated in the survey. Those responses are excluded from the analysis to avoid the repetition of data except for some factors in which more data is provided. A total of 177 out of 193 teachers completed this question. Generally, the English teachers believe that there are many causes, such as parental support and care, home

environment, the prior linguistic knowledge that include phonics awareness, genre "topics", classroom climate and environment, teacher knowledge, English as a foreign language, practice, gender, and finally health problems. The following lines manifest some of the major thoughts about those factors, which are categorised by their significance and occurrences in the responses.

The first significant and most emphasised factors are the home environment and parents' backgrounds. A total of 85 out of 177 participants, who complete this question believe that home environment can affect students' oral reading fluency. For example, "*if the students have a rich print environment at home, this will help them in reading fluently because they get the chance to see words and practice reading them*". Another participant stated: "*home environment and assistance at home could affect a student's oral reading fluency. Reading is not encouraged at home! Once they leave the classroom, they "flip" into their native Language. Parents do not encourage English at home! They do not see the need to learn English*". Moreover, another respondent thought: "*the amount of reading done at home barely exists. Many students, but not all, are not practicing reading at home. They are influenced by TV shows and electronic games more than reading. Even library periods too, they like to watch cartoons*". It is also believed by a few teachers (n=4) that there are different ethnicities, which affected students' reading fluency. It was said: "*there are different ethnicities that have different accents hence, affects their oral fluency*".

The second key factor is the genre. A total of 20 teachers believe that. It is stated: "*many topics of textbooks are too challenging and not appropriate for students in some grades. They do not match all of the students' interest*". Also, it was stated: "*students have a limited number of texts available at their level, which are culturally inappropriate to them and their experiences. Biff and Chip and stories of snow and other western traditions have little relevance to them and their lives - so they are busy trying*

to decode words, which they have no idea what they are anyway. Therefore – "reading" becomes a "barking at print" exercise rather than reading for any meaning. This then in turn also affects their phrasing and reading fluency".

The third factor is the classroom climate. One of the teachers said: "*the classroom climate is a major factor; other pupils' support or disparagement and how the teacher manages this will massively impact the students' willingness to read aloud. Also, students are scared of making mistakes, as others laugh aloud or crack jokes related to their pronunciation*". Another teacher, who had the same idea said: "*having fear to express in front of the class with the thought of making mistakes in pronunciation. Where other students might mock at them. They feel shy and nervous, become tongue-tied*".

The fourth factor is teachers' knowledge, which has a high effect on the students' performance. It is stated in the responses that: "*teachers' knowledge of phonics is important to help students in improving their oral reading fluency. A teacher, who has an "…" accent is likely going to affect students' pronunciation, oral reading fluency, and speaking skills as well*" said one of the teachers, who taught grade three. Furthermore, another quote said by a grade eight teacher was: "*the teacher without a passion and motivation will affect a student's desire to read*".

Another important factor is the English language itself. It is perceived that "*because English is an FL (foreign language) in the UAE, most people take it as a source of communication. They do not pay heed towards its importance as a subject. They only try to understand it which is not fulfilling the quench of English language and literature. Therefore, the English language for some students is a challenge to them*". Another participant stated that: "*the language barrier could be a factor. Particularly, if English is not their first language and they are given materials to read in English, some will likely have difficulties*

in reading fluently since they might not be able to pronounce each word effectively and may need to try and sound out the words".

The sixth factor is practice. The more the students practice at school and home, the better they will become. "*If students are not allowed to practice fluency on a regular basis, this will also affect their fluency. It is not something that must be done every once in a while, but regularly, meaning a few times per day every day*" stated by grade two teacher. Additionally, two English teachers teaching cycle one and two stated that "*the students need to practice reading. Thus, they need some assistance. Allowing the students to listen to the audio text, help them to practice reading*". "*I ask my students to go home and read the text with the expression as they are acting the text*". Also, another teacher stated: "*asking the students to read after me or read the text after the recorder many times helps them to practice reading. Also, I ask my students to practice reading in pairs; a student reads, and another corrects the mistakes, a reader, and a corrector. It was also used as a reading game, which allows not only practice but also a peer to peer correction*".

The seventh factor is students' prior knowledge of literacy, which is related to having a strong foundation of phonics. A total of 70 teachers believe that students have a problem with phonics. A respondent stated: "*there are some students who are transferred from other public schools. Their prior knowledge is weak, not that strong*". Furthermore, one of the related detailed quotes to this is: "*students have difficulty with phonic awareness because phonics was not taught correctly in the early stages and therefore their basic learning in lower classes was not mastered. Consequently, the students' background and exposure to different genres, sight words, high-frequency words, intonation, decoding, and expressions are weak. Many students spend more time decoding the words, which affects their fluency*". Additionally, one of the participants, who teaches cycle two students stated: "*there is no foundation*

curriculum to help young children. A strong foundation of phonics should be taught at schools. Readers need to learn specific intonation behaviours, such as raising the voice tone at a question or pulling out an ending sound at an ellipse".

The final factor is the students' health problem, which is stated in the survey statement. Some teachers add more problems that hindered reading fluency related to the health problems factor. Some of those problems are autism and introvert nature. Another significant point provided is the lack of special education services. It is stated that: "*no special education teacher to help those students can affect their oral reading fluency*". Thus, this point was a concern to two participants. Also, gender was mentioned as a factor. However, only two teachers stated that: "*girls are better than boys in reading fluency*".

4.4.5. Summary of the Survey Findings

The survey is created to address the first three research questions, which includes the reading-aloud strategies, the factors that can affect a student's oral reading fluency, and the assessment techniques used to assess students' oral reading fluency. The survey is meant to confirm the data collected in the first phase to develop a comprehensive teaching-assessment model for oral reading fluency. The survey is designed using a Likert scale. However, there is an open question in each section, which yields a deep insight for the researcher. For the first section, there are eight strategies mentioned in the survey. Concerning the overall usage of reading-aloud strategies, all participants use them. Thus, the usage rate of each strategy is different among the English teachers. Additionally, the number of respondents, who did not use some of the mentioned strategies was minor. For the integration of technology in reading-aloud instructions, there are four statements, which are integrating technology (i.e. internet, computers, and iPad,) in my fluency instructions/strategies (1) improves a student's pronunciation, (2) improves a student's motivation to read, (3) increases a student's confidence, and (4) helps a student to read

accurately and at a good speed. Overall, most of the respondents have a positive perception about the integration of technology in reading fluency instructions. The number of participants, who disagree and took a neutral stance, is insignificant. With respect to the open-ended question, it reveals some different techniques than those mentioned in the survey such as reading with music and songs, Round Robin, Popcorn reading, role play, individual reading-aloud, and Kagan reading approaches. It is worth mentioning that different devices, technological aids, and websites are mentioned to boost students' oral reading fluency.

For the second section of the survey, which focuses on the assessment techniques, there are three statements. They are about using rubrics, DIBELS: the WCPM test and observation to assess students' oral reading fluency. The results present that observation is the most frequent assessment tool that is used among the teachers. The second assessment tool is rubrics. Interestingly, for the open-ended question, many assessment tools are added, which included immediate verbal feedback, keeping records of students' performance, self-assessment technique, diagnostic assessment, criterion-referenced assessment, word reading efficiency test, read aloud grade-level unseen passage and read a minute and talk a minute test.

Section three of the survey focuses on the factors affecting students' oral reading fluency. This section has two parts. The first part has six statements, which are (1) students are not motivated to read aloud, (2) students do not have a strong foundation of English reading skills i.e. phonics awareness and sounds, (3) parents do not read to their children, (4) students find the texts in the textbooks difficult to read, (5) students have anxiety about reading aloud, and (6) students' health might affect their oral reading fluency (i.e. articulation, visual, and hearing problems). Most of the participants agree to the statements made. However, it seems that there is an argument about the last two statements, it.

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Concerning the open-ended question, others factors are identified such as parental support and care, home environment, the prior linguistic knowledge, genre and "topics", classroom climate and environment, teacher knowledge, English as a foreign language, practice, gender, and finally health problems.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Summary, and the Oral Reading Fluency Teaching-Assessment Model

5.   Chapter Overview:

This chapter presents a thorough investigative discussion of the results for the qualitative and quantitative phases. The discussion of the results is then organised and presented according to the order of the research questions. Based on the discussion of the results, a teaching-assessment model for oral reading fluency is developed. Finally, a summary of the findings is presented.

5.1. Summary of the Study Purpose:

The primary purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of how oral reading fluency was being addressed in cycles one and two in private schools in the UAE. The aim was to clarify several aspects of oral reading fluency; reading strategies, assessment techniques, and factors affecting students' oral reading fluency. The results of this study were used to answer the fourth research question, which was about creating a comprehensive model for teaching and assessing students' oral reading fluency. Therefore, the data was collected using the sequential exploratory design, in which two phases were implemented: qualitative and quantitative respectively. Much attention was given to the qualitative phase, in which three tools were used. Thus, the second phase was conducted to validate and generalise the findings of the first phase to facilitate creating the model. The model is developed and illustrated at the end of the discussion section.

5.2. Discussion of the Findings

5.2.1. The Qualitative Phase:

In the qualitative phase, which has been conducted in two private schools in Fujairah city, three tools were used: documents analysis (students' textbooks and lesson plans), classroom observations, and interviews. The following paragraphs present a discussion of the qualitative results, which have been organised according to the first three research questions.

5.2.1.1. What are the reading strategies that are used to build and improve students' oral reading fluency?

Many studies have proved that oral reading fluency has a positive effect on comprehension skills (Padak & Rasinski 2008; Rasinski 2014). Therefore, reading-aloud strategies are significant to develop and improve not only students' oral reading fluency, but also their comprehension skill, which is the ultimate goal of reading. This question aimed to investigate the reading-aloud strategies that the teachers used. The following manifest those strategies that have been used in two private schools according to the order of implementation of the qualitative tools.

With respect to the document analysis, there was a slight difference in the degree of focus on oral reading fluency between the results of the student's textbooks and the lessons plan in the two schools: A and B. However, combining the results of both the student's textbooks and the lessons plans showed that both schools focused on building a strong foundation for teaching reading skills, which was emphasised by many educators (Chamot, Cummins & Hollie 2008; Ehri & McCormick 1998; Padak & Rasinski 2008; Rasinski 2014), such as phonemic awareness, fluency with text, vocabulary, and comprehension. Both schools also provided great attention to the students' ability to read aloud fluently. The document analysis presented reading-aloud strategies that have shown great influence on students' oral reading

fluency such as peer reading, reading together (choral reading), modeled reading, reading with the help of technology, and teachers reading to students, which was found basically in the primary levels. Padak and Rasinski (2008) and Rasinski (2014) recommended using the previous strategies with elementary levels. Furthermore, the documents showed that the two schools: A and B encouraged independent reading, individual reading-aloud, and reading practice to help students build their reading fluency and confidence (Ehri & McCormick 1998). Ehri and McCormick also stressed highly in their theory the role of practice in developing reading words. Practice provided the students with opportunities to get exposure to richer language, which allowed them to move gradually towards native-speaker fluency in both oral and written language (Rasinski 2014).Moreover, technology was highly involved in the textbooks and lessons plans, particularly in School A, in which audio and video stories and texts were usually used as a part of reading fluency instructions in the student's textbooks. Students had to listen to an audio text or listen and watch a story. Investigating the teacher's guide and asking teachers about it, it was clear that technology was used to assist students' reading and help them to listen to a native modelling the reading. In fact, those technological aids, audio files, and videos that have clearly emerged were found to be effective in improving students' oral reading fluency (Hui Yong Tay 2016; Leffingwell 2016; Musti-Rao, Lo, & Plati 2015; Özbek & Girli 2017).

The classroom observations served as a complementary tool for document analysis. They have revealed more reading-aloud strategies than what has been found in the document analysis. In fact, it was visible that the students are given daily chances to read aloud and practice. Apparently, there were more reading-aloud strategies used in cycle one than in cycle two. The reading techniques noticeably differed albeit slightly at times from one grade to another. For example, most of the teachers, who read and modeled the reading for their students, were in grades one, two and three. They also used repeated

reading, group reading with low-level students, and choral reading with all students. For grades four, five and six, the teachers relied more on the students themselves to read to the whole class, along with paired reading. Moreover, with students at lower levels, the teachers employed paired, grouped, and repeated reading techniques. A pertinent conclusion could be drawn that students of a younger age require more deliberate, hands-on support in reading on the part of the teacher (Ehri & McCormick 1998). This indicated why the aforementioned strategies were most suitable for them (Ehri & McCormick 1998; Tracey & Morrow, 2012). On the other hand, in the case of students at age 9 (grade four) and above, they were able to perform well independently. Consequently, the teachers used other techniques, such as a student reading to a group or whole class, paired reading, and group reading. In fact, at the age of 9, the cognitive and reading abilities should have developed, and therefore, students start focusing on understanding texts. However, the literature has supported all the previous strategies to address students' oral reading fluency not only in primary grades but also with upper grades (Al-Kharusi 2014; Blevins 2001; Meeks & Austin 2003; Padak & Rasinski 2008; Rasinski 2014; Rasinski et al. 2016; Rasinski et al. 2009; Rasinski & Padak 2000; Rubin 2016; Wallot, Van Rooij & Hollis 2013). It is worth mentioning that many of those studies also focused on improving the oral reading fluency of students' who had learning difficulties or special needs. This means that those strategies work well with all students.

On the other hand, for cycle two students, it was clear that the students read aloud throughout the initial periods of the classes. They tended to be independent. It was visible that some students read aloud to the whole class and sometimes, they read to small groups. The job of the teacher was to correct and model the native or native-like pronunciation of the more difficult words to the students (Padak & Rasinski 2008; Rasinski 2014; Tankersley 2003). Also, it was clear that there were less reading-aloud strategies used in cycle two and students were modeling the reading to their classmates. The reason for

that is that students in the upper grades should have already developed their reading fluency skills. Therefore, at this level, most of the attention was placed on improving comprehension skills as was claimed by Samuels (1979), and Rasinski (2014). However, for students who lack reading fluency, the teachers employed repeated reading, choral reading and reading practice methods, which was found to develop students' reading fluency.

Additionally, with respect to the pedagogical methods, those employed in various schools are similar in most of the classes. For instance, teachers in School A were using similar academic strategies and approaches. This applied for school B as well. Notably, the techniques that were used with cycle two students, were widely used in the literature too, not only for cycle two students, but even with higher level students (Chang 2010; Devaney, Foord & Anne, 2012; Hussien 2014; Jeon 2012; Mustafa et al. 2009; Veenendaal, Groen & Verhoeven 2014). This indicated the effectiveness of the previous reading-aloud instructions in cycles one and two.

It was evident that most of the teachers used some technological aids to help students improve their oral reading fluency. For instance, audio stories and videos from multiple sources, such as *YouTube* and *Online Story* have been used to address and boost students' oral reading fluency by providing them with modeled reading, which is encouraged by Ehri and McCormick (1998). The *ReadTheory* website was one of the commonly used websites in both schools to increase and enhance students' oral reading fluency. This website was mentioned in the lesson plans in school B and was observed in one of the classes, in which the teacher showed the results of the students' performance. The website showed positive results on students' reading skills as stated by the teachers and the consulted literature (Piedra Carrión & Cabrera Arias 2018). Notably, a few studies have been done on this site. One of the recent quasi-experimental studies on the *ReadTheory* website was conducted to determine the effect of the

website on students' reading comprehension skills (Piedra Carrión & Cabrera Arias 2018). The findings revealed that the programme influenced students' reading skills, which included oral reading fluency and comprehension. However, the influence was not significant. Piedra Carrión and Cabrera Arias (2018) also used a survey in their study, which showed positive results on students' perceptions and attitudes towards the website and their overall performance in reading. Notably, according to the researcher's investigation of the website, it did not show how the teachers could assist students' oral reading. The website has text with some questions for each level. The site does not allow readers, in this case students, to record their reading. Teachers responded to being asked how students could develop their oral reading, by telling that independent reading and practice reading allow students to develop their oral reading fluency. This claim is supported by Slavin, (2002) and Ehri and McCormick (1998), who believed that independent reading practice could develop students' reading skills. Also, it was clearly observed that using videos was successful in capturing students' attention, stimulate their interest, increase their motivation level to learn, and give them a chance to listen to native speakers. These outcomes of integrating technology in reading classes seem to be consistent with other research, which found the same results (Hui Yong Tay 2016; Kay et al. 2013; Leffingwell 2016; Musti-Rao, Lo, & Plati 2015; Özbek & Girli 2017).

The interviews revealed a wide range of strategies that the English teachers used and believed had a positive impact not only on students' fluency skills such as pronunciation, phonological awareness, accuracy, reading speed, and confidence, but also on their comprehension skills (Padak & Rasinski 2008). Those strategies were: model reading, rhyming poetry, assisted reading (watching a video and following the subtitles or listening to an audio file and following with their fingers), individual reading-aloud (one student read to the whole class or one group), paired reading (one high-level student with a

below level student), and choral reading (one group of students or the whole class read the text together). Those aforementioned strategies are presented in the literature as common techniques that improved students' reading fluency in different countries and at various teaching levels by Rasinski et al. (2016), Rubin (2016), Al-Kharusi (2014), Rasinski (2014), Wallot, Van Rooij and Hollis (2013), Berg and Lyke (2012), Padak and Rasinski (2008), Meeks and Austin (2003), Blevins (2001), Rasinski and Padak (2000), and finally, Samuels (1979). The following discusses some of the reading-aloud strategies, which teachers are using in private schools, and their connection to relevant studies.

Additionally, according to the interviews responses, almost all the interviewed teachers used and agreed that integrating technology in the reading instructions can help students in improving their oral reading fluency. For example, they claimed that the repetitive language presented in specific applications on tablets or computers helped the students to acquire the language and improve their pronunciation and fluency, which is supported by Al Dhanhani (2014) and Reichenberg (2014). Some participants had experience in using technology. Therefore, they were enthusiastic about integrating their techniques to improve students' performance in reading. For example, the interviewee two in school (A), who was pursuing her master's degree in educational technologies, said: "technology is the demand of 21st-century life skills". She believed that online visualisation of vocabulary and texts has a great impact on the learner's brain. This finding was found in multiple studies such as Al Dhanhani (2014), Hui Yong Tay (2016), Stetter and Hughes (2010). Those researchers argued that the features of applications provided by various tablets stimulate learners' brains and provoke their thinking. They also motivate students to learn. For these reasons, the interviewee used lots of videos and games with her students to attract and engage them. Another interviewee mentioned that some games, audio stories, and other applications, whether they are on computers or iPad, are presenting a clear language for users. The characteristics of

those games and stories can affect students' attention positively (Hui Yong Tay 2016; Kay et al. 2013; Musti-Rao, Lo & Plati 2015). Therefore, they can be used to maximize learning (Hui Yong Tay 2016; Al Dhanhani 2014) and in this regard, they can develop students' fluency and reading skills (Reichenberg 2014). Moreover, the eighth interviewee from school (A) had almost no background in technology. She had no idea how it could improve reading fluency. However, she used an audio recorder in the class. She stated that: "even this device is very simple and not modern, but it has its own advantages. It can make the students confident and fluent". This claim is highlighted by Armbruster et al. (2008), who focused on building literacy skills using audio assisted reading and by Count (2016), who used a voice recognition software to develop students' oral reading fluency. Overall, many reading-aloud strategies were used to develop students' oral reading fluency in the first phase. The following points summarise those strategies, which were clearly observed in the document analysis and during classroom observations except for the last strategy, rhyming poetry, which is uncovered during the interview.

- Reading practice.

- Readers theatre

- Modeled reading by the teacher or other technological devices

- Repeated reading: reading the same text multiple times

- Pair reading or partner reading

- Choral reading: reading together

- Assisted reading through the use of technology i.e. audio files or videos.

- Rhyming poetry: reading with beat and rhythm

- Reading theatre

5.2.1.2.   What are the assessment methods that are used for evaluating students' oral reading fluency?

This question sought to investigate the assessment techniques and tools that teachers used in private schools to assess students' oral reading fluency. It is known that the assessment techniques have significant effects on the delivery of effective reading instructions, which can make students fluent readers (Rasinski 2014; Rasinski & Padak 2005). Therefore, it is essential to investigate the assessment methods. This question was answered through document analysis, observation, and interviews.

Through the investigation of the document analysis, it was found that both schools emphasised assessing students' oral reading fluency highly. However, there were many tools used in school A, such as rubrics, peer-assessments, self-assessments, and the WCPM test. Clearly, those tools in school A textbooks and the teacher's guide were well presented, in which anyone who read the instructions could implement them. On the other hand, in school B, peer and self-assessments were mentioned in the lessons plans only. However, they were not clear enough about how they were implemented. The lessons plans did not show clear instructions for assessments. When the teachers in school B were asked about the instructions on lesson plans, they claimed that they are experienced teachers who know how to assess. The plan is to guide them. With respect to those tools used, Rasinski (2014) encouraged using a variety of techniques and tools to assess and measure oral reading fluency. It depends on the teachers' goals and objectives to use the right assessment tool.

Moreover, during the classroom observations, it was found that the teachers depended greatly on observation as a tool, to diagnose and assess students' oral reading fluency (Rasinski 2004). It was also observed that the teachers used a rubric to assess students' oral reading rate and prosody, which is stressed by many educators (Rasinski 2004; Xu 2015; Yoon 2009) to assess and measure students' fluency. For

example, Xu (2015) and Yoon (2009) used a rubric for assessing students' expressive reading. It was also visible that peer and self-assessments were also used in school A, while the teacher was using a rubric to assess students' reading fluency (Rasinski 2004). Asking the observed teacher about using those different assessments at once, she said that employing peer and self-assessment gave the students a chance to evaluate themselves and their peers. It helps them to judge their performance. Furthermore, the *ReadTheory* website mentioned earlier was used to encourage students to read after school hours. At the same time, the site was also used to assess them. Notably, most of the assessments that were used during classroom observation were formative assessments. Significantly, the most frequent assessment methods were observing students while they were reading and giving them appropriate feedback. Although the document analysis revealed various assessment tools, however, the classroom observations showed fewer assessment techniques. They were not much deeper than what was found in the document analysis. It is important to point out that the observed classes were regular reading classes not assessment or testing classes. The formal reading assessment is conducted on specific dates.

The interviews provided a deeper insight into assessments of oral reading fluency. From the interviews, it was found that the summative assessment of oral reading fluency is conducted on specific dates during the academic year as was recommended by Rasinski (2004). However, the informal assessment is conducted daily and weekly through the teachers' observation, a self-assessment checklist, and sometimes a peer assessment checklist, which were also recommended to use by Rasinski (2004). From the interviews, most of the teachers used rubrics (Rasinski 2004; Xu 2015; Yoon 2009) very often to assess students' oral reading fluency formally. The interviewed teachers in school B stated that: "using rubrics or checklists is much easier and faster than using the WCPM test". However, the teachers, who taught the American curriculum in school A, used the WCPM test (Cummings, Park & Schaper 2013;

Rasinski & Padak 2005; York et al. 2011). Hence, some of the interviewed teachers in school A believed that the WCPM test is time-consuming (Cummings, Park & Schaper 2013; Rasinski 2004; Rasinski & Padak 2005; York et al. 2011). Therefore, the teachers preferred using a rubric as was observed. This finding is supported by Meeks and Austin's (2003) conclusion, who found that conducting the WCPM is taking quite a chunk of the reading classes' time. In response to this claim, Rasinski and DiSalle (2017) and Hudson, Lane, and Pullen (2005) argued that the selected assessment tool should be based on the teachers' goals and areas of focus. In fact, the latest research believed that the WCPM test is accurate and widely used assessment, which is a part of the DIBELS (Samuels 2007). Significantly, it is noted that the WCPM test is accurate and reliable in measuring fluency and comprehension (Al-Kharusi 2014; Rubin 2016).

To sum up, some common assessment techniques were found in all instruments. For instance, a self-assessment checklist, a peer assessment checklist and a rubric were found in the three tools: document analysis, classroom observations and interviews. However, observing students, giving appropriate feedback including clarifications and corrections, and using the WCPM test were discovered through both document analysis and interviews.

5.2.1.3.   What are the teachers' perspectives related to the factors that affect students' oral reading performance?

This question investigated the factors that could affect students' oral reading fluency positively and negatively. It is important to understand those factors, which could be reduced or reinforced in the future. Basically, this question was answered through the interviews only. The interviews uncovered many factors, which were mentioned in the literature. For instance, many teachers stated that students are not motivated to read aloud. The teachers believed that students do not like reading aloud and,

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therefore, they do not practice reading aloud sufficiently, which affects their pronunciation. This finding was also similar to the findings in Duursma, Augustyn, and Zuckerman's (2008) and Hermosa's (2002) studies, which found various factors that affected children's reading fluency including their motivation to read. Also, in their studies, the children, who did not like the reading classes, did not perform well in reading fluency. Notably, the reason behind the lack of motivation to read was not clearly stated in the interviews, but the fifth interviewee in school A argued that the texts in the students' textbooks were too hard to read. They were beyond their reading abilities. Accordingly, those texts decreased students' motivation, interest and confidence in reading. This factor, textbooks level, was found in the Cummings, Park, and Schaper (2013) and Wallot, Van Rooij, and Hollis (2013) studies. Those studies found that the level of students' texts affects students' fluency. Consequently, they recommended that the level of texts should match all students' levels to improve their reading fluency. Moreover, one of the significant factors found was the lack of a strong foundation of English reading skills. Again, the fifth interviewee in school A, who taught grades three and four claimed that improper foundation of teaching sounds and phonics to students could affect their fluency. Interestingly, this finding agreed with the finding of Rasinski's study (2014), in which he believed that building a strong foundation for teaching fluency is a key factor that influences students' oral reading and comprehension. For example, students, who have no phonemic awareness, will likely have problems with reading fluency and so on. Similarly, students, who do not recognise sight and high-frequency words, will also have problems in reading fluency. Consequently, Rasinski (2014) and Ehri and McCormick (1998) stressed building students' oral reading fluency skills at an early age.

Furthermore, it was found that parents can affect their childrens' reading fluency. Eight of the interviewed teachers stated that children, whom their parents read to and encourage to read, had a better

reading fluency than other children. This finding corroborated the ideas of Duursma, Augustyn, and Zuckerman (2008) and Ozola (2008), who suggested that parents should read aloud to their children to help them read fluently and comprehend texts easily. Also, Duursma, Augustyn, and Zuckerman (2008) proved that parents, who encourage their children to read and retell the stories at home, had great results on students' literacy skills including oral reading fluency and speaking skills too. Another interesting factor was reported by one of the interviewed teachers, who said: "*some students are afraid to read aloud. They have a bad attitude towards reading aloud. They seem, become, anxious when I ask them to read aloud*". Though this factor was not clarified during the interview, however, it was supported in the literature. This factor was stressed in studies that were conducted by Sanaei, Zafarghandi, and Sabet (2015) and Dewaele (2002). Both studies argued that anxiety in learning a second language could affect the production of oral fluency, which included both reading and speaking. Therefore, building a rapport among students and between teachers and students is the teacher's job to reduce anxiety in the classroom. Concerning the final factor, which was about students' health, Hermosa (2002) believed that physical health issues, such as articulation and speech difficulties, had a great effect on students' academic performance and their oral reading fluency. Schools cannot control this factor, however they should provide special educational services to those students. Furthermore, teachers should use a wide range of strategies to help students.

To sum up, there were six factors that were uncovered during the interviews. These factors were (1) students are not motivated to read aloud, (2) students don't have a strong foundation of English reading skills, (3) parents do not read to their children, (4) students find the texts in the textbooks difficult to read, (5) students have anxiety about reading aloud, and (6) students' health might affect their oral reading fluency (i.e. articulation, visual, and hearing problems).

5.2.2. The Quantitative Phase:

The quantitative phase aimed to address the first three research questions to confirm the data gleaned in the first phase, generalise the results of the study, and create a model for teaching and assessing oral reading fluency. The survey had two types of questions: closed and open-ended questions. Closed questions aimed to confirm what was found in the first phase and the purpose of the open-ended questions was to add more valuable data to the results that were uncovered in the first phase, but could help in creating the model. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the closed questions, while qualitative content analysis was used to analyse the open-ended questions to figure out new themes. The online survey was circulated to all private schools across the five emirates; Sharjah, Ajman, UAQ, RAK, and Fujairah. A total of a hundred and ninety-three (n=193) English teachers completed the survey. The summary of the results is presented based on the research questions.

5.2.2.1. What are the reading strategies that are used to build and improve students' oral reading fluency?

It is important to investigate if reading-aloud strategies are generally used or not in other private schools in the UAE. Therefore, the first statement in section one of the survey was made to find out about the overall usage of reading-aloud instructions. It was evident from the responses that all English teachers used reading-aloud instructions with their students. Notably, 84.4% of the respondents indicated that "they always and very often use reading-aloud techniques in their classes". Only 15.5 % of the participants stated that "they sometimes use reading-aloud strategies". Thus, many of those participants were teaching cycle two students. Also, none of the participants selected "never", which indicated that all participants had used reading-aloud strategies with their students. This result was consistent with what

was found during the first phase. None of the interviewed teachers said that they did not use reading-aloud at all with students.

The second part of section one included the frequency of using eight of the reading-aloud strategies, which were: (1) modeling: i.e. a teacher reads to students; (2) reading practice i.e. a student is given a chance to practice reading-aloud; (3) repeated reading by the student i.e. read the text many times until mastering it; (4) pair reading i.e. a student reads to his partner; (5) choral reading i.e. students read together a selected text; and (6) readers theatre i.e. students perform a show in front of an audience; (7) rhyming poetry i.e. students read aloud a poem with rhythm or beat; (8) assisted reading i.e. read a text while listening simultaneously to a fluent reading for the same text.

Judging the results of the previous techniques showed that the readers theatre technique was the least frequent strategy with a total of 4.7 per cent of the respondents, who never used it with their students. In fact, this strategy was pointed out by one participant during the interview. Also, assisted reading through technology was not used regularly. Only 78 out of the 193 participants indicated that "they always and very often use this strategy with their students". On the other hand, concerning the choral reading technique, almost half of the participants (n=91) indicated that "they always and very often use it". Significantly, the reading practice strategy was the most frequent strategy among teachers. In fact, 143 participants stated that "they always (n=65) and very often (n=78) use it with their students". Meanwhile, the modeling technique was also used regularly among teachers. The total number of the participants, who "always and very often use it" was 140, which accounted for 72.6%. It is also worth mentioning that the repeated reading approach was used quite often with a total of 112 participants, who stated that "they always and very often use it". Regarding the other methods: pair reading and rhyming poetry, more than half of the population stated that "they always and very often use them", which

accounted for 51.8 % and 50.3 % respectively. Remarkably, the number of respondents, who did not use at all some of the mentioned strategies was minor and did not exceed more than 8% of the participants.

The conclusion that can be drawn from the previous results is that all the aforementioned strategies in the survey are used in private schools across the five emirates, but to different degrees. Therefore, those techniques have the power to build and improve students' reading fluency. Notably, a considerable amount of literature has been published on the previous strategies and their effectiveness to develop and improve students' oral reading fluency as was discussed earlier in the qualitative phase (Al-Kharusi 2014; Berg & Lyke 2012; Elbaum et al. 2004; Gorsuch & Taguchi 2008; Rasinski 2014; Rasinski & Padak 2005; Rasinski & Padak 2000). The previous researchers recommended using the previous methods in different grades depending on students' needs and levels. It is worth mentioning that teachers did not have to use all of the previous techniques. It depended on the students' needs and teachers' objectives. The purpose of using the previous strategies was to improve the students' oral reading fluency. Therefore, the number of reading-aloud strategies teachers used was not important. The most significant thing is improving students' oral reading fluency, no matter what were the strategies used or how many were used.

Concerning the third part of section one in the survey, most of the participants had a positive attitude and perception towards integrating technology as a part of reading instructions. They agreed about the four statements that are prepared based on the interview responses, which were: "(1) improves a student's pronunciation, (2) improves a student's motivation to read, (3) increases a student's confidence, and finally, (4) helps a student to read accurately and at a good speed". Around 80% of the surveyed teachers agreed with the four statements, while the number of participants, who strongly disagreed or just disagreed with the statements, was very small and insignificant. It did not exceed more

than 4% in the four statements. Also, the number of participants who were undecided or neutral was not more than 10% of the participants, the largest number was (n=19), which was insignificant too. Hence, concerning those participants, who were undecided or neutral, some of them stated in the open-ended question that they did not have internet access or a computer in their classroom. Accordingly, the availability of technology can affect the responses of the participants. Moreover, 19 participants were 50 years old and above. Those participants might not be aware of utilising technology to foster students' oral reading fluency as one of the interviewed teachers said. Thus, to maximise students' learning with technology, both teachers and students should have and be able to use and adapt technology based on their needs. Teachers' and students' knowledge of technology plays a significant role in this issue (Al Dhanhani 2014; Leffingwell 2016; Özbek & Girli 2017). Overall, it was noted in the literature that a variety of studies have examined the effects of different types of technology on students' reading fluency as was pointed out earlier in the qualitative phase (Hui Yong Tay 2016; Musti-Rao, Lo, & Plati 2015; Özbek & Girli 2017). The outcomes of those studies demonstrated the power of technology to develop and enhance the student's oral reading fluency, which was also found in the qualitative phase including the three instruments.

For the open-ended question: listing other reading-aloud strategies, there were one hundred and sixty-five (n= 165) participants out of one hundred and ninety-three (n=193), who answered the question. It is worth mentioning that this question added more value to the research and enhanced building the model for teaching and assessing oral reading fluency. Some of the reading-aloud techniques listed were Kagan reading, reading with music and songs, Round Robin or chain reading, Popcorn reading, role play and finally, individual reading-aloud. Some of the previous strategies were supported and endorsed by a number of reading scholars, but others were not. For example, the Kagan reading strategy, an approach

that targets students' oral language skills, was proved to be effective to develop students' second language, in particular, reading fluency and comprehension skills (Kagan & Kagan 2009; Mclaughlin 2012) through the active engagement of students. Moreover, the instruction of the Kagan approach is designed to foster cooperation and communication among students (Kagan & Kagan 2009), and help to build their confidence. Reading with music and songs also improved and increased students' reading performance level (Patel & Laud 2007; Rasinski et al. 2016). Patel and Laud (2007) claimed that using songs enhanced students' reading fluency. However, the songs must be attractive to the students. Concerning Round Robin and Popcorn reading instructions, they are not supported positively in the consulted research. Both strategies are almost the same. They are designed to foster students' reading fluency. Round Robin reading is defined as one student starts reading and the other student is asked to read from the next word where he/she stops (Opitz & Rasinski 2008). Popcorn reading is calling on students randomly to read aloud-whether their hand is raised or not (Opitz & Rasinski 2008). It is noteworthy that both of these techniques were not endorsed by scholars of reading. It is found that those strategies can reduce students' self-esteem and confidence to read (Opitz & Rasinski 2008). Moreover, both strategies do not work with all levels. Therefore, to avoid any harm that those strategies could cause, teachers have to be careful when they implement them (Opitz & Rasinski 2008).

Furthermore, concerning those who mentioned role play, prior studies that have noted the importance of this method in building students' confidence, oral reading fluency, and comprehension skills (Mountford 2007; Mraz et al. 2013; Sovitsky 2009; Young & Rasinski 2009). Joma, Al-Abed and Nafi (2016) in their study about the role play approach have revealed that it could increase students' motivation to read and improve their speaking skills. Notably, role play is very close to the readers theatre strategy. Obviously, in the readers theatre approach, students do not have to dress in costumes. They

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have to read aloud with expression as they are acting it out to convey meaning to an audience. However, some studies claimed that readers theatre and role play approaches are similar and the difference between them is insignificant (Mraz et al. 2013; Rasinski 2009). Despite the fact that individual reading-aloud was not mentioned directly in the survey as one of the reading-aloud strategies, it was surprising that many participants (n=73) mentioned it in the open-ended question. Rasinski et al. (2016) and Rasinski and Padak (2000) pointed out the advantages of using the individual reading-aloud technique to build and improve students' oral reading fluency. The individual reading-aloud strategy helps teachers to figure out students, who have reading difficulties. This leads teachers to adapt their reading instructions to help those students.

Additionally, the open-ended question proved that technology was used as a part of reading strategies. English teachers in private schools across the five emirates mentioned that they used a variety of technology to enhance and boost students' oral reading fluency. They listed some devices such as laptops, computers, tablets, smart-board, various websites, audio aids, visual aids, speakers, audio recorders, mobile devices, projectors, and language labs as in some schools. Those technological aids were highly supported in the current literature for enhancing and boosting students' oral reading fluency level (Kay et al. 2013; Hui Yong Tay 2016; Leffingwell 2016; Özbek & Girli 2017; Musti-Rao, Lo & Plati 2015). In fact, many of the previous devices were found in the first phase of the study. Teachers also stated some of the advantages of the previous tools, some of which were mentioned in the survey. The advantages of integrating technology in reading instructions that were not mentioned in the survey were (1) increases students' engagement, (2) increases students' collaboration, and (3) increases speaking and listening skills. It is worth mentioning that five participants stated in the open-ended question that they did not have computers and the internet at their schools. This might explain the reason why some of

the participants, an insignificant number, strongly disagreed about the statements about integrating technology in reading fluency instructions and students' oral reading fluency.

5.2.2.2.   What are the assessment methods that are used for evaluating students' oral reading fluency?

This question had two parts. Part one had three statements that presented the usage of three significant tools in the observed two schools in Fujairah city and the literature. Those tools were a rubric, the DIBELS: the WCPM test and observation. The first section aimed to determine whether the aforementioned three tools were implemented in other schools or not. The second part of the section was an open-end question for listing other assessment methods that the teachers used.

The results of the first part showed that all the three tools were used by the English teachers, but with different rates. Observation was the most frequent assessment tool that was used among the English teachers with 80 participants out of the 193, who stated that "they always use it", which accounted for 41.5 per cent. As was stated by the interviewed teachers: "we know our students very well and we can judge their performance through observing them". Using observation as a frequent tool to assess students was clearly noted during the first phase of the study, in particular, during classroom observations. However, observation alone is not a sufficient tool to judge students because there is always a mix of abilities and characteristics in one class such as shy students, who usually do not participate (Tost 2013). With respect to the rubric, 34.7% and 38.9% of the total participants indicated that they "always and very often use the rubric" respectively, which accounted for 73.6%. The DIBELS: WCPM test was used by the participants with a total of 37 out of 193 respondents, which accounted for 19.2 per cent, stated that "they always use it" and 61 respondents out of the same population "very often use it", which accounted

for 31.6 %. Apparently, several attempts have been made to illustrate the assessment methods and its importance for measuring oral reading fluency, (Gregory & Diller 2014; Rasinski 2014; Rasinski & Padak 2005; Tindal et al. 2016). However, the most frequent and accurate assessment for oral reading fluency in the consulted literature was the DIBELS; WCPM. However, it was the least frequent assessment tool used by the participants. The reason for this, as it was reported by the interviewed teachers, was that the teachers believed that the DIBELS: WCPM test is time-consuming. They have a rich curriculum, textbooks, to finish on time, which keeps them busy. For this reason, they neglected using DIBELS; WCPM test and preferred to use rubrics and checklists. Noticeably, the results of this part is similar to the first phase of the study. In fact, the overall result of this phase was consistent with the first phase.

The open-ended question was about listing any other assessment techniques and explaining how they were used. A total of 168 out of 193 respondents completed this question. One of the most frequent assessment techniques was giving immediate verbal feedback, which was not mentioned in the survey. Teachers claimed that they used this technique daily with the students. This method was used by Özbek and Girli (2017) and Dewey et al. (2015) in their studies as an intervention to improve students' reading performance. Also, giving immediate verbal feedback was emphasised by Rasinski (2014), Padak and Rasinski (2008) and Rasinski and Padak (2000), who pointed out that teachers must correct students' mistakes and give them proper feedback to improve their pronunciation and fluency.

The second regular assessment technique was keeping records of students, in which notes were taken on students' strengths and weaknesses. In the Calo, Woolard-Ferguson, and Koitz (2013) study, which created a "Fluency Idol" model to improve students' oral reading fluency, the teacher was observing the students and taking notes of their performance when they had to read various poems. The

teacher kept a record of the students' progress. This method was handy to document the students' development over a period of time.

Moreover, 30 teachers used self-assessment and peer assessment checklists with their students, which were also not mentioned in the survey. Tost (2013) examined the effects of using peer assessment on students' pronunciation, oral reading fluency and expression. The results of the study reported a positive impact of using a peer appraisal technique to develop students' reading fluency. It was also found that students' social interactions and assessing each other, had a clear positive influence on students' oral reading fluency.

Additionally, 25 participants mentioned other strategies such as using the running record, PM Benchmarks, and reading aloud a grade-level unseen passage. A running record is found to be a method to assess students' reading progress by recording their independent reading-aloud. It was developed by Marie Clay (Johnston 2000) to present students' progress over a period of time. Concerning the oral reading fluency test, students have also to read aloud specific passages that match their reading level. Students' accuracy rates, error rates, and self-correction rates are calculated by software. This method focuses on students' errors in pronunciation and their reading accuracy. It helps teachers to prepare materials and lessons that suit learners' levels (Johnston 2000) starting from kindergarten through grade three. PM Benchmarks are instructional strategies designed to assist students' literacy skills (Smith 2010). Students are assessed on different skills such as fluency, re-telling, and comprehension. The reading aloud of a grade-level unseen passage is a part of the PM Benchmarks reading assessment (Smith 2010). Notably, the previous assessments are formative, ongoing, assessments that are conducted many times throughout an academic year: at intervals over a period of time. Each student is assessed

individually, which takes time (Johnston 2000; Smith 2010). However, those assessments provide rich sources of assessment information for each learner (Smith 2010).

Furthermore, 19 participants mentioned a word reading efficiency test. This test, which is not new, is developed to measure individuals' efficiency of sight word recognition and phonemic decoding in both children and adults (Torgesen, Wagner & Rashotte 1999). This test only assesses students' reading accuracy of separate words and not a full passage. Also, 35 participants mentioned a pronunciation test. When the teachers were asked about the pronunciation test, it was found that the word reading efficiency test was called a pronunciation test. Other listed assessments, but without details, were: diagnostic assessment, formative assessments, criterion-referenced assessment, and summative assessments. Significantly, many of those assessments that have been discussed could be conducted as diagnostic assessments if they are conducted for the first time. When they are conducted periodically, then they are meant to be formative assessments. The accumulation of those formative assessments at the end of an academic year presents the students' whole progress. Therefore, they become summative assessments at the end.

In summary, the open-ended question demonstrated other assessment methods that the English teachers, in private schools, use to improve and assess students' oral reading fluency. They use a variety of assessment tools that are not mentioned in the survey, but are supported via literature. It is apparent that all the assessment methods involve reading aloud separate words and full passages. Some techniques were not clearly presented by the participants, but they were excessively used in the literature. Quite surprisingly, the open-ended question added more assessment methods that are not found during the first phase. However, even though feedback, self-assessments and peer assessment were provided in the initial survey, in the interest of reliability it was decided to exclude all three of these from the survey. Many

participants also pointed out the fluency sub-skills that students should be assessed on. Those sub-skills, which are mentioned in chapter 2, were well presented by a large number of scholars (Gregory & Diller 2014; Rasinski 2014; Rasinski & Padak 2005; Tindal et al. 2016). This presented the awareness the English teachers had about measuring oral reading fluency across the five emirates, which was also found in the first phase.

5.2.2.3.   What are the teachers' perspectives related to the factors that affect students' oral reading performance?

It is important to investigate the teachers' perceptions of the factors that affect students' English oral reading fluency, which has been found in the first phase. This question was presented in the survey in two parts. The quantitative part was covered through rating the extent to which English teachers agree or disagree with six statements about the factors. This question could give an insight about the English teachers' perceptions of those factors in the five emirates. The statements were: (1) students are not motivated to read aloud, (2) students do not have a strong foundation of English reading skills i.e. phonics awareness and sounds, (3) parents do not read to their children, (4) students find texts on the textbooks difficult to read, (5) students have anxiety about reading aloud, and (6) students' health might affect their oral reading fluency (i.e. articulation, visual, and hearing problems).

Generally, the numbers of respondents, who strongly agreed and just agreed with first, second, third, and fourth statements were larger than those, who strongly disagreed and just disagreed, which accounted for 61.6%, 72.5%, 61.7, and 65.3% respectively. However, for the last two statements, which were about students having anxiety about reading aloud and students having health problems that affect their oral reading fluency, it was apparent that there was an argument about them. To elaborate, concerning students having anxiety about reading aloud, slightly more than half of the participants,

excluding the undecided/neutral population, had a negative response. The number of respondents, who strongly disagreed and just disagreed, was 93, which accounted for 48.2%. On the other hand, the number of respondents, who strongly agreed and just agreed, was 82, which accounted for 42.4%. Probably, some teachers had anxious students and others had not. Therefore, some agreed with the statement and others did not. For the last factor, students having health problems that affect their oral reading fluency, the majority of the participants, excluding those, who were undecided/neutral (n=36), provided negative responses. The numbers of participants, who strongly disagreed and just disagreed were 59 and 29 respectively. A possible explanation for that is that some teachers might teach students with some health issues and others might not. It is important to point out that those factors were extracted only from interviewing the teachers. Therefore, the interviewed teachers mentioned factors that they believed had an impact on the students' oral reading fluency. Some factors were different from one teacher to another. This explains the results of this closed question in the survey. Teachers agreed on factors that they had knowledge or experience about. To sum up, the results of those factors confirmed what was found in the first phase and the consulted literature except for the last two statements. They need further investigation.

In relation to the open-ended question, it revealed more factors than those explored in the first phase. There were some widespread factors that could affect students' reading fluency and those factors were highly recognised in research. One of the factors was environment: home and school. For home environment, various points were mentioned. The home environment was not only about parents reading to their children as was mentioned in the survey, but it was about the encouragement and support parents provide to their children to boost their reading fluency by providing a rich printed home environment that supports reading (Hermosa 2002). Notably, there were 4 participants, who believed that parents are

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from "different ethnicities that have different accents hence, affects their oral fluency". Although the number who stated that was insignificant, the literature supported it. For example, Beghetto and Tindal (2004) analysed a fifth grader version of District Reading Tests, which included three sub-tests: oral reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. The analysis was conducted by using students reading achievement results from twenty-nine schools. The tests results of one thousand four hundred forty-three students were used. Concerning the oral reading fluency test, the findings presented that there were differences in results across ethnicity. Moreover, the role of the classroom environment was significant for improving students' oral reading fluency. To elaborate, the classroom environment should be rich with attractively printed words including sight and high-frequency words as was recommended by Hermosa (2002).

The second factor was about teachers. It was stated that a teacher's knowledge, experience, and passion are important in building students' oral reading fluency. Interestingly, it was noted in the literature that teachers with sufficient knowledge, wide experience, and positive attitudes had a clear positive influence on students' oral reading fluency (Lane et al. 2009). Interestingly, in relation to teachers' knowledge, it was stated that teachers' accents affected students' oral reading fluency. In fact, this finding was found during the interview, but it was not included in the survey to avoid offending or harming any teachers as was recommended by one of the consulted teachers.

The third factor stated was the cognitive development of students. It is widely recognised that not all students grow up at the same level (Boivin & Bierman 2014; Hermosa 2002). There are some individual differences among them. Therefore, students' eagerness for education varied, which accordingly affects their reading fluency (Boivin & Bierman 2014; Hermosa 2002).

The fourth factor was textbooks. In fact, two points were stressed by participants, which were the textbooks' level, which was mentioned in the survey, and genre. Cummings, Park, and Schaper (2013), Wallot, Van Rooij, and Hollis (2013), and Hermosa (2002) claimed that both levels and genre of texts had clear impacts on students' reading fluency. The textbook levels should match all the students' levels. Meanwhile, genre and topics have to be attractive to stimulate students' desire to read (Hussien 2014). Hermosa (2002) also reported that "the culture should be taken into account when it comes to literacy". A teacher said: "*Biff and Chip and stories of snow and other western traditions have little relevance to them and their lives…*". Considering the culture of a particular context (Parlakian & Sanchez 2006) helps to determine the genre that suits learners' interests and knowledge.

The fifth factor was the English language itself. English is a foreign language in the UAE context. Therefore, it is a barrier for students, who will likely have difficulties in reading fluently. This claim was supported by Armbruster et al. (2008) who believed that learning a second language has an effect on students' reading fluency. Another factor was that some students made fun of their classmates when they made mistakes during reading aloud. Therefore, those students developed a negative attitude towards reading aloud, which made them hesitant to read again, when the teacher asked them. Consequently, their performance was affected. In fact, this hesitation led to creating anxiety in the classroom, which had a clear effect on students' oral reading fluency (Dewaele 2002; Sanaei, Zafarghandi & Sabet 2015). Remarkably, it was reported during interviews that some students were afraid to read aloud, but the reason for that panic was not clarified. Considering the fact that some students made fun of their classmates when they made a mistake, this could explain the reasons for their being afraid and anxious about reading aloud.

Considering the fact that some students made fun of their classmates when they made mistakes, explained the reasons for being afraid and anxiousness about reading aloud. This finding was unexpected and suggested that teachers should create a stress-free environment that encourages students to read aloud as one of the interviewed teachers stated. It also suggested that teachers should prepare a classroom climate and build good relationships students (Rasinski & Padak 2000).

Finally, as regards the issue of students' health which was mentioned in the survey, some teachers added more problems that hindered reading fluency relating to health problems: autism and introverted nature. Also, they believed that a lack of special education services can affect their oral reading fluency (Hermosa 2002). However, this point was a concern of two participants only. Also, two teachers, an insignificant number, believed that gender could affect students' reading performance. This was found in studies conducted by Van Dijk (2018) and Beghetto and Tindal (2004). However, Limbrick, Madelaine, and Wheldall (2011) conducted a study to examine the gender differences in oral reading fluency. Two hundred ten students participated in the study. Interestingly, the results showed that there were no statistically significant differences in mean scores. The results of the two gender had almost equal rates of development. The study concluded that gender has no relation with students' oral reading fluency.

5.3. What comprehensive teaching-assessment model can be developed to build and enhance oral reading fluency?

To address the fourth, final, research question in this study, the results of the two phases in this study are taken into consideration. The model is created according to the findings. It demonstrates some sure-fire reading-aloud techniques that have been used in private schools and found to be highly effective in the consulted literature. Also, the model presents some assessment methods, which English teachers

in public schools can use to assess students' oral reading fluency. The model is for cycles one and two, which included grades from one to nine. Before presenting the model, it is important to mention and clarify some valuable points that are related to reading-aloud strategies and assessment methods in each cycle.

Starting at the primary level, from grade one to four, students must build their literacy skills to achieve a strong base of literacy. This happens, when students get exposed to a variety of reading-aloud strategies that focus on the practice and repeated reading approaches. Notably, the repeated reading technique is the most frequent strategy that dominated the research in the area of developing and improving reading fluency (Al-Kharusi 2014; Berg & Lyke 2012; Kay et al. 2013; Musti-Rao, Lo & Plati 2015; Rowen et al. 2015; Rubin 2016). It is also acknowledged that allowing students to repetitively read a specific text multiple times helps them to master reading fluency. Hence, teachers must maintain students' engagement and attention. Moreover, providing students with a good example of modeled reading is no less important than the repeated reading approach. Teachers can model the reading to students or use supplementary devices: audio files or videos. Integrating technology in read-aloud instructions is positively perceived to motivate students and build their reading fluency skill. Furthermore, encouraging students to practice reading at school and home is essential to support their reading development. It is also important to point out that teachers should use a wide range of methods to engage students. Therefore, integrating readers theatre, choral reading, rhyming poetry, and paired reading strategies are useful to maintain students' engagement levels. All the previous reading-aloud methods are useful and suitable to develop oral reading fluency at the elementary level.

Concerning the assessment of oral reading fluency at the primary level, students should be regularly assessed on specific dates in each term throughout an academic year. It is important to use both

formative and summative assessments to measure and maintain students' progress. For the formative assessment, it can be conducted through teachers' observations, appropriate feedback, peer and self-assessments. Notably, using peer and self-assessments are recognised to be useful to use at this level (Hofstadter-Duke & Daly 2011). For the summative assessment, the most common method of measuring reading fluency in the early elementary grades is counting the number of accurate words per minute a child can read orally. This method represents an early indicator of at-risk students. However, this method does not guarantee that students have mastered oral reading fluency. The assessment of oral reading fluency should include: voice modulation, stress, intonation, pause according to punctuations, clarity in reading, pronunciation, accuracy, articulation, and expression (Rasinski & Padak 2005). However, counting a number of accurate words per minute is the simplest and accurate method that teachers can use to measure oral reading fluency (Rasinski & Padak 2005). Significantly, there is a vast amount of free material that teachers can use to assess students' oral reading fluency from kindergarten to grade eight. The DIBELS website provides material for both monitoring students' progress and assessing their overall performance. The URL link for the previous materials is https://dibels.uoregon.edu/assessment/index/materialdownload/?agree=true#dibelseight. Concerning the method of conducting the test itself, there are many online videos that explain how it should be done.

With respect to cycle two students, they should have mastered reading fluency when they reach that upper level. For that reason, reading classes should be devoted to comprehension skills. Thus, for those, who are still struggling with reading fluency, teachers have to support them to ensure that they can comprehend increasingly complex levels of text and keep pace with their peers. For this reason, teachers should use some of reading-aloud strategies with them such as repeated reading, assisted reading, paired

reading, and readers theatre approaches to foster their reading fluency. Research has shown positive effects of the repeated reading approach when it is used as an intervention with those, who are struggling in reading fluency at different levels as presented in the earlier discussion. Moreover, the readers theatre approach has shown good results in the students' reading performance at this stage too (Ryall & Robison 2003; Worthy 2005). It is worth mentioning that students at this level tend to be more independent than the primary grades students. Therefore, the teachers can guide them towards independent reading practice.

Concerning the assessment of struggling readers, the teachers' observation is the simplest way to identify them. However, using a diagnostic assessment at the beginning of an academic year is essential to find out about those, who need assistance and support, at an early stage. According to Robinson (2005), a diagnostic test is used to: (a) identify learner's areas of strengths and weaknesses in reading, (b) determine the cause of such weaknesses, and (c) find a suitable reading intervention that suits learners. Teachers can also guide students to use self-assessment rubric to evaluate their own performance. The following table (19) illustrates and summarises the model, which incorporates both reading-aloud strategies and assessment methods.

Reading-aloud strategies	Cycle/ Level	Assessment methods
Basic reading-aloud strategies: • Modeling by the teacher or an audio device. • Practice: individual/ pair/group/ whole class • Repeated reading • Rhyming poetry	Primary/ Elementary Grades 1-3 Cycle 1 Integrating technology would help students to	At the beginning of an academic year: • Diagnostic assessment • Observing students Throughout the year: • Observing students • Keeping a record of a student's progress

• Choral reading	build and improve their oral reading fluency	• Immediate appropriate feedback • Using word pronunciation test • WCPM
Basic reading-aloud strategies: • Modeling: good students can model to their classmates. • Practice • Repeated reading • Assisted reading Other reading-aloud strategies: • Choral reading • Rhyming poetry • Paired reading • Individual reading aloud • Readers theatre	Primary/ Elementary Grades 4-6 Cycle 1 Integrating technology would help students to build and improve their oral reading fluency such as: audio-recorder devices and reading websites.	At the beginning of an academic year: • Diagnostic assessment • Observing students • Keeping a record of a student's progress Throughout the year: • Observing students • Immediate appropriate feedback • Using word pronunciation test • WCPM • DIBELS ORF • Peer-assessment rubrics • Self-assessment rubrics
Basic reading-aloud strategies: • Modeling by students (new difficult vocabulary can be model by teachers or using online dictionaries). • Assisted reading for those, who are struggling. • Independent reading practice.	Preparatory level Grades 7-9 Cycle 2 At this stage, reading classes should be devoted to comprehension skills, however, teachers must identify those students, who need support, and help them to comprehend	At the beginning of an academic year: • Observing students • Taking notes • Diagnostic assessment • Immediate appropriate feedback Throughout the year: • Self-assessment rubrics • DIBELS: WCPM, which can be used to assess struggled readers.

| Other reading-aloud strategies that can be used at this stage:
• Rhyming poetry
• Readers theatre
• Paired reading | increasingly complex levels of text. | |

Table 19: Teaching-assessment model for building and developing students' oral reading fluency (Author)

5.4. Summary of the Two Phases Findings

This research was designed to achieve some outcomes, which included discovering the reading-aloud strategies used in private schools to address students' oral reading fluency. Also, the study aimed to investigate the assessment methods and factors that affect students' oral reading fluency. The findings were used to create and develop a comprehensive teaching-assessment model for oral reading fluency. The sequential exploratory design was used to collect the data from two phases: qualitative and quantitative respectively. The qualitative phase revealed many reading-aloud strategies that were used in private schools in Fujairah city. Those strategies were: repeated reading, choral reading, rhyming poetry, paired reading, reading practice, readers theatre, and assisted reading strategies Also, through the investigation of reading-aloud strategies, it was discovered that technology was integrated as a fundamental part of reading fluency instructions. In fact, the English teachers had a positive perception of integrating technology in their fluency instructions to build and enhance students' oral reading fluency. They believed that some devices such as computers, iPads applications, and audio recorders improved students' pronunciation, motivation to read, and confidence. Those tools also encouraged students to read accurately and at a good speed. The assessment methods in both schools were mostly similar. The English teachers used observation, rubrics or checklists, and WCPM tests to measure oral reading fluency.

Undoubtedly, those methods were also recognised in the current research and trends in education. Regarding the factors that affect students' oral reading fluency, the interviews uncovered some of those factors, which were used in the survey to validate the data. Those factors were: (1) students are not motivated to read aloud, (2) students do not have a strong foundation of English reading skills i.e. phonics awareness and sounds, (3) parents do not read to their children, (4) in general, my students find the texts on the textbooks difficult to read, (5) some students have anxiety about reading aloud, and (6) some students have health problems i.e. articulation, visual, and hearing problems.

Concerning the quantitative phase, it was clear that the results of the survey validated and confirmed most of what was found in the first phase of the study. For instance, concerning the findings of the five-point Likert scale on reading-aloud strategies, it was clear that the majority of the participants agreed that they used the strategies that were found in the first phase, but with different rates of use. Moreover, the open-ended question added more reading-aloud strategies such as the Kagan reading, the role play, the Round Robin and the Popcorn approaches, but not all strategies were supported in the literature such as the Round Robin and the Popcorn. With regards to the assessment methods, there was a clear agreement and consistency between what was found in both phases. Hence, the most frequent assessment techniques that teachers in the five emirates used were observation and rubrics. Additionally, the open-ended question revealed more assessment methods for measuring oral reading fluency such as keeping records, running record, word efficacy test, and PM Benchmarks. Significantly, all were known for the efficiency of measuring reading fluency and comprehension. This highlighted that teachers used a greater variety of assessment techniques and tools than was found in the first phase. They also mentioned diagnostic assessment, formative assessments, criterion-referenced assessment, and summative assessments. This demonstrated the amount of awareness and attention given and dedicated

to assess oral reading fluency. Regarding the factors that affect students' oral reading fluency, there was a slight disagreement between some of the factors that were found in the first phase and teachers' responses in the second phase. For instance, with respect to the two factors: students having anxiety about reading aloud and students having health problems that affect their oral reading fluency, around half of the participants did not agree with the statement. It is worth mentioning that there were some external factors that emerged from the open-ended question, which were supported by the literature such as; home and school environment, teachers' knowledge and experience, cognitive development of learners, the genre, the culture of texts, English as a second language, and prior knowledge of literacy and practice.

Those core findings were used to create the model for teaching and assessing oral reading fluency in order for its proposal to the MOE in the UAE. The model suggested effective reading-aloud strategies that could be used with the different cycles one and two. It also proposed well-recognised assessment techniques to measure and assess reading fluency that were used with the different levels. In relation to the factors which were uncovered during both phases, these should be taken into consideration before or during the implementation of the model.

Chapter 6: Conclusion, Recommendations, Challenges, and Limitations

6. Chapter Overview:

This chapter presents a thorough conclusion of the study. It also provides some recommendations, which are drawn from the findings for future studies. Finally, the chapter discusses the challenges and analyses the limitations of the study.

6.1. Conclusion

Oral reading fluency is a significant skill and component of reading, which should be integrated into any English reading program. It provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension. Therefore, mastering oral reading fluency at early grades allows the learner to devote a large capacity of the brain for meaning and comprehension, which is the ultimate goal of reading. Notably, this research has contributed to the limited body of knowledge within the UAE about the significance of integrating reading-aloud strategies in any reading programs to develop students' fluency and comprehension. The study bridged the gap in the literature through exploring more than one strategy used to boost students' oral reading fluency. Also, this study has shed light on the assessment methods that should be addressed in an English reading program. The study has also attempted to explore the factors that affect students' reading performance to provide some recommendations for the implementation of a teaching and assessing oral reading fluency model. The core outcome of this study was developing a comprehensive teaching-assessment model for oral reading fluency based on the findings. The reason behind developing the model is to propose it to the MOE in the UAE to integrate teaching this significant reading skill, oral reading fluency, in their English reading program in public schools. It is important to enable students in public schools to be as fluent as those students in private schools. The following section summarises some of the key findings.

Overall, it was evident from the interviews that English teachers believed that oral reading fluency is an essential skill that helps develop students' comprehension skills. Therefore, it was a focus in private schools in the UAE. It was also evident that the English teachers in the private schools focused on teaching oral reading fluency, in which many reading-aloud strategies were implemented such as repeated reading, pair reading, individual reading-aloud, practice reading, choral reading, reading practice, and assisted reading. It was also obvious that different assessment techniques were employed to assess students' oral reading fluency such as the rubric, checklist, DIBLES: WCPM test, word efficiency test, and keeping records of students' performance. Moreover, it was evident that technology could develop and improve students' oral reading fluency and the English teachers were in agreement regarding this. Using eBooks, recorders, various applications, and websites had a huge impact not only on students' oral reading skill, but other reading skills including listening and speaking as the participants claimed. Concerning the factors, it was evident that students' motivation to read aloud, having a strong foundation of English reading skills, the level of texts, and parents can affect students' oral reading fluency. Significantly, the results of the two phases have almost the same findings. Therefore, the generalizability of data is possible, but concerning some factors they need further investigation. According to the previous findings, fostering oral reading fluency and creating a better reader, who reads fluently should be taken into account. Therefore, oral reading fluency should be integrated into any reading program and should not be neglected. Policymakers and curriculum designers have to think of incorporating oral reading fluency into reading programs and curriculum. They should not only integrate the teaching and assessment methods, but also consider the integration of technology in the English reading programs.

Taking into account the previous findings, a model for teaching and assessing oral reading fluency was developed. The created model would give the policymakers, curriculum designers and English teachers, whether they are in private or public schools, insight into the best practices that have been implemented in private schools and supported by the literature. The reading-aloud methods, which were presented in the model, were suitable for each cycle. The suitability of those methods was uncovered through the study and the consulted literature. In fact, many of those strategies could be used at different levels. Furthermore, the assessment methods mentioned in the model, are suitable for different levels. It is worth mentioning that more of those reading-aloud methods and assessment tools should be used in cycle one more than cycle two. In cycle two, more focus should be given to comprehension skills. However, for those, who still need assistance with oral reading fluency, different reading methods and assessment techniques can be used. Significantly, to maximise students' oral reading fluency and ensure that the model works well for each cycle, policymakers, curriculum designers and English teachers have to consider those points written in the recommendations section, which are designed based on the results of the factors that could affect students' oral reading fluency.

To sum up, the key aim of this study was to create a comprehensive teaching assessment model for oral reading fluency. The model includes best practices that have been used in both literature and private schools in the UAE. It summarised the findings of the study, in which it provides a range of possible reading-aloud instructions and assessment methods that can be used in grades one to nine to address the investigated issue. Considering the results of the study, the recommendations offered, and the model, this would open the path for the emirates students to become better readers. Moreover, this study would hopefully enlighten English teachers in public schools about the effective and successful teaching practices that are used in private schools. Besides, considering the factors that were found in

this study, this could enable and support English teachers to turn them into opportunities and solutions to increase students' oral reading fluency.

6.2. Recommendations

Reading fluency is once again a topic of interest. Commonly held opinions about the significance of teaching and assessing oral reading fluency need further investigation (Rasinski 2014; Rasinski 2006; Rasinski & DiSalle 2017). Without research-based evidence to support the idea of teaching and assessing oral reading fluency, it would be neglected as it is in public schools in the UAE. This was a preliminary study in the UAE private schools. It aimed to explore and create a pathway to more advanced research on oral reading fluency, particularly in the UAE context, which has a limited number of studies in this area. Oral reading fluency should be clearly on the rise in the current trends of UAE education. Therefore, directions for future research in the area of oral reading fluency must be considered in the near future. The next lines illustrate some recommendations for future research and policymakers and curriculum designers.

6.2.1. Recommendations for Future Research

Ultimately, this study focused on oral reading fluency skill. Further studies can investigate other reading sub-skills, which contribute to students' oral reading fluency such as phonemic awareness and sight or high-frequency words recognition. Besides, this study did not involve any experimental design or using test-retest tools to investigate the impact of particular reading-aloud strategies. Further research should look thoroughly at the effects of some reading-aloud techniques on students' reading fluency. It would be worthwhile in future research to draw attention to the advantages and disadvantages that could be gained from specific reading-aloud strategies. Also, the instructions for conducting those strategies would be investigated in more detail.

Moreover, although this study explored the assessment methods for oral reading fluency, it did not provide in-depth details about the procedures for conducting those assessments. There was not adequate information about how those assessment tools could be developed, designed, and implemented to assess students' oral reading fluency. Significantly, the open-ended question revealed a variety of assessment techniques that teachers used to assess students' reading fluency. Studies on a specific, assessment method can take place, in which procedures and processes are clearly described and clarified for teachers to use and implement in classrooms.

In addition, although the interviews revealed the teachers' perceptions about the positive relationship between oral reading fluency and comprehension, more investigation should be done about that relationship. How oral reading fluency influences students' comprehension skills requires a deeper investigation. Answers to such questions could be best achieved through conducting longitudinal studies. Also, this study was conducted in cycles one and two. It would be great to focus on one cycle or a specific grade to investigate students' oral reading fluency thoroughly.

Furthermore, additional knowledge of technology and reading fluency could be explored and examined. This study did not provide great knowledge about the effect of a particular technology on students' performance. Notably, public schools in the UAE are highly equipped with technological aids. Therefore, further studies could be conducted in the UAE public schools. For example, future studies could examine the effect of certain technological aids, for example a specific tablet application, and its impact on students' reading performance. It is important to provide evidence for the efficacy of those technological aids.

Finally, it became apparent that much remains to be learned about the factors that could affect students' oral reading fluency. For instance, how the texts levels should be tackled is as yet unresolved. Enhancing students' motivation and interest in reading is also a topic of interest. Moreover, the role of parents in reading to their children and supporting them at home could be explored. Additionally, students' perception of this topic could be taken into consideration in future studies. It is worth mentioning that students can be a good source of data for a future investigation; this was not covered in this study.

6.2.2. Recommendation for Curriculum Designers, Policymakers, Schools and English Teachers

In relation to the results of the study, and in particular, the factors that were revealed during both phases, the following key points were drawn to represent several implications that should be taken into consideration to maximise students' oral reading fluency. Policymakers, curriculum designers, schools, and English teachers are responsible to create better readers by handling the following:

1. Reading fluency should be integrated into reading programs, which is likely to add to the program's success. Therefore, a part of reading classes should be allocated for building and developing oral reading fluency. Accordingly, creating routines in reading classes that promote reading-aloud is essential.

2. It is important to build a strong foundation of teaching English literacy skills such as letter-sound knowledge, phonemic awareness, sight, and high-frequency words, blending, and chunking skills at an early level as is recommended by Ehri and McCormick's (1998) model of reading development.

3. While building the base for literacy skills, it is advisable that students get exposure to explicit and systematic instructions (Ehri & McCormick's 1998). Teachers' instructions

should be presented clearly and gradually: i.e. from recognition of sounds or sight words to blending and chunking words. Teachers should start teaching reading gradually. For example, teachers may allow students, in the beginning, to read separate words. Then, students can read sentences. After that, students should be introduced to reading full texts to develop their reading fluency (Rasinski 2014; Ehri & McCormick 1998).

4. More focus should be placed on elementary levels than the upper levels. The reasons for this is that, when students reach the upper grades, they will not have to struggle with reading fluency. Their cognitive capacity will be devoted to understanding the texts. In fact, it is noted that students should have mastered oral reading fluency when they reach grade four (Padak & Rasinski 2008; Rasinski 2004). Therefore, it is essential to place great attention on the primary level, particularly in cycle one. Nevertheless, this skill must be emphasised beyond primary grade levels, but not with the same amount of attention. Teachers should support older students' reading ability and encourage them to comprehend increasingly complex levels of text.

5. It is also essential to provide students with adequate practice. Students should be given opportunities to read aloud in class and practice. Frequent practice improves automaticity and the number of recognized words. The teacher's job, during practice time, is to provide immediate feedback and clarifications. With respect to the reading practice approach, it is recommended that teachers have to integrate it into their instructions (Padak & Rasinski 2008; Wallot, Van Rooij & Hollis 2013). Reading practice is found to be highly effective at improving students' reading fluency in different perspectives, such as pronunciation and expression (Rasinski & Padak 2000; Rasinski 2014; Samuels 1979). Many studies have also reported that reading practice increased the students' accuracy, word

recognition (sight words) and automaticity (Rasinski 2009; Rasinski & DiSalle 2017; Wallot, Van Rooij & Hollis 2013).

6. Teachers have to use a wide variety of reading techniques such as modeled reading, individual reading-aloud, repeated reading and assisted reading approaches. The modeled reading strategy is a critical approach to improving students' fluency. Teachers have to provide students with a good modeled reading either by reading to them or using an audio file. In fact, this approach is very beneficial to build and improve students' phonological awareness (Rasinski & Padak 2000). Regarding the individual reading-aloud approach, a teacher should provide a chance for each student to read aloud. This method also helps the teacher to identify the fluent and disfluent reader. Therefore, the teacher can provide more assistance for those students in need (Rasinski & Padak 2000). The repeated reading approach has dominated research in the area of fluency. It increases students' automaticity, and accuracy of reading (Al Jaffal 2014; Al-Kharusi 2014; Berg & Lyke 2012). Assisted reading is also recognised by many scholars such as Özbek and Girli (2017), Musti-Rao, Lo and Plati (2015), Meeks and Austin (2003), and Blevins (2001), who focused on helping readers to decode words successfully through the use of technology. As a result of employing technology in reading classes, students built and developed word recognition, pronunciation, and automaticity.

7. The physical classroom environment should also be prepared to include large and colourful printed items such as letters and words that are hung up on classroom walls to remind students of their pronunciation.

8. Classroom atmosphere should be well prepared to encourage students to read aloud. Teachers should build rapport among students. Students should not be allowed to mock their friends or humiliate their classmates, when mistakes are made.

9. Teachers should use various text genres that suit the learner level. Undoubtedly, using only one type of genre throughout an academic year or a term would not attract all students and capture their attention. Genres must stimulate students' desire and interest to read.

10. Text levels should match all learners' levels, interests, and cultures. Texts should not be too challenging or hard, and, at the same time, they should reflect the culture of students.

11. In relation to students' health problems and parents reading to their children at home; these are uncontrollable factors, which schools and teachers cannot handle. However, schools must provide special education services to cater for those who require it. In fact, a number of studies showed that the previously discussed reading-aloud strategies were successful in helping students with special needs. Moreover, schools can spread the significance of parents reading aloud to their children by providing them with training or workshops in order to involve them in school activities, and therefore, improve children's reading performance.

12. With regard to the assessment of students' reading fluency, it should be done regularly throughout an academic year. A variety of tools can be used to measure and assess oral reading fluency such as checklists, rubrics, DIBELS: the WCPM test. Additionally, schools must inform parents about their students' assessment schedules, and how they can help their children to prepare for a test at home.

6.3. Challenges and Limitations of the Study

There is no concept of the perfect study, and like any research, this study faced some obvious challenges and obstacles, which in turn became limitations despite the great findings. The obstacles encountered during the study started with the data collection. The very first obstacle was getting access to private schools in Fujairah and receiving the approval to conduct classroom observations and interviews. A constant refusal was received after visiting seven schools to conduct the study and, therefore, it was decided that two schools were sufficient to collect the essential data. Notably, the selection of schools was based on the schools' willingness to support the research. However, controlling the researcher's bias in selecting the study sites was an issue. In fact, due to an issue with the researcher's job, the schools that were visited were not very distant from the researcher's workplace. However, those schools were known for welcoming researchers. It is worth mentioning also that Fujairah is a relatively small city within the UAE. Obviously, the number of private schools is limited and, for this reason, the generalisation of the data could be perceived as weak. Therefore the data from the qualitative phase was used to create a survey and administer it to five emirates. The findings of the survey were used to confirm and generalise the data.

The second challenge was in observing the intended grades; two, four, six and eight. However, due to the schools' decisions and the prepared schedules for the researcher's observations, a grade from each cycle within each school was observed, and the teachers of the observed classes were interviewed. Focusing on specific grades would give more depth and accuracy to the findings. However, this was not under the control of the researcher. It is important to point out that observing all grades at each cycle provided the study with rich data on the investigated issue.

The third obstacle was adopting a mixed methods design. The researcher was most certainly aware of the challenges of the mixed methods design, which required extensive time and effort. Despite this pressing challenge, the researcher was determined to fulfill the purpose of the study with the assistance of different experts and educators, who provided their feedback and comments on the instruments used in the study. However, using the mixed methods design in this study added credibility to the research findings (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009). Additionally, using and implementing different instruments allowed the researcher to understand the problem more holistically and enhance the accuracy of the results. Before administering the instruments, many procedures were taken into consideration such as ensuring that the instructions were comprehensive. Also, the validity and reliability of the items and the wording of the questions and statements were examined (Simon 2006). Notably, the pilot study was conducted to test the document analysis checklist, the observation checklist, and the semi-structured interview questions. All those procedures took a considerable amount of time and effort.

Obtaining all lesson plans from the observed classes was also a challenge. Some participants were very sensitive in providing their lesson plans due to a fear of losing their jobs. Talking to those participants, informing them about their confidentiality in the study and convincing them was challenging. Meeting the participants after work hours and emailing them multiple times added much stress and pressure to the researcher. Also, during both classroom observations and interviews, it was difficult to transcribe everything to avoid the loss of data. It was very hard and almost impossible to get permission to use a videotape and an audio recorder. Therefore, the researcher had to write down everything and transcribe the data on the same day of interviews and observation. Then, the transcribed data was sent to the teachers' emails to confirm the data and avoid any discrepancies.

Concerning the selection of documents, it is widely recognized that this could involve the researcher's bias (Bowen 2009; Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017; Fraenkel & Wallen2009). Therefore, it can affect the authenticity and representation of the chosen documents. Thus, the lesson plans were not selected by the researcher. It was based on the schedules that were prepared for the researcher to observe the reading classes. Concerning the analysis of the students' textbooks, it was almost impossible to investigate all English textbooks for the observed classes in cycles one and two. Therefore, based on the advice of the experts, grade four textbooks were selected for investigation in both schools.

Moreover, creating document analysis and classroom observation checklists was extremely stressful. For the second phase, creating a survey to address the qualitative findings was equally complex. Therefore, adding all the findings from the first phase to the survey's items and checking for the reliability were problematic. The sample size of the pilot study was relatively small at twenty-one participants. To address and increase the reliability of the survey, some of the assessment techniques such as feedback, peer assessment, and self-assessment methods found in the first phase were omitted. It is worth mentioning that the deleted items were mentioned in the open-ended question. Furthermore, analysing the four tools; documents, interviews, observations and the survey, which had two types of questions: closed and open-ended questions was another major challenge the researcher experienced. Analysing 193 responses was problematic, particularly the open-ended questions. Obviously, the researcher's bias could interfere with the drawing of valid conclusions from the analysis of those tools. Hence, the findings in the first phase were sent back to the teachers to approve them. For the interviews, most of the participants were not in favour of using audio recording equipment to avoid the loss of data during the process of taking notes. Accordingly, the researcher tried hard to write notes of everything the interviewees said, which was painful and stressful.

The final major challenge was using the qualitative content analysis to interpret the research data. Notably, all the tools in the first phase were analysed using the qualitative content analysis to extract themes except for the survey, which was analysed using both the descriptive statistics and qualitative content analysis. The qualitative analysis could potentially involve the researcher's bias, but to avoid and minimise the bias, the analysis, which included documents analysis, classroom observation, and interviews transcripts was sent back to the teachers to confirm the findings as mentioned earlier. This process consumed more time than was expected by the researcher.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Questionnaire: Oral Reading Fluency

This survey is being used to collect data for a PhD thesis at the British University in Dubai. The purpose of this survey is to investigate reading aloud strategies, factors which affect Students' oral reading fluency and assessment techniques used to measure Students' oral reading fluency in private schools (grades 1-9). This survey is designed for English teachers only. It takes four to seven minutes maximum to complete the survey. All responses will be confidential with only aggregate data used in the report. I appreciate, in advance, your willingness to participate in this study.

Conditions of Participation

•I recognize that by completing the survey I agree to be a part of the study.

•I understand that only the researchers of this study will review my responses.

•I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time and my data will be excluded from the analysis and that my participation will remain confidential.

•I understand that the results of this study may be published.

•**Tell us a little bit about yourself:** *(opt = optional)*

1.	Age (opt): _____
2.	Nationality _____
3.	Teaching grades: _____ Curriculum; American / British /Other:
4	Years of experience (tick): ☐ 1-5 ☐ 6-10 ☐ 11-15 ☐ more than 16
5	5. Emirate:

•**Survey questions:**

Section One: reading aloud strategies

Please tick the response that is most true for you:

Usage of reading aloud strategies	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
6. I use reading aloud techniques with students					

Please indicate how often the following read aloud strategies are used as part of your teaching by checking the box that is most true for you. Choose only one option per question.

Frequency of use:		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
7.	Modeling: i.e. a teacher reads to students					
8.	Reading practice: i.e. students are given a chance to practice reading aloud.					
9.	Repeated reading by students i.e. read the same text many times until mastering it.					
10.	Pair reading i.e. two student read to each other.					
11.	Choral reading: i.e. students read together a selected text.					
12.	Reading theatre i.e. students perform a show in front of an audience					
13.	Rhyming poetry i.e. students read aloud a poem with rhythm (beat).					
14.	Assisted reading i.e. read a text while listening simultaneously to a fluent reading for the same text					

Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements in your classroom. If you do not use computers, audio recorder or tablets as a part of your reading fluency instructions, please leave it empty.

Integrating technology (e.g. internet, computer, iPad, etc.) in my reading fluency instructions…		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
15	Improves a student's pronunciation					
16	Improves a student's motivation to read					
17.	Increases a student's confidence					
18.	Helps students to read at a good speed and accurately					

19. Please list any other reading-aloud strategies that you use in your classroom:

....

....

....

....

Section Two: Factors that affect Students' oral reading fluency

Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about factors that affect Students' English oral reading fluency in your classroom.

I believe that	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
20. Students are not motivated to read aloud.					
21. Students do not have a strong foundation of English i.e. phonics and sounds.					
22. Parents do not read to their children					
23. In general, students find the texts on the textbooks difficult to read					
24. students have anxiety about reading aloud.					
25. Students' health might affect their oral reading fluency i.e. articulation, visual, and hearing problems.					

26. Please list any other factors that you believe affect students' English oral reading fluency:

....
....

Section Three: oral reading fluency and assessment techniques

Please select the response that you believe to be the most accurate about the assessment techniques you use to assess students English oral reading fluency:

I use ...	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
27. Rubrics proposed by the curriculum					
28. DIBELS: i.e. a words correct per minute (WCPM) test					
29. Observation					

30. Please list any assessment techniques that you used:

....

Debriefing: Thank you for your valuable time. If you are interested in a copy of the results, let me know and I will email it to you. For further inquiries, please email me at 2015121019@student.buid.ac.ae .

Appendix 2: Ethical Permission from BUID

الجامعة البريطانية في دبي
The British University in Dubai
www.buid.ac.ae

25 January 2017

To Whom It May Concern

This is to certify that **Miss Zainab Rashed Aldhanhani** with ID number **2015121019** is a registered part-time student on the **Doctor of Education** programme in **The British University in Dubai** since **September 2015**.

Miss Aldhanhani is currently working on her thesis as part of the programme requirements. She is required to gather data through interviews and questionnaires. Your permission to conduct her thesis in your organisation is hereby requested. Further support provided to her in this regard will be highly appreciated.

This letter is issued on Miss Aldhanhani's request.

Yours sincerely,

Amer Alaya
Head of Student Administration

Appendix 3: The MOE Academic Research Office

Appendix 4: Consent Form

Consent Form

Oral Reading Fluency in the UAE Private Schools: Strategies and Assessment methods

Researcher: Zainab Rashed Aldhanhani   **Site:** UAE's Private Schools

This interview is being conducted to collect data for a PhD thesis at the British University in Dubai. The purpose of this interview is to explore reading-aloud strategies, factors affecting students' oral reading fluency and assessment techniques used to measure students' oral reading fluency in private schools. All responses will be confidential with only aggregate data used in the report. I appreciate, in advance, your voluntary effort to participate in this study.

Conditions of Participation

•   I recognize that by completing the interview, I agree to be a part of the study.

•   I understand that only the researchers of this study will review my responses.

•   I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time and my data will be excluded from the analysis and that my participation will remain confidential.

•   I understand that the results of this study may be published.

By signing this consent form, you are also indicating that you fully understand the above information in this study. For further inquiries, please email me on (050 4704599 or at (Email: 2015121019@student.buid.ac.ae)

•   Participant's signature _____

•   Date: _____

•   Researcher's signature: _____

•   Date: _____

Debriefing: Thank you for your valuable time. If you are interested in a copy of the results, let me know and I will email it to you. For further inquiries, please email me at 2015121019@student.buid.ac.ae.

Appendix 5: Assisted reading through listening to audio files

Reading 1

Prepare to Read

What You Will Learn

Reading
- Vocabulary building: *Context, phonics*
- Reading strategy: *Understand character*
- Text type: *Literature (poem)*

Grammar
Simple present: *be* verbs

Writing
Describe a person

These words will help you understand the reading.

Key Words

neat
street
luck
flower
mail

8 UNIT 1

Key Words

Cool Hector is a poem about a boy going around his neighborhood.

Words in Context

Audio

1 This bike is so **neat**!

2 There are a lot of people on the **street**.

3 What **luck**! The ball is in my glove!
4 I give my grandmother a **flower**.
5 The mail carrier delivers the **mail** every afternoon.

Practice

Create a vocabulary notebook.
- Divide your page into three columns: the new words, their definitions, and drawings of the words when possible.
- Test yourself by covering one of the columns.

Make Connections

Hector likes to talk to people in his community. What do you like to do in your community? Why? Discuss. Use some of the key words as you speak.

WB 3

READING 1   9

Appendix 6: language book page 10

These words will help you talk about the reading.

Academic Words

item
single piece or thing

purchase
buy

Academic Words

Words in Context 🎵 Audio

I have a list of new words. The first **item** on my list is *communities.*

You can **purchase** a book at a bookstore.

Practice

Write the sentences in your notebook. Choose an academic word to complete each sentence.

1. We go to the post office to _____ stamps for our mail.

2. I have a list of things to do today. The first _____ on my list is to walk my dog.

Apply

Write the answers in your notebook. Use the academic words. Then ask and answer with a partner.

1. What is one **item** your family usually buys at the store?

2. Do you usually get books from the library, or do you **purchase** them?

WB
4

10 UNIT 1

Practice

Circle the correct form of the verb.
Write the sentences.

Example: Carlos (mix, (mixes)) things.

1. The teacher (ask, asks) questions.

2. I (fold, folds) the paper in half.

3. Hana (create, creates) a new tradition.

4. Her friend does not (smile, smiles).

5. Do your friends (like, likes) dessert?
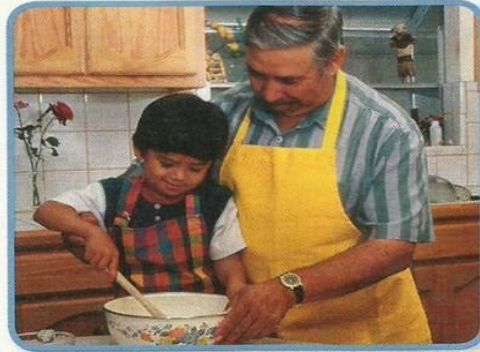
Apply

Work with a partner. Ask and answer the questions.
Use the simple present in your answers.

Example: A: Do you walk to school?
         B: Yes, I walk to school.

- Do you walk to school?
- Do your friends live near you?
- Does your father fix things?
- Do you like cold weather?
- Does your mother watch television?
- Do you help at home?
- Does your teacher smile a lot?
- Do you like dessert?

W B
20

Grammar Check ✓

Make a sentence using the **simple present**.

READING 2   35

Appendix 8: The publish activity on page 62

4 Edit

Check your work for errors. Trade papers with a partner. Use the Peer Review Checklist.

5 Publish

Make a clean copy of your final draft.
Share it with the class.

WB
35–36

Peer Review Checklist

✓ The details of the event are in order.
✓ The writing is interesting.
✓ Pronouns and verbs agree.

SPELLING TIP

Add -es to 3rd person singular verbs in the simple present if the verb ends in -s, -ch, -sh, or -x. If the verb ends in y, change y to i, then add -es.

62   UNIT 1

Appendix 9: Technology integration, computers, projectors, the Pearson website, PowerPoint presentations and e-pens

Lesson 4 **Grammar** **Punctuation in Quotations&** **Reporting Speech** **Pacing: 2 Classes**	• Students will learn about why punctuation is so important when using a speaker's exact words. • Students will be able to learn about reported speech, which does not use quotation marks. They will learn that reported speech may be a paraphrase of the person's exact words.	**Punctuation in Quotations** **1. Introduce/ Teach:** Proper use of punctuation is important so that your reader knows when you are using a speaker's exact words. Use quotation marks (" ") and a comma () to separate direct, or quoted, speech from the phrase that identifies the speaker. If the direct speech is a question, use a question mark(?) If it is an exclamation, use an exclamation mark (!) **2. Practice:** E text: page.334. Work with a partner. Copy the sentences to punctuate and add capitalization to each sentence. Workbook p. 174 ✓ **Grammar Skill:** Be sure to capitalize the first word within a quotation unless the phrase identifying the speaker interrupts the quotation. ✓ **Grammar Check:** What are the different kinds of punctuation you can use with quotation?	**Reported Speech: Reporting Verbs said, asked, told.** **I. Introduce/ Teach:** Reported speech does not use quotation marks and may be a paraphrase of the person's exact words. The verb form usually changes. Use the reporting verb said when reporting statements. To report wh- questions : use statement word order, not question word order. For Yes-No questions, use if or whether. **2. Practice:** E Text: page-335 – Work with a partner. Change the direct quotations into reported speech using said, asked , or told. Workbook p. 175 ✓ **Grammar Check:** Reported speech does not use quotation marks and may be a paraphrase of the person's exact words. ✓ **Grammar Skill:** In reported speech, the phrase identifying the speaker comes at the beginning of the sentence.
Lesson 5 **Writing** **Write to Compare and** **Contrast** **Pacing: 1 Class**	• Students will learn how to write a critique. • Students will be able to use main and subordinate clauses in their writing correctly.	*Writing Prompt:* Write a paragraph that compares and contrasts two people, places or things that you know well . Be sure to use transitions to show compare and contrast or similarity or to add information correctly in your writing. Practice: E text : p.202 Workbook:p.104	**I.** The teacher will read and explain the Writing Prompt. **II.** Remind the students to follow the Writing Process to write a critique : **1. Prewrite** (Workbook p.104)Begin by choosing the people ,places or things you want to write about . • Think of all the ways in which they are similar or different • Which ideas go together? . • List your ideas in a graphic organizer. **2. Draft:** Use your graphic organizer to help you write a first draft. Who and what are you comparing **3. Revise:** Read over your draft. Improve unclear writing. Use the Writing Checklist to help you identify problems. **4. Edit:** Correction of grammar, usage, mechanics, and spelling errors. Use the Peer Review Checklist on workbook page 104. **5. Publish:** Prepare a clean copy of your final draft. Share your compare and contrast paragraph with the class. ✓ **Writing Checklist:** ✓ **Ideas:** A paragraph compares and contrasts two people, places or things ✓ **Word Choice:** I made sure that transitions to show compare and contrast or similarity or to add information.
Resources required	Lesson 1: Workbook, p.97-98. Audio CD 3. Tracks 11-13 . CD-ROM/e-book, Literary Words, Academic Words Lesson 2: Workbook, p.101; Audio CD 3 Track14, CD-ROM/e-book, Reader's Theater, Comprehension. Lesson 3: Workbook, p.99 Word Study Lesson 4: Workbook, p.102-103, CD-ROM/e-book, Grammar Lesson 5: Workbook, p.104, Transparencies, Writing Model 33 & Graphic Organizer 6. -White board, Marker, E pen ,pen, pencil ,notebook, flashcards.	
Assessment planned	Unit 3 Reading 2 Assessment: Lesson 1:Workbook:p.97-98 Vocabulary: Literary words & Academic Words Lesson 2:- Workbook,p.101 Comprehensions: Questions about the reading text. Lesson 3:Workbook p.99 Word Study: synonyms - Spelling Test 3 Lesson 4:Workbook:p.102-103 : Grammar;' Transitions . Lesson 5:Workbook,p.96 Writing: writing to compare and contrast will be evaluated .	
Technology Integration	Used by both student and teacher Lesson 1: Computer, projector, printer. Websites; www. Pearsoncesnet.com ,e pen, flash memory ,Audio . Lesson 2: Computer, projector. Website: www.Pearsoncesnet.com, video(Unit 3:Reading 2) ; e pen , Audio . Lesson 3: Computer. Websites; www. Pearsonsuccesnet.com, power point presentation ,e pen. Lesson 4: Computer, projector, internet connection. Websites; www. Pearsonsuccesnet.com, power point presentation , e pen . Lesson 5: Computer, Printer, Microsoft word, www.Pearsonsuccesnet.com, power point presentation , e pen . www.classdojo.com	

Appendix 10: Detailed lesson plan

Context/Topic:The Ant and the Dove.- Reading	
Specify skill to be developed	**2Re3 Begin to read, with support, very short simple fiction and non-fiction texts with confidence and enjoyment.**
SMART Learning Objective	By the end the lesson students will be able to : Read the text with limited support and sequence the story.
Teaching & learning resources (ICT & others)	ICT, /Flash cards, White board, notebook, and ICT Worksheet. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFXgePGHrso
Cross curricular links / Links to life / community / World / UAE	M.E.P. : being helpful. Relate the story to your own life. Has such an incident happened to you. Where you helped and someone helped you in return.
1. Starter: (5 mins)	the teacher shared the learning objective with the students. She displays the key words on the board. She starts by asking the students what they think the story is about? Do you think it is fiction or non fiction. Use clues from the key words.
2. Teaching & Learning Activities:	
2a. Development of learning	Teacher starts by asking students to follow the passage as she reads. They are asked to place their index finger on the words that the teacher is reading. Teacher reads the passage and the students follow. They are asked to make note of any difficult words or if they have not understood the meanings of certain words. These are then clarified before group reading. *Group reading:* students read in groups. Names are called out according to ability groups and each group reads part of the passage. After groups read, teacher then clarifies meaning or pronunciations of difficult words. She asks questions to check on understanding such as – who are the characters in the story? Who was in trouble at first? Who helped the ant? Each groups is asked to fill out a story map. Groups work on one element of the story. (title / setting / fiction or non fiction/ problem / characters / moral) each groups is also asked to discuss – if you were the authors of this story – which part would you change, why? If you had to be one of the characters which one would you be? What do you not like about this story? How would you change it ? *Individual work:*.Students are then asked to read the passage independently and sequence the story on the worksheet that is given.

Silent reading (handwritten)

2b. Meeting individual and group learning needs: [15 mins]   **Differentiation by Tasks:**

HA: Children are able to read the text independently with fluency and expressions and are able to answer inferential questions. They sequency the story independently.

M.A.: are able to read the text with limited support and answer a few inferential questions. They are given support when asked for while sequencing the story.

L.A.: are able to read the key words and are helped to understand the text. They are able to answer factual questions based on the story and are assisted to sequence the story.

☐ Differentiation by Resources: -

☐ Differentiation by Support: L.A.s are supported while reading.

Plenary: (10 mins) . students enact the story they have just read about.

Assessment to check on progress of learning [AFL]	Students assess their own reading skills.	
Learning Outcomes	I can statements: ↓	
All students can: read the key words, sequence the story and answer factual questions with support.	Most students can: : read the text, sequence the story and answer a few inferential questions.	Some students can : read the text with fluency, answer inferential questions and sequence the story independently.
Home Learning	Find out if something like this has happened to you or someone you know. Where you helped and were helped in return.	
Self-evaluation of lesson		

Signature of Teacher - _____

Signature of HOD - _____

Appendix 11: Lesson plan

Context/Topic: The clean park	
Specify skill to be developed	**Skill: Reading** 1.2 Identify a variety of purposes for reading and choose reading materials appropriate for those purposes.
SMART Learning Objective	At the end of the lesson the students will be able to: ➤ Read the passage confidently with fluency and clear diction. ➤ Demonstrate ability to respond to literal questions.
Teaching & learning resources (ICT & others)	White board, ICT, worksheets, Home assignment worksheet & written link.
Link to life / community / World / UAE	**Eng-** New vocabulary words, Importance of reading. **Science** – importance of physical exercise & cleanliness UAE – Year of reading/Year of Zayed
1. Starter: (5 mins)	**Warm up-** The teacher introduces the topic by asking What do the words **USE ME** on a bin mean? Do you like to spend your time in a park? Why? She asks them if the park is not clean how they you feel? **Pre reading task:** Teacher plays the video related to cleaning the park followed by asking few questions like. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lp7yppOAyPw What is the video about? **Name few parks in the UAE?**
2. Teaching & Learning Activities:	
2a. Development of learning (10mins)	Group Activity: 'I can lend a helping hand' **PEER ASSESSMENT** (Mixed ability group)

LA: Support by their peers and if needed, by the teacher.

HA / G&T: Will complete the work independently.

☐ DO Support:

Help by the teacher to complete the exercise.

Plenary: (10 mins)

Elicit answer from the students:
Ask each student to read their answers.

Assessment to check on progress of learning [AFL]	Students are assessed on the task given in the worksheet. (Self-Assessment). ➢ Ability to focus. ➢ Understanding & Completion of questions.	
Learning Outcomes	I can statements: ⬇	
All students can: Deduce most specific information by responding to 5 differentiated questions orally and in writing.	Most students can: Deduce most specific information by responding to 8 differentiated questions orally and in writing. .	Some students can: Deduce most specific information by responding to 10 differentiated questions orally and in writing.
Home Learning	Carry out a research about composting. How does composting help soil? Students watch the following link with their parents. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dRXNo7Ieky8 2. List three new words you learned in the passage. Resource Read a story book. Follow Readtheory.org	
Self-evaluation of lesson		

Appendix 12: Rubric

Third Grade Reading Rubric

Names	(3= Excellent 2= Good 1= Needs improvement)				
	Uses a loud voice	Articulates words clearly	Reads with expression	Reads with fluency	Total
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					
11.					
12.					
13.					
14.					
15.					
16.					
17.					
18.					
19.					
20.					
21.					
22.					
23.					
24.					
25.					
26.					
27.					

Appendix 13: Demographic data for the city, nationality, age, curriculum and teaching grade

City					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ajman	71	36.8	36.8	36.8
	Al Fujairah	6	3.1	3.1	39.9
	RAK	27	14.0	14.0	53.9
	Sharjah	82	42.5	42.5	96.4
	UAQ	7	3.6	3.6	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table A: Responses to the city
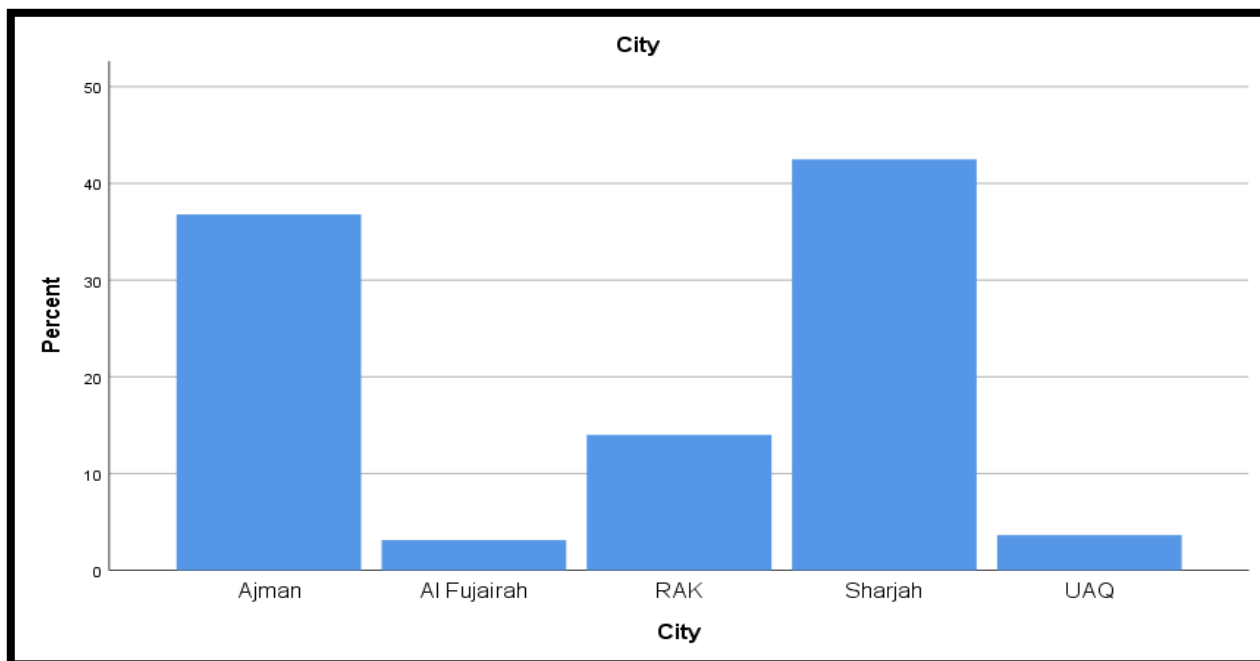
Figure A: Responses to the city

Nationality					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	American	3	1.6	1.6	1.6
	Australian	1	.5	.5	2.1
	British	8	4.1	4.1	6.2
	Canadian	4	2.1	2.1	8.3
	Egyptian	18	9.3	9.3	17.6
	Emarati	1	.5	.5	18.1
	Filipino	1	.5	.5	18.7
	Georgian	1	.5	.5	19.2
	German	1	.5	.5	19.7
	Indian	107	55.4	55.4	75.1
	Iraqi	2	1.0	1.0	76.2
	Irish	2	1.0	1.0	77.2
	Jamaica	1	.5	.5	77.7
	Jordanian	9	4.7	4.7	82.4
	New Zealander	1	.5	.5	82.9
	Pakistani	14	7.3	7.3	90.2
	Palestinian	4	2.1	2.1	92.2
	Scottish	1	.5	.5	92.7
	South African	6	3.1	3.1	95.9
	Sri Lankan	1	.5	.5	96.4
	Syrian	7	3.6	3.6	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table B: Responses to the nationality
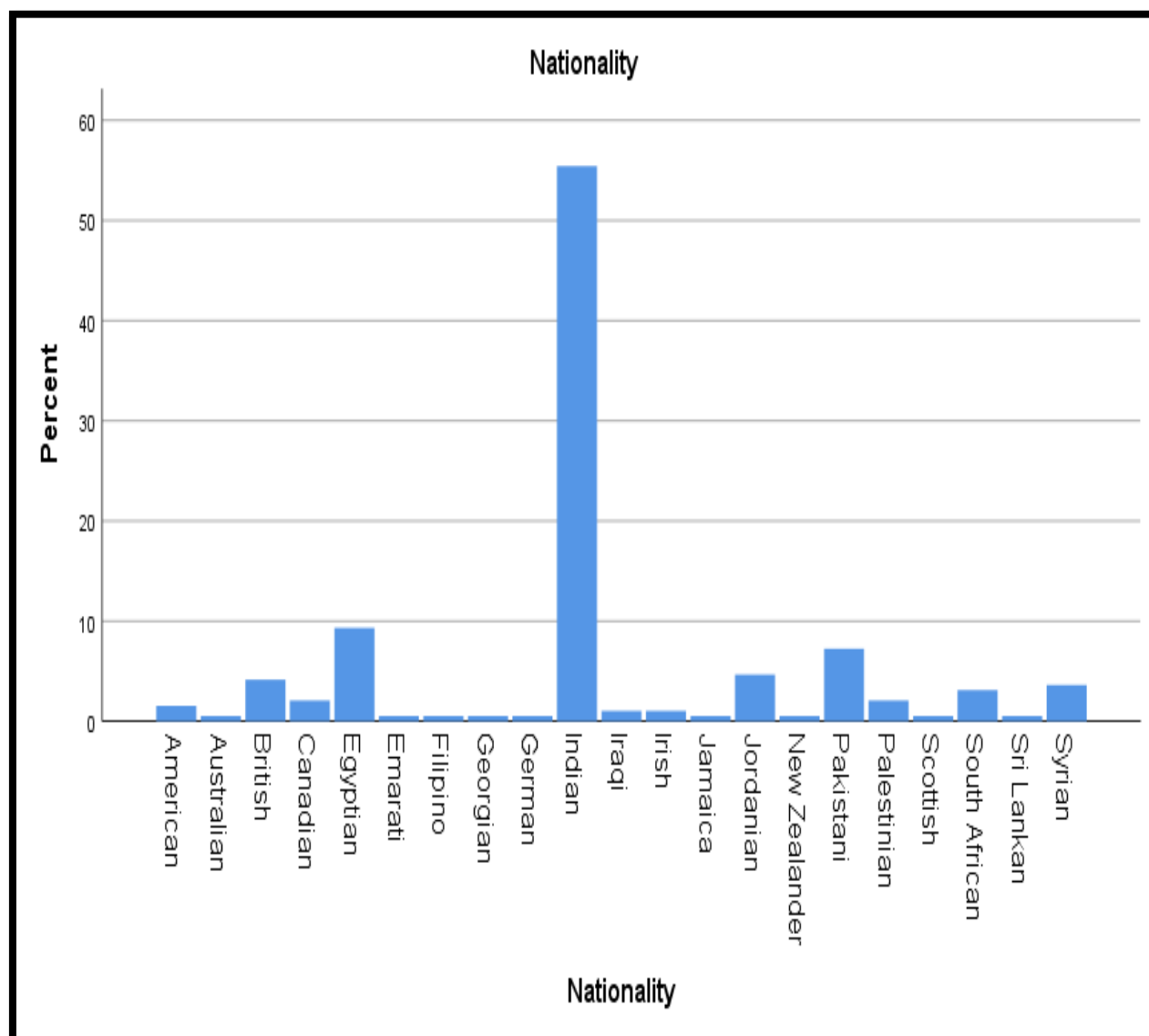
Figure B: Responses to the nationality

Age		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20-29 years old	28	14.5	14.5	14.5
	30-39 years old	97	50.3	50.3	64.8
	40-49 years old	49	25.4	25.4	90.2
	50 years old or above	19	9.8	9.8	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table C: Responses to the age
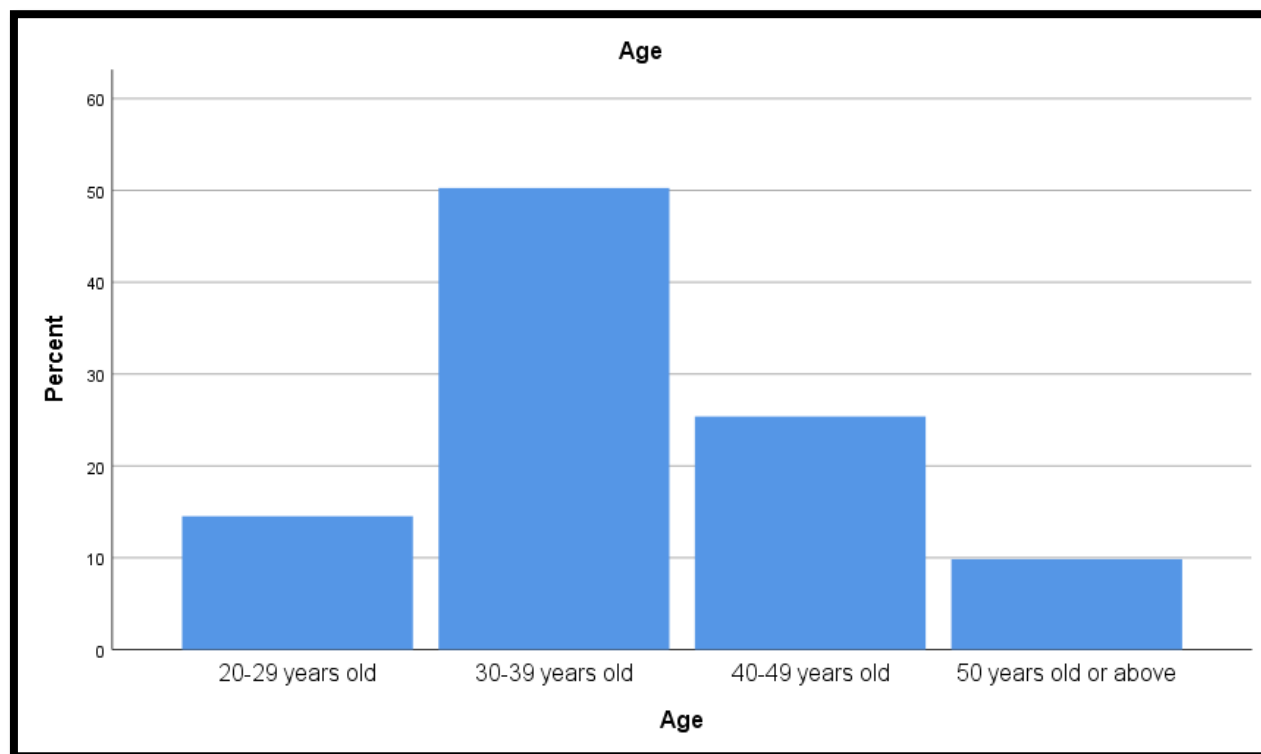
Figure C: Responses to the age

Curriculum					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	CBSE	64	33.2	33.2	33.2
	FBISE	4	2.1	2.1	35.2
	Indian	7	3.6	3.6	38.9
	MOE	20	10.4	10.4	49.2
	American	20	10.4	10.4	59.6
	British	76	39.4	39.4	99.0
	IB	2	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table D: Responses to the curriculum
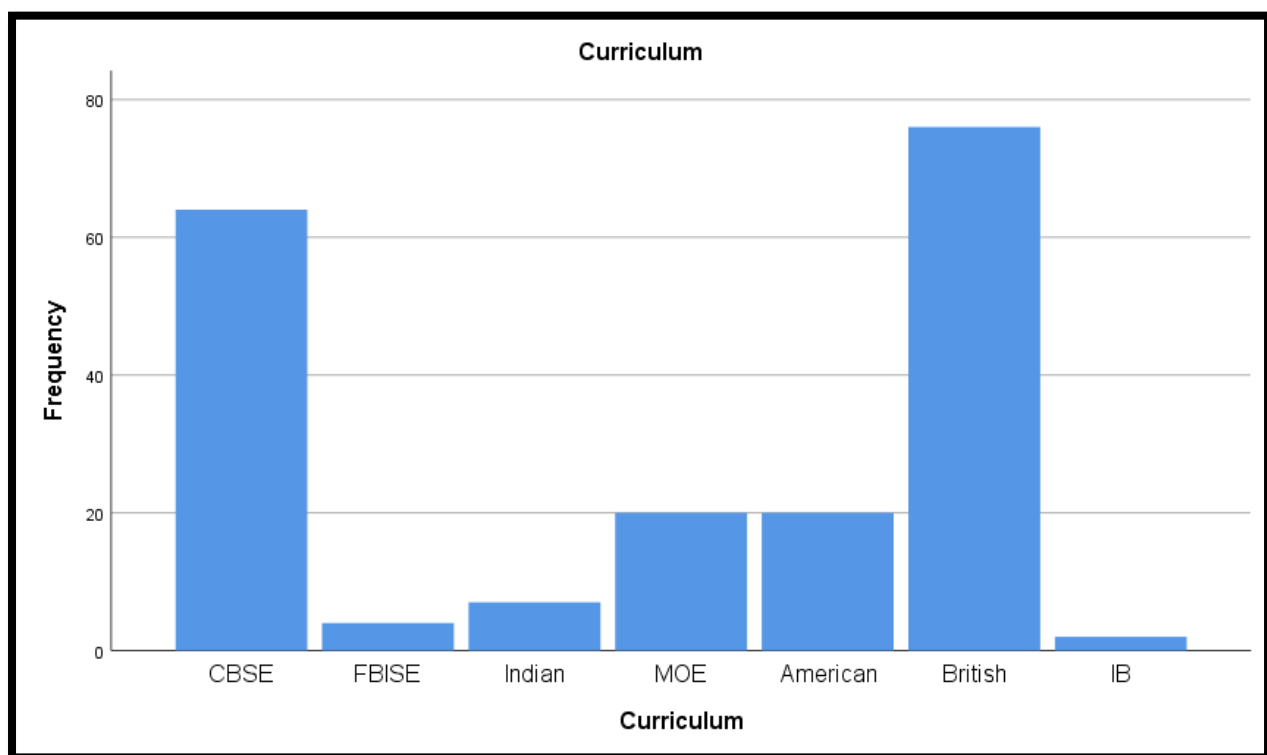
Teaching Grades					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Cycle one (1-3)	67	34.7	34.7	34.7
	Cycle one (4-6)	55	28.5	28.5	63.2
	Cycle two (7-9)	71	36.8	36.8	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Figure D: Response to the curriculum

Table E: Response to the teaching grades
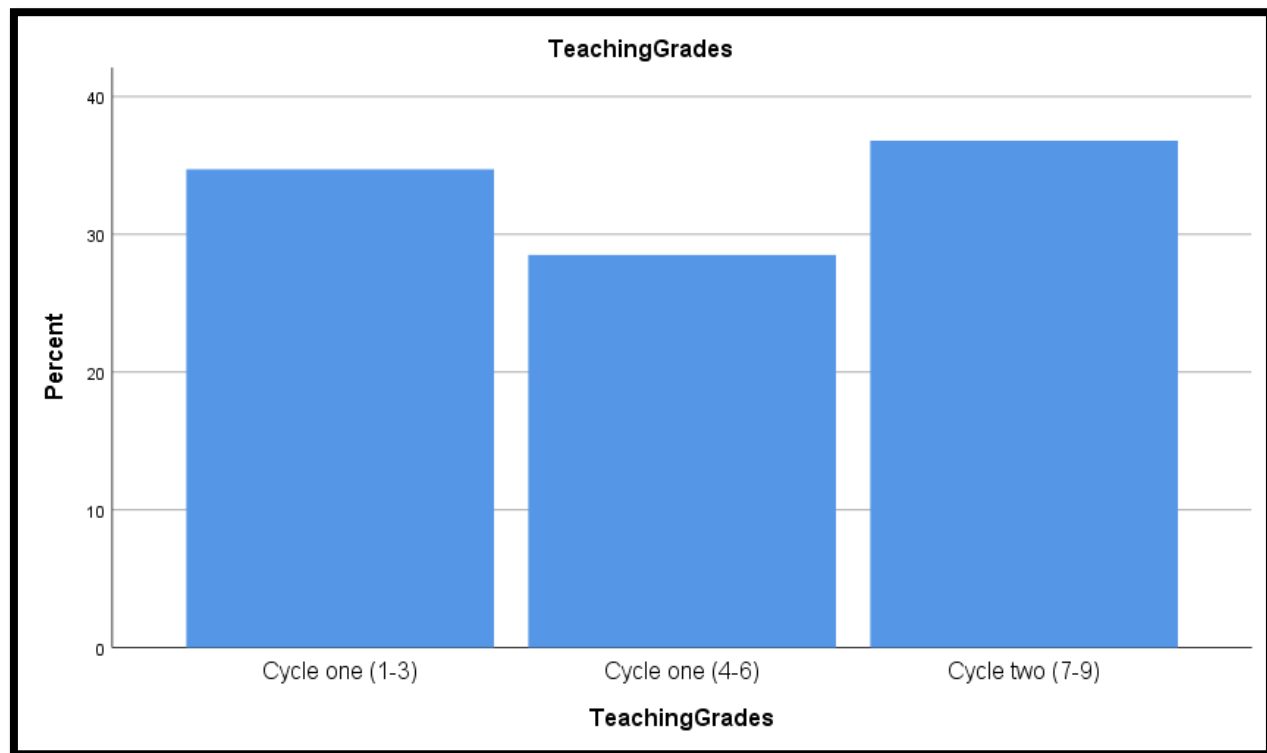
Figure E: Response to the teaching grades

Appendix 14: Frequency tables for significance of integrating technology as a part of reading instruction

<table>
<tr><td colspan="6" align="center">Improves a student's pronunciation</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>Frequency</td><td>Percent</td><td>Valid Percent</td><td>Cumulative Percent</td></tr>
<tr><td>Valid</td><td>Strongly disagree</td><td>1</td><td>.5</td><td>.5</td><td>.5</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Undecided/Neutral</td><td>11</td><td>5.7</td><td>5.7</td><td>6.2</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Agree</td><td>81</td><td>42.0</td><td>42.0</td><td>48.2</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Strongly agree</td><td>100</td><td>51.8</td><td>51.8</td><td>100.0</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Total</td><td>193</td><td>100.0</td><td>100.0</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Table F: improves a student's pronunciation

Improves a student's motivation to read					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	1.6	1.6	1.6
	Undecided/Neutral	14	7.3	7.3	8.8
	Agree	97	50.3	50.3	59.1
	Strongly agree	79	40.9	40.9	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table G: Improves a student's motivation to read

Increases student's confidence					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	.5	.5	.5
	Disagree	4	2.1	2.1	2.6
	Undecided/Neutral	17	8.8	8.8	11.4
	Agree	92	47.7	47.7	59.1
	Strongly agree	79	40.9	40.9	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table H: Technology increases student's confidence

Table

I:

Helps students to read accurately and at a good speed					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	.5	.5	.5
	Disagree	6	3.1	3.1	3.6
	Undecided/Neutral	19	9.8	9.8	13.5
	Agree	94	48.7	48.7	62.2
	Strongly agree	73	37.8	37.8	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Technology helps students to read accurately and at a good speed

Appendix 15: Frequency tables for factors affecting students' oral reading fluency

Students are not motivated to read aloud				
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	12	6.2	6.2	6.2
	Disagree	44	22.8	22.8	29.0
	Undecided/Neutral	18	9.3	9.3	38.3
	Agree	89	46.1	46.1	84.5
	Strongly agree	30	15.5	15.5	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table J: Students are not motivated to read aloud

students do not have a strong foundation of English readings skill i.e. phonics awareness and sounds				
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	7	3.6	3.6	3.6
	Disagree	33	17.1	17.1	20.7
	Undecided/Neutral	13	6.7	6.7	27.5
	Agree	102	52.8	52.8	80.3
	Strongly agree	38	19.7	19.7	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table K: Students do not have a strong foundation of English readings skill i.e. phonics awareness and sounds

parents do not read to their children

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	.5	.5	.5
	Disagree	40	20.7	20.7	21.2
	Undecided/Neutral	33	17.1	17.1	38.3
	Agree	87	45.1	45.1	83.4
	Strongly agree	32	16.6	16.6	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table L: Parents do not read to their children

students find the texts on the curriculum difficult to read					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	7	3.6	3.6	3.6
	Disagree	40	20.7	20.7	24.4
	Undecided/Neutral	20	10.4	10.4	34.7
	Agree	103	53.4	53.4	88.1
	Strongly agree	23	11.9	11.9	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table M: Students find the texts on the curriculum difficult to read

students have anxiety about reading aloud					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	33	17.1	17.1	17.1
	Disagree	60	31.1	31.1	48.2
	Undecided/Neutral	18	9.3	9.3	57.5
	Agree	63	32.6	32.6	90.2
	Strongly agree	19	9.8	9.8	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table N: Students have anxiety about reading aloud

Students' health might affect their oral reading fluency (i.e. articulation, visual, and hearing problems)					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	29	15.0	15.0	15.0
	Disagree	59	30.6	30.6	45.6
	Undecided/Neutral	36	18.7	18.7	64.2
	Agree	58	30.1	30.1	94.3
	Strongly agree	11	5.7	5.7	100.0
	Total	193	100.0	100.0	

Table O: Students' health might affect their oral reading fluency (i.e. articulation, visual, and hearing problems)