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重複朗讀練習對於臺灣國中生文法學習之影響研究

Effects of Repeated Reading-aloud Practice on Taiwanese Junior High Students'  
Learning of Grammatical Rules

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## 中文摘要

過去數十年來，臺灣英語教學課堂上文法教學始終扮演核心的角色。然而，當檢視學生在相關成就測驗上的表現時，卻發現使用傳統、明示教學的文法翻譯法似乎對提升文法的效果有限；因此近年來，漸漸有使用所謂的「隱性教學法」（即聚焦於其他能力面向的間接文法教學法）來加強學習者文法習得的趨勢。本研究旨在檢視重複朗讀練習間接提升文法學習之效果，同時並探究此方法對於不同英語學習成就者之成效。研究參與者共包含 52 位北台灣的國中學生，其中 26 人被隨機分派為實驗組接受朗讀練習，另外 26 人則是接受傳統紙筆練習的對照組。研究數據包含文法觀念的前測、後測以及課文朗讀流暢度的隨堂測驗，並以 T 檢定進行分析。研究結果顯示：比起傳統紙筆練習，重複朗讀練習更能幫助參與者，尤其是低學習成就學生，有效習得文法規則；可能原因為參與者對於句法分析與音韻的熟識，以及課堂投入程度的提升。冀望本研究能激發並鼓勵本地英語教師嘗試以其他教學法來增進學生文法能力。

**關鍵詞：**文法學習、隱性教學、朗讀、臺灣

## ABSTRACT

Grammar instruction has served as the core in English teaching in Taiwanese classrooms for the past decades. However, with examination of students' performance on relevant achievement tests, the traditional explicit approach, Grammar- Translation Method, appeared to have limited contribution to their grammar learning. Thus, in recent years, there has been a growing trend to utilize implicit instruction, which refers to indirect grammar teaching approaches focusing on other aspects of competence, to enhance learners' grammar acquisition. The purpose of the present study was to examine the effects of repeated read-aloud practice on enhancing Taiwanese students' learning of grammatical rules indirectly and its efficacy on learners of different achievement levels. The participants included 52 junior high school learners in northern Taiwan, with 26 of them randomly chosen as the experimental group receiving read-aloud practice while the other 26 as the control group receiving traditional written practice. The research data contained a pre-test and a post-test on grammar and oral reading fluency quizzes on reading textbook lessons, which were then analyzed statistically through T-tests. The findings revealed that, compared to traditional written practice, repeated read-aloud practice was more effective in promoting the participants' grammar rules acquisition, especially for lower-achieving students. The possible factors might have been their acquaintance of syntactic parsing and prosody and the promotion of their engagement in class. Hence, hopefully, the study may inspire and encourage local English teachers to attempt to apply other instructional approaches to enhance learners' grammar competence.

*Keywords:* grammar learning; implicit instruction; reading aloud; Taiwan

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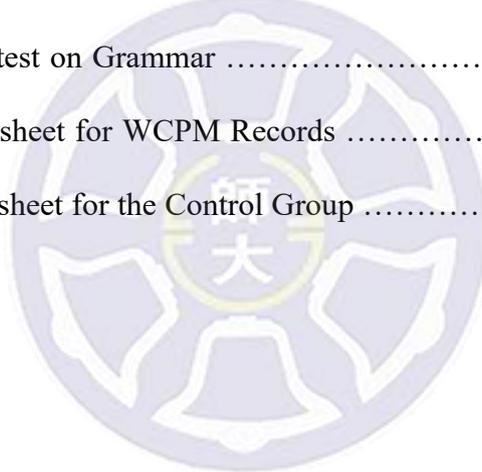
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## INTRODUCTION

With the growing recognition of English as a lingua franca, many countries have incorporated English into the curriculum since elementary school, and Taiwan is no exception. Among the various aspects of English, grammar has played a vital role in learning of the language. Azar (2007) maintained that the role of grammar is to “help students discover the nature of language, i.e., that language consists of predictable patterns that make what we say, read, hear, and write intelligibly” (p.3). Thus, grammar instruction, for decades, has served as the core in the field of English teaching in Taiwan, with many educators still applying Grammar- Translation Method (GTM), in which they focus on explaining vocabulary and translating reading passages (Lin, 2008; Yeh, 2004). Widely utilized in Taiwanese classrooms, this predominant approach, however, did not appear to improve students’ language learning considerably. Many students still have difficulties in answering grammar questions on written tests in sectional exams or making grammatically correct sentences based on the researcher and her colleagues’ observation in recent years. Also, according to the report of Comprehensive Assessment Program (CAP) for Junior High School Students in 2017, still about thirty percent of the students were ranked level C on the English exam, leaving much to be desired. What upsets the parents and teachers more is that, of the five academic subjects in CAP, students performed the worst on English reading comprehension section. The results of past studies have confirmed the crux of struggling readers usually lies in their poor processing of grammatical structure (Alderson, 1993; Bernhardt, 2000; Mokhtari & Thompson, 2006). This compelled English teachers in Taiwan to reflect on the traditional grammar instruction and call for efforts to explore other instructional approaches to enhance students’ learning of grammar.

Viewing the learning process of native speakers, almost all the grammatical rules seem acquired naturally by children at the age of five or six without artificial language instruction due to their great exposure to the inputs in daily life (Fernald, Hartup, & Weinberg, 2002; Pinker, 1995; Slobin, 1992). While grammatical structures in the first language can be internalized easily and unconsciously by native speakers, in L2-learning context like Taiwan, constructing grammatical system remains a challenging task for language learners as well as teachers. To complement the lack of sufficient inputs for L2 learners, a method called Simultaneously Read-Aloud and Write-out Practice (SRAWOP), in which they required students to read aloud a passage and write down the sentences at the same time, was implemented in many L2 classrooms in Japan (Kunihiro, 1970; Mizusawa, Shibata, & Shinozuka, 2017). It is argued that as learners read aloud, their own voices could serve as an auditory input, which may enhance automatic processing in language learning. In fact, reading aloud has been verified to have positive effects on one's reading fluency (Kadota, 1982). Prosody, one of the critical elements of fluency, can also be enhanced as learners' oral reading improves. Reading with prosody may contribute to the promotion of learners' syntactic parsing, which is the key to the micro processing of a reading text, thus lead to better reading comprehension ultimately (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). Therefore, with the link between reading aloud and prosody and parsing, there exists a possibility that learners' grammar acquisition may be better enhanced as a by-product of improved oral fluency.

In addition to the abovementioned theories and findings of the empirical studies, the researcher had a personal experience that also speaks to the power of reading aloud as a method of learning grammatical structures of a second language. In the spring of 2017, the junior high school where the researcher then taught introduced a

groundbreaking practice, i.e., incorporating English oral reading into the sectional exam. Students were made to read aloud passages from the textbook in one minute, and the words correct per minute (WCPM) were calculated, accounting for 10% of their scores on English exam. To achieve the best performance, most students made efforts to practice reading the materials aloud repeatedly in two weeks prior to the exam. As predicted, the learners' oral reading fluency improved conspicuously. Nevertheless, to the amazement of the researcher and her colleagues, the students' scores of the translation section on the exam, which were closely related to their grasp of grammatical rules, were found to increase to a certain extent as well. If students' improvement in their translation scores really had to do with the practice of read-aloud, then this technique may hold a key to their command of English grammar.

Most of the existing studies have focused on the relationship between read-aloud implementation and reading fluency or comprehension, yet, no studies were found to have investigated the impact of reading aloud on grammar learning. To bridge that gap, the present study aimed to examine whether repeated read-aloud practice can promote students' learning of grammatical rules.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Grammar Instruction**

As grammar still holds the key to successful language learning, many practitioners and educators have strived to design grammar instructional methods, or apply practical methods originally derived for promoting other aspects of language competence, to effectively enhance learners' grammatical knowledge. These teaching strategies can be essentially categorized into two basic approaches: explicit and implicit instruction. An explicit approach involves the deliberate elaboration on grammatical rules deductively or inductively to enhance grammar learning, while an

implicit approach emphasizes learners' natural grammar acquisition through exposure to syntactic structures in a meaningful context (Scott, 1990).

### *Explicit Instruction*

Although the Direct Method, which emphasizes natural acquisition of the target language through oral activities, has spun a debate over whether grammar should be instructed explicitly, explicit grammar instruction has still been dominant and existed in different pedagogical approaches, such as Grammar- Translation Method and Form-Focused Instruction, for the past decades (Macaro & Masterman, 2006). With the essence of drawing learners' attention to the grammatical forms, explicit instruction employs two different methods, deductive and inductive approaches, depending on their sequence of presenting the rules. The former emphasizes the presentation of rules before using the forms while the latter addresses the application of sentence patterns before elaborating on rules.

Both deductive and inductive methods are utilized in different instructional approaches on grammar, yet, which approach benefits learners more is at best inconclusive. Derived from the conventional approach to teach Greek and Latin, Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) addresses students' learning and analysis of grammatical rules of a foreign language and was once a dominant teaching exemplar until 1950s (Van Patten, 1996). GTM posits that teachers should present syntactic rules and elaborate on the usage deductively for students to practice and translate the reading texts accurately with the rules. To investigate the effects of this method on learners' grammar acquisition, Aqel (2013) examined twenty 10-grade female students in Jordan and found that the participants made a prominent progress in the grammar achievement post-test, with positive attitudes toward the method and greater self-confidence revealed as well. Erlam's (2003) study also provides evidence in

support of the effectiveness of deductive language instruction in a teacher-centered class of 69 school-age learners. The effectiveness of deductive instruction was proved to outweigh that of inductive instruction on measures of both comprehension and production.

In contrast to Aqel's study, Haight, Herron, & Cole (2007) empirically verified the positive effect of inductive approach on grammar learning. They investigated 47 French college students by teaching eight syntactic rules, four with deductive instruction where the forms were presented before learners applied them, and four with a guided inductive approach in which teachers guided them to uncover rules through leading questions. The researchers then examined learners' test performance and maintained that the effectiveness of guided induction overshadowed that of deductive approach, especially in terms of long-term learning. It is explained that the guided inductive approach involves a variety of forms and strategies, which might shift learners' attention away from grammar to communication, and thus, their learning can be reinforced in the process of co-constructing the meaning and form.

As shown by the above studies, deductive and inductive approaches both have their unique contributions to grammar instruction. Although employing different strategies, these various instructional approaches do have something in common, and that is, they both still deal with grammar learning explicitly.

### *Implicit Instruction*

In recent years, there seems to be studies suggesting that grammatical concepts could be indirectly picked up via methods that do not have a direct bearing on grammar. Thus, more educators have attempted to apply instructional approaches initially designed for facilitating other language abilities as an implicit way to enhance learners' acquisition of grammatical rules. Chiu (2004), for example, examined 58

eighth graders' grammar learning and their attitude changes in a communicative classroom in southern Taiwan. After 12-week treatment, the results revealed that the communicative language teaching (CLT) was effective in improving the participants' grammar acquisition as well as their attitudes toward learning English grammar. With the same aim, Lee & Wang (2002) investigated 65 adult Taiwanese EFL learners with two instructional methods, form-focused and communication-focused instruction. However, contrast to Chiu's findings, the grammar group yielded better performance on the grammar recognition post-test than the communicative group. Despite inconclusive results of communicative learning approach on grammar acquisition found in the empirical studies, communicative language teaching as an instructional alternative to indirectly enhancing learners' grammar continues to gain popularity.

Reading-aloud, originally utilized as an oral reading practice, may serve as another indirect approach to develop learners' grammar competence since it has recently been confirmed to contribute to learners' reading comprehension in various studies (Koskinen, & Blum, 1986; Reutzel, Hollingsworth, & Eldredge, 1994). Kadota (1982) once evaluated the efficacy of implementing read-aloud and maintained that it could foster not only speech coding but internalization of reading skills, which include word and grammatical knowledge. The strong relation between reading comprehension and grammatical knowledge (Schoonen, Hulstijn & Bossers, 1998; Shiotsu & Weir, 2007) speaks of the potential for repeated reading aloud to serve as another promising alternative to enhance one's grammar leaning indirectly.

The reasons why reading aloud can reinforce one's grammar acquisition may lie in its connection with parsing and prosody, both of which in turn are tied to syntactic clues. Grammar system consists of syntactic rules and constituent structures, which involves breaking the sentence into smaller parts so that clues can be delivered more

clearly. Alderson (2000) suggested that “the ability to parse sentences into their correct syntactic structure appears to be an important element in understanding text” (p. 37). Thus, training readers to segment sentences into meaningful phrases theoretically should enhance their grammatical knowledge, which leads to better comprehension ultimately (Arcand et al., 2014; Cromer, 1970). Apart from the development of syntactic parsing, the repetition of reading texts aloud facilitates the building of prosody as oral reading fluency improves. Providing a scaffold that allows an auditory sequence to be held in working memory (Frazier, Carlson, & Clifton, 2006; Swets, Desmet, Hambrick, & Ferreira, 2007), prosody should help not only with syntactic parsing (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003) but also with increasing capacity for further processing of complex sentence structures (Koriat, Kreiner, & Greenberg, 2002). It could thus be inferred that parsing skills and prosodic reading, promoted by repeated reading aloud, may contribute to grammar learning to a certain extent.

### **Research Questions**

As demonstrated above, through referencing from theories and empirical studies, repeated reading aloud stands a chance to be an alternative method of cultivating one’s grammatical competence in an implicit way. The connection between repeated read-aloud practice and grammar acquisition is mediated through reading fluency, which can then be linked to parsing and prosody skills involved in read-aloud. To further explore the potential of repeated read-aloud as an instructional approach of fortressing learners’ grammatical competence, the present study aims to delve into the effects of repeated read-aloud practice on promoting the acquisition of grammatical rules. Following are the research questions of the study.

1. Does the implementation of repeated read-aloud practice better enhance learners' grammatical performance, as a by-product of improved reading fluency, than traditional written practice?
2. Are there any differences in how repeated read-aloud benefits higher-achieving and lower-achieving learners?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Participants**

The participants of the present study were two eighth-grade classes from a junior high school in Taoyuan city. Both classes consisted of twenty-six students. The English achievement level of the two classes appeared rather similar according to their academic performances on monthly exams in the fall semester of 2017; both were at the lower-intermediate level. Nevertheless, a wide variance existed in the participants' English achievement levels within each class. As for the learning background of the students, they had formally learned English as a foreign language for five years since grade three in elementary school. To show no favoritism to either class, one class was randomly assigned to be the experimental group, implementing repeated read-aloud practice, and the other, the control group without the intervention.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The whole experiment lasted for eight weeks. The last, or the fourth, period of the initial week was used for the pre-test on grammatical rules for both the experimental and control group. The experiment took place in the last period of week 2 to 7 (see Figure 1). During those six treatment sessions, students in the experimental group received repeated read-aloud practice as well as an immediate oral reading fluency test, while those in the control group had the usual worksheet written practice. In the other three periods each week, the teaching procedures in both groups were the

same, including the instructions on dialogues and readings on the textbook, in which the teacher played the CD and guided the students to read the texts orally. As for grammar instruction, both inductive and deductive methods were utilized in both groups; that is, the teacher first highlighted several sentences in the texts for students, guided them to come up with the rules on their own and then elaborated on syntactic rules. The learners in both groups were also required to do written practice in the textbook. At last, after the six-week treatment, all the participants took the post-test on grammar during the last period of week 8.

	1 <sup>st</sup> Period	2 <sup>nd</sup> Period	3 <sup>rd</sup> Period	4 <sup>th</sup> Period
Week 2				✓
Week 3				✓
Week 4				✓
Week 5				✓
Week 6				✓
Week 7				✓

Usual teaching procedure

Treatment

**Figure 1** Treatment Sessions for the Experimental Group

*Pre-treatment*

Prior to the treatment in the third period of week 2, the participants, based on their pre-test performance, were divided into seven groups, with each group containing four students of mixed achievement levels. To ensure successful and effective implementation of repeated read-aloud practice, seven students, or one student from each group, who got the highest scores on the pre-test- (roughly top 25% of the class) were chosen as group tutors and trained to give their peers corrective feedback on their oral reading and to calculate words correct per minute (WCPM) for their peers.

### *During-treatment*

As shown in Figure 2, during the weekly treatment session, the learners in the experimental group were first required to silently read the assigned passages, with the syntactic rules just taught, and highlight unfamiliar words at the same time for the first five minutes. The teacher then read the passage aloud as a model to facilitate the students to memorize the correct pronunciation of each word. In the subsequent ten minutes, the teacher gave instruction on chunking skills and intonation practice to help the learners read more fluently as well as promote syntactic processing.

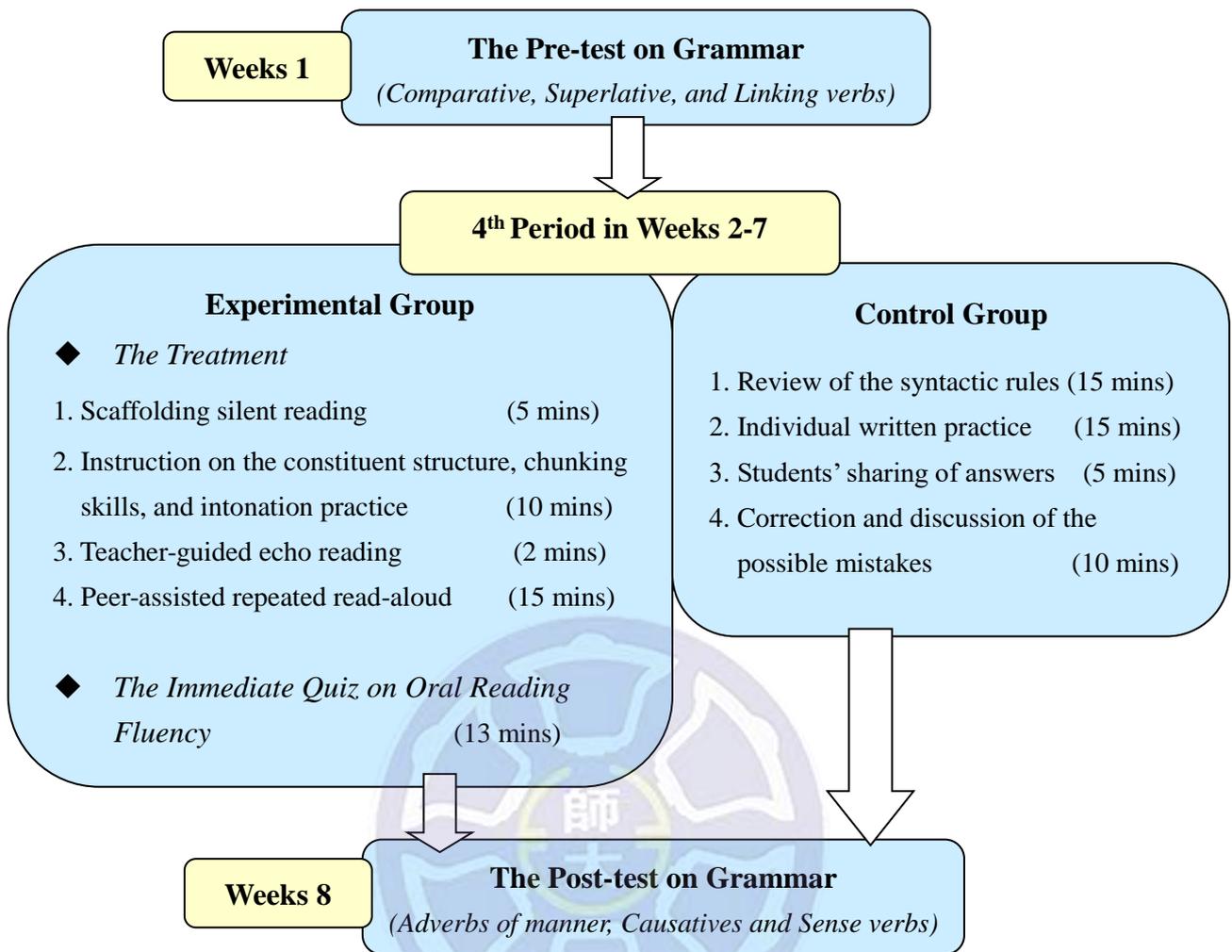
After the reading demonstration, the whole class did echo reading, repeating each sentence aloud after the teacher, two times. After the teacher ensured that most of the students could follow, the participants then started the 15-minute read-aloud practice in groups. Meanwhile, the seven selected tutors guided their group members to read the passage more smoothly and accurately. When their peers mispronounced certain words or had parsing problems, the tutors would give corrective feedbacks or demonstrate. During the practice, all the students repeatedly read the assigned passage aloud to reach better fluency. Ten minutes before the break, the teacher carried out an immediate post-test, inviting the group tutors to read aloud the practiced texts for one minute respectively and calculating their WCPM as the demonstration first; then, the others had to read aloud to the peer tutors to record the WCPM as well. In addition, they were also told to read the passages as fast and accurate as possible. Every member's reading was recorded with the tutor's cellphone and sent to the teacher after class so that she could reassure that the WCPM were correctly calculated. From the received recording, it is found that the tutors documented nearly all the mistakes their group members made and the miscounted words were later eliminated from previous WCPM records by the teacher. Following the oral reading fluency test, the teacher

required the participants to jot down their WCPM on a worksheet to monitor their own progress of fluency.

As for the control group, the teaching procedure of the last period of each week was the same as usual. That was, the teacher first reviewed the syntactic rules that students learned in the previous class periods, distributed a worksheet (see Appendix D), and required the students to do the written practice of sentence patterns in the unit individually. After most students finished the worksheet, the volunteers went up to the blackboard to share their answers with the others, and the teacher checked whether their answers were correct. At the end of the class, the teacher discussed the sentences on which learners made mistakes.

#### *After-treatment*

In the last period in the eighth week, a post-test on grammar was administered to both groups to examine whether the read-aloud practice had greater effects on promoting the acquisition of grammatical rules, or syntactic knowledge, than the worksheet- writing practice.



**Figure 2** The Data Collection Procedure

### **Instrument**

The instrument adopted in this research included a pre-test and a post-test on grammar for both groups. The purpose of conducting a pre-test was to ensure that the achievement levels of the two groups were similar. In addition, an oral reading fluency quiz was given to the participants in the experimental group to monitor their progress in oral reading fluency in each session. To verify if the effects of read-aloud practice vary according to students' English achievement levels, the post-test performance of higher-achievers and lower-achievers were also compared.

### *A pre-test and a post-test on grammar*

To capture students' grammatical competence, the pre-test (see Appendix A) encompassed the sentence patterns and grammatical rules that the students had just learned in the previous three units, including comparatives, superlatives and linking verbs. The post-test (see Appendix B), conducted in wake of the six-week experiment, contained the grammatical foci in the three units covered in the time of the experiment, i.e., adverbs of manner, causatives and sense verbs. As grammar knowledge is a constant built-on, both the pre-test and the post-test also contained questions assessing some grammatical concepts learned previously but were recurred in the three units covered in the treatment session, i.e., gerunds, infinitives, and imperatives. Though mostly covering different content, the two tests were comparable in their form and included two sections: filling in the blank and unscrambled sentences. Filling in the blank was a widely utilized form to test learners' knowledge of morphology (Singson, Mahony, & Mann, 2000; Stokes, 1985); unscrambled sentences served as a measure to assess their implicit syntactic knowledge (Lanteigne, 2017). Although the testing forms, filling in the blank and unscrambled sentences, were inconsistent with the materials used for read-aloud practice, they are common questions to assess student's grammatical knowledge and can minimize the impact of their lexical competence on the post-test. Misspelled words in the pre-test and the post-test were not counted in when scores were assigned.

### *Immediate tests on the oral reading fluency*

At the end of each treatment session, the participants in the experimental group undertook an immediate test on their oral reading fluency, which was calculated through the words correct per minute (WCPM)<sup>1</sup>. That is, the learners read the passages that they had just repeatedly practiced in class for one minute and the group tutor counted the correct words by subtracting the number of errors from the total number of words they had read. Following the test, the participants had to jot down their WCPM on a worksheet (see Appendix C) to keep track of their fluency progress.

### *Teacher-Researcher's communication with learners*

To acquire the participants' comments and perceptions toward the treatment, the teacher-researcher utilized various measures to collect the data. The observation of the learners' engagement and performance in class, short conversations with different students after class, and their feedback in communication books were included as supplementary data to discuss and explain the results of the study.

### **Data Analysis**

The learners' pre-test scores were analyzed statistically with a T-test to reassure that the grammar competence levels of these two classes were similar prior to the treatment. In other words, if their posttest scores indeed differ significantly, the differences could be attributed to the different grammar teaching method, instead of the difference in their entry English achievement levels.

After the six-week treatment, the post-test data of the two groups were compared to evaluate whether the experimental group outperformed the control group to a significant extent. The respective performance of higher-achievers (top 30%) and

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<sup>1</sup> The reason for choosing WCPM calculation, instead of counting the total time spent on reading, as the measure to evaluate oral reading fluency was that for the length and the difficulty level of assigned texts, most of the participants would take one minute or so to finish reading the whole text. Besides, it might have been difficult for lower-achievers to finish the whole passages even if they had been given more time to read.

lower-achievers (lower 30%) in the experimental group were also analyzed with a T-test to investigate if students of different achievement levels benefited differently from the repeated read-aloud practice. In addition, the first and the last WCPM records of those in the experimental group were computed and analyzed through a T-test to see if their oral reading fluency had improved significantly. The changes between the first and last WCPM counts of the higher- and lower-achieving learners were also compared to see the respective effects that repeated reading aloud yielded on these two groups of students.

## **RESULTS**

### **The Performance of the Pre- and Post-test on Grammatical Rules**

The t-test results of the two groups' pre-test and post-test performance reveal that the implementation of repeated read-aloud practice, compared to traditional written practice, yields better results on learners' grammar learning. As Table 1 shows, in the pretest, the mean score of the experimental group (77.42, SD= 25.14), though higher than that of the control group (69.38, SD= 24.05), did not reach a significant level ( $p = .244$ ). In other words, the initial grammar competence was similar between the experimental and the control groups. However, the gap between the two groups' mean scores were widened on the post-test (see Table 2). The experimental group's mean score rose to 79.65 (SD= 15.08), or a positive gain of 2.23, while and the control group's mean score declined to 66.23 (SD= 30.34), or a negative gain of 3.15. With further examination, the difference between the two groups' post-test performance was significant ( $p = .049$ ), namely, the experimental group outperformed the control group, suggesting that repeated read-aloud practice was more effective in enhancing students' acquisition of syntactic rules than traditional written practice.

**Table 1** *Students' Pre-test Performance on Grammar*

Group	Experimental Group (n=26)	Control Group (n=26)	Sig.
Pre-test Scores	M=77.42 (SD= 25.14)	M=69.38 (SD= 24.05)	.244

**Table 2** *Students' Post-test Performance and Gains for Pre-Posttest on Grammar, and the Significance of the Two Groups' Posttest Difference*

	Experimental Group	Control Group
Post-test	M= 79.65 (SD= 15.08)	M= 66.23 (SD= 30.34)
Pre-Posttest Gains	M= 2.23	M= -3.15
Sig of the Two Groups' Post-test Difference	.049	

### The Post-test Performance of Higher-achievers and Lower-achievers

With the aim of evaluating whether the repeated read-aloud practice as a grammar instruction method benefited students of different achievement levels differently, the performance of top and bottom 33%<sup>2</sup> of the participants in the experimental group was compared. As Table 3 indicates, the low-achievers' mean score hiked up by 15.78 points, but there was a slight decline of 3.44 points in the high-achievers' post-test performance. A paired sample T-test showed that the changes were statistically significant for both groups ( $p = .026$ ). In other words, the repeated read-aloud practice had assisted low-achieving learners but had impeded the high-achieving learners in their learning of grammar.

<sup>2</sup> According to the students' performances on previous sectional exams, almost one third of them attained a higher-achieving level while another one third reached a lower-achieving level. Therefore, among the 26 participants in the experimental group, nine of them were chosen as higher-achievers, and nine, lower-achievers.

**Table 3** *High-achievers and Low-achievers' Performance on Pre-Posttest*

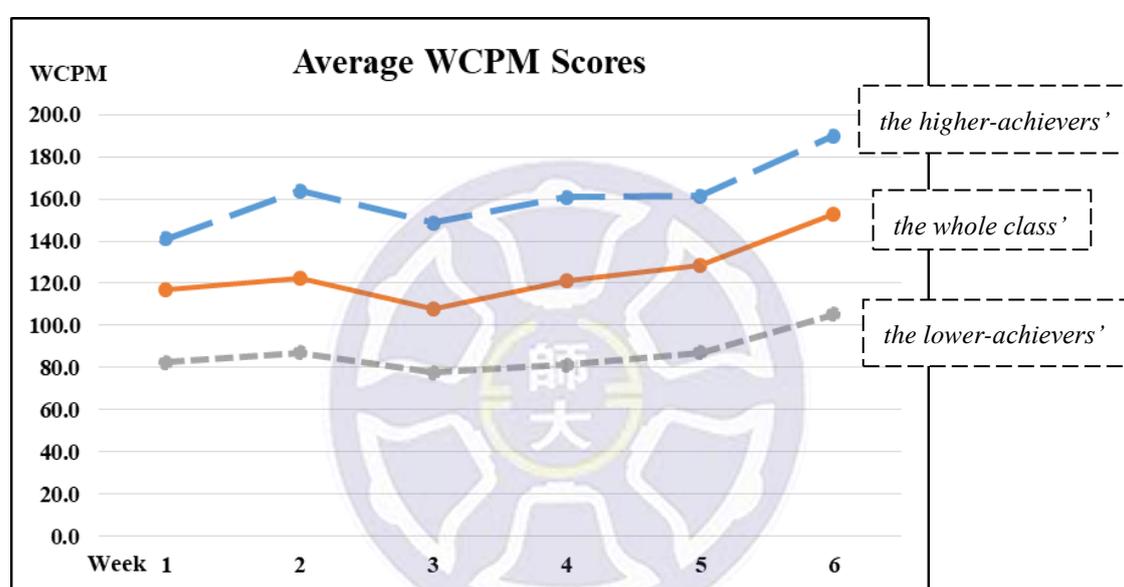
Group	Pre-test	Post-test	Gains	t	Sig.
High-achievers (n=9)	M= 95.33 (SD= 3.74)	M= 91.89 (SD= 3.62)	M= -3.44 (SD= 3.78)	-2.735	.026
Low-achievers (n=9)	M= 51.33 (SD= 27.21)	M= 67.11 (SD= 16.45)	M= 15.78 (SD= 17.41)	2.718	.026

### **The Immediate Quiz of Oral Reading Fluency**

The participants in the experimental group were monitored on their oral reading fluency through WCPM. As Figure 3 indicates, over all the learners made a progress in their reading rate, with the average words correct per minute rising from 122 words in the first week of the treatment to 156 words in the last week of the treatment, or a gain of 34 words. A paired sample T-test proved that it was a significant gain ( $p=.000$ ) in students' reading fluency from the time the treatments just started (122.1,  $SD=38.46$ ) to the time that it wound up (156.7,  $SD=50.05$ ) (see Table 4). The higher-achievers' and lower-achievers' initial and final performance also showed that both groups made a significant improvement ( $p<.05$ ) in their oral reading fluency. However, further examination of the two groups' respective path of WCPM records in the six weeks (see Figure 3) revealed that the higher-achieving group made greater progress throughout the process than the lower-achieving group, with a gain of 39.8 words for higher-achievers while 23.3 words for lower-achievers. In other words, reading aloud practice was more effective in enhancing higher-achieving learners' oral reading fluency than that of the lower-achievers.

**Table 4** *The Initial and Final Performance on Oral Reading Fluency Quiz of The Higher- and Lower-achievers in the Experimental Group*

Group	1 <sup>st</sup> Quiz	6 <sup>th</sup> Quiz	Gains	Sig.
Experimental Group	M= 122.1 (SD= 38.46)	M= 156.7 (SD= 50.05)	34.54	.000
High-achievers (n=9)	M= 156.9 (SD= 4.96)	M= 196.7 (SD= 32.18)	M= 39.8 (SD=30.63)	.005
Low-achievers (n=9)	M= 79.2 (SD= 31.87)	M= 102.6 (SD=32.27)	M= 23.3 (SD= 16.80)	.003



**Figure 3** *The Performance of Oral Reading Fluency Quiz*

## DISCUSSION

### Effects of Repeated Read-aloud on Grammar Learning

Repeated read-aloud practice, as a method to teach grammar, proves to be more effective than traditional written practice. The findings echo what Kadota (1982) maintained: Reading aloud could not only facilitate speech coding but also the internalization of reading skills, inclusive of syntactic knowledge. Moreover, the instruction of parsing skills, for its close relationship between parsing and syntax,

could have also contributed to the positive effects of the treatment. With the acquaintance of syntactic parsing and prosody, which helps to hold the auditory sequence in working memory, learners could have internalized grammatical rules or sentence patterns unknowingly.

Another critical factor that leads to the effectiveness of reading aloud might be the learners' engagement in class since they had to stay attended to the text while reading it. During the traditional written grammar practice, which requires students to complete a large amount of exercises on grammatical rules and sentence patterns, learners might not pay full attention to or simply gave up on the practice. If tired of tedious sentence writing, the students could be more motivated and willing to participate in oral activities that served as an alternative for the acquisition of syntactic knowledge.

### **Effects of Repeated Read-aloud on Oral Reading Fluency**

Apart from the improvement in grammar, the repeated read-aloud also enhanced the learners' oral reading fluency to a significant extent, judging from the WCPM performance of the first and the last week of the treatment. The reason for the slight regression observed in some of the weeks may be the different difficulty levels of the reading passages. However, the overall oral reading rate increased, which also aligns with the findings of past research that repeated reading was effective in improving learners' reading fluency (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002; Morgan & Sideridis, 2006; Therrien, Wickstrom, & Jones, 2006).

### **Effects of Repeated Read-aloud on Higher- and Lower-achievers' Grammar Learning**

Despite the confirmed efficacy of repeated read-aloud on both higher-achievers' and lower-achievers' oral reading fluency, the effects of this practice as a grammar

instruction method, however, is not without a catch. While it works well to help the lower-achievers, it seems to hamper the higher achievers, in their learning of the grammar rules. For learners of lower English achievement level, the crux of their learning difficulties usually lies in their decoding of words and the distinction of meaningful phrases, which may in turn influence the construction of meaning and acquisition of grammatical rules, i.e., learning of grammar. With the practice of repeated reading aloud and gradual improvement on their reading fluency, they could recognize words more promptly, pronounce them less painstakingly, and build up prosody more easily. The chunked reading practice also helped them to distinguish and break sentences into smaller meaningful parts, thus enhancing their analysis of grammatical structures (Ransinki, 2005). The enhancement on oral fluency, prosodic reading, and syntactic parsing could have contributed to the great progress in lower achievers' grammar competence. In addition, owing to the difficulties of memorizing complicated grammatical rules, the lower-achievers now could depend on an intuitive judgment (i.e., "This sounds right." or "That doesn't sound right.") resulted from repeated reading aloud when answering grammar questions. This is evidenced by a statement a lower-achiever once made, "Actually, I don't know the exact meaning of the sentences and still don't understand the rules the teacher had taught. I just thought the sentence might be structured like this (Ken)."

Another cause for the lower-achievers outdoing the higher-achievers in the extent of improvement on their grammar tests might be their different learning styles, preferences, and attitudes toward the peer-mediated reading aloud. The higher-achieving learners, though making greater progress in their oral reading fluency than the lower-achievers, could have possibly been more reliant on written exercises offered in school and cram schools as a way to internalize sentence patterns.

Thus, by doing primarily repeated read-aloud practice, they could have missed out on a routine learning tool for acquiring those grammatical rules. One higher-achiever commented on this problem, “I feel unease when answering the questions because the teacher used to distribute some worksheets to us to practice sentence patterns (Betty).” Another high-achiever shared the same concern, “I hope that the teacher can give us some handouts so that we can be more familiar with the grammatical rules to get better grades on tests (Brendon).” Also, their heavy reliance on explicit instruction on English grammar, e.g., segmenting sentences into constituents to analyze syntactic structures and zeroing in on those components for practice, could have competed with and hindered them from benefiting from repeated reading aloud practice, which by nature is a more implicit way of learning grammar. Moreover, the higher-achieving students were considered more visual when it comes to acquiring information and preferred individual learning, while the lower-achievers did not (Park, 2000). Compared with traditional written practice, less visual aids and individual work were involved in the peer-mediated reading aloud, which tapped more on auditory aids and group practice instead. The switch to a learning medium that could be less preferred by higher-achievers might have also had a negative impact on their learning and thus contributed to a regression on the post-test performance. In contrast, with little dependence on deductive method and explicit instruction to acquire grammatical rules and no strong preferences for visual learning, which might have subtracted the effectiveness of reading aloud, the lower-achievers could have easily taken up a new practice and thus fully benefited from repeated read-aloud. The auditory aids and support of the classmates under peer-assisted repeated reading might have facilitated the lower-achievers to become more willing to do the practice and search for help if they had problems with pronunciation or grammar. Moreover, when they saw a

marked improvement in their word recognition and increase in the reading rate, they could have gradually obtained a sense of achievement and self-efficacy. This might have led them to take the read-aloud practice more seriously and yielded better performance, which is exemplified by a statement a lower-achieving learner gave, “May I know what the next assigned text is? I want to practice beforehand so that I can read more words than Kevin next time. He did a better job than me today (Edward)!”

## **CONCLUSION**

With past research confirming the effectiveness of repeated read-aloud on reading fluency as well as comprehension, the current study aimed to evaluate its efficacy as a potential alternative for learning grammar for local junior high school students. Significant positive effects were found not only on their acquisition of syntactic rules but also on their oral reading fluency, especially among the lower-achieving learners. With the above findings, the present study has important contributions and pedagogical implications in the field of grammar instruction. Meanwhile, future studies can work on what the research has left and branch out in aspects worth further exploration.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

Repeated reading aloud, which has been commonly utilized to improve oral reading fluency, now stands as a promising method for grammar instruction. This is particularly meaningful and important given that many English educators tend to adopt written practice as the major approach to enhance learners’ acquisition of syntactic rules and leave out the oral practice just to spare time for written practice on grammatical rules. Nevertheless, this research proves that reading passages aloud repeatedly could promote better learning effects than doing written grammar exercises,

especially for lower-achievers. This finding can help provide inspiration, innovation and incentive for English instructors to apply oral practice as an effective alternative to facilitate grammar learning.

However, it should be noted that, with different effects that repeated reading aloud yielded on higher- and lower-achieving students, English teachers need to exercise caution when deciding to utilize this method as a learning vehicle for grammar in a class of mixed achievement levels. Adopting the individual read-aloud but keeping some of the written practice may be a better option for higher-achievers.

### **Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies**

Though having its contributions, the present study is not without its limitations, and thus suggestions, concerning both content and method, are made to future research interested in further exploring this topic. The efficacy of repeated reading aloud on the acquisition of grammatical rules among junior high students is proved in this study, but how it works on learners of other age levels is yet to be explored. Future research can evaluate its effects on elementary school and senior high school students' grammar learning. The fact that the grammatical rules taught in junior high schools are basic and repetitive might have made it possible for students to internalize grammatical rules through repeated reading aloud and answer grammar questions based on their intuitive judgment. However, more complicated grammatical concepts are involved in senior high school English textbooks. Whether and how the difficulty level of the text affects the viability of repeated read-aloud practice as a more implicit grammar-learning method remains an issue for further examination. Second, with no questionnaires and structured interviews with the participants to collect their opinions toward the read-aloud practice, the reasons for why learners' of different achievement levels had responded differently to this teaching approach were, for the most part,

inferred. Future research could certainly tap into how learners of different achievement levels perceive this teaching method by giving them a chance to voice their thoughts and feelings. Finally, some methods that may work more effectively in evaluating students' oral reading fluency are recommended for future use. In the current study, the participants' WCPM records were documented by their peers and double-checked by the teacher. However, to increase the validity of the results and ensure that the study is free of bias from the tutors or the researcher, replacing student tutors with independent raters, such as other English teachers in the school, to check WCPM counts can ensure the objectivity and accuracy of the word count. If students' achievement level is higher or the length of reading passages is longer, future researchers could evaluate learners' oral reading fluency by calculating how much time they spend on reading the whole passage, which then can address the reading rate instead of accuracy only. Also, future research can document when learners pause or how they chunk sentences in the reading process so as to look into the effects of syntactic parsing skills on the oral reading fluency, and the extent to which syntactic parsing may contribute to students' performance on grammar tests.

For the past years, in light of the significance that grammar accounts for language acquisition, educators have been dedicated to derive a variety of instructional approaches to facilitate learners' grammar learning. However, there is growing agreement and positive evidence that methods not having a direct bearing on grammar may serve as an effective alternative. Hopefully, the present study has provided some insights and useful perspectives for English teachers who attempt to enhance students' grammar competence.

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## Appendix A

### The Pre-test on Grammar

#### 一、填空 (請寫出適當的形式變化)

1. Today was \_\_\_\_\_ (happy) day in my life.
2. Tony is \_\_\_\_\_ (tall) than all the girls in his class.
3. Which is \_\_\_\_\_ (fast), a bike, a car, or a plane?
4. Terry is as \_\_\_\_\_ (smart) as his little brother.
5. This smartwatch is \_\_\_\_\_ (light) than that one.
6. I like to drink coffee because it smells \_\_\_\_\_ (great).
7. My grandma feels much \_\_\_\_\_ (good) today.
8. Mark has \_\_\_\_\_ (special) farm of the four.
9. Lisa is \_\_\_\_\_ (careful) than Sally.
10. The jacket looks \_\_\_\_\_ (beautiful) on Grandpa.
11. Music is \_\_\_\_\_ (interesting) subject of all.
12. John looks a lot \_\_\_\_\_ (young) than Timmy.
13. Lisa is \_\_\_\_\_ (thin) of the two little girls.
14. Whose eyes are \_\_\_\_\_ (big), John's or Tom's?
15. My cousin is becoming \_\_\_\_\_ (tall) and taller.
16. There are kids \_\_\_\_\_ (roll) eggs in the playground.
17. \_\_\_\_\_ (be) a happy farmer is only an e-mail away.
18. It is difficult \_\_\_\_\_ (set) up this video camera.
19. The parents spent much time \_\_\_\_\_ (color) eggs.
20. \_\_\_\_\_ (upload) the photos, and you can share with friends.

#### 二、句子重組 (請依適當順序重組文句)

1. sweet/ the apple pie/ a little/ tastes  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. popular / the song/ the/ of the year/ is/ most  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. like/ junior high school / Lora/ a/ looks/ student  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. than/ is/ the old one/ useful/ the new smartphone/ more  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

### The Post-test on Grammar

#### 一、填空 (80%) (請寫出適當的形式變化)

1. The woman closed the door \_\_\_\_\_ (quiet).
2. Ian is a good runner. He can run \_\_\_\_\_ (fast).
3. Lillian seldom goes to school \_\_\_\_\_ (late).
4. Edward jumps \_\_\_\_\_ (high) in his class.
5. Everyone practiced \_\_\_\_\_ (hard) for the game.
6. The actress can dance \_\_\_\_\_ (beautiful).
7. Kevin's father cooks really \_\_\_\_\_ (good).
8. Helena walks \_\_\_\_\_ (slow) than Olivia.
9. Kate helped her dad \_\_\_\_\_ (sweep) the floor.
10. My dad asked me \_\_\_\_\_ (clean) up my room.
11. Mom won't let me \_\_\_\_\_ (see) a movie tomorrow.
12. We must not \_\_\_\_\_ (feed) any animals at the zoo.
13. We watch her \_\_\_\_\_ (write) something on the paper.
14. They listened to Selina \_\_\_\_\_ (sing) a beautiful song.
15. Alice saw someone \_\_\_\_\_ (run) out of the house.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ (use) shopping bags can help reduce trash.
17. It is great \_\_\_\_\_ (enjoy) the beauty of the nature.
18. There are some people \_\_\_\_\_ (walk) dogs in the park.
19. \_\_\_\_\_ (drive) less often, and try to take the MRT.
20. Ethan spent two days \_\_\_\_\_ (stay) on Green Island.

#### 二、句子重組 (20%)

1. buy/ made/ Dad/ me/ yesterday/ newspaper

\_\_\_\_\_

2. do/ should/ by/ you/ the homework/ yourself

\_\_\_\_\_

3. than/ loudly/ John/ more/ his classmates/ shouted

\_\_\_\_\_

4. crying/ heard/ we/ sadly/ this morning/ a little girl

\_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix C

## The Worksheet for WCPM Records

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Tutor: \_\_\_\_\_ Partners: \_\_\_\_\_

Date						
Texts						
<b>WCPM</b>						
<b>200</b>						
<b>195</b>						
<b>190</b>						
<b>185</b>						
<b>180</b>						
<b>175</b>						
<b>170</b>						
<b>165</b>						
<b>160</b>						
<b>155</b>						
<b>150</b>						
<b>145</b>						
<b>140</b>						
<b>135</b>						
<b>130</b>						
<b>125</b>						
<b>120</b>						
<b>115</b>						
<b>110</b>						
<b>105</b>						
<b>100</b>						
<b>95</b>						
<b>90</b>						
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<b>75</b>						
<b>70</b>						
<b>65</b>						
<b>60</b>						
<b>55</b>						
<b>50</b>						
<b>45</b>						
<b>40</b>						
<b>35</b>						
<b>30</b>						
<b>25</b>						
<b>20</b>						
<b>15</b>						
<b>10</b>						
<b>5</b>						
<b>0</b>						

## Appendix D

### The Worksheet for the Control Group

#### Unit 4

##### 一、請依例完成句子

例：Ted / watch TV / quiet / last night

Ted watched TV quietly last night.

1. he / go to bed / early / every day

\_\_\_\_\_

2. the girl / always / dance / beautiful

\_\_\_\_\_

3. May / talk / loud / now

\_\_\_\_\_

4. it / rain / heavy / later

\_\_\_\_\_

5. the kids / hide eggs / happy / Easter

\_\_\_\_\_

6. the players / practice / hard / yesterday

\_\_\_\_\_

##### 二、請依提示字回答問題

1. How does your grandmother ride the scooter? (slow)

\_\_\_\_\_

2. How are the kids eating the cake? (hungry)

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Judy/ jump/ high/ than/ Jane/ in PE class

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Billy/ sing/ terrible/ in his family

\_\_\_\_\_

5. the girls/ dance/ beautiful/ than/ their mother

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Alex/ run/ fast/ of the three boys

\_\_\_\_\_

## Unit 5

### 一、請加入括號內提示字改寫句子

例：She wiped the table. (her mom, make)

Her mom made her wipe the table.

1. He plays video games every day. (his dad, let)

\_\_\_\_\_

2. I swept the floor. (Mrs. Chen, have)

\_\_\_\_\_

3. She studies English every day. (Mr. Wang, make)

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Jane takes care of the baby. (the nurse, help)

\_\_\_\_\_

5. He surfs the Net every evening. (his mom, let)

\_\_\_\_\_

6. They collected old clothes. (the students, help)

\_\_\_\_\_

7. She cried in the movie theater. (the sad movie, make)

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Tina looked prettier. (the skirt, make)

\_\_\_\_\_

### 二、請依例改寫句子：1~2 題用 **should**；3~4 題用 **must**

例：He has to wash the dirty clothes.

(a) He should wash the dirty clothes.

(b) He must wash the dirty clothes.

1. You have to be kind to the animals.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Everyone has to drive carefully.

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Henry has to go to the doctor now.

\_\_\_\_\_

4. I have to call the police.

\_\_\_\_\_

## Unit 6

一、請依提示寫出句子：1~4 題寫(a)句型；5~8 題寫(b)句型

例：we / watch / the kids / hide eggs / this morning

(a) We watched the kids hide eggs this morning.

(b) We watched the kids hiding eggs this morning.

1. I / see / Emma / talk to a handsome boy / yesterday

(a) \_\_\_\_\_

2. he / not / feel / the wind / blow / then

(a) \_\_\_\_\_

3. we / hear / a little girl / cry loudly / last night

(a) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Nancy / see / a fish / jump out of the water

(a) \_\_\_\_\_

5. I / see / a movie star / shop / department store / last week

(b) \_\_\_\_\_

6. he / watch / his sister / dance beautifully / at the party

(b) \_\_\_\_\_

7. she / feel / someone / brush / her hair / in her sleep

(b) \_\_\_\_\_

8. we / listen to / the students / play the guitar / park

(b) \_\_\_\_\_

二、依提示作答

1. I watched my brother. He flew a kite. (合併句子)

\_\_\_\_\_

2. They saw the young man. He took away all the money. (合併句子)

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Angela saw the stranger.

The stranger walked around near her house. (合併句子)

\_\_\_\_\_