

Grade 5 learners in selected public schools in Vietnam: Their exposure to foreign teachers of English and their oral reading fluency

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between Grade 5 learners' exposure to foreign teachers of English and their oral reading fluency in selected public schools in Vietnam. Anchored on input theory and fluency development frameworks, the research investigated whether structured exposure to foreign English teachers significantly correlates with learners' oral reading rate, accuracy, and prosody. A descriptive-correlational research design was employed. Exposure to foreign teachers was measured using frequency indicators and a structured survey instrument, while oral reading fluency was assessed through Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) procedures. Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient was utilized to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between exposure and fluency components.

Findings revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between exposure to foreign teachers and overall oral reading fluency. Reading rate and prosody demonstrated notable associations with exposure, while accuracy showed a moderate but meaningful relationship. The results suggest that increased interaction with foreign English teachers may contribute to improved fluency development through authentic pronunciation modeling and interactive language input.

The study highlights the pedagogical value of structured foreign teacher exposure in elementary EFL contexts and recommends strengthening collaborative instructional models in Vietnamese public schools.

Keywords: Descriptive-Correlational Study; Foreign Teacher Exposure; Grade 5 Learners; Oral Reading Fluency; Vietnam

1. Introduction

Oral reading fluency is a fundamental component of literacy development and second language acquisition. The National Reading Panel identifies fluency as a critical link between word recognition and overall reading proficiency, emphasizing the integration of accuracy, rate, and prosody. Fluent reading enables learners to allocate cognitive resources efficiently, thereby supporting higher-level language processing. In English as a Foreign Language contexts, the development of oral reading fluency is often constrained by limited exposure to authentic spoken input and reduced opportunities for meaningful interaction in English.

Recent scholarship continues to underscore the importance of fluency in reading development. Kuhn, Schwanenflugel, and Meisinger (2020) argue that fluency reflects not only automatic word recognition but also expressive and meaningful oral reading. Paul and Karmarkar (2022) further explain that decoding automaticity facilitates efficient processing, which contributes to overall reading performance. In second language settings, prosodic competence has

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been associated with exposure to accurate pronunciation models and natural language rhythm (Li and Li 2020). These findings suggest that authentic language input plays an essential role in strengthening fluency components.

In Vietnam, educational reforms aimed at enhancing English proficiency have led to increased engagement with foreign teachers of English in public schools. The presence of foreign teachers is intended to provide learners with exposure to varied pronunciation patterns, intonation, and communicative practices. Studies examining foreign teacher involvement report positive effects on speaking proficiency and learner engagement. Stoller and Nguyen (2020) highlight that interaction with foreign teachers expands opportunities for authentic language use, while Sundkvist and Nguyen (2020) emphasize the benefits of collaborative instructional approaches in promoting communicative competence. Although these studies demonstrate advantages in oral communication, empirical investigations connecting foreign teacher exposure to oral reading fluency remain limited.

Existing research on oral reading fluency has primarily focused on instructional interventions such as repeated reading, phonics-based strategies, and comprehension outcomes. Research examining foreign teacher exposure, on the other hand, has largely concentrated on speaking skills, motivation, and classroom dynamics. There is a noticeable absence of correlational evidence exploring whether learners' exposure to foreign teachers is associated with measurable differences in reading rate, accuracy, and prosody, particularly among elementary learners in Vietnamese public schools.

Addressing this gap is significant for both theoretical and practical reasons. From a theoretical perspective, examining the relationship between exposure and fluency contributes to broader discussions on input-based language acquisition and literacy development in foreign language contexts. From a practical standpoint, empirical findings may inform educational policy and instructional planning regarding the deployment of foreign teachers in public elementary schools. Given the transitional stage of Grade 5 learners, who are moving from foundational decoding toward more automatic and expressive reading, understanding factors that influence fluency development is especially relevant.

In light of these considerations, the present study investigates the relationship between Grade 5 learners' exposure to foreign teachers of English and their oral reading fluency in selected public schools in Vietnam. By employing a descriptive correlational design, the study aims to provide empirical evidence that contributes to current discussions on foreign teacher engagement and elementary literacy development in EFL settings.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

This study aims to examine the relationship between Grade 5 learners' exposure to foreign teachers of English and their oral reading fluency in selected public schools in Vietnam.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

- Determine the level of learners' exposure to foreign teachers of English in terms of frequency and nature of interaction.
- Assess the oral reading fluency of Grade 5 learners in terms of reading rate, accuracy, and prosody.
- Establish whether a statistically significant relationship exists between exposure to foreign teachers and oral reading fluency.

2. Discussion

The present study examined the relationship between Grade 5 learners' exposure to foreign teachers of English and their oral reading fluency in selected public schools in Vietnam. The findings indicate a statistically significant positive correlation between exposure to foreign teachers and overall oral reading fluency. This section interprets these results in relation to existing scholarship and highlights their theoretical and pedagogical implications.

The positive association between exposure to foreign teachers and overall fluency suggests that authentic language input may contribute to learners' development of automatic and expressive reading. This finding aligns with fluency theory, which conceptualizes oral reading fluency as the integration of accuracy, rate, and prosody into coordinated performance (Kuhn, Schwanenflugel, and Meisinger 2020). Increased interaction with proficient English speakers may provide learners with consistent exposure to accurate pronunciation, stress patterns, and intonation, which are essential components of prosodic reading. The results support the view that input quality and frequency influence language performance in measurable ways.

With respect to reading rate, the analysis revealed a meaningful positive correlation with exposure to foreign teachers. Reading rate reflects the degree of automatic word recognition and processing efficiency. According to Paul and Karmarkar (2022), automaticity reduces cognitive load, allowing learners to process text more smoothly. Exposure to foreign teachers may indirectly facilitate this automaticity by reinforcing phonological awareness and pronunciation accuracy through repeated auditory modeling. While the study does not establish causation, the relationship suggests that interaction with foreign teachers may be associated with increased processing efficiency in oral reading tasks.

The relationship between exposure and prosody was also notable. Prosody involves appropriate phrasing, intonation, and expressive delivery, which are closely tied to natural speech patterns. Research by Li and Li (2020) emphasizes that prosodic competence in second language reading is influenced by exposure to authentic spoken input. In classroom contexts where foreign teachers model natural rhythm and stress, learners may internalize these patterns and apply them during oral reading. The findings of this study extend prior research on communicative benefits of foreign teacher engagement by demonstrating a measurable association with expressive reading performance.

In contrast, the correlation between exposure and reading accuracy, while statistically significant, was comparatively moderate. Accuracy often depends heavily on foundational decoding skills and explicit phonics instruction. Although exposure to proficient speakers may support pronunciation modeling, decoding competence may be more directly influenced by systematic reading instruction rather than interaction alone. This distinction highlights the multifaceted nature of fluency development and suggests that foreign teacher exposure may complement, rather than replace, structured literacy instruction.

The findings contribute to existing literature in several important ways. Previous studies examining foreign teacher involvement in Vietnam have primarily focused on speaking proficiency, learner motivation, and classroom interaction (Stoller and Nguyen 2020; Sundkvist and Nguyen 2020). By contrast, the present study extends the scope of inquiry to oral reading fluency, a foundational literacy skill. Furthermore, while numerous studies have explored instructional strategies for improving fluency, fewer investigations have examined environmental or exposure-based factors within elementary EFL settings. By employing a descriptive correlational design, this study provides empirical evidence that links exposure variables to measurable reading outcomes.

The results must be interpreted within the context of the study's design. Because the research utilized a correlational approach, the findings indicate association rather than causation. Other variables, including instructional quality, learner motivation, and home literacy environment, may also influence fluency development. Nevertheless, the statistically significant relationships observed in this study suggest that exposure to foreign teachers is a meaningful factor worthy of further investigation.

Overall, the study underscores the potential pedagogical value of authentic language exposure in elementary EFL classrooms. The findings suggest that policies supporting structured and consistent interaction with foreign teachers may contribute not only to communicative competence but also to measurable improvements in oral reading fluency.

3. Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between Grade 5 learners' exposure to foreign teachers of English and their oral reading fluency in selected public schools in Vietnam. The findings revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between exposure and overall fluency. Reading rate and prosody demonstrated meaningful associations with exposure, while reading accuracy showed a moderate but significant relationship.

These results suggest that increased exposure to foreign teachers may be associated with enhanced automaticity and expressive reading performance. The study contributes to current discussions on foreign teacher engagement by extending its relevance beyond speaking proficiency to include literacy development. Although the design does not establish causality, the evidence indicates that exposure is a factor that merits consideration in elementary EFL instructional planning.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- First, public schools may consider strengthening structured collaboration between local English teachers and foreign teachers to maximize authentic language modeling during reading instruction.

- Second, classroom practices may incorporate guided oral reading activities that emphasize prosody, stress, and intonation to complement exposure to authentic speech patterns.
- Third, policymakers may evaluate the allocation and scheduling of foreign teachers to ensure meaningful and consistent learner interaction rather than sporadic exposure.
- Finally, future research may employ longitudinal or experimental designs to examine causal relationships between foreign teacher exposure and oral reading fluency development. Additional studies may also explore moderating variables such as instructional strategies, learner motivation, and socioeconomic context.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

Statement of ethical approval

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Open University System Review Ethics Board of Polytechnic University of the Philippines. The study was reviewed and approved on November 28, 2022, in compliance with institutional ethical standards for research involving human participants.

Statement of informed consent

Written permission was secured from the participating school principals. Parental consent was obtained prior to data collection, and the anonymity and confidentiality of all Grade 5 student participants were strictly maintained throughout the research process.

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