8-2013

Using Oral Reading to Self to Improve Oral Fluency of English Language Learners

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USING ORAL READING TO SELF TO IMPROVE ORAL FLUENCY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction

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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study were to study the effect of oral reading-to-self on adult English Language Learners' oral fluency and their perception toward oral reading-to-self. This experimental study used a pretest-posttest design. The participants (N = 63) were recruited and randomly assigned to a control group (n = 30) and an experimental group (n = 33). The speaking test: Klomjit Lincoln Measure of Spoken English (KLMSE), developed by the researcher, was administered as both pre and posttest. The treatment was an assignment to read out loud-to-self. The Evaluation of Using Oral Reading to Improve Oral Fluency, a quantitative scale questionnaire survey instrument, was used to measure the participants' perception toward using oral reading-to-self in three categories; difficulty, effectiveness, and language input. Data included demographic information, pre and posttest scores, and questionnaire responses. ANCOVA, t test, and descriptive statistics were conducted to analyze the data. The ANCOVA determined that oral fluency of the participants was improved significantly after reading out loud-to-self, $F(1, 60) = 4.78$, $p = .03$. The participants perceived oral reading-to-self as easy, effective, language input. There was no statistical significant difference between male and female participants on perception toward oral reading-to-self in the three categories; difficult, male ($M = 2.50$, $SD = .81$), female ($M = 2.26$, $SD = .87$), $t(31) = .97$, $p = .34$, effective, male ($M = 3.63$, $SD = .87$), female ($M = 4.84$, $SD = .29$), $t(31) = -.94$, $p = .36$, and language input, male ($M = 3.88$, $SD = .91$), female ($M = 4.02$, $SD = .55$), $t(31) = .52$, $p = .60$. The difference between male and female participants on posttest scores was not significant, $F(1, 30) = 1.76$, $p = .19$.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank everyone who helped me be able to complete this dissertation. Without your guidance, suggestions, supports, questions, answers, influence and encouragements, this study would not have been possible.

I cannot thank Dr. Lincoln, my advisor and my dissertation director enough for her professional advice and friendship since the first day I started doing my Ph.D. I am grateful for everything you have done for me.

I am very thankful to my committee members, Dr. Daugherty, Dr. Denny, and Dr. Wavering, for giving me suggestions, encouragement, and for being there when I needed help.

Thank Dr. Bowles for her time and her expertise during the Speaking test scoring process.

Acknowledgements go to Amy Hodges and Lindsey L. King, the instructors of EASL classes who allowed me to recruit the participants for this study and supported me in various ways.

Thank you all my participants. I wish you all the best.

A special thank goes to all my fellow doctoral students and friends.

Thank you Prapatsorn Acord (Pa Dang), Wipawon, Viroj, and Roongroj Phiukhao who prepared everything for our arrival, for us to survive our first week in Fayetteville and the whole time in Arkansas. Thank Wissuta Gentry, Dr. Gaewalin (Oupadissakoon) Ricklefs, and Dr. Nophachai Cholthitchanta for the fun time we shared together.

Thank to my family especially Tone Tulakarn and Jumlong Klomjit.

Acknowledgements go to my university, Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon (RMUTP), and colleagues for their support.

Lastly, I acknowledge the Royal Thai Government Scholarship (Higher Educational Strategic Scholarships for Frontier Research Network, CHE-PhD SFR) for funding me to pursue my Ph.D. here at the University of Arkansas.

DEDICATION

In memory of my mother, Somsong Wimonmart Khemdaeng, who was my very first teacher.

In memory of my father, Mongkol Khemdaeng, Some English words in his bedtime stories, ‘come here’, ‘LTV - Water Buffalo’ and ‘snake snake fish fish’ inspired me to learn English.

Tan Suwanna Khemdaeng Klomjit

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

There are times when English language learners (ELL) who have had considerable previous English study know they have to say something in English, know what that something is, but they just do not know how to say it out loud. It is evident through the observation that ELLs whose backgrounds are either English as a Second Language (ESL) Learners or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners who are international students at colleges and universities in the United States are often in that situation. Most of them have learned English in their home countries where English is not the lingua franca. When they further their study in the United States, they have to meet the university requirements for international students to be accepted into the programs. Among the requirements is the English proficiency level. The widely used English test is the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). According to Educational Testing Service (ETS) (2013), more than 8,500 colleges, universities and agencies in more than 130 countries rely on TOEFL test scores to help make admissions decisions. TOEFL scores range from 0 - 120. Most colleges and universities set their own required TOEFL admissions scores. A sampling of required TOEFL admissions scores shows that a total TOEFL iBT, the test ministered via the internet, score of average 74.2 for undergraduate admissions and 82.6 for graduate admissions are required. TOEFL iBT measures the four skills of using English; reading, listening, speaking, and writing. ETS stated that the required level of English proficiency proves that international students have the English skills they will use in academic classrooms in English speaking settings.

Statement of the Problem

Research reveals that even those ELLs who passed the required TOEFL test have difficulties with communicating in oral English (Cheng, Myles, & Curtis, 2004; Halic, Greenberg, & Paulus, 2009; Kim, 2006; Zappa-Hollman, 2007).

Speaking is a productive skill. Language learners need to produce language to improve and to show levels of proficiency. When they cannot speak fluently, they are considered unsuccessful in mastering the language. Even though they have been studying English in their home countries for many years, English speaking may be still at the beginning level. This result is partly because of a focus on teaching grammar and lack of opportunity to practice speaking English. They can speak English back and forth on basic topics; greetings or saying good bye because they practiced these conversational English through drill and rote learning. The typical method of teaching EFL/ESL speaking skill in other countries is through practicing these standard conversational dialogues in the classrooms, for example, "*Hello. How are you? I am fine, thank you, and you?*" Some students are still seeking the TOEFL paper based test which has no speaking component instead of the iBT because they want to avoid the speaking test.

To find out about ELLs' perception about their English proficiency and their concern, the researcher discussed the issue with some students from Korea, Japan, China, and Vietnam, where English has been taught as a foreign language. The following statement was from a conversation with an international student in a university in the U.S. mid-south.

> I got a good TOEFL score, but I still want to improve my English. I want to speak English better, but I don't have time to practice with my American friends, and they don't have time for me too. I have a lot of homework. My speaking is bad. (August, 2011)

Even when ELL international students have spent a period of time in an English speaking country, some of them cannot speak intelligible English when it is not about basic conversation. On the contrary, they can read their textbooks in English silently for comprehension successfully. This observation was confirmed by ETS's (2012) TOEFL test and score data summary. This summary presented data on the performance of examinees who took the TOEFL iBT test between January and December 2011. The summary reported that TOEFL iBT examinees from countries where English is a foreign language, for example, China, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, and Vietnam made higher scores on reading than speaking. This study investigated the use of oral reading to self to improve oral fluency of ELLs, especially those who have learned academic English, and who are international students in the U.S. This present study investigated whether they can strengthen their weak area, speaking, by using reading, their stronger skill.

Background of the Study

Theoretical Background. The order of acquiring a language according to the Natural Approach (Krashen & Terrell, 1983) is listening, speaking, reading and writing. The Natural Approach presented that listening to a lot of comprehensible target language will automatically make the listeners learn to speak the language as in a baby learning his or her first language. Most ESL/EFL learners do not learn English that way. They are taught through memorizing grammar rules when they are in school age and already mastered their first language.

Language learning theories stated that students' first language (L1) affects second language (L2) learning resulting in not being able to produce some English sounds, especially in

adult learners. This is also in part because of the fossilization - the loss of progress in learning the language (Han, 2004) and the limits of their mouth muscle movement to produce speech due to their L1. Shumine (1997) explored the factors affecting adult learners' oral communication, components underlying speaking proficiency, and specific skills or strategies used in communication. She stated that adult ELLs are mostly shy and do not want to make mistakes in public. Strategies to improve adult ELLs' oral skills should help them create an oral atmosphere for themselves in their comfort zone. One way they can do this is to read the language out loud in their home.

Several studies have evaluated the varying effects of reading. Reading is a crucial mode of learning. Oral reading is one of the reading methods which is effective in helping students learn, and also benefits other listeners. Reading out loud for one's own use, for better comprehension, is a form of intrapersonal communication. Reading to young children is a recommended way to instill language and expression and to promote comprehension of text (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985; Ketterlin-Geller, Yovanoff, & Tindal, 2007; Prior & Welling, 2001).

Written language has the advantage that it is permanent so that it can be studied conveniently and at leisure. Reading out loud to self connects print to speech. Reading written materials out loud can make the readers practice as if they were giving a talk or acting in a play. Reading out loud also can help the readers to produce the words concisely and clearly as tongue, mouth muscle, and jaw exercises. Rehearsing a script is one form of reading out loud to self. Zappa-Hollman's study (2007) reported one of the key strategies non- native English speaking graduate students used to deliver academic presentations is rehearsing the presentation over and

over. This present study focused on ELLs' reading out loud to themselves and its impact on speech.

Historical background. In the past, the emphasis in ESL/EFL teaching methods, for example, the Classical Method, or also known as the Grammar Translation Method, was placed on reading ability and not on oral communication. Brown (2000) noted that languages were "not being taught primarily to learn oral/aural communication, but to learn for the sake of being 'scholarly' or…for reading proficiency" (p. 15). From the turn of the nineteenth century until the late 1940s, the grammar-translation method was popular because it is easy to teach and it requires no more than the ability to memorize lists of vocabulary. It does not focus on oral communication and aural comprehension. Educators have tried other ESL/EFL methodologies resulting in numbers of pedagogies such as the Direct Method, the Audiolingual Method, the Universal Grammar, the Silent Way, the Total Physical Response, the Natural Approach and the Communicative Method. However, according to Brown, the Grammar Translation Method is still alive and well in language classrooms throughout Europe, Asia, and America.

Technologies have brought a lot of changes in teaching and learning. English learning and teaching are facilitated by media products of mass communication such as videos, music, news, magazines, TV programs, and so on. Language teaching and learning are also facilitated through e-Learning and varieties of educational technologies. The present study investigated the advantages of one conventional method, oral reading.

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study were to investigate the effect of using oral reading-to-self in improving oral fluency of ESL/EFL learners and also to examine their perception on using oral reading-to-self. Oral reading was implemented to participating international students who have learned English as a foreign language from their home countries. Comparative pre and post speaking test scores were analyzed to ascertain students' English speaking proficiency gain. A questionnaire survey was administered to investigate the participants' perception of using oral reading to improve their oral fluency. The study also analyzed if there was a difference between males and females on perception and post speaking test scores.

Research Questions

The following three research questions guided the study. The guiding research questions were derived from a review of literature on ELLs and their English speaking skills presented in Chapter 2.

1. Is there a difference in speaking test scores among ELLs according to the treatment of oral reading and non-oral reading?
2. How do ELLs perceive using oral reading to improve their oral fluency in terms of the following three aspects?

    2.1 Difficulty of using oral reading to improve their oral fluency

    2.2 Effectiveness of using oral reading to improve their oral fluency

    2.3 Language input (the input or knowledge that learners receive from implementing oral reading)

3. Is there a difference in speaking test scores and perception between male and female participants in experimental group?

Hypotheses

There were three null hypotheses to be tested.

1. There is no difference in speaking test scores among ELLs according to the treatment of oral reading and non - oral reading
2. Using oral reading to improve oral fluency is not easy, not effective and it is not a source of language input.
3. There is no difference between the male and female participants in experimental group in perception and posttest scores.

Significance of the Study

Reading is a critical piece of learning. ELL International students read academic written materials on a regular basis. By studying the effectiveness of oral reading to improve English speaking skill, ELLs can benefit more from their regular task. This study may help ELLs to continue improving their English proficiency and enhance their autonomy to be life-long learners. The result of this study may extend ESL/EFL educators' understanding of teaching English Speaking skill.

Scope of the Study

This study focused on studying English speaking skill of ELL international students in one U.S. university. The students studied were those who met the English requirement for admission, and were studying in the U.S. The generalization of this study was limited to ELLs

who have learned English and can read written materials in English. In this study, fluency means the smoothness or flow when sounds, syllables, words and phrases are joined together when speaking and one's ability of spoken English to be understood by both native and non-native listeners. The following micro skills of speaking a language were not investigated in detail: morphology, lexis, grammar and syntax. Oral reading for comprehension and teachers' reading out loud to students were not studied.

Assumptions

1. The participants were adult international students with reasonable responsibility, intellect and ability to complete the required tasks of the study.
2. The participants had enough prior English knowledge to read written materials in English.
3. The participants had basic personal computer skills, have access to computer and internet, and can correspond via electronic mails.

Definitions of Terms

Comprehensible Input: Comprehensible input is a theory developed by Steven Krashen (1981). This theory states that learners progress in their knowledge of the language when they comprehend language input that is slightly more advanced than their current level (i+1).

ELL: ELL stands for English Language Learner. This refers to those who learn the English language.

EFL: This acronym refers to English as a Foreign Language. This conveys the idea that a person is studying English as an additional language in an environment in which English is not the dominant language.

ESL: This acronym refers to English as a Second Language. This conveys the idea that a person is studying English in an English speaking country. ESL learners may use their first language at home and among friends but must use English at school and/or at work.

Fossilization: This term refers to a cessation of learning a second or foreign language. The learners have more difficulty developing levels of fluency in the language.

Language input: In this study, language input was used to refer to the knowledge of English that the participants receive from reading written materials in English.

Lingua franca: A language that is adopted as a common language between speakers whose native languages are different.

L1: First language

L2: Second language

Oral fluency: In this study, oral fluency means the smoothness or flow when sounds, syllables, words and phrases are joined together in producing intelligible spoken English of ESL/EFL learners.

Oral reading: The act of reading aloud. This study examined the effects of oral reading to self.

Productive Skills: In language learning, productive skills are speaking and writing

TOEFL iBT: Test of English as a Foreign Language Internet Based Test

TOEFL: The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) evaluates the potential success of an individual to use and understand academic English at a college level. It is used as a scale of proficiency for non-native applicants at many English-speaking colleges and universities.

TWE: TOEFL Test of Written English

IELTS: International English Language Testing System

ELPT: English Language Placement Test – The EPLT is an in-house-designed placement test of the University of Arkansas. ELPT is designed to evaluate newly admitted graduate and undergraduate international students' ability to read and comprehend college level material and to write well organized, comprehensible essays based on that material, demonstrating readiness for a full or partial academic course load.

GRE: GRE stands for Graduate Record Examinations. The GRE tests measure skills that assist graduate schools, business schools and departments with admissions activities, guidance and placement, program evaluation and selection of fellowship recipients (ETS, 2013)

GMAT: GMAT stands for Graduate Management Admission Test. The GMAT exam consists of four main sections—Analytical Writing Assessment, Integrated Reasoning, Quantitative, and Verbal

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The purposes of this study were to investigate the effects of using oral reading toward the improvement of ELLs' oral fluency and their perception. There were three research questions to study.

1. Is there a difference in speaking test scores among ELLs according to the treatment of oral reading and non - oral reading?
2. How do ELLs perceive using oral reading to improve their oral fluency in terms of the following three aspects?

    2.1 Difficulty of using oral reading to improve their oral fluency

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    2.3 Language Input (the input that learners receive from implementing oral reading)

3. Is there a difference in speaking test scores and perception between male and female participants in experimental group?

This chapter presents five sections that are essential in establishing the research rationale, purpose, and focus of this study. Section One provides a summary of characteristics of international students as adult ELLs and factors affecting adult ELLs in speaking English. Section Two discusses the importance of input to enhance adult ELLs. This section guides the

research question 1.3 that aimed to investigate whether ELLs who add oral reading to their regular activities gain additional English knowledge resulting in improving of their oral fluency. Section Three presents a brief exploration of strategies in enhancing English speaking. This section provides understanding of what a typical speaking activity looks like and a summary of research based strategies. Section Four defines levels of oral skill fluency of ESL/EFL. Section Five explores reading and reading out loud as vital modes of learning for all ages and levels. In addition, Section Five proposes reading out loud to improve English speaking of ELLs.

Section One: Adult English Language Learners

This section describes adult ELLs' characteristics that relate to teaching and learning English speaking. The terms adult learners and adult education have been used in different meanings. According to Princeton University (2010), adult education usually refers to "a course, via lectures or correspondence, for adults who are not otherwise engaged in formal study". In the U.S., adult learners are defined as nontraditional learners who are over the age of 25 (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language, 2012). Adult ELLs in this study are not those adult learners in nontraditional education described above but they are ESL/EFL learners who are legal adult at age 18 years old and up currently studying for academic degrees in colleges and universities.

In ESL/EFL teaching and learning, ESL/EFL learners start learning English when they are in school age and continue learning the language until they are adult. Harmer (2007) stated that "adult language learners are notable for a number of special characteristics" (p. 84). Harmer described both advantages and disadvantages of teaching adult language learners according to

their characteristics. Teaching and learning activities for adult language learners can include traditional, lecturing or verbalizing because adult language learners can process abstract thought better with their range of life experiences. They are disciplined and have their learning goals. However, with their different backgrounds, experiences, and expectation, some adult language learners can be critical of teaching methods, too worried about making mistakes and hesitate to try different activities. They seek to understand the nature of the rule system (Rivers, 1992) and can be focused on form or correctness.

One dominant characteristic of adult learners is autonomy. Holec (1981) defined learner autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (p. 3). Learners are responsible for making decisions involved with the learning process such as determining the goals, selecting contents and methods, setting the pace, monitoring progress, and assessing outcomes. Most adult learners are autonomous and self-directed (Reeve, Bolt, & Cai, 1999). Learner autonomy relates to lifelong learning skills and self - access language learning.

Factors affecting adult ELLs in speaking English. Research, theory, and professional points of view have tried to determine the best age to start learning a second or foreign language (Harley, 1998; Singleton, 1989). To learn a second language effectively in a target- like way is to begin early when the learners are young (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Krashen, Scarcella, & Long, 1982). However, research that compares younger and older learners of foreign languages suggest that in some respects, older learners are more efficient language learners. Adult learners know how to learn and have prior knowledge and background that can be used in learning a foreign language. Other studies revealed that younger learners are more proficient in the long run, but

older learners are quicker in the short run (Krashen et al., 1982), particularly in the area of oral communication (Harley, 1998).

Mostl adult ELLs want to use the English language with confidence and spontaneity, in the same way as they use their first language. The major complaint that teachers hear is *I can't say anything off the top of my head* (Rivers, 1992). Moreover, Rivers stated that in making a conversation, ELLs talk in English about unfamiliar topics with constant hesitation.

In addition, for some adult ELLs, competence in English speaking skills is hard to develop because it depends on a number of factors: age, aural medium – listening ability, socio-cultural and affective factors (Shumine, 1997). The affective factors like emotions, self-esteem, empathy, anxiety, attitude, motivation, uneasiness, self-doubt, frustration, and apprehension are issues that affect learning proficiency.

They may also have certain linguistic problems. One of these problems is called fossilization or fossilized errors. Fossilization in adult language learners has long been a topic of interest in ESL/ESL research (Han, 2004). According to Han (2004), fossilization in language learners is error in language usage that became permanent because of no corrective feedback, no motivation to change. Adult ELLs have no motivation to change or beautify their usage errors because they still can communicate successfully with errors. In addition, Selinker and Lakshmanan (1992) stated that factors affecting fossilization were language transfer process from the learners' first language to the target or second language, lack of sufficient exposure to the target language, and wrong teaching. Fossilization makes language learners have more difficulty furthering their fluency in the language.

Teachers dealing with adult learners should remember that adults, unlike children, are concerned with how they are judged by others. They are cautious about making errors in what they say. This is because making errors would be a public display of ignorance, which would be an obvious occasion of losing face. This sensitivity of adult learners to making mistakes has been the explanation for their inability to speak without hesitation (Shumine, 1997).

Gender is also one of the factors that may affect oral fluency of adult ELLs. In general, researchers and educators found that females are ahead in literacy while males are better at math (Hendrickson, 2011). There are numbers of studies investigating language learning strategies that male and female language learners use. Several studies show that females are more active strategy users than males. For example, Green and Oxford (1995) studied 374 pre basic, basic, and intermediate college students in Puerto Rico. One hundred and seventy eight students were female and 196 were male. The study found that females used 75 percent more strategies than males. According to EF English Proficiency Index (2012), women speak English better than men worldwide and in almost every country. Gender as an influencing factor of oral fluency is one of central interest to this study.

This research examined the effect of encouraging adult ELLs to speak out. Reading written materials out loud to self provides plenty of opportunity to practice speaking and avoid making mistakes in public. Later, they may feel comfortable to speak. Grammatical accuracy of textbooks may correct the inaccuracies in learners' speaking. The major cause of grammar errors came from earlier learning stereotypes that became fossilized errors.

Oral reading-to-self is an activity outside the classroom that requires learner autonomy and self-direction to implement. The present study investigated the effectiveness of oral reading activities to improve oral fluency of international ELLs. With their learning characteristics described above, they can improve their English speaking skill using oral reading on their own.

Section Two: Comprehensible Input

Comprehensible input is a hypothesis first proposed by Stephen Krashen (1981). He purports that ELLs acquire language by receiving the language 'input' that are slightly above their current language level also known as i +1. Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis stated that after years of immersion in a new linguistic environment where ESL/EFL learners are exposed to massive amounts of high quality input, they should be able both to speak and write the language. Krashen reconsidered the matter and suggested more input in the form of films, tapes and pleasure reading to remedy what he still saw as a deficiency of input (1998, p. 10). This implies that ELLs who are exposed to English in English speaking environments need more forms of input. Flege (1995) suggested that more research is needed to determine how much/what kind of L2 input results in improved L2 speech.

Input in general for ELLs is "language which a learner hears or receives and from which he or she can learn" (Richard, Platt & Weber, 1985, p. 143). Input for ELLs can be any correct English that they can hear or read. For ESL learners, they are surrounded with the language and have more opportunity to expose to the language. Therefore, ESL learners can learn the language both in the classroom context and/or outside the classroom. They have availability of second language input that they have access to. In EFL instructional settings, learners' exposure to the

target language is limited. Gass and Selinker (2001) stated that there are three primary sources of input for EFL learners, teacher, materials, and other learners. Researchers and educators suggested that language learners must be exposed to the language to be able to speak that language fluently. However, when opportunity for direct interaction is limited, more forms of input should be provided (Krashen, 1998). Bailey (2005) also added that input can be one way and learners can receive input by reading or listening without responding. This study investigated whether reading written materials orally is an effective strategy that provides ELLs both opportunity to practice oral skill and L2 input. Section Five of this chapter elaborates more on reading and particularly oral reading.

Section Three: Strategies in Enhancing English Speaking

Both language teachers and learners use strategies in teaching and learning the language. Most of the strategies used and suggested for teachers focus on providing opportunities to the learners to speak through activities in the classroom. Linguistics and ESL/ EFL teachers agree that students learn to speak in the second or foreign language by interacting. There are many techniques to provide opportunities for interaction applied in teaching and learning English speaking skill, for example, discussion, role play, simulation, information gap, brainstorming, storytelling, interviews, games, jokes, and song.

In addition to studies on effective teaching strategies language teachers should implement into the classrooms, there are numbers of studies focusing on the language learners themselves, especially studies on learning strategies that the learners use. Learning strategies are defined as "specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques – such as seeking out conversation partners, or

giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task -- used by students to enhance their own learning" (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992, p. 63). Research on language-learning strategies has established the role learner strategies play in making language learning more efficient and successful (Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary & Robbins, 1999; Oxford, 1990).

Oxford (1990) created Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) to reveal the self-reported language learning strategies that second and foreign language learners utilize. SILL consists of questions concerning six strategy types: memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. Oxford (1990) has classified her six learning strategies into direct strategies and indirect strategies. Direct strategies require mental processing of the language and these are grouped into memory, cognitive and compensation strategies. The purpose of using the memory strategies is to store and retrieve new information. Cognitive strategies, on the other hand, help learners to understand and produce new language through a series of means such as summarizing and reasoning, among others. When learners feel they have certain limitations in getting their messages through or in understanding what other people are telling them, they make use of the compensation strategies to fill in the gaps in communication, like making intelligent guesses, asking for clarification, asking for repetition, and so forth. In contrast, indirect strategies ¨support and manage language learning without involving the target language¨ (p. 135). Indirect strategies are subdivided into metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Metacognitive strategies allow learners take control of their own knowledge by using functions such as centering, arranging, planning and evaluating. Because learners get confused with all of the rules, vocabulary, and writing systems when learning a new language, they use the metacognitive strategies to

reorganize their schemata or previous knowledge and overview and link new material with old material. The affective strategies deal with emotions, attitudes, motivations, and values. Several studies carried out using SILL have shown a positive association between proficiency level and the use of certain types of strategies, especially metacognitive, cognitive, and compensation strategies (Huang, 2010; Purpura, 1997).

In the area of speaking, many studies have addressed how strategies can help learners develop their oral communication ability. Littlemore (2003) studied effective strategies in communicating meaning among 82 advanced ELLs. This study revealed that reconceptualization strategies, for example, describing the items, location, function were the most effective. Carson and Longhini (2002) found that advanced ELLs used strategies much more frequently than lower proficiency level students. The strategies that advanced ELLs used were metacognitive, affective and social strategies. Oxford and Ehrman's (1995) study also established a significant positive correlation between cognitive strategy use and speaking proficiency. Although some studies have concluded that learners with more proficiency use a greater variety and number of strategies, the relationship between reported strategy use and performance is not clear-cut.

In addition to language teaching and learning strategies, most universities in the U.S. provide extra activities outside the classroom for their international students to help them adjust better into the new environment. Table 1 shows activities that provide international students opportunities to interact with the L1 community of a university in the mid-southern region of the United States.

Table 1

Activities Provided for International Students to Promote Exposure to Language and Culture

Activities	Detail
Thanksgiving in an American Home	Experience/share/learn the Thanksgiving holiday between international students and hosts
Conversation Club	Each group is led by American volunteer, meet 1 hour/week
Cross Cultural Mentor Program	Mentors are selected students who volunteer their time to lead new international students through orientation and to serve as a point of contact
Friendship Family Program	International students will be matched with American families to do something once a month to introduce international students to everyday American life
International Culture Team	the team visits local classrooms, businesses and community organizations to share culture
Dinner in the American Home	International students spend a few hours in an American home for a personal welcome
Student Cultural Organizations	Opportunity to connect over common interests and cultures
International Education Week	A joint effort of the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of State to celebrate the benefits of international education and exchange. International students are invited to join and share
Spouse and Family	Assist spouse and family of international students with a resource of document of contact information

Even though there are activities for international students to continually attend to help with their English, there is a major limitation of time. Most of them spend their time outside the

classrooms reading and doing homework. If reading out loud to self can improve their English speaking, this strategy can be convenient and easy to implement.

Section Four: Oral Fluency

Oral fluency is one of the most important markers of proficiency in learning a language. The term fluency has a range of meanings, the most common of which is related to high proficiency, that is, an excellent grasp of the vocabulary and grammar of a language. Oral fluency is also defined as a performance phenomenon related to 'flow, continuity, automaticity, or smoothness of speech' (Koponen & Riggenbach, 2000, p. 6). In this study, fluency means the smoothness or flow when sounds, syllables, words and phrases are joined together when speaking, and intelligibility. Even though the ultimate goal of learning to speak a foreign language is to be able to speak like a native speaker, 'oral fluency' in learning a foreign language does not mean 'native-like'. From the definition of fluency described above, fluency may be the easiest quality to judge in ELLs' speaking by evaluating how comfortable they are when they speak, how easily the words come out, and if there are great pauses and gaps in the speaking or not. With this definition, grammar is not the main purpose in evaluating fluency. ELLs who have excellent grammar and do well in grammar testing can still fail to be fluent because fluency does not improve at the same rate as other language skills.

Numbers of studies stated that fluency can also be facilitated by pedagogical procedures such as consciousness-raising that is to raise awareness of fluency features (Boers, Eyckmans, Kappel, Stengers, & Demecheleer, 2006). Most of the studies on promoting consciousness-raising to improve oral fluency concluded that this procedure was more effective with individual

learners than with group as in regular classroom setting. Some studies tested the provision of pre-task planning time to be effective in improving oral fluency (Skehan & Foster, 2005; Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005; Yuan & Ellis, 2003). The imposition of time constraints on production was also included as an effective procedure in promoting oral fluency (Arevart & Nation, 1991; Nation, 1989). Other studies investigated using task repetition in improving oral fluency and found that repeated practice increased fluency (Bygate, 2001; De Jong & Perfetti, 2011; Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 2005; Lynch & Maclean, 2001; Nation, 1989).

Among the studies on task repetition, the study of De Jong and Perfetti (2011) raised a point about gaining and keeping fluency level of the students. In this study, 24 ESL learners were divided into two groups and were asked to record three speeches of 4, 3, and 2 minutes. Group one spoke about the same topic three times, and group two spoke about three different topics. Fluency improved in both groups during training but only students who repeated the same topic maintained until the posttest.

Gatbonton and Segalowitz (2005) suggested that although many spoken language teaching classrooms promote general fluency, they do not provide the repetition necessary to achieve automatic fluency. Although one component of fluency is automatic, smooth, and rapid language use, there are few provisions in current ESL/EFL methodologies to promote language use to a high level of mastery through repetitive practice. When teachers believe that learning has reached the point where reinforcement of new forms through practice is necessary, they tend to revert to non-communicative means for attaining this end, such as pattern practice (p. 327).

Oral fluency of ELL is mostly measured by either human-rated or automatic evaluating systems from intelligibility, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. For example, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) oral proficiency test is a human-rated speaking test (ACTFL, 2012). The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (2012) describe speaking to be rated into five major levels of proficiency: distinguished, superior, advanced, intermediate, and novice. From the ACTFL description of fluency, fluency is related to speaking rate and it reflects whether speakers are comfortable at the speaking task and can communicate effortlessly. In another testing system - the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), iBT speaking test is a computer-based test system (ETS, 2012). Fluency on the TOEFL iBT speaking test is rated on a scale of 1 to 4 using human raters. Fluency at the lowest proficiency level (score 1) is described in the category of delivery as “choppy, fragmented, or telegraphic; frequent pauses and hesitations.” At the next level (score 2), fluency is described as having a “choppy rhythm/pace” of speech. At a proficiency score of 3, the examinee’s “speech is generally clear, with some fluidity of expression.” At the highest level (score 4), the test taker's speech has a “generally well-paced flow (fluid expression).” This study investigated whether reading random written materials out loud to self can improve language ability and can be a transition to fluency of ELL’s oral English.

Section Five: Reading and Reading Out Loud

Reading is a vital mode of learning, a source of factual information about any subject both practical and theoretical for all ages and levels of learning. A vast mass of knowledge in all fields can be gained by reading. Reading to children is one of the most effective ways of building the language neural connections in their growing brains, opening up new world and enriching their lives (Healy, 1994).

Reading aloud is a widely accepted practice in lower grades and provides students multiple exposures to more vocabulary than can be directly taught. Many studies show that multiple exposure to words result in vocabulary acquisition of both young learners and English language learners (Jenkins, Stein, & Wysocki, 1984; Stahl, 2003; Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986; Ulanoff & Pucci, 1999). Students acquire various levels of word knowledge through repeated and varied experiences with words (Beck & McKeown, 2002; Beck, McKeown, & Omanson, 1987). Vocabulary knowledge is necessary for comprehension. Manzo, Manzo, and Thomas (2006) stressed the need for vocabulary development, and listed several reasons why word knowledge improves the capacity to learn. Among those reasons are that vocabulary increases comprehension, most teaching and learning is accomplished through language, and words help students develop and understand content area concepts. In addition, a large vocabulary helps students understand their world in more sophisticated ways (Stahl, 2003). Graves (1986) reviewed several studies that reported that lack of vocabulary affects comprehension of text, and that, conversely, vocabulary knowledge increases comprehension of text. Krashen (1989) argued that the remainder of vocabulary is learned incidentally through oral acquisition and through

reading. He used the ‘Input Hypothesis’ to suggest that vocabulary is acquired in the same way that oral language is acquired. Input from reading and listening, among other literacy activities, results in vocabulary growth. Vocabulary can be learned incidentally through oral classroom activities, exposure to print, and many opportunities to read a variety of genres. Krashen (1989) also cited a study by Miller in 1941 in which junior-high students learned technical vocabulary naturally through oral language activities during a unit on natural resources. He also reviewed Nagy et al.’s studies from 1985 and 1987 that concluded that seeing a word in print resulted in an increase of word knowledge.

The relationship among reading, writing, listening and speaking has long been a topic of interest to some researchers and educators. Budzinski (1998) studied the effect of reading a text on the speaking of advanced learners of ESL. The study investigated the oral presentation of 35 graduate students that were prepared under two conditions; reading a text followed by planning and delivering a spoken presentation based on the text, and planning and delivering a spoken presentation without reading a text. The quantitative analysis revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in two oral presentations. However, the qualitative analysis demonstrated that the speakers who planned the presentation after reading a text referred to text, organized and used more special terminology. Hayden (2012) suggested teachers to integrate writing and speaking in teaching writing. She stated that some activities that will enable teachers to restage a timed writing activity so that students can integrate speaking and writing during the three main stages of the writing process that are prewriting, active writing, and post writing.

This study introduced using reading out loud-to-self to improve English speaking skill of international students who previously had learned English as a foreign language. Reading out loud, both to self and to listeners, has been recognized as a vital and effective method to help students learn (Baker, 2002; Blachowicz & Ogle, 2001; Ogle & Blachowicz, 2002). For those students who are adults, who have learned English and can read well silently for comprehension, reading out loud may be a way to develop them into fluent speakers. In addition, adult learners are believed to be focused on form or correctness. They seek to understand the nature of the rule system. Reading well written English materials out loud reduces their concern of making mistakes on the form and rule system of the language and seeing words in print resulted in an increase of word knowledge.

To speak English, ELLs produce the English speech sounds and sound patterns, use word and sentence stress, intonation patterns and the rhythm of the language, select appropriate words and sentences according to the proper social setting, audience, situation and subject matter, and organize their thoughts in a meaningful and logical sequence (Nunan, 2003). They are not likely to achieve that goal if they do not have enough vocabulary knowledge, or do not know how to pronounce the vocabulary they know. Reading written materials helps them in vocabulary growth and helps them to rehearse what they want to say, to get themselves mentally sharper. In addition, it also has the benefit of toning their speaking muscles. Lax muscles of the lips, tongue and cheeks can be toned by exercise the same way as any other muscle (Sanghi & Hattiangadi, 2006).

Sanghi and Hattiangadi (2006) also stated that speech is made up of consonants and vowels. When students practice systemically and, take note of how the consonants are formed, speaking skill will be improved. Sanghi and Hattiangadi also added that good speech is a result of good habits. Speaking clearly takes more effort than muttering or mumbling through hardly opened lips. Unless corrected, the tongue, lips and cheeks take the line of least effort.

Farnen (2012) and Wright (2012) suggested that ELLs can use reading out loud to improve their speaking voice if this activity is done without disturbing, and when there are no people around to make fun of them. Reading slowly, stressing every syllable of the words can help pronunciation.

However, students may be reluctant to read out loud to self and it can be time consuming. Celce-Murcia (2001) used the word 'bookish' to explain learners who retain their formal-sounding full form and do not use slang and idioms in speech. Reading written texts out loud can be challenging and deprive learners of real world communication situations. Bygate (1987) stated that it is hard to read aloud from a book because it is not something people are used to and the written text can be too long, too complex, or too technical. In addition, reading aloud tends to require considerable attention (Bygate, 1987). Because oral reading in adult language learners is a practice that is not being promoted, this present study will assess its effectiveness in supporting the incidental improvement of oral fluency.

Summary

Chapter 2 presented a review of adult ELLs, comprehensible input, strategies in enhancing English speaking, oral fluency, and reading and reading out loud. Adult ELLs have

some characteristics that both support and weaken their language learning. Adult ELLs are disciplined, have their learning goals, autonomous, but can be hesitant, or rebellious. In improving oral fluency of ELLs, factors such as age, gender, fossilization, personal characteristics have been raised. In ESL/EFL education, comprehensible input plays an important role in learners' proficiency. The right level and type of input should be implemented into teaching and learning strategies. The success of each strategy depends on the purposes of each individual. This study aimed to study the improvement of oral fluency of ELLs by using oral reading to self, therefore oral fluency was defined and oral reading to self was explored. Based on the above summary of the literature review in Chapter 2, research questions and research methods are developed and presented in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

Methods

This study was aimed to investigate three research questions, 1) Is there a difference in speaking test scores among ELLs according to the treatment of oral reading and non - oral reading?, 2) How do ELLs perceive using oral reading to improve their English speaking skill in terms of the following three aspects; difficulty, effectiveness, and language input; and 3) Is there a difference in speaking test scores and perception between males and females in the experimental group?

Research Design

To answer the above research questions, experimental pretest and posttest with randomly assigned control and experimental groups were used. Demographic information was collected to obtain descriptive characteristics for the participants using Background Information Questionnaire (Appendix A). Two quantitative methods were employed in this study; a quantitative questionnaire survey and an experimental, randomized pretest-posttest control group design (Table 2). The pre- and posttest (Appendix B) were used to compare the two sets of speaking scores. Comparative pre-and post-speaking scores analysis was conducted to ascertain student English speaking proficiency gains. Pre speaking test established beginning base-line English speaking proficiency scores for all participating ELLs. The pretest contains three questions. Post speaking scores ascertained which students actually achieved English speaking proficiency gains as a result of oral reading. The posttest consists of the same three questions. The quantitative questionnaire was a Likert satisfaction test. Questionnaire satisfaction survey,

Evaluation of Using Oral Reading to Self to Improve Oral Fluency (Appendix C) was administered to the experimental group after completing the treatment and posttest. The speaking test and questionnaire survey are described in detail in the following part of this chapter.

Table 2

Research Design

Group	n	Pretest	Treatment	Posttest
Experimental	33	Speaking Test	oral reading to self	Speaking Test Questionnaire Survey
Control	30	Speaking Test	-	Speaking Test

Participants

The population of interest were international students in a U.S. university who have learned English as a foreign language from their home countries. This study was conducted in a public university located in the U.S. mid-south during Spring 2013 semester. After getting an approval from Institutional Review Board for research of the host university (Appendix D), the researcher recruited the participants through three channels. The first one was to ask for permission from the instructors of English as a Second Language (EASL) classes to contact the students. EASL classes are for international students who score under 29 on the TOEFL iBT (writing), under 5 on the TWE, under 7.0 on the IELTS (writing), under 4.5 on the GRE or GMAT Analytical Writing, or under 81 on the English Language Placement Test (ELPT) writing. There are five courses in EASL, Grammar, Reading and Writing I & II, Pronunciation,

and Listening and Speaking. The researcher contacted the students in Reading and Writing I and II classes. There were 78 students enrolled in six sessions of Reading and Writing I and II in Spring semester. According to the course description of the university, the objectives of Reading and Writing courses are to work on improving skills necessary to write a well-organized, thought provoking essay incorporating paraphrased, summarized, and quoted from various sources, introduction to several rhetorical patterns. The second channel to recruit the participants was to contact the student cultural organizations on campus for volunteers to participate in the study. The student cultural organizations with the most members who are former EFL learners are Japanese Student Association, Korean Student Association, Chinese Students and Scholars Association, and Vietnamese Student Association. There were only two meetings held during the time of recruitment and not many members attended the meetings. The third channel to recruit the participants was to contact the researcher's friends who were qualified to participate in this study.

The recruiting letter as shown in Appendix E was used in all three channels. Informed consent (Appendix F) was distributed to interested students. All participants were asked to fill in the demographic data form and were randomly assigned into two groups, control and experimental. Three out of six EASL classes were randomly selected to comprise the control group, and the remaining three comprised the treatment group. Each participant was provided with a digital voice recorder, written instruction to complete the task, and the test materials. The participants in control group took the pre speaking test by recording their answer and submitting it to the researcher via email. They re-took the test again after four weeks. The participants in the experimental group took the pre speaking test and submitted. They also recorded their reading

out loud for two minutes, five times a week for four weeks, re-took the speaking test and completed the questionnaire survey.

Data Collection

Instruments. There were three instruments used to collect data, demographic data form, speaking test and questionnaire. Validity and reliability together with detail of each instrument were described as follows.

Validity and reliability. The procedures to establish reliability and validity were as follow.

1. The researcher examined the purposes, questions and hypothesis of the study, the target participants and their background, especially their educational and readability levels. The researcher then studied through literature search and readings the existing quantitative questionnaire items and speaking tests.
2. The researcher created operational definitions for the questionnaire items (Appendix G) and an outline of the speaking test.
3. The researcher wrote the questionnaire items to correspond with the operational definitions that were created using a 5-point Likert scale and the following values: strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, neutral = 3, disagree = 2, and strongly disagree = 1. The speaking test consisted of three questions derived from the literature review on ESL/EFL assessment and the purpose of this present study. The rubrics were designed based on the definition of fluency.

4. Content validity and construct validity of the questionnaire items were established by using the index of item-objective congruence (IIOC) measure (Rovinelli & Hambleton, 1977). The researcher asked one of the committee members, and two faculty members to do the pilot evaluation to check both the flow of the process and the construct validity. At this step, the three evaluators suggested to revise and reword the operational definitions and some items because some items were judged to measure two subscales. The final version of IIOC Evaluation Document (Appendix H) was sent to the content expert panel. The content experts who rated the items were three faculty members associated with IIOC measure and ESL/EFL studies. The speaking test was reviewed by the dissertation committee chair for readability and construct validity.
5. Pilot study was conducted on a small scale with 2 participants who were accessible international students. The main purpose of the pilot study was to determine if the procedures for contacting participants, distributing study materials were workable and if all directions were clear, understandable, and easy to use. The data of the pilot study were collected and used in training the speaking test raters.

Index of Item – Objective Congruence (IIOC). The final version of IIOC Evaluation Document (Appendix H) was sent to the content expert panel consisted of three faculty members to perform the IIOC as a measure of the questionnaire's content validity. The experts were not told which constructs the individual items are intended to measure. The experts were instructed to rate each item on each objective using the following rating scales: if an item is a clear measure of the objective's operational definition, provide a rating of 1. If an item is clearly not a measure

of the objective's operational definition, provide a rating of -1. If an item is an unclear measure of the objective, in other words, it may be related to the objective or slight measure of the construct/content, however it is not a clear or clean measure of the objective, provide a rating of 0. The range of the index score for an item is -1 to 1 where a value of 1 indicates that all experts agree that the item is clearly measuring only the objective that it is hypothesized to measure and is clearly not measuring any other objective. The researcher set the cut score of IIOC at .70. Items with IIOC .70 or higher would be included in the questionnaire. After revising and rewording the operational definition from the previous step, all 24 items that were created obtained IIOC score 1 (Appendix I). In summary, all 24 items remained for Evaluation of Using Oral Reading to Improve Oral Fluency scale. The final form of the questionnaire (Appendix C) was posted online and was distributed to the participations through e-mail.

Internal consistency of the questionnaire and the speaking test. Cronbach's alpha was used to check the internal consistency of the questionnaire and the speaking test. The Evaluation of Using Oral Reading to Improve Oral Fluency questionnaire (Appendix C) was found to be highly reliable (24 items; a = .86). The pre and posttest score of KLMSE was also highly reliable (2 tests; a = .88) Cronbach's alpha .86 and .88 indicates a high level of internal consistency for this scale and this test with this sample.

Inter-rater reliability. Pretest and post-test were rated by two raters, the dissertation committee chair and one faculty member using the rubric presented in the later part of this chapter. Before they started the scoring process, 10% of the tests were randomly selected, and the two raters calibrated the scores. Then, an inter-rater reliability was calculated by using

Pearson correlation coefficient. Because the two raters were strongly correlated, $r = .91$, $p < .01$, they divided the rest of the tests and individually rated them. Each rater rated half of the tests from both control and experimental groups.

Demographic data form. Demographic information was collected to obtain descriptive characteristics of the participants in the two groups. The demographic data form is presented in Appendix A.

Speaking test. To answer research question number 2, the comparison of the students' speaking test scores, a pretest – treatment – posttest – design (see Figure 1) was used. The speaking test: Klomjit Lincoln Measure of Spoken English (KLMSE) as shown in Appendix B was given as both pre- and posttests. In this study, oral fluency means the smoothness or flow when sounds, syllables, words and phrases are joined together when speaking, and intelligibility or comprehensibility of ESL/EFL learners' oral performance. I developed the speaking test based on the purpose of this study, based on the literature review of ESL/ EFL assessment, and tasks currently used in second language speaking tests.

Speaking is a productive skill in which speakers produce utterances that are observable. The observations are always colored by the accuracy and effectiveness of the speakers (Brown, 2004). Therefore, the speaking test should provide test takers with opportunities to show observable ability of the target language. This consideration suggested a need for performance-based assessment to collect evidence of the test takers' speaking ability.

According to Bailey (2005), there are four basic criteria to consider when designing a speaking assessment. They are validity, reliability, practicality, and washback or instructional

impact. Validity and reliability of the speaking test; the test measures what it is intended and is consistent, will be established as described in previous section of this chapter. Practicality refers to reasonable demands on resources, for example, time, money, and personnel. Washback of the test can be either positive or negative. However, there is no formal teaching and learning in this study. The treatment, oral reading to self, used in this study does not directly prepare the participants to answer the speaking test questions.

Clark (1979) classified speaking tests into three approaches, a direct test, an indirect test, and a semi-direct test. The direct test is a face to face testing, for example, an oral interview. The direct test is the test that the test takers do not speak but are given a written test, for example, a conversational cloze test. The semi-direct test is the test that the test takers actually speak but do not interact in a conversation with the tester.

The speaking test designed for this present study is a semi-direct test, audio-recorded and task-based. The test, the Klomjit Lincoln Measure of Spoken English (KLMSE), was designed to be a take home test which can be completed from home. The test materials consisted of a test booklet with instructions and a USB digital voice recorder to record the answer. The USB digital voice recorder yields a clear WAV file and can be attached with an E-mail. The recorded speaking answer was rated by two raters using holistic ratings to evaluate the fluency when sounds, syllables, words and phrases are joined together in producing intelligible spoken English while the participants were performing the following linguistic tasks: 1) Telling about area of study, 2) describing pictures, and 3) reading sentences out loud. Question 1 the participants demonstrate a short continuous speech on a familiar topic for one minute. Question number 2

asks the participants to describe a set of pictures which are not related to any specific field of study. Question 3 is to read the 10 sentences out loud. The chosen 10 sentences consist of words difficult to pronounce and tongue twisters. Each participant was provided with a digital voice recorder and the test instruction. They recorded their answers and submitted it to the researcher via E-mail. The speaking tests were scored by two raters. The speaking test scores ranged from 1 to 5 (1= limited, generally lacks intelligibility, unclear, choppy, fragmented or telegraphic, frequent pauses and hesitations, consistent pronunciation and intonation problems; 5 = excellent, completely intelligible although accent may be there, always clear, fluid and sustained).

Raters of speaking test and rating scale. The two raters who evaluated the KLMSE test were two faculty members. They are experienced ESL scholars, have more than 10 years of experience in rating English speaking tests, and are English native speakers. The two raters were provided with the rubric (Appendix J) and scoring sheets (Appendix K). The dissertation committee chair was the trainer. The two raters met, discussed and rated the pilot test together. Then they separately rated the same seven tests to check inter rater reliability before dividing the rest of the tests and rated them individually.

Treatment. The treatment for the experimental group was an assignment (Appendix L) that required the students to read their choice of written materials out loud for two minutes, five times a week, every week for four weeks during Spring 2013 semester. The duration of treatment was assigned as recommended by Kim (1999) that advanced level ESL/EFL students should interact in a strategy everyday or at least five days a week to achieve a particular goal. The

reading out loud was recorded and submitted to the researcher via E-mail to ascertain that the treatment is accomplished.

Questionnaire. A quantitative scale questionnaire survey instrument Evaluation of Using Oral Reading to Improve Oral Fluency (Appendix C) was designed piloted and conducted based on research question 1 to evaluate the participants' perception toward using oral reading to improve oral fluency. Evaluation of Using Oral Reading to Improve Oral Fluency questionnaire was developed and assessed for content validity using the index of item-objective congruence measure (Rovinelli & Hambleton, 1977). The questionnaire was divided into three subscales corresponded to the research questions 1.1 – 1.3. The three subscales were Difficulty, Effectiveness, and Language Input. The questionnaire consisted of 24 items. Table 3 provided a summary of the breakdown subscales.

Table 3

Subscales, Numbers of Items, Item Number

Subscales	Numbers of Items	Item number
Difficulty	8	1, 2, 6, 10, 12, 15, 17, 23
Effectiveness	10	5, 7, 9, 13, 14, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24
Language Input	6	3, 4, 8, 11, 16, 19
Total	24	

The questionnaire survey used a 5-point Likert scale with the following values: strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, neutral = 3, disagree = 2, and strongly disagree = 1. As a result, the possible

scores of the difficulty subscale raged from a low of 8 to a high of 40, the effectiveness subscale ranged from low 10 to a high of 50, and the language input subscale ranged from a low of 6 to a high of 30. The raw scores were averaged and standard deviation was computed. This study assumed that the higher the score of each subscale was, the more difficulty, effectiveness, and being language input of oral reading was according to the participants' perception. The interpretation of the scores was based on the research question 1. Research question 1 investigated the perception of the participants on using oral reading-to-self whether this intervention was difficult, effective, and valid language input. To make the interpretation intelligible and be able to answer the research question, after mean scores were computed, the researcher collapsed the scores of each subscale from five to two categories, easy and difficult, ineffective and effective, and not an input and an input based on Beamish's (2004) strategy of collapsing response categories 'less is better' (as cited in Grimbeek, Bryer, Beamish, & D'Netto, 2005). Scores and categories in detail were presented in Table 4. This survey was administered to the participants in the experimental group after they completed the treatment.

Table 4

Questionnaire Score Interpretation

	Scale		
Score	Difficulty	Effectiveness	Language Input
1.00 – 2.74	easy	ineffective	not input
2.75 – 5.00	difficult	effective	input

Procedure. After getting approval from Institutional Review Board for research at the host university (Appendix D), permissions from EASL classes' instructors and chairs of cultural organizations on campus, the researcher recruited the participants by visiting five classes of Reading and Writing Course of two instructors. The class instructors allowed the researcher to present this research study to the classes at the beginning of each class time. In recruiting the target participants who are members of Cultural Organizations, the researcher attended their meetings and talked directly to interested participants. Most of the participants in this study were recruited through visiting EASL classes. Interested students were asked to sign the informed consent (Appendix F), fill out the demographic data form (Appendix A). Their e-mail addresses were collected because all procedures and correspondence to complete this study were through e -mail. Then, testing materials including KLMSE test, USB voice recorder, and treatment checklist for experimental group were distributed. The participants took the pretest by recording their answers to the KLMSE test at their convenience within the deadline specified by the researcher. The pretest files were submitted to the researcher by e-mail. Each pretest file was assigned a unique code and was calibrated by two raters. Participants in experimental group also submitted their recorded files via e-mail. Reminders to read out loud were sent to the experimental group daily. In one month time, after all the participants in the experimental group completed the treatment, the researcher sent an e-mail with a questionnaire survey link and a reminder to take the posttest to each of the participants. The participants in control group also received a reminder e-mail to take post-test. The posttest files were assigned with codes and sent to the raters to rate.

Data Analysis

The researcher utilized statistic software SPSS for Windows in data analysis. Descriptive statistics were employed to describe sample characteristics. Data included Likert questionnaire responses, pretest and posttest scores, and demographics information. An ANCOVA procedure was used to analyze the pretest and posttest scores. The pretest scores served as the covariate in the study. ANCOVA was used in this experimental study because there were some antecedent variables, for example, participants' levels of education and background knowledge of English that the researcher did not remove. Differences between group means were considered statistically significant at the .05 level. Partial eta-squared was used to measure the effect size. To evaluate if the males performed on the test differently from the females, ANCOVA procedures were used. The Independent-Sample *t* Test was used to answer if the males and females have different perception. Internal validity test was run on the questionnaire using Cronbach's Alpha statistic. Table 5 summarized the statistical procedure used to analyze data.

Table 5

Statistical Procedure Used to Analyze Data

Question	Description	Statistic
Q1 perception	Likert	Mean, SD, Percentage
Q2 performance	test scores	ANCOVA
Q3 perception & performance	gender /posttest score	ANCOVA
	gender/perception	*t* Test

Timeline

This study was conducted at the beginning of Spring 2013. The planned timeline from start to finish collecting data was 6 weeks. The timeline of the study was shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Study Timeline

Week 1 – Pilot study
Week 2 – Recruit participants, administer demographic survey and pre-speaking test, start week 1 treatment
Week 2-5 - Treatment and rating pre-speaking test
Week 6 - Administer post-speaking test and questionnaire survey, rate post-speaking test, and analyze questionnaire survey data
Week 7 - Analyze the data & start writing the results

CHAPTER 4

Results

The purpose of this study was to study perception and performance in terms of oral fluency after implementing oral reading-to-self. There were three research questions investigated:

1. Is there a difference in speaking test scores among ELLs according to the treatment of oral reading and non - oral reading?
2. How do ELLs perceive using oral reading to improve their English speaking skill in terms of the following three aspects?
    2.1 Difficulty
    2.2 Effectiveness
    2.3 Language Input
3. Is there a difference in speaking test scores and perception between males and females in the experimental group?

Demographics Data

This study was conducted during spring 2013 at a university in the U.S. mid-south. A total of 82 sets of testing materials were distributed to interested international students who were ELLs. Sixty three participants out of 82 completed all the requirements and were included in the study. This indicated a participation of 77%.

Participants were 63 international students from 22 countries attending a public university in the U.S. and were randomly assigned into a control and an experimental group with

30 and 33 members respectively. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 47 years (M = 27.52, SD = 7.02). The sample members were 50.79% male, 49.21% female and 100% of them have learned English as a second or foreign language. With regard to years of ESL/EFL study, 22.22% studied English less than five years, 31.75% studied English 5-10 years, and 46.03% studied English more than 10 years. The majority of the sample had stayed in an English speaking country less than one year (52.38%) and one to two years (31.75%). The sample members' levels of education currently being pursued were 30.15% non-degree, 12.70% bachelor's degree, 25.40% master degree, and 31.75% doctoral degree. The participants' age, gender, years of English study, years in English speaking country, and level of education in control and experimental group were reported in Table 7.

Table 7

Demographics Data Distribution (N = 63)

Variables	Control (n= 30)	Experimental (n=33)	Total (N = 63)
Age (year)			
Mean	28.50	26.63	27.52
SD	8.13	5.81	7.02
Minimum	18	19	18
Maximum	47	45	47
Gender			
Male	15	17	32
Female	15	16	31

Table 7 (continued)

Variables	Control (*n*= 30)	Experimental (*n*=33)	Total
Years studies English			
< 5 years	7	7	14
5-10 years	7	13	20
> 10 years	16	13	29
Years in English Speaking Country			
<1 year	13	20	33
1-2 years	13	7	20
3-4 years	0	1	1
>4 years	4	5	9
Level of Education			
Non degree	8	11	19
Bachelor's	2	6	8
Master's	8	8	16
Doctoral	12	8	20

The participants were from 22 countries. The top four countries of origin were Thailand (*n* = 16), Brazil (*n*=7), China (*n* = 5), and Korea (*n*=4). Table 8 showed a complete list of numbers of participants from each 22 countries.

Table 8

Native Countries of the Participants and Numbers (*N* = 63)

	Country	Number		Total
		Control	Experimental	
1.	Austria	0	2	2
2.	Brazil	1	6	7
3.	China	2	3	5
4.	Colombia	0	1	1
5.	Egypt	1	0	1
6.	India	2	1	3
7.	Indonesia	1	0	1
8.	Iran	1	1	2
9.	Iraq	2	0	2
10.	Japan	0	1	1
11.	Korea	1	3	4
12.	Kuwait	0	1	1
13.	Mexico	1	1	2
14.	Nepal	1	0	1
15.	Panama	1	0	1
16.	Peru	1	1	2
17.	Romania	1	0	1
18.	Saudi Arabia	3	0	3
19.	Thailand	10	6	16
20.	Tunisia	0	1	1
21.	Turkey	1	2	3
22.	Vietnam	0	3	3
Total		30	33	63

The 22 countries were from six regions with the majority from Asia (8). The other five regions were Middle East (7), South America (3), Europe (2), North America (1), and Central America (1). Figure 1 presented the home origins of the participants. The participants' regions on world map (Bruce Jones Design, 2013) were marked in black.

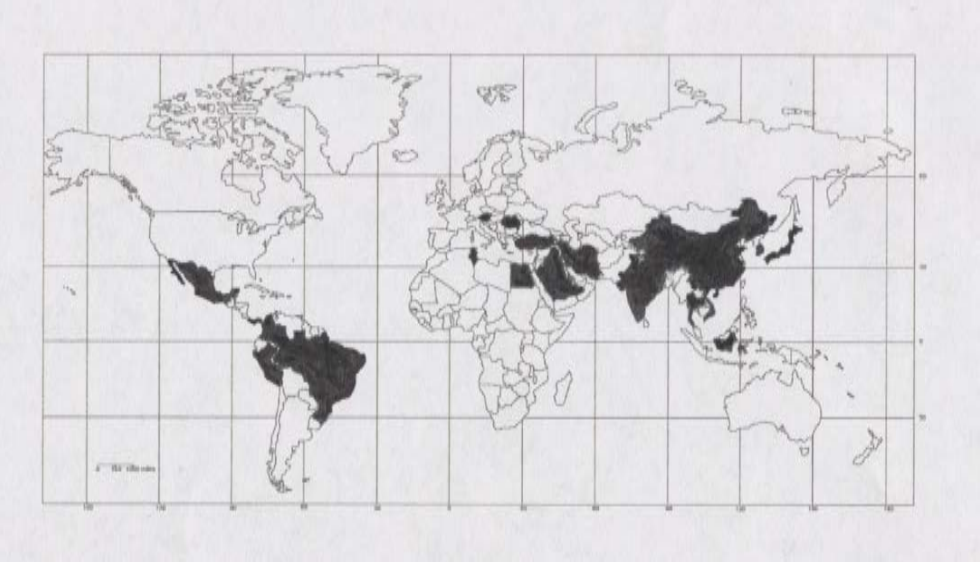

Figure 1. Participants' region of origin.

Percentage of the participants who did not finish the study. The percentage of the participants who did not finish the study was calculated from numbers of the participants who signed the informed consent to participate in the study, received all testing materials and instructions but withdrew or failed to turn in the complete requirements including pre and post speaking tests, the treatment, and the questionnaire. The total number of interested participants was 82. There were 63 (77%) participants who completed all the requirements and were included in the study. The number of participants not completing the study was 19 and equal to 23%. They were 9 males and 10 females from 10 countries. The mean age was 25.40 years old.

Research Question 1

Research question 1 explored whether there was a difference in speaking test scores among ELLs according to the treatment of oral reading and non - oral reading. KLMSE was used in pre and posttest and the scores were rated by two experienced raters. Upon receiving the socres, the researcher checked the internal consistency of the scores using Cronbach's alpha. The internal consistency of the scores was high (2 tests; *a* =.88). The descriptive statistics of the two sets of scores were presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics of Pre and Posttest Scores of the Two Groups

Group	*n*	Pretest		Posttest	
		mean	SD	mean	SD
Control	30	3.51	.98	3.88	1.01
Experimental	33	3.78	1.03	4.35	.72

The above table showed that participants in the experimental group made higher mean scores on pretest. Both groups mean scores were higher in posttest than in pretest. The mean posttest score of the participants in experimental group was higher than the mean posttest score of the control group. However, that mean scores cannot be interpreted because the researcher did not control for some other variables that can affect the difference of the scores. The participants in the experimental group might make higher posttest scores because of longer duration of stay

in English speaking country, or other factors. As a result of this assumption, a one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to answer this question. The independent variable, the treatment, included 2 levels: no oral reading in control group and oral reading in experimental group. The dependent variable was the participants' posttest scores and the covariate was the participants' pretest scores. A preliminary analysis evaluating the homogeneity-of-regression assumption indicated that the relationship between the covariate and the dependent variable did not differ significantly as a function of the independent variable, $F(1, 61) = 3.35$, $p = .07$. Then, the ANCOVA procedure was used. The ANCOVA was significant, $F(1, 60) = 4.78$, $p = .03$ (See Table 10). Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected. The ANCOVA procedure also revealed that 7.4% ($\eta_p^2 = .074$) of the total variance was accounted for by the treatment controlling for the effect of the posttest scores.

Table 10

Analysis of Co-Variance for Posttest Scores by Group

Source	SS	*df*	MS	*F*	*p*	η_p^2
Pretest	30.10	1	30.10	111.36	.00	.650
Group	1.29	1	1.29	4.78	.03	.074
Error	16.22	60	.27			
Total	49.86	62				

There was a statistically significant difference in posttest scores of control and experimental group when adjusting for the effect of pretest scores. Table 11 shows the adjusted

posttest scores after adjusting for differences using the pretest. The results revealed that the experimental group (M = 4.27) scored higher on the posttest than the control group (M = 3.98).

Table 11

Adjusted Posttest Mean by Groups

Group	Adjusted Posttest Mean
Control	3.98
Experimental	4.27

In addition to analyzing the difference of the pre and posttest scores of the control and experimental group, the researcher also examined the difference between the pre and posttest score of the participants in the control group who did not read out loud to self for this study. The *t*-Test revealed that the difference between the pre and posttest scores of this group was not statistically significant, t =-1.45, p = .895 (Table 12).

Table 12

t-Test Summary of Pre and Posttest Scores of Control Group

group	*n*	score	*n*	mean	*SD*	*t*	*p*	*df*
control	30	pretest	30	3.51	.98	-1.45	.895	58
		posttest	30	3.88	1.01			

Research Question 2

Question 2 investigated how ELLs perceived using oral reading to improve their English speaking skill in terms of the following three aspects,1) difficulty, 2) effectiveness, and 3) language input. The data to answer this question were obtained by using the Evaluation of Using Oral Reading questionnaire. This questionnaire was considered highly reliable (24 items; a = .86). Upon receiving the data, the internal consistency reliability was computed again for the three subscales, difficulty, effectiveness, and language input. Cronbach's alphas for the eight difficulty items, 10 effectiveness items, and six language input items were considered high values for instrument reliability and were reported in the following table (Table 13).

Table 13

The Reliability Coefficient Alpha for Evaluation of Oral Reading

Scale	*n*	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Difficulty	33	8	.77
Effectiveness	33	10	.90
Language Input	33	6	.88

The percentage of responses per question of all categories was also calculated to see how the participants rated each item before collapsing the five Likert scale values from one -five into two categories; 1.00 – 2.45 and 2.50 – 5.00 to be intelligibly interpreted in the later step. Evaluation of each item and percentage were presented in Table 14.

Table 14

Evaluation of Oral Reading Items and Percentage

Value	Item and Percentage									
	Difficulty									
	1	2	6	10	12	15	17	23		
Strongly disagree	33.3%	36.4%	30.3%	6.1%	33.3%	12.1%	33.3%	18.2%		
disagree	42.4%	51.5%	42.4%	30.3%	39.4%	33.3%	21.2%	63.6%		
Neutral	18.2%	6.1%	21.2%	12.1%	12.1%	18.2%	18.2%	12.1%		
agree	2%	6.1%	6.1%	21.2%	9.1%	15.2%	15.2%	6.1%		
Strongly agree	0%	0%	0%	30.3%	6.1%	21.2%	12.1%	0%		
	Effectiveness									
	5	7	9	13	14	18	20	21	22	24
Strongly disagree	12.1%	6.1%	21.2%	9.1%	18.2%	6.1%	24.2%	6.1%	6.1%	27.3%
disagree	18.2%	15.2%	15.2%	15.2%	36.4%	6.1%	15.2%	27.3%	12.1%	54.5%
Neutral	57.6%	57.6%	39.4%	63.6%	39.4%	21.2%	54.5%	54.5%	33.3%	18.2%
agree	12.1%	21.2%	24.2%	12.1%	6.1%	48.5%	6.1%	12.1%	48.5%	0%
Strongly agree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	18.2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Language Input									
	3	4	8	11	16	19				
Strongly disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%				
disagree	15.2%	15.2%	12.1%	15.2%	12.1%	0%				

Table 14 (continued)

Value	Item and Percentage					
Neutral	12.1%	9.1%	15.2%	15.2%	9.1%	18.2%
agree	33.3%	45.5%	36.4%	51.5%	60.6%	36.4%
Strongly agree	39.4%	30.3%	36.4%	18.2%	18.2%	45.5%

Table 14 showed that, in the Difficulty subscale, item 10 (Oral reading requires too much time.), item 15 (Oral reading is hard for me.), and item 17 (I had trouble reading out loud.) were rated as difficult. In the Effective subscale, item 18 (I feel more confident to speak English after I read out loud.) was the only item that got the "strongly agree" scores from the participants. In the subscale language input, no participant "strongly disagreed" that oral reading is language input. Then, each item in the three subscales was interpreted into two categories, easy-difficult, ineffective – effective, and not an input – an input as showed in Table 15.

Table 15

Mean and Standard Deviation and Interpretation of Items

Items	mean	*SD*	Interpretation
Difficulty			
1. Oral reading is difficult to do.	1.97	.88	easy
2. I found oral reading is time consuming.	1.82	.80	easy
6. I have to put much effort to read out loud.	2.09	1.04	easy
10. Oral reading requires too much time.	3.39	1.36	difficult

Table 15 (continued)

Items	mean	*SD*	Interpretation
12. I feel ill at ease to read out loud to myself.	2.15	1.17	easy
15. Oral reading is hard for me.	3.00	1.36	difficult
17. I had trouble reading out loud.	2.52	1.41	difficult
23. Oral reading is demanding.	2.12	.92	easy
Effectiveness			
5. Oral reading improved my speaking ability.	3.70	.84	effective
7. I speak English better after practicing reading out loud to myself.	3.94	.78	effective
9. I can pronounce some English words better after I read out loud.	3.67	1.08	effective
13. I can say some difficult English words after I read out loud.	3.79	.78	effective
14. I have become more competent in speaking English due to oral reading.	3.33	.85	effective
18. I feel more confident to speak English after I read out loud.	3.67	1.05	effective
20. I speak English clearer after I read orally.	3.42	.93	effective
21. I am satisfied with how much I improved my speaking ability from oral reading.	3.73	.76	effective
22. Oral reading is worth doing.	4.18	1.07	effective
24. Oral reading encourages me to speak English when I am afraid of making a mistake.	3.91	.67	effective

Table 15 (continued)

Items	mean	*SD*	Interpretation
Language Input			
3. Oral reading broadened my English vocabulary.	3.97	1.07	input
4. Oral reading provided me more opportunity to practice speaking English.	3.91	1.01	input
8. I have learned new things from oral reading.	3.97	1.01	input
11. Oral reading pushed me to greater knowledge of English.	3.85	.94	input
16. As a result of oral reading, I was exposed to a variety of English sounds.	3.73	.87	input
19. Oral reading brought me unfamiliar English words.	4.27	.76	input

Table 15 revealed that three out of eight items in the difficulty subscale were rated "difficult" and five items were rated "easy". The remaining two subscales, effective and language input were rated 100% in the same categories: "effective" and " input".

To gain a clearer answer of research question 2, average scores of each subscale were calculated as shown in Table 16 and Figure 2 to compare the average scores of each subscale. To interpret the scores of the three subscales, the higher the scores, the more difficulty, more effective and more Language Input the participants found the oral reading was.

Table 16

Means, Standard Deviation, Interpretation of Perception on Difficulty, Effectiveness, and Language Input

Scale	*n*	Minimun	Maximun	mean	*SD*	Interpretation
Difficulty	33	1.13	4.00	2.38	.71	easy
Effectiveness	33	2.40	5.00	3.73	.65	effective
Language Input	33	2.33	5.00	3.94	.75	input

The subscale difficulty intended to evaluate the degree to which a person believes that oral reading is time consuming, demanding, and not easy to implement. Table 18 revealed that the participants perceived reading out loud to self to be easy.

The subscale effectiveness was to investigate the degree to which a person believes that oral reading is effective in improving his/her oral fluency, makes him/her feel more confident in speaking English, and satisfied with the outcome related to improving the ability to speak English, provide him/her more opportunity to exposure to the language. The mean score 3.73 for this subscale indicated that the participants perceived oral reading to be effective.

The subscale language input intended to study the degree to which a person finds oral reading helps him/her gain more knowledge of English. This study revealed that the participants agreed that oral reading to self was valid language input.

Figure 2 compared participants' perception mean scores on oral reading to self in three subscales, difficulty, effectiveness, and language input.

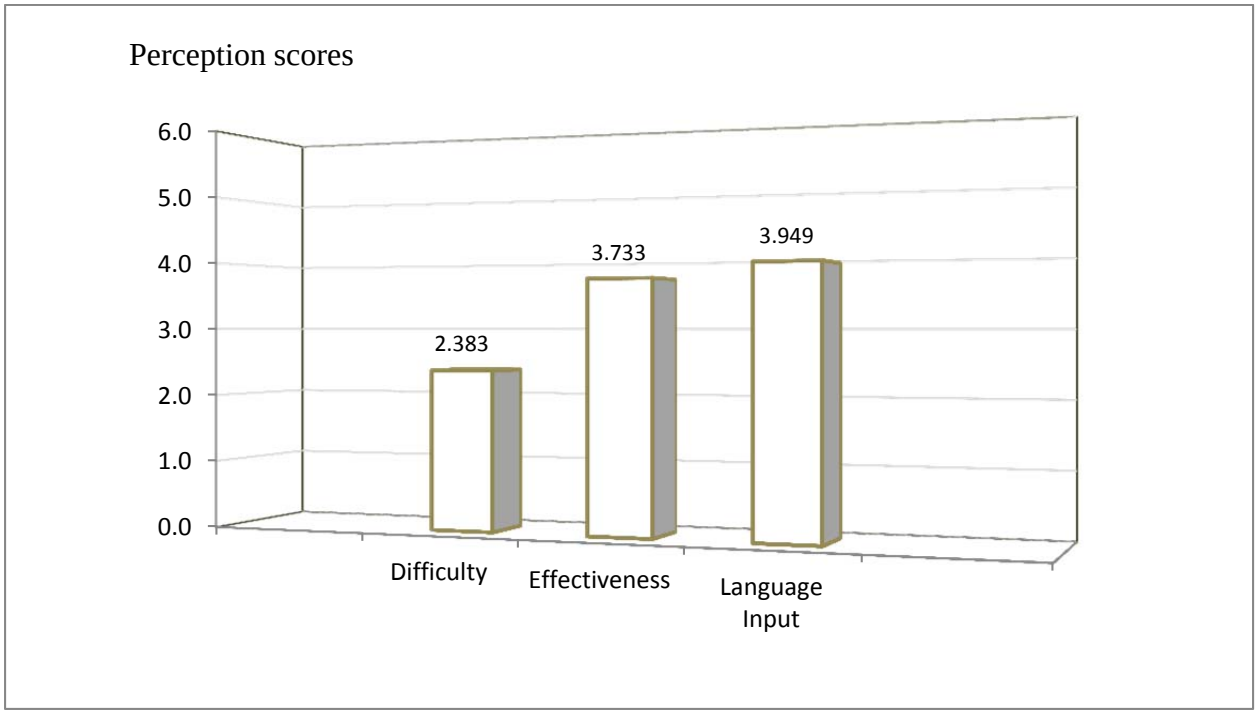

Figure 2. Comparison of Perception Mean Score.

In conclusion, the responses from the questionnaire survey revealed that the participants perceived oral reading to self as easy, effective, and viewed oral reading as language input. Therefore Null Hypothesis 2 was rejected.

Research Question 3

Question 3 investigated whether there was a difference in speaking test scores and perception between male and female participants in the experimental group. ANCOVA procedures and Independent sample *t* Test were used to answer this question. Independent sample *t* Test was used to investigate if there is a difference of perception between male and female participants. Table 17 presented the summary of the *t* Test.

Table 17

t Test Summary of Gender and Perception

subscale	gender	*n*	mean	*SD*	*t*	*p*	df
Difficulty	male	17	2.50	.81	.97	.34	31
	female	16	2.26	.87			
Effectiveness	male	17	3.63	.87	-.94	.36	31
	female	16	3.84	.29			
Language Input	male	17	3.88	.91	-.52	.60	31
	female	16	4.02	.55			

An independent-samples *t* Test was conducted to compare perception on the three subscales in males and females. Table 17 revealed that there was no significant difference in participants' perceptions on the three subscales, difficult, male (M = 2.50, SD = .81), female (M = 2.26, SD = .87), $t(31) = .97$, $p = .34$, effective, male (M = 3.63, SD = .87), female (M =4.84, SD = .29), $t(31) = -.94$, $p = .36$, and language input, male (M = 3.88, SD = .91), female (M = 4.02, SD = .55), $t(31) = .52$, $p = .60$. ANCOVA procedures were used to determine that there is a difference of the posttest scores between males and females. The independent variables were males and females. The dependent variable was the posttest scores and the covariate was the pretest scores. A preliminary analysis evaluating the homogeneity-of-regression assumption indicated that the relationship between the covariate and the dependent variable did not differ significantly as a function of the independent variable, $F(1, 31) = 1.125$, $p = .30$. Then, the ANCOVA procedure was used. The ANCOVA was not significant, $F(1, 30) = 1.76$, $p = .19$ (See Table 18).

Table 18

Analysis of Co-Variance for Posttest Scores by Gender

Source	SS	*df*	MS	*F*	*p*	η_p^2
Pretest	10.70	1	10.70	58.80	.00	.66
Gender	.32	1	.32	1.76	.19	.06
Error	5.46	30	.18			
Total	16.66	32				

There was no statistically significant difference in posttest scores of male and female participants when adjusting for the effect of pretest scores. Table 19 shows the adjusted posttest scores after adjusting for differences using the pretest. The results revealed that males (M = 4.26) did not score statistically significantly higher on the posttest than female (M = 4.45).

Table 19

Adjusted Posttest Mean by Gender

Gender	Adjusted Posttest Mean
Male participants	4.26
Female participants	4.45

ANCOVA results revealed that there was no significant difference between males and females and the posttest scores. As a result, the null hypothesis 3 was retained.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate three research questions, 1) is there a difference in speaking test scores among ELLs according to the treatment of oral reading and non - oral reading?, 2) how do ELLs perceive using oral reading to improve their English speaking skill in terms of the following three aspects; difficulty, effectiveness, and language input, and 3) is there a difference in speaking test scores and perception between male and female participants in the experimental group?

Summary of Findings

Sixty three international students from 22 countries participated in this study. The sample was randomly assigned into control (non – oral reading to self) group (n = 30), and experimental (oral reading to self) group (n = 33). The pretest was administered to both groups. After one month, the posttest was administered again to both groups. The questionnaire survey was also distributed to members of the experimental group to investigate their perception on oral reading to self. The findings of the study answered the three research questions as described below.

1. Is there a different in speaking test scores among ELLs according to the treatment of oral reading and non-oral reading?

The finding revealed that ELLs who implemented oral reading two minutes a day, five days a week for four weeks statistically significantly outperformed those who did not read out

loud on the speaking test. The researcher also examined the pre and posttest scores of the control group and found that the difference between these two sets of scores was not significant.

2. How do ELLs perceive using oral reading to improve their English speaking skill in terms of the following three aspects; difficulty, effectiveness, and language input?

The analysis of the Likert scale questionnaire survey using descriptive statistics: mean, standard deviation and percentage showed that the participants perceived oral reading to self to be easy, effective and a source of language input. Interestingly, in addition to the result of the questionnaire survey that revealed that the participants had positive perception of oral reading to self, there were numbers of the participants who e-mailed the researcher to thank the researcher for introducing this activity. They also asked if they can continue recording their reading out loud and submit the voice files to the researcher to keep improving their oral English. This information, though anecdotal, is consistent with the finding of this study.

3. Is there a difference in speaking test scores and perception between male and female in experimental group?

An independent Sample *t* Test and ANCOVA procedures were performed to answer this question. The result revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in speaking test scores and perception between male and female participants in the experimental group.

Interpretation and Implications of Findings

Participants. Participants of this study were 63 international students studying in a university in the U.S. mid-south. They were from 22 countries in Asia, Central America, Europe,

Middle East, Central America, and South America. Compared to ETS's 2012 data of international students in the U.S., this sample characteristic; age range, gender, levels of education corresponded to those reported by ETS. The generalization of the study findings would be easier.

The participants' characteristics in this study also confirmed the literature review on adult ELLs' characteristic in Chapter 2 that adult ELLs are autonomous. This was implied from the fact that this study required the participants to complete all the requirements on their own outside their classrooms without teachers' control and 77% of them completed all the tasks.

Oral Reading to Self. As earlier discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2, oral reading to self is not a common activity in adult learners and some educators argued that reading written texts made ELLs speak English in a 'book-ish' way. This study revealed that oral reading to self improved oral fluency of these adult ELLs.

They also positively perceived this activity as easy to do, effective, and it saw as language input that broadened their English knowledge and oral fluency. Even though overall perception was positive, there were some negative views toward oral reading to self in that oral reading requires too much time, and for some individuals it was hard to do and that they had trouble reading out loud. Among the three subscales of oral reading evaluation that were evaluated, being a language input was rated the highest. According to the items and the rating scores in the questionnaire, the participants favored oral reading to self because they can learn unfamiliar English words, broaden their English vocabulary, have more opportunity to practice speaking English, and be exposed to a variety of English sounds.

The highly positive feedback on the subscale “language input” or source of English knowledge suggested reading aloud as a remedy for fossilization in ELLs. Fossilization in adult ELLs was discussed in Chapter 2 of this study. Some researchers pointed out that fossilization cannot be overcome and that fossilization occurred partly because of no corrective feedback. This dissertation contended however, that perhaps fossilization can be remedied if the learners are encouraged in further attempts to read written materials out loud to self. The formal written English in printed materials can be served as a corrective feedback and as the finding of this study revealed, reading written text out loud broadens the readers’ English knowledge both in vocabulary and sound.

Oral reading was also found to be suitable and effective for both male and female ELLs. According to the finding of this study, there was no difference between males and females in perception and test scores. There are brain differences; structural, processing, and chemical, between genders (James, 2007) and this area has long been an interest in ESL/EFL education especially in the difference of language processing areas between male and female (Norton & Pavlenko, 2004). Oxford (1990) stated that male and female differ in language learning style and socialization and cultures are the main influence on this difference. She suggested that teaching and learning activities should be generalized for both male and female language learners. The finding of this present study implied that oral reading to self to improve oral fluency is one activity that can be implemented to both male and female students.

However, the test scores of female participants in this study slightly higher than the test scores of male participants. Although the difference is not statistical significant, this result

confirmed the literature review presented in Chapter 2 of this study that women speak English better than men.

There were two findings that were not part of the main purposes of the study but added more information to the study. The first one was the finding that there was no difference in pre and posttest scores of participants in the control group. In one month time of the study, participants in this group did their regular activities while the experimental group read out loud-to-self for 20 days. This result revealed that staying in an English speaking country for one month is not long enough to make ELLs' oral fluency improve. This finding also confirmed the statement of the problem of the present study that even when ELLs pass the English tests and start their academic programs in an English speaking country, their English speaking skills are not at the satisfactory level.

The second unexpected finding was a positive consequence that revealed the authenticity that resulted from this study. The researcher received some emails from the participants that they enjoyed reading out loud to self, enjoyed recording their reading and listening to their own voice and they found that this activity was useful and effective in improving their oral skill. They mentioned in their emails that they will keep doing this activity. At the end of the study, there were two participants continuing to submitting their reading files to the researcher. This suggests that ELLs can become autonomous and life - long learners if they find suitable self - access activity matched their interest.

In chapter 2, the researcher reviewed literature on strategies to enhance the speaking skills of ELLs. Most of the strategies studied were implemented in classroom settings with the

teachers' control. Almost all of the interventions yielded positive outcomes, mostly during the period of the study. The question is how ELLs can keep their level of improvement and keep improving out of the class without the teacher. One of the factors preventing teachers from successfully teaching English speaking is large classes with 30 - plus students. It can be difficult to have all of them practice speaking. According to the result of this study, reading out loud can be one solution to previously discussed problems. Having students record their reading out loud to self to practice and to keep improving will be easy, effective and provide variety of English knowledge and work well with large classes as an assignment to improve oral fluency.

Discussion on Limitations of Study

There were some limitations of the study. Firstly, it was the technical issue related to the device and technology used in the study. KLMSE, the speaking test, is a take home test. The treatment was to record reading out loud to self. The participants in both control and experimental groups were provided with a test booklet and a digital voice recorder to take the test from home and submit the recording to the researcher via e-mail. The experimental group was asked to submit audio- taped reading out loud for 20 days in one month. There were reported technical problems including the digital recorder did not work, was broken, was lost, was washed in washer, no internet connection, and periods when the university e-mail server was down. There was one participant who could not be reached because his e-mail inbox was full. For the cases related to the digital voice recorder, the researcher replaced with a new one for the participants. Two participants used their own devices. The internet and server issues resulted in

delays in submitting the audio files. Registered e-mail inbox full was solved by contacting the participant via an alternative e-mail address.

Another limitation was time. This study was conducted during Spring semester and could not get the study started early enough to avoid Spring break week and could not wait until the Spring break was over or the study would last until the final week of the semester. The researcher informed the participants of two options during Spring break, to continue submitting the audio file daily as usual, and to continue recording the reading out loud daily but submit all the files after the break. Most of the participants chose option one.

The last limitation was the KLMSE test results. This test was designed to collect speaking samples to be measured for oral fluency. The scope of oral fluency to be evaluated was defined as the smoothness or flow when sounds, syllables, words and phrases are joined together in producing intelligible spoken English of ELLs. The test results cannot be generally applied to all aspects of English speaking proficiency of ELLs.

Discussion on Future Directions of Research

The following recommendations for further investigation were based on the findings of this study.

1. Oral reading-to-self to improve oral fluency of ELLs with longer periods of oral reading-to-self, or no limitation of time on oral reading-to-self should be examined to investigate the levels of oral fluency improvement.

2. Effects of oral reading to self on improvement of some other elements in speaking, for example, grammar, vocabulary, should be investigated. This present study aimed to investigate the effects of using oral reading-to-self toward the improvement of oral fluency only. The scope of oral fluency to be evaluated in this present study was defined as the smoothness or flow when sounds, syllables, words and phrases are joined together in producing intelligible spoken English of ELL. Oral reading-to-self might be effective in improving other elements in speaking as well.
3. Duration of stay in English speaking countries, without any special design treatment that will make remarkable improvement of oral skills of ELLs from various backgrounds should be investigated. One of the unintended findings of this present study found that participants in the control group with different backgrounds on levels of English proficiency, years of learning English, years of staying in English speaking country and levels of education did not improve statistically significantly on KLMSE test.
4. This study should be replicated with ELLs with lower level of background knowledge of English, other age groups, or have more limitated to exposure to native speakers of English such as EFL who are studying English as an additional language in an environment in which English is not the dominant language. Participants in this study were ELLs in an English speaking country. During the study, they had plenty of opportunity to exercise their speaking skills. This might be one of the factors that led to the participants making statistically significantly higher posttest scores than the pretest scores.

5. Additional research should be conducted using a specific type of written materials, for example, textbooks, to further validate the finding of this study. This study let the participants chose written materials to read out loud by themselves up to their interest. This is because the participants were from different backgrounds and were studying different programs.
6. A study of using oral reading-to-self to improve oral fluency that provides feedback on oral reading-to-self to the participants should be carried to investigate if the level of improvement of oral fluency of the participants is different.
7. Using oral reading-to-self to improve oral fluency of other foreign language learners, for example, French, Spanish, Japanese, or Chinese should be conducted.

Conclusion

Reading English written materials orally was found to be easy, effective and also a source of English knowledge that made the readers who are English language learners both male and female improve their oral fluency in this study. Being able to communicate more effectively and more fluently in the target language is always a main purpose in learning that particular language. The finding of this study has enriched the body of knowledge in teaching and learning English both as a second or foreign language. However, there is much more to investigate to make language education more effective and successful.

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Appendix A

Background Information Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions or check the appropriate response. This is for research purposes only and your response will be kept confidential at all time.

1. Age _____
2. Gender: Male_____ Female_____
3. What is your native country? _____
4. Have you learned English as a second or foreign language? Yes_____ No_____
5. How many years have you studied English?
    a. _____ less than 5 years
    b. _____ 5-10 years
    c. _____more than 10 years
6. How long have you stayed in an English speaking country?
    a. _____ less than one year
    b. _____ 1-2 years
    c. _____ 3-4 years
    d. _____ more than 4 years
7. What level of education are you currently pursuing at this university?
    a. _____ non degree program (Ex. exchange, visiting, etc.)
    b. _____ bachelor's degree
    c. _____ master’s degree
    d. _____ educational specialist
    e. _____ doctoral degree
    f. _____ post-doctoral

Appendix B

Speaking Test: Klomjit Lincoln Measure of Spoken English (KLMSE)

Instructions for producing and submitting speaking samples

You will be able to demonstrate how well you speak English through the following tasks. The tasks will last approximately five (5) minutes. The speaking tasks consist of three questions. Each question was designed to tell the raters about your oral English ability. There is no right or wrong answer. The raters will evaluate how well you communicate in English. Please answer all questions by recording your answer with the provided USB digital voice recorder. Save the file onto your personal computer. Email the file to the researcher.

How to use your USB digital voice recorder (from www.tmart.com)

1. For 1 minute (60 seconds), talk in English about your area of study and why you chose it.

2. Please look at the 4 pictures below. Tell the story that the pictures show, starting with picture number 1 and going through picture number 4. You may take one minute to look at all the pictures and think about the story. Begin recording the story when you are ready. You will have 2 minutes to tell about the story.

1.

2.

3.

4.

3. Read out loud the following 10 English sentences.

- Elizabeth will finish her dissertation within three months.
- My brother Paul prefers coffee to tea.
- Pat’s house is absolutely fantastic.
- She sells sea shells by the sea shore.
- It’s a pity we didn’t go to the city.
- You’d better look it up in a cookbook.
- How much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?
- I miss my daughter.
- The bride looked gorgeous on her wedding day.
- Spaghetti with shrimp is a meal my husband often cooks for dinner.

Appendix C

Evaluation of Using Oral Reading to Improve Oral Fluency

Code # _____ Gender: Male _____ Female _____

Following are a series of questions concerning your perception about oral reading you were assigned to do last four weeks. Please answer all questions by marking (X) the number that most closely matches your response.

strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, neutral = 3, disagree = 2, and strongly disagree = 1.

Questions	strongly agree 5	agree 4	neutral 3	disagree 2	strongly disagree 1
1. Oral reading is difficult to do.	5	4	3	2	1
2. I found oral reading is time consuming.	5	4	3	2	1
3. Oral reading pushed me to greater knowledge of English.	5	4	3	2	1
4. As a result of oral reading, I was exposed to a variety of English sounds.	5	4	3	2	1
5. I can say some difficult English words after I read out loud.	5	4	3	2	1
6. Oral reading is hard for me.	5	4	3	2	1
7. I can pronounce some English words better after I read out loud.	5	4	3	2	1
8. Oral reading brought me unfamiliar English words.	5	4	3	2	1
9. I feel more confident to speak English after I read out loud.	5	4	3	2	1
10. I have to put much effort to read out loud.	5	4	3	2	1

11. Oral reading broadened my English vocabulary.	strongly agree 5	agree 4	neutral 3	disagree 2	strongly disagree 1
12. I had trouble reading out loud.	5	4	3	2	1
13. I speak English better after practicing reading out loud to myself.	5	4	3	2	1
14. I am satisfied with how much I improved my speaking ability from oral reading.	5	4	3	2	1
15. Oral reading is demanding.	5	4	3	2	1
16. I have learned new things from oral reading.	5	4	3	2	1
17. I feel ill at ease to read out loud to myself.	5	4	3	2	1
18. I speak English clearer after I read orally.	5	4	3	2	1
19. Oral reading provided me more opportunity to practice speaking English.	5	4	3	2	1
20. I have become more competent in speaking English due to oral reading.	5	4	3	2	1
21. Oral reading encourages me to speak English when I am afraid of making a mistake.	5	4	3	2	1
22. Oral reading is worth doing.	5	4	3	2	1
23. Oral reading requires too much time.	5	4	3	2	1
24. Oral reading improved my speaking ability.	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix D

IRB Approval

February 20, 2013

MEMORANDUM

TO:	Suwanna Klomjit Felicia Lincoln
FROM:	Ro Windwalker IRB Coordinator
RE:	New Protocol Approval
IRB Protocol #:	13-02-494
Protocol Title:	*Using Oral Reading to Self to Improve Oral Fluency of English Language Learners*
Review Type:	☒ EXEMPT ☐ EXPEDITED ☐ FULL IRB
Approved Project Period:	Start Date: 02/20/2013 Expiration Date: 02/19/2014

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (http://vpred.uark.edu/210.php). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

This protocol has been approved for 200 participants. If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 210 Administration Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

Appendix E

Recruiting letter

Title: Get free evaluation of your spoken English ability and a chance to improve it.

Dear International Students,

My name is Suwanna Klomjit, a doctoral candidate in Curriculum & Instruction, College of Education and Health Professions at the University of Arkansas. My academic advisor, Dr. Felicia Lincoln, and I are conducting research to investigate the effect of using oral reading to self to improve oral fluency of English as Second/Foreign Language learners.

I am currently seeking participants for this study. The benefits of participation in this study include a free evaluation of your spoken English ability, and if you are chosen to be in the experimental group, you will have a chance to try reading out loud to improve your English speaking ability. In return, you will be asked to take two 5-minute spoken English tests, fill out a questionnaire, and if you are chosen to be in the experimental group, you will be asked to record your reading out loud five days a week for four weeks followed by completing a questionnaire survey. The whole procedure will last about one month and will be done from your home. You will be provided with a 4GB USB digital voice recorder and this device will be given to you as a complementary after the completion of the study. This study will be conducted during Spring 2013.

Your participation is very valuable. It is completely voluntary and you can withdraw from the study any time you wish. All the information you provide will be kept entirely confidential. Your name and your email address will NOT be published. A code number will be used to analyze all data obtained for this study.

To participate in this study you must meet all of the following conditions:

1. Your native language is not English.

2. You are at least18 years old.

If you are interested in participating please contact Suwanna Klomjit via email.

Your participation will be very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Suwanna Klomjit

Appendix F

Informed Consent

Using Oral Reading to Self to Improve Oral Fluency of English Language Learners
Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Principal Researcher: Suwanna Klomjit
Faculty Advisor: Felicia Lincoln, Ph.D.

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

You are invited to participate in a research study on improving English speaking ability of English as second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) learners. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are not a native speaker of English.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE RESEARCH STUDY

Who is the Principal Researcher?
Suwanna Klomjit

Who is the Faculty Advisor?
Felicia Lincoln, PhD.
University of Arkansas
College of Education and Health Professions
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
121 Peabody Hall
Phone: 479-575-8729
FAX: 479-575-6676
flincoln@uark.edu

What is the purpose of this research study?

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of oral reading to self towards the improvement of oral fluency of ESL/EFL learners. The study also investigates how ESL/EFL learners perceive the use of oral reading to self to improve oral fluency.

Who will participate in this study?

60 international students of the University of Arkansas, 18 years old and older, and 20 adult non-students are expected to participate in this study.

What am I being asked to do?

Your participation will require the following:
You will be provided with a 4GB digital voice recorder to be used in the study. You may keep the device after the study is completed. The researcher will randomly assign the participants into two groups – a control and an experimental group. If you are in control group, you will be asked to do the following tasks:

1. Answer the Background Information Questionnaire
2. Take pre and post speaking tests entitled Klomjit Lincoln Measure of Spoken English. The posttest will be administered 4 weeks after the pretest. You will be provided with a printed test book and a USB digital voice recorder to record your answer. You can take the tests from home and submit the recorded answer to the researcher via email. The recorded answers will be assigned with unique codes that protect your identities and will be rated by two raters.

If you are in experimental group, you will have to do the following tasks:

1. Answer the Background Information Questionnaire
2. Take pre and post speaking tests entitled Klomjit Lincoln Measure of Spoken English. The posttest will be administered 4 weeks after the pretest. You will be provided with a printed test book and a USB digital voice recorder to record your answer. You can take the tests from home

and submit the recorded answer to the researcher via email. The recorded answers will be assigned with unique identifiers that protect your identities and will be rated by two raters.

3. Choose written material in English, read it out loud for two minutes, record your reading with the provided USB digital voice recorder and submit the recorded reading out loud to the researcher via email. You will be asked to do this task five times a week for four weeks.
4. Answer the questionnaire survey entitled Evaluation of Using Oral Reading to Improve Oral Fluency.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?
There are no anticipated risks to participating.

What are the possible benefits of this study?
You will get free evaluation of your English speaking ability and a complementary 4GB digital voice recorder that can be used as a voice recorder and a USB storage drive.

How long will the study last?
The study will last for one month.
If you are in control group, the study will take totally 15 minutes spread out over a month (3 minutes on background questionnaire, 6 minutes on pre speaking test, and 6 minutes on post speaking test).
If you are in experimental group, the study will take totally 60 minutes spread out over one month (3 minutes on background questionnaire, 6 minutes on pre speaking test, 2 minutes on reading out loud 5 days a week for 4 weeks = 40 minutes, 6 minutes on post speaking test, and 5 minutes on questionnaire survey).

Will I receive compensation for my time and inconvenience if I choose to participate in this study?
No, there is no monetary compensation for your time and inconvenience, but you will receive a 4GB USB digital voice recorder used in the study as a complementary gift to you after the completion of the study.

Will I have to pay for anything?
No, there will be no cost associated with your participation.

What are the options if I do not want to be in the study?
If you do not want to be in this study, you may refuse to participate. Also, you may refuse to participate at any time during the study. Your job, your grade, your relationship with the University will not be affected in any way if you refuse to participate.

How will my confidentiality be protected?
All information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by applicable State and Federal law. Your answer will be anonymous. Results of the study will be reported as aggregate data.

Will I know the results of the study?
At the conclusion of the study you will have the right to request feedback about the results. You may contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Felicia Lincoln at Email: flincoln@uark.edu or Phone: 479-575-8729 or the Principal Researcher, Suwanna Klomjit at Email: sklomjit@email.uark.edu or Phone: 479 871 3113. You will receive a copy of this form for your files.

What do I do if I have questions about the research study?
You have the right to contact the Principal Researcher or Faculty Advisor as listed above for any concerns that you may have.

You may also contact the University of Arkansas Research Compliance office listed below if you have questions about your rights as a participant, or to discuss any concerns about, or problems with the research.

Ro Windwalker, CIP
Institutional Review Board Coordinator
Research Compliance
University of Arkansas
120 Ozark Hall
Fayetteville, AR 72701-1201
479-575-2208
irb@uark.edu

Informed Consent

Title of the Study: **Using Oral Reading to Self to Improve Oral Fluency of English Language Learners**

I _____ have read the above statement and have been able to ask questions and express concerns, which have been satisfactorily responded to by the investigator. I understand the purpose of the study as well as the potential benefits and risks that are involved. I understand that participation is voluntary. I understand that significant new findings developed during this research will be shared with the participant. I understand that no rights have been waived by signing the consent form. I have been given a copy of the consent form.

Signature Date

Appendix G

Operational definitions for Difficulty, Effectiveness, and Language Input

Evaluation of Using Oral Reading to Improve Oral Fluency of EFL Learners

Difficulty: the degree to which a person believes that oral reading is time consuming, demanding, and not easy to implement.

Effectiveness: the degree to which a person believes that oral reading is effective in improving his/her oral fluency, makes him/her feel more confident in speaking English, and satisfied with the outcome related to improving the ability to speak English, provide him/her more opportunity to exposure to the language.

Language Input: the degree to which a person finds oral reading helps him/her gain more knowledge of English.

Appendix H

IIOC Evaluation Document

Operational definitions for Difficulty, Effectiveness, and Language Input
Difficulty: the degree to which a person believes that oral reading is time consuming, demanding, and not easy to implement.

Effectiveness: the degree to which a person believes that oral reading is effective in improving his/her oral fluency, makes him/her feel more confident in speaking English, and satisfied with the outcome related to improving the ability to speak English, provide him/her more opportunity to exposure to the language.

Language Input: the degree to which a person finds oral reading helps him/her gain more knowledge of English.

Please rate each item on each objective using the following rating scale:

If an item is a clear measure of the objective's operational definition, provide a rating of 1.

If an item is clearly not a measure of the objective's operational definition, provide a rating of -1.

If an item is an unclear measure of the objective (in other words, it may be related to the objective or slight measure of the construct/content, however it is not a clear or clean measure of the objective), provide a rating of 0.

	Difficult	Effectiveness	Language Input
1. Oral reading is difficult to do.			
2. I found oral reading is time consuming.			
3. I have to put much effort to read out loud.			
4. Oral reading requires too much time.			
5. I feel ill at ease to read out loud to myself.			
6. Oral reading is hard for me.			
7. I had trouble reading out loud.			
8. Oral reading is demanding.			
9. Oral reading improved my speaking ability.			
10. I speak English better after practicing reading out loud to myself.			
11. I can pronounce some English words better after I read out loud.			
12. I can say some difficult English words after I read out loud.			
13. I have become more competent in speaking English due to oral reading.			
14. I feel more confident to speak English after I read out loud.			
15. I speak English clearer after I read orally.			
16. I am satisfied with how much I improved my speaking ability from oral reading.			
17. Oral reading is worth doing.			
18. Oral reading encourages me to speak English when I am afraid of making a mistake.			
19. Oral reading broadened my English vocabulary.			
20. Oral reading provided me more opportunity to practice speaking English.			
21. I have learned new things from oral reading.			
22. Oral reading pushed me to greater knowledge of English.			
23. As a result of oral reading, I exposed to a variety of English sounds.			
24. Oral reading brought me unfamiliar English words.			

Appendix I

IIOC Score Summary

Items	Experts 1	2	3
1. Oral reading is difficult to do.	1	1	1
2. I found oral reading is time consuming.	1	1	1
3. I have to put much effort to read out loud.	1	1	1
4. Oral reading requires too much time.	1	1	1
5. I feel ill at ease to read out loud to myself.	1	1	1
6. Oral reading is hard for me.	1	1	1
7. I had trouble reading out loud.	1	1	1
8. Oral reading is demanding.	1	1	1
9. Oral reading improved my speaking ability.	1	1	1
10. I speak English better after practicing reading out loud to myself.	1	1	1
11. I can pronounce some English words better after I read out loud.	1	1	1
12. I can say some difficult English words after I read out loud.	1	1	1
13. I have become more competent in speaking English due to oral reading.	1	1	1
14. I feel more confident to speak English after I read out loud.	1	1	1
15. I speak English clearer after I read orally.	1	1	1
16. I am satisfied with how much I improved my speaking ability from oral reading.	1	1	1
17. Oral reading is worth doing.	1	1	1
18. Oral reading encourages me to speak English when I am afraid of making a mistake.	1	1	1
19. Oral reading broadened my English vocabulary.	1	1	1
20. Oral reading provided me more opportunity to practice speaking English.	1	1	1
21. I have learned new things from oral reading.	1	1	1
22. Oral reading pushed me to greater knowledge of English.	1	1	1
23. As a result of oral reading, I exposed to a variety of English sounds.	1	1	1
24. Oral reading brought me unfamiliar English words.	1	1	1

Appendix J

Speaking Test Scoring Rubric

Score Level	The response is….
5 Excellent	- Completely intelligible although accent may be there - Almost always clear, fluid and sustained.
4 Good	- May include minor difficulties with pronunciation or intonation, but generally intelligible. - Generally clear, fluid and sustained, pace may vary at times.
3 Adequate	- May lack intelligibility in places impeding communication. - Exhibits some difficulties with pronunciation, intonation or pacing. - Exhibits more fluidity.
2 Fair	- Often lacks intelligibility impeding communication. - Frequently exhibits problems with pronunciation, intonation or pacing. - May not be sustained at a consistent level throughout.
1 Limited	- Generally lacks intelligibility. - Generally unclear, choppy, fragmented or telegraphic. - Contains frequent pauses and hesitations. - Contains consistent pronunciation and intonation problems.

Appendix K

Rating and Score Summary Worksheet

Participant Code # _____ Rater # _____

Question 1 spontaneous speech: talking about area of study

- o 1 Limited
- o 2 Fair
- o 3 Adequate
- o 4 Good
- o 5 Excellent

Question 2 Describing pictures

- o 1 Limited
- o 2 Fair
- o 3 Adequate
- o 4 Good
- o 5 Excellent

Question 3 Reading out loud

- o 1 Limited
- o 2 Fair
- o 3 Adequate

- 4 Good
- 5 Excellent

Rater's note:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix L

Reading out loud Assignment

Dear Participant,

Reading aloud is shown to improve confidence and understanding. This activity has been designed to help you practice your reading and speaking skills. You will focus on the language used and different aspects of pronunciation.

Please choose a passage from written materials (your textbooks, your favorite magazines, newspaper, etc.), read the passage out loud and record your reading with the provided USB digital voice recorder for 2 minutes, save the file onto your computer and email it to me at sklomjit@email.uark.edu.

This study requires you to repeat the above assignment 5 days per week for 4 weeks. You can choose any 5 days of the week. In total you will read 20 passages, and total time for the whole study is 40 minutes. The following planner will help you keep updated.

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Day 1	Day 1	Day 1	Day 1
Day 2	Day 2	Day 2	Day 2
Day 3	Day 3	Day 3	Day 3
Day 4	Day 4	Day 4	Day 4
Day 5	Day 5	Day 5	Day 5