Promoting Oral Fluency of General Diploma Students through Oral Reading to Self and Narrow Reading

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Abstract

This study investigated the effect of oral reading to self (ORTS) and narrow reading (NR) on promoting oral fluency of general diploma students. The sample of the study consisted of seven higher studies students enrolled in general diploma, English specialization, at Port Said Faculty of Education. An oral fluency test was prepared and used by the researcher to investigate the improvement in the students' oral fluency. The results of the study revealed that ORTS and NR were effective in promoting oral fluency as they helped the students speak more smoothly and logically. Accordingly, they were recommended to be used to develop various English language skills in the Egyptian TEFL context.

Keywords: oral fluency, general diploma students, oral reading to self, narrow reading, TEFL, Egypt*.*

Introduction

Fluency refers to speaking at a good pace without pausing or hesitating (Handley and Wang, 2018, p.5). Oral fluency is important for the smooth delivery of speech and correct understanding of the message. According to Richards and Schmidt (2002, p.4), fluency includes producing spoken language with ease, communicating ideas effectively, and communicating without causing comprehension difficulties.

Many EFL learners face difficulty in speaking smoothly without pausing or hesitating as many researchers noted (Aydın, 2001; Cheng, 2005; Bygate, 2006; Wilson, 2006; and Saint-Leger, 2009). A problem in oral fluency is remarkably seen with EFL learners who do not practice sufficient speaking activities for a long time. An example of these learners is a certain population of general diploma English specialization students who did not practice the language for a long period of time.

General diploma students are post graduate students who were specialized in English language at their faculties and joined higher studies at faculty of education to become EFL teachers. Some of

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these students, the population in concern, graduated approximately five years ago from their faculties before their registration in the diploma. So, they had a noticeable problem regarding oral fluency. These students were expected not only to speak the target language fluently, but also teach English during practicum and discuss methodological topics, in the target language, competently with their supervisors.

For five years the researcher faced a problem with this certain population from general diploma English specialization students while teaching them the course "Teaching Methods". The students could not speak fluently and lacked confidence to speak in front of an audience. They complained about this problem and looked for a solution. It became a necessity for the researcher to find a way to develop these students' oral fluency.

Reviewing previous studies, many treatments were suggested for oral fluency problems. Examples of recent suggested treatments are: oral tasks with varying levels of complexity, task repetition, digital video recordings, computer-mediated communication adopting digital games, reflective listening, and daily 6 approach (BavaHarji, Gheitanchian, and Letchumanan, 2014; Gashan and Almohaisen , 2014; Göktürk, 2016; Grimshaw, Cardoso, and Waddington, 2016; Abd Al Galil, 2019; Cadena-Aguilar, Ortega-Cuellar, and Cadena-Aguilar, 2019) .

The problem in the present study, as studied by the researcher, has two major dimensions: physical and professional. The physical dimension is related to the unused speaking muscles which became less flexible or heavier in producing correct oral utterances and the professional dimension which is related to the lack of methodological background in terms of terminology and cognition. The researcher found that a treatment based on oral reading to self (ORTS) and narrow reading (NR) may be useful for the target students.

 ORTS is an instructional strategy that can help students improve a variety of skills including fluency (Reading partnership, 2019, p.1). ORTS involves reading aloud to self the assigned reading texts. When students practice oral reading, they train, strengthen, and flex their verbal articulators which may be useful in addressing the physical dimension of the students' oral fluency problem.

 NR refers to a reading strategy wherein readers focus on the work of a single author or a single topic over the course of a number of texts for an extended period of time (McQuillan, 2016; and Schmitt and Carter, 2000). By utilizing NR, the professional dimension problem may be addressed as general diploma students are going to focus on methodological topics and extend their terminology as well as cognitive background in this field. Accordingly, their oral fluency will be promoted when they speak about these topics.

On the grounds of these reasons, the present study sought to examine the effect of ORTS and NR on promoting the oral fluency of general diploma students, and offer insights into their implementation in the TEFL classes.

1.1   Context of the Problem

The researcher recorded a problem with a specific group of general diploma English specialization students who graduated several years ago and did not practice the language for a long period of time. They were EFL graduates from faculties of Arts and registered in general diploma to be able to practice TEFL. The problem they faced was related to the oral fluency of these students who are supposed to be fluent at the language as future EFL teachers and, specifically, fluent when they discuss methodological topics as competent teachers do.

The problem was noticed each time the researcher taught general diploma students the "Teaching Methods" course; the students lacked oral fluency and asked the researcher to suggest a treatment to help them.

Furthermore, the researcher conducted a pilot study, including tape recorded interview, to pinpoint the oral fluency skills the students lack and identify the oral fluency problems among them. It was applied at the faculty of education at the beginning of the first term in the academic year 2019/2020 on thirty nine general diploma students. The responses of these students to the posed questions, asking for example about teacher's roles and teaching skills, reflect the oral fluency skills they lack such as speaking without hesitation or repetition and organizing ideas about methodological topics logically.

Considering the problem in two dimensions: physical and professional, the researcher adopted a treatment based on ORTS and NR. Thus, the present study was an attempt to promote the oral fluency of general diploma students through ORTS and NR.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of the study thus can be identified as follows: general diploma English specialization students lack oral fluency. They have a problem to produce a smooth speech that reflects their poor cognitive background about teaching. They are not fluent speakers in terms of the physical and professional dimension. Hence, this study sought to find answers to the following questions:

    1- What are the suitable fluency skills for general diploma students?

    2-What are the main features of the treatment based on ORTS and NR strategies?

3-   How far is the treatment based on ORTS and NR strategies effective in promoting the students' oral fluency?

1.2   Hypothesis of the Study

The present study tested the following main hypothesis:

There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of general diploma students in the pre-test and the post-test of oral fluency in favor of the later.

1.3   Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the effect of ORTS and NR on promoting oral fluency of general diploma students.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study stemmed from the following considerations:

−   The suggested strategies and the instrument presented in the study might be beneficial to EFL researchers, teachers, and course designers.

−   The study might provide guidelines upon which further treatments may be designed to improve oral fluency of EFL learners.

−   The study might provide guidelines upon other EFL skills that may be developed through the application of ORTS and NR.

−   The study might provide EFL teachers with guidelines on how to adopt ORTS and NR for enhancing EFL learners' oral fluency.

1.5 Delimitations of the Study

This study was restricted to:

−   ORTS and NR strategies to improve oral fluency skills (in terms of smoothness of utterances and construction of meaning).

−   An oral fluency test designed by the researcher to investigate the effect of the suggested treatment on improving the students' oral fluency.

−   A sample of seven general diploma English specialization students who graduated several years ago before registration in the diploma.

−   A limited duration for implementing the treatment (six weeks).

1.6   Definition of Terms

Some terms were repeatedly used in the present study. The following are definitions of these terms.

Oral Fluency

Baker and Westrup (2003, P. 90) note that "fluency means speaking with ease and without thinking about possible errors."

Similarly, Handley and Wang (2018, p.5) state that "fluency refers to speaking at a good pace without pausing or hesitating."

In the present study, oral fluency refers to general diploma students' ability to speak smoothly and meaningfully when they face an audience while teaching or discuss methodological topics with colleagues and supervisors.

Oral Reading to Self (ORTS)

According to Opitz and Rasinski (2008), ORTS is a useful activity done for specific authentic purposes such as to develop comprehension and achieve fluency.

As for Reading partnership (2019, p.1), ORTS is an instructional strategy that can help students improve a variety of skills including fluency as it involves reading aloud to self the assigned reading texts.

In the present study, ORTS is defined as an instructional strategy, that involves reading aloud to self assigned reading texts, administered by general diploma English specialization students at Port Said Faculty of Education in order to promote their oral fluency.

Narrow Reading (NR)

NR refers to a reading strategy wherein readers focus on the work of a single author or a single topic over the course of a number of texts for an extended period of time (Schmitt and Carter, 2000; and McQuillan, 2016).

Similarly, Krashen (2004, p.17) notes that NR means reading several books by one author or about a single topic of interest which results in the acquisition of both structure and vocabulary due to many exposures in a comprehensible context.

In the present study, NR is defined as the practice of reading assigned texts about teaching and methodological topics of general diploma English specialization students at Port Said Faculty of Education in order to enhance their oral fluency.

1 Review of Literature

In the following section the researcher sheds more light on the concepts of oral fluency, oral reading to self, and narrow reading.

2.1 Oral Fluency

Fluency, as Lennon (2000, p.26) describes, is the rapid, smooth, accurate, lucid and efficient translation of thought or communicative intention into language. This mission becomes harder in case of speaking a language other than the mother tongue. Being fluent in the foreign language involves the presence of the features which give a speech the qualities of being natural and normal, including the native-like use of pausing, rhythm, intonation, stress, the rate of speaking, and use of interjections and interruptions (Richards and Schmidt, 2002, p.204).

Difficulties in the EFL Context Affecting Oral Fluency

Oral fluency, as Handley and Wang (2018, p.5) state, is speaking at a good pace without pausing or hesitating. Still, there are some difficulties that affect oral fluency. According to Ur (1996), there are four main difficulties of speaking a language other than the mother tongue: inhibition, nothing to say, low or uneven participation and mother-tongue use. Inhibition refers to the students being afraid of making mistakes and facing criticism. The second difficulty is related to motivation which is the motive behind speaking and participating in a speaking activity. The third difficulty is related to the context where the learners have few chances to speak when being in large classes. The last difficulty is the use of the mother-tongue as learners who share the same mother-tongue tend to use it because it is easier for communicating the message. Those difficulties are possibly found in most EFL classes.

In the same concern, Aydın (2001), Cheng (2005), Bygate (2006; 2009), Wilson (2006), and Saint-Leger (2009) identified the reasons behind the challenges posed when speaking a second or a foreign language as follows: First, it encompasses a complex cognitive processing task that is difficult for EFL/L2 learners to accomplish (Bygate, 2006, 2009; Saint-Leger, 2009). Second, there are some psychological factors that come into play during EFL/L2 learners' oral performance such as anxiety and self-confidence (Aydın, 2001; Cheng, 2005; Wilson, 2006). In addition to the cognitive demand and other psychological factors, another challenge with speaking is that in the context where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL), learners have a limited number of opportunities to use the language outside of the class, if not any at all. Thus, EFL learners have challenges regarding the cognitive processing task, the psychological factors, and the physical factor due to lack of practice.

Moreover, Segalowitz (2010) proposes that a distinction should be made between three notions of fluency: cognitive fluency, utterance fluency, and perceived fluency, that is closely related to cognitive fluency as it shows if the speaker's cognitive machinery is efficient.

Clearly, considering these difficulties, challenges, and notions has an effect on the process of improving EFL learners' oral fluency.

Oral Fluency Indicators

Automaticity has been described by many researchers as the major indicator for oral fluency. Schmidt (1992, p. 358) referred to fluency as "automatic procedural skill". Also, Gatbontonand Segalowitzn (2005, p.327) confirmed that oral fluency major character is "automatic, smooth, and rapid language use". This was supported by Saville-Troike (2012, p. 80) who stressed that fluency is achieved in production through "use of automated rule-based systems".

In speaking a second or a foreign language there are several indicators for oral fluency. According to Richards and Schmidt (2002, p. 204) fluency is used to refer to proficiency in communication, which includes: the ability to produce language with ease, the ability to speak

with a good but not necessarily perfect command of intonation, vocabulary, and grammar, the ability to communicate ideas effectively, and the ability to produce continuous speech without causing comprehension difficulties or a breakdown of communication.

The aforementioned indicators form a basic rationale for oral fluency measurements. According to Foster and Skehan (1996), Skehan and Foster (1999), and Elder and Iwashita (2005), fluency can be measured by counting the number of repetitions (of the same word or phrase), false starts (utterances abandoned before completion), reformulations (phrases or clauses repeated with some modification to syntax, morphology, or word order) and replacements (substitution of one lexical item for another).

In the same concern, the total number of pauses is one of the measures, which was used in several studies (Mehnert, 1998; Dembovskaya, 2009) as it showed significant differences in the students' fluency. Hence, to evaluate the students' oral fluency, the aforementioned indicators are considered.

Previous Research on Oral Fluency

In the study of BavaHarji, Gheitanchian, and Letchumanan (2014), the researchers evaluated the effects of tasks, with varying levels of complexity on EFL learners' oral production in a multimedia task-based language teaching environment. Fifty seven EFL adult learners carried out 12 tasks with different levels of complexity. The oral test tasks were assessed in terms of accuracy, fluency and complexity. This study found that scaffolding learners in performing the tasks results in improved second language oral production.

As for the study of Gashan and Almohaisen (2014), the researchers aimed to probe the effect of task repetition on foreign language output. Twenty-eight Saudi female students in the Preparatory Year at King Saud University were randomly selected to conduct an oral information gap task. The participants were asked to perform the task two times with two-week interval between the two performances. The oral performances were transcribed and analyzed to measure fluency and accuracy of language output. The findings revealed that task repetition resulted in significant differences in the subjects' oral discourse in terms of fluency and accuracy.

An action-based study was conducted by Göktürk (2016) to investigate whether digital video recordings would contribute to the enhancement of EFL learners' oral fluency skills. It also investigates the learners' perceptions of the use of digital video recordings in a speaking class. Ten Turkish EFL learners participated in this study. The speaking module of IELTS was modified as pre- and post-test. The results reveal improvement in overall speaking proficiency without significant improvement in oral fluency. Yet, the analysis of the qualitative data showed that the utilization of digital video recordings has several benefits.

Grimshaw, Cardoso, and Waddington (2016) adopted a new treatment in their study to explore the development of oral fluency in a Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) environment

that uses a 'shouting' digital game as a pedagogical tool. Twenty high-beginner/low-intermediate English as a Second Language (ESL) learners participated in the study, divided into two groups: an experimental group (n=11), and the control group (n=9) engaged in 'traditional' classroom activities. The study followed a mixed methods design with pre-, post-, and delayed post-tests to measure developments in oral fluency. The results suggest that mobile games such as Space team ESL have the potential to assist in fluency development.

As for the study of Abd Al Galil (2019), the researcher aimed to examine the effect of using reflective listening on developing EFL adults' oral fluency. A random group of course trainees who passed level five in the Cambridge placement test and who intended to study a conversation course (n= 30) were the participants in the study. The researcher designed a pre/post oral fluency test. Test scores were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The results showed that reflective listening was highly effective in developing EFL adults' oral fluency.

In another respect, in the study of Al-Ghazali and Alrefaee (2019) oral fluency was examined in the EFL context in relation to the phenomena of silent pauses. They investigated three aspects of silent pauses, the frequency, the placement and the length. The data were collected from 20 level four students enrolled in the Department English Language, Faculty of Education, Taiz University. The participants were recorded narrating the events of a short silent video immediately after watching it. Data were analyzed quantitatively utilizing the waveform spectrogram software called PRAAT. The findings showed overuse of silent pauses. Therefore, it was highly suggested to draw the learners' attention to the notion of pausing.

In an action research study conducted by Cadena-Aguilar, Ortega-Cuellar, and Cadena-Aguilar (2019), the aim was to examine the impact of the Daily six approach on the oral fluency of thirteen adolescents. Data were gathered through surveys, diagnostic and achievement tests, and recordings using VoiceThread™. Results revealed improvement in oral fluency in terms of length of runs, silent pauses, length of pauses, filled pauses, and pace.

The aforementioned studies are examples of recent research conducted to improve oral fluency of English language learners. They, as well as the present study, stress the continuous need for adopting new treatments to develop oral fluency among EFL/ESL learners. Still, in the present study the researcher suggests a different treatment based on ORTS and NR to promote oral fluency. The rationale supporting the suggested treatment is discussed in detail in the following lines.

2.2   Oral Reading to Self
The Relation between Oral Reading to Self and Oral Fluency
Oral reading can help EFL learners improve a variety of skills including fluency. Oral reading for those students who are adults and can read well silently for comprehension, as Klomjit (2013, p.26) mentions, may be a way to develop them into fluent speakers.

According to Nunan (2003); and Sanghi and Hattiangadi (2006), oral reading can develop speaking fluency for the following rationale: during speaking, ELLs produce the English speech sounds, use word and sentence stress, apply intonation patterns, select appropriate words and sentences, and organize their thoughts in a meaningful and logical sequence. Reading written materials helps them to rehearse what they want to say and get mentally and physically sharper. It 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.

In the same concern, Sanghi and Hattiangadi (2006) state that speech is made up of consonants and vowels. When students practice the language systemically, speaking skill will be improved. In fact, a good speech is the result of good habits. Speaking clearly takes more effort than muttering or mumbling through hardly opened lips. Thus, through oral reading to self EFL learners practice the language systematically and form good learning habits.

Originally, oral utterance involves a proper use of speech articulators (Yurtbasi, 2015, p.90). Speech articulators are lips, teeth, tongue, jaw and facial muscles. It is very important to feel and notice the tactile sensation from the mouth while speaking. If the speaker cannot feel this tactile sensation, then the oral utterances are not in proper rate. Reading out loud includes training in this process especially if applied systematically. Figure1.shows speech articulators and sounds:

Figure1. Speech Articulators and Sounds

(Source: Muller, 2015, p.19)

Practicing oral reading can be implemented systematically when a teacher or peer reads a passage aloud, modeling fluent reading. Then students reread the text quietly, on their own, sometimes several times. It is worth to mention that the text should be at the student's independent reading level. Next, the students read aloud and then reread the same passage. Usually, reading the same text four times is sufficient (Reading partnership, p.1).

Previous Research on Oral Reading to Self

Budzinski (1998) studied the effect of oral reading on the speaking skill of ESL advanced learners. The study tested the oral presentation of thirty five graduate students that were prepared

under two conditions; reading a text followed by planning and delivering a spoken presentation based on the text, planning and delivering a spoken presentation without reading a text. The quantitative analysis revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in the two oral presentations. However, the qualitative analysis demonstrated that the speakers who planned the presentation after reading used more special and organized terminology.

As for Klomjit (2013), the researcher studied the effect of oral reading-to-self on adult English Language Learners' oral fluency and their perception toward oral reading-to-self. This quasi 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). A speaking test, developed by the researcher, was administered as a pre and posttest. Results revealed that oral fluency of the participants was improved significantly after reading out loud-to-self. Moreover, the participants perceived oral reading-to-self as easy and effective.

2.3   Narrow Reading

Narrow reading refers to readers focusing on the work of a single author or a single topic over the course of a number of texts for an extended period of time (Schmitt and Carter, 2000; and McQuillan, 2016). According to Chang and Millett (2017, P.1) narrow reading is an under-researched area and very little research has been done on it.

The Relation between Narrow Reading and Oral Fluency

Narrow reading can achieve many educational benefits. Easing the lexical burden is one of the benefits achieved through narrow reading. Because in narrow reading the texts are related and have similar topics. Related texts contain fewer word types because key words recur across texts, which can ease the lexical burden (Schmitt and Carter, 2000; and Chang and Millett, 2017). Another benefit, according to Samuels (2006, p. 9), is improving reading fluency in terms of reading rate (speed) and comprehension.

Moreover, as noted by Schmitt and Carter (2000) and Rodgers and Webb (2011), improving vocabulary learning can be achieved through narrow reading. This is because narrowly reading a series of related texts recycles vocabulary more effectively than randomly reading unrelated texts. Furthermore, Kang (2015, p.165) stresses that narrow reading results in great receptive and productive knowledge of target vocabulary.

Furthermore, narrow reading can increase background knowledge, which can be general knowledge, cultural knowledge or knowledge of a certain topic or discipline. Thus, one efficient way to gain specific background knowledge or contextual knowledge is narrow reading. (Chang and Millett, 2017, P.3).

According to Redmer (2019, p.30), in narrow reading, the idea is noticing certain features of language that aids acquisition. That is to say if the students need to acquire specific vocabulary or

certain cognitive background, they can target such language features through narrow reading. This can be done in various settings and with specific steps as the following figure shows:

Figure2. Steps of Narrow Reading
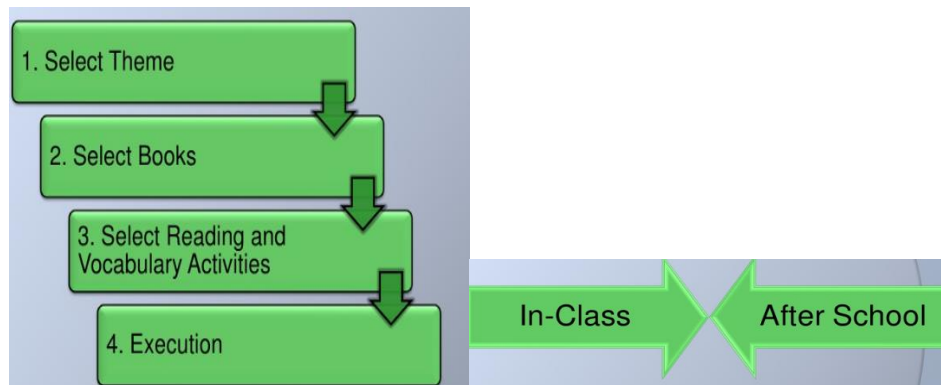
(Source: Warren and Ward, 2010, p.21)

Previous Research on Narrow Reading

Chang and Millett (2017) conducted a study in which they compared the reading speed, comprehension, and perceptions of two groups of EFL learners. Each group addressed one of two types of narrow reading: same genre and same title. The study was conducted over a three week period. Then, two approximately (1,000) word texts were used to measure whether the participants' reading speed and comprehension differed in reading the two types of texts. The results showed that all participants read significantly faster and comprehended more with the related text than the unrelated text. A questionnaire on participants' perceptions showed positive responses to narrow reading, especially the same title treatment.

As for Chang and Renandya (2019), they investigated the effect of narrow reading on EFL learners' vocabulary learning. Twelve graded readers were selected and categorized into four sets: same author, same genre, same title, and random readers. Each set contains three graded readers. Fifty-six students were divided into four subgroups and each group took turns reading each set of the graded readers. Twenty-five unknown target words were selected to be tested in each category. After students had read a set of three graded readers, their vocabulary knowledge was assessed on three dimensions: form-meaning recall, sources, and use. The data were analyzed using linear mixed-effects models (LMM), with the participants as the random effect, and text organization, vocabulary dimensions, time order, and reading text sequence as fixed effect variables. The results show that more vocabulary words were acquired from texts by the same author or random texts than from texts of the same title; the L2 learners recalled 61% of the source and 50% of the meaning, and 41% of the target words were used correctly. Moreover, learning rates increased as they read more.

Reviewing previous research on ORTS and NR shows that skills such as oral speaking/fluency, reading fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary learning could be improved through the administration of ORTS and NR. Similar to the aforementioned studies, the present study targets the skill of oral fluency. Still, the treatment that is suggested is based on both ORTS and NR to address the physical and mental dimensions of the oral fluency problem and this adaptation is new.

3   Methodology
3.1   Design of the Study

The study was based on educational action research in which educational practice is examined systematically and carefully using the techniques of research (Ferrance, 2000, p.7). The researcher conducted a type of educational action research called teacher/individual action research wherein the educational practice of the "Teaching Methods" course was explored and the participants' (seven general diploma students) problem (regarding oral fluency) was addressed.

3.2   Participants

The participants in this study included seven higher studies students enrolled in general diploma, English specialization, at Port Said Faculty of Education. All of them were graduated from faculties of Arts and sought to practice teaching. The study took place in the first term of the academic year 2019-2020 while the researcher was teaching the methodological course "Teaching Methods" to the participants who lacked oral fluency skills, such as the abilities to speak confidently without pauses or hesitation, due to a long period of non-practicing the language. The researcher sought to solve the problem of this sample through the suggested treatment.

3.3   Instruments of the Study
The Pre-posttest of Oral Fluency

The instrument of the study included an oral fluency test designed by the researcher to measure the improvement in the students' oral fluency due to the administration of ORTS and NR. An oral fluency rubric was used for assessing the test scores.

The pre-posttest of oral fluency was graded out of twenty four marks. It contained only one question. The students had an opportunity to choose only one topic, to talk about, out of four alternatives: teacher's roles, teaching skills, challenges of teaching, and teaching strategies. Questions were related to the topics presented to the students through the administration of ORTS and NR. All the students' responses were tape recorded to evaluate oral fluency skills in terms of smoothness of utterances (speaking confidently without pauses or repetition) and construction of meaning (conveying correct content and organized ideas using precise concepts).

The researcher confirmed test validity by submitting the test to a jury of five. This is to ensure that the test measures the skills it was purports to measure, state how far the test measures the target oral fluency skills, and make the necessary modifications.

Moreover, to assess the test reliability, it was administered to an equivalent sample of general diploma English specialization students (n=7). These students have the same characteristics of the study sample. They graduated several years ago from faculties of Arts before their registration in the diploma and they did not practice the language for a long period of time. Due to commitment issues they could be participants in the study. The oral fluency test was administered at the faculty of education at the beginning of the first term in the academic year 2019/2020. The result obtained by using Cronbach's formula was approximately .9 verifying the test reliability. (For more details see Appendix A).

An oral fluency rubric was prepared and used together with the pre-and-post oral fluency test for assessing the participants' oral fluency skills. The rubric was a four-point scale in which (4) means distinguished, (3) means proficient, (2) means basic, and (1) means unsatisfactory. The rubric evaluated the participants' responses to the oral fluency test in terms of smoothness of utterances (related to the physical dimension of fluency; including evaluation of pauses, hesitation, and repetition.) and construction of meaning (related to the professional dimension of fluency; including terminology, content, and organization.) Before using the rubric, it was presented to a panel of jury of specialists in English curriculum and instruction (N.5) and their comments were taken into consideration. Moreover, a specialist colleague participated in the evaluation of the students' responses to the test. (For more details see Appendix B).

3.4 The Treatment

The treatment in the present study is based on two strategies: oral reading to self (ORTS) and Narrow reading (NR). The researcher selected some reading topics that are suitable and beneficial for the particular participants in the study. The topics that are related to the "Teaching Methods" course such as: the roles teachers are expected to perform in the classroom, the challenges they may encounter with in the teaching career, and the teaching methods/strategies they can adopt while EFL teaching. Moreover, the researcher made sure that the selected topics include a variety of educational concepts that are necessary to be acquired by the participants, although unfamiliar to them yet. The aforementioned steps, determining topics, readability level, and vocabulary load represented the planning phase of the treatment.

 The treatment, which is based on two reading strategies, lasted for six weeks in the first term of the academic year 2019-2020. With the purpose of promoting their oral fluency physically as well as professionally, the students were asked to practice oral reading to self and narrow reading with the selected topics each week. As for the evaluation system, the improvement in oral fluency was measured by the pre-posttest of oral fluency applied before and after the treatment. The following table summarizes the steps/ procedures followed during the treatment administration:

Table1. The Steps of the ORTS and NR Based Treatment

Planning	– Determining the following points: 1-Selected topics 2-Readability level 3-Vocabulary load		
Implementation	**Week N**	**Steps**	**Rationale**
	One **Two** **Three** **Four** **Five** **Six**	-Applying the pre-test. 1-Introduction of topics (such as teaching skills and strategies) and steps. 2-Focusing on selected topics (practicing NR). 3-Reading aloud assigned topics (practicing ORTS)**.** **Students practiced NR and ORTS in classroom setting, meeting sessions, and at home for further training.	**NR** confirms that students have cognitive background about the topic. Hence, they are expected to talk about it meaningfully. **ORTS** confirms that students trained their muscles and speech articulators in the process of reading aloud the assigned texts. Hence, they are expected to speak smoothly.
Evaluation	Applying the oral fluency test which contains questions related to the topics introduced through treatment administration.		

4   Results and Discussion

4.1   Results of the Pre-post Oral Fluency Test

In this section, results will be presented along with a discussion based on the statistical analysis of the collected data as well as the research questions.

In response to the first research question: "What are the suitable fluency skills for general diploma students?", review of literature related to oral fluency revealed that fluency is used to refer to proficiency in communication including the ability to produce language with ease and the ability to communicate ideas effectively. Reviewing literature formed a basic rationale for the oral fluency skills checklist that was prepared and modified according to its suitability to the present study.

In response to the second research question: "What are the main features of the treatment based on ORTS and NR strategies?", review of literature related to ORTS and NR strategies showed implementation steps/procedures and other considerations that helped the researcher identify the features of the treatment (purpose, phases, teaching steps, duration, and evaluation system).
In response to the third research question: "How far is the treatment based on ORTS and NR strategies effective in promoting the students' oral fluency?", the researcher followed these procedures: applied the pre-test, administered the treatment, applied the post test, and analyzed the results.

The researcher used a non-parametric test, Wilcoxon test, to report significant differences between pre/post results which were confirmed at 0.05 level. Moreover, the researcher used descriptive statistics including comparing means in order to compare the pre-treatment and post-treatment evaluation results and determine the extent of change achieved by administering the treatment. Table (2) shows means of the participants in the oral fluency pre-and-posttest.

Table2. Results of Comparing the Means of participants (n=7) in the Pre-treatment and the Post-treatment Evaluation.

participant / test	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean
Pre-test	10	10	15	14	7	14	8	**Pre-test Mean=11.14**
Post-test	16	14	21	19	16	20	19	**Post-test Mean=17.86**

As indicated in table (2) above, the results of comparing the means in the pre-posttest confirmed the significant influence of the suggested treatment on improving the students' oral fluency skills. Apparently, there is a significant increase in the total score participants achieved regarding the two tests (from 11.14 to 17.86). This indicates that participants gained oral fluency skills in terms of smoothness of utterances and construction of meaning due to the administration of the ORTS and NR based treatment.

Moreover, as table (3) shows, comparing the means in the pre-posttest regarding the two categories, smoothness of utterances and construction of meaning, it was found that there was a progress in the means of the participants in category one (from 5.43 to 8.14) and a progress in the means of the participants in category two from (5.71 to 9.71) which implies that the most significant improvement was related to meaning construction.

Table3. Results of Comparing the Means in the Pre-Posttest Regarding Categories.

	Category One: Smoothness of Utterances		Category Two: Construction of Meaning	
	Pre-test	**Post test**	**Pre-test**	**Post test**
Means	**5.43**	**8.14**	**5.71**	**9.71**

Thus, results showed that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of general diploma students in the pre-test and the post-test of oral fluency in favor of the later verifying the study hypothesis.

4.2   Discussion

The oral fluency test results show that there is an improvement in the students' oral fluency. In the pre-test, students had difficulty producing meaningful smooth oral response to the posed questions. While in the post-test, they were fluent in terms of producing smooth utterances and presenting meaningful and logical ideas.

The target population of general diploma students could not speak fluently and lacked confidence to speak in front of an audience. Moreover, they lacked cognitive background about educational concepts. Still, they were expected not only to speak the target language fluently, but also teach English during practicum and discuss methodological topics, in the target language, competently with their supervisors.

The steps followed during the administration of the ORTS and NR based treatment promoted the students' oral fluency physically and professionally. Through ORTS the students trained their speech articulators and muscles, and through NR the student gained cognitive background about topics and constructed meaning. It was the professional category in which the students achieved the most significant improvement according to test results, implying the increase in their cognitive background about educational and methodological topics with the repeated suggested reading practice during treatment administration. NR provided the students with ample opportunities to read and comprehend correct models of EFL sentence structures, which had positive effects on their oral accuracy.

In the present study, the relation between language skills is confirmed. It was reading that improved the target skill or the study dependent variable. The two types of reading were beneficial for the concern of the study. Thus, reading was a means to an end not the end itself.

The result of the study coincides with the findings of BavaHarji, Gheitanchian, and Letchumanan (2014), Gashan and Almohaisen (2014), Göktürk (2016), Grimshaw, Cardoso, and Waddington (2016), Abd Al Galil (2019), Cadena-Aguilar, and Ortega-Cuellar, and Cadena-Aguilar (2019). These studies suggested new treatments for oral fluency problems, based on using modern strategies/techniques or adopting another language skill, and these treatments proved to be effective.

5   Conclusions, Recommendations, and Suggestions for Further Research
5.1   Conclusions

The treatment in the present study was based on ORTS and NR strategies. The students practiced the two reading strategies in classroom setting, meeting sessions, and at home for further training for a period of six weeks. NR helped the students form cognitive background about the methodological topic which enriched their ability to talk meaningfully. ORTS allow the students to train their muscles and speech articulators in the process of reading aloud the assigned texts which fostered their ability to speak smoothly. The results of the study indicated that the

treatment was effective in developing the students' oral fluency. Although the result of the study was limited by the sample size and the instrument used, it could provide the basis for many other treatments based on ORTS and NR to develop different skills in the EFL context.

5.2 Recommendations

In the light of the study findings, the researcher recommends the following:

−　　　ORTS and NR should be recommended as teaching techniques in the "Teaching Methods Course".

−　　　Faculties of Education staff members who hold meetings with general diploma students , the future EFL teachers, should do the following: accept only highly motivated to be teachers candidates, investigate the level of oral fluency for English specialization students, and confirm that teaching is the profession of challenges and creativity, hence, a respectable effort is expected to be made.

−　　　The students' needs should be the basis for designing methodology courses.

−　　　Faculty of Education instructors who teach general diploma students should consider the individual differences among students in terms of their ages, levels, backgrounds, and needs. Thus, being ready to give extra practice and guidance to those who need.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the study result, the researcher suggests the following:

−　　　More studies testing the effectiveness of ORTS and NR in developing speaking and other language skills are needed to be implemented on a larger scale of students.

−　　　More research that investigates students' needs is required so as to consider these needs in designing methodology courses.

−　　　Action research that aims at improving productive language skills and increasing professionalism is required for the preparation of EFL teachers.

−　　　Performing action research could be very beneficial to solve classroom problems, especially with the application of new pioneering treatments.

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تحسين الطلاقة الشفوية لطلاب الدبلومة العامة من خلال القراءة الشفوية للذات والقراءة الضيقة

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المستخلص

تحققت الدراسة الحالية من أثر القراءة الشفوية للذات والقراءة الضيقة على تحسين الطلاقة الشفوية لدى طلاب الدبلومة العامة. فتكونت عينة الدراسة من سبعة من طلاب الدراسات العليا المقيدين بالدبلوم العام تخصص لغة إنجليزية بكلية التربية جامعة بورسعيد. و تضمنت أداة الدراسة اختبار الطلاقة الشفوية من تصميم الباحثة والذى تم تطبيقه قبليا وبعديا للتحقق من تحسن الطلاقة الشفوية لدى الطلاب عينة البحث بعد تطبيق القراءة الشفوية للذات والقراءة الضيقة و استمرت التجربة لمدة ستة أسابيع. استخدمت الدراسة اختبار ويلكوكسن اللابارامتري بجانب الاحصاء الوصفى بمقارنة المتوسطات فى التطبيقين القبلى والبعدى لتحديد فعالية الاستراتيجيات المقترحة فى تحسين الطلاقة الشفوية لدى الطلاب عينة البحث . كشفت نتائج الدراسة أن القراءة الشفوية للذات والقراءة الضيقة لهما فعالية في تحسين الطلاقة الشفوية. وبناء على ذلك ، أوصت الدراسة باستخدامهما لتطوير مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية في سياق تدريسها كلغة أجنبية بجمهورية مصر العربية.

الكلمات المفتاحية : الطلاقة الشفوية ، طلاب الدبلومة العامة ، القراءة الشفوية للذات ، القراءة الضيقة ، تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ، مصر.