

Effect of the Use of Exit Slips on Reading comprehension, Self-reflection, and Learner autonomy of EFL Omani Students in a Higher Education Institution

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Abstract

The study focused on examining the effect of exit slips, known as short reflections that students complete at the end of a lesson, on level 1 students' reading comprehension, self-reflection, and learner autonomy. The study was conducted in a preparatory studies center of a higher educational institute in Oman. Data were collected from 34 students studying in level 1 through a pre- and post-test and sixteen exit slips over a four-week intervention period. Frequency distribution and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the sixteen exit slips, and a paired t-test was used to compare the pre- and post-test scores. The results from the sixteen exit slips showed students' progression from the lower-order reading strategies to the higher-order comprehension, and pre- and post-test scores showed a statistically significant improvement in reading comprehension ($M = 13.59$ to $M = 16.12$, $p = .001$). In addition, the findings also showed that exit slips contributed to students' self-reflection and learner autonomy. The study underscores the value of integrating exit slips into English language learning contexts to enhance students' reading comprehension, self-reflection and learner autonomy. The study has implications for administrators, policy makers, and teachers.

Keywords: exit slips, learner autonomy, metacognition, reading strategies, self-reflection

1. Introduction

Exit slips are reflective tools to support students' learning and serve as feedback to teachers with insights into students' learning needs and modify their lessons to meet students' expectations. Exit slips are known as short written reflections that students complete at the end of a lesson. This practice helps students to know what they are learning, identify challenges, evaluate their progress, and thereby focus on improvement. These metacognitive self-reflection (Leigh, 2012) processes are closely related to effective reading comprehension which is an essential academic skill in the higher education context in Oman. Students have to read complex reading texts with unfamiliar vocabulary, and they struggle to develop a holistic comprehension of the reading text. Hence, it is necessary to adopt learning practices like exit slips because they may enhance student's ability to understand, monitor and develop their reading comprehension skills. Research studies conducted on the use of exit slips show that they promote student engagement and self-reflection (Basco, 2021; Leigh, 2012; Mastromonaco, 2015). As a consequence, exit slips have emerged as simple yet effective instructional tools in classroom settings.

Exit slips have been increasingly used in classroom teaching and learning in recent years. There are studies on exit slips promoting self-assessment, motivation, and self-reflection (Jeyraj, 2019; Izor, 2019; Leigh, 2012). There are some studies on the use of exit slips to improve writing skills and reading skills (Amaelia, 2025; Lestari, 2021; Hamdy & Kalisah, 2020). Research studies show that Omani students have challenges with reading comprehension (Chinnathambi et al. 2024a, 2024b, 2025). Reading comprehension requires students to reflect their understanding of the text, identify the difficulties they encounter in the process of reading a text, and assess their progress based on the reading strategies they use. This self-reflective process enables students to be responsible for their own learning, monitor their learning progress, adopt effective reading strategies and improve their academic performance independently. Thus, it also supports learner autonomy as it gives students scope to self-reliant and not to depend on the teacher completely (Pearson et al., 2009). Exit slips facilitate these processes, promoting students to notice and record what they learned, locate their challenges learning to read, assess their progress, and become independent learners.

Furthermore, in learning a language, self-reflection plays a crucial role in increasing students' awareness of his/her learning process, monitoring and evaluating their progress, and thereby improving their academic performance. Omani students mainly focus on the lower-order reading comprehension strategies like skimming, scanning and vocabulary as their primary aim is to score in the reading exam. As a result, they do not pay attention on the higher-order reading comprehension strategies like inference, synthesis and critical thinking which require self-reflection and learner autonomy. They approach the reading texts with the notion of securing a passing grade

in the reading exam and they greatly depend on the teachers to complete the exam-related tasks (skimming, scanning and vocabulary tasks). This over-dependency on teachers and exam focused learning deviates them from engaging in activities or tasks that require self-reflection, monitoring their learning progress and the ability to address their difficulties autonomously. Thus, there is a need to use a tool that gives students the opportunity to self-reflect, exercise autonomy and thereby shift their focus from lower-order reading strategies to higher-order reading strategies. Hence, the use of exit slips is appropriate in this context (Chinnathambi et al. 2024a). Exit slips help students to reflect on their learning, understand the difficulties and challenges they face, and also encourage them to use some strategies to improve themselves. Similarly, learner autonomy gives students a sense of responsibility and ownership of their learning. Exit slips provide students with a scope to develop self-learning strategies that enhance their academic performance.

The use of exit slips at the end of every reading lesson prompts students to think and reflect on their learning process. This practice enables students to be aware of their learning, explore the challenges, and resolve them through interaction with the teacher via exit slips. This reflective practice encourages students to develop more confidence and motivation, which helps them to locate and address their learning gaps. Furthermore, it helps students to shift their attention from the lower-order reading strategies to higher-order reading strategies. Thus, exit slips as a regular classroom practice enable students to be self-reflective and support learner autonomy (Basco, 2021; Leigh, 2012; Mastromonaco, 2015). Within the Omani higher education context, the use of exit slips has not been widely studied, and there is a need for empirical research to study the effectiveness of this reflective tool in enhancing reading comprehension, self-reflection, and learner autonomy. Therefore, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of exit slips on improving reading comprehension and promoting self-reflection and learner autonomy. This research aims to contribute to the formative assessment feedback mechanism through the use of exit slips, thereby enhancing teaching and learning in the Omani higher education context and contributing to reflective learning practices in English language learning classrooms. The findings have implications for teachers, administrators, policy makers, and students. Based on the students' reading challenges and limitations, and the underlying benefits of the exit slips, the following research objectives were designed.

1.1 Research Objectives

1. To determine whether there is a significant difference between level 1 students' pre-test and post-test reading comprehension scores after using exit slips.
2. To examine how the use of exit slips influences level 1 students' focus from lower-order reading strategies (skimming, scanning, vocabulary) to higher-order comprehension strategies.
3. To identify how the use of exit slips influences level 1 students' awareness of reading difficulties, from vocabulary and scanning to comprehension challenges.
4. To evaluate whether the use of exit slips leads to a significant improvement in level 1 students' self-assessed comprehension levels across the four-week period.

1.2 Research Questions

1. Is there a significant difference between level 1 students' pre-test and post-test reading comprehension scores after using exit slips?
2. How does the use of exit slips influence level 1 students' focus from lower-order reading strategies (skimming, scanning, vocabulary) to higher-order comprehension strategies?
3. How does the use of exit slips influence level 1 students' awareness of reading difficulties, from vocabulary and scanning to comprehension challenges?
4. Does the use of exit slips lead to a significant improvement in level 1 students' self-assessed comprehension levels across the four-week period?

2. Literature Review

Reflective learning plays a vital role in student-centered pedagogy. In this context, exit slips have garnered the attention of researchers and academics recently. They are used as practical and reflective tools in the classrooms. They encourage students to actively participate in the learning process, enabling them to connect newly learned ideas with their prior knowledge, identify challenges, and develop a holistic perspective of learning, making the classroom experience more engaging and fruitful. Many studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of exit slips across the globe. Although these studies have shown many benefits, they have mostly focused on general learning contexts, and with regard to specific language skills, the focus is more on writing skills than on reading comprehension skills. Furthermore, limited studies have focused on the effect of exit slips on reading comprehension. Based on these findings, this study aims to contextualize the use of exit slips in the English language learning background, specifically targeting the reading lessons. Along similar lines, this literature review explores the recent studies on the effect of exit slips on reading comprehension and the role of exit slips in fostering self-reflection and learner autonomy.

2.1 Effectiveness of Exit Slips in Improving Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is one of the most challenging skills among EFL learners, and previous studies showed that Omani students faced challenges in the IELTS-based reading exam (Chinnathambi et al., 2024a, 2024b, & 2025). In this context, structured reflective practices

like exit slips can be more beneficial to students as they may influence enhancing the reading comprehension skills. It is evident from the research studies that exit slips not only keep students active in the learning process but also enhance students' comprehension and promote deeper learning. Although Leigh (2012) did not focus on reading comprehension skills, his study illustrates that exit slips encouraged students to reflect on the new content and link it with their prior knowledge. It suggests that exit slips helped students to integrate the new content with the existing schema, which is equally an essential process in reading comprehension. Similarly, Basco (2021) highlighted how the self-assessment aspect of exit slips helped students who regularly evaluated their learning process to identify the learning gaps and employ recommended strategies to improve their academic performance. Based on the insights, it may be inferred that exit slips focus on comprehension checks and personal reflections, which in turn may improve students' adoption of effortful strategies to help figure out key ideas and difficulties. Further, the study findings of Hamdy and Kalisah (2020) provide empirical evidence for the improvement of students' reading comprehension by using exit slips. Their study used three components, such as reflective summarizing, motivation, and feedback, to see the significant improvement in reading comprehension; however, their study didn't determine which component contributed to the improvement. So, this study aims to find out how exit slips contribute to enhancing reading comprehension skills.

2.2 Exit Slips and Self-Reflection

Self-reflection is important for efficient learning, which enables students to reflect, evaluate their understanding, identify challenges, and adopt strategies to improve their reading comprehension skills. Over the years, exit slips have gained prominence as a tool to foster reflective practices in English language learning classrooms. One of the more consistent findings in the literature is that exit slips encourage students to engage in metacognitive self-reflection. Leigh (2012) highlighted in his study how exit slips were helpful for teacher trainees not only to record what they learned in class, but also as a means of understanding and making their own growth. Though the study didn't focus on reading, its findings highlight how a consistent use of exit slips helps develop self-awareness among teacher trainees, which is also a requirement to enhance reading comprehension skills. Likewise, a study conducted by Zou, Jeyaraj, and Ismail (2024) in an English language learning context described how exit slips helped students clarify their beliefs, monitor their progress, and identify areas that need improvement. Together, the findings of these two studies show how reflection through exit slips supports teacher trainees and students alike. Both groups benefit from exit slips as they transform learning from teacher-centered to student-centered. Basco (2021) further strengthened this view by describing the exit slips as a form of formative assessment that allowed students to keep track of their own learning while also giving teachers a clearer sense of where targeted support was needed. However, most of these studies focus on students' perceptions and do not examine the effectiveness of this tool. Overall, these study findings indicate that exit slips have the potential to promote reflective thinking and metacognition, two important learning processes that help students to evaluate their understanding and improve their comprehension skills.

2.3 Exit Slips and Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy is essential to achieve academic success. In addition to fostering self-reflection, exit slips help learners develop independent learning skills, enabling students to take charge of their learning, monitor their progress, show progress in their learning process, and ultimately gain improvement. A study by Jeyaraj (2019) revealed that students become more autonomous in their learning when they are encouraged to reflect on their own progress. Another study by Yuliani and Lengkanawati (2017) emphasized that self-reflective routine and self-instruction are essential to the development of autonomy. Similarly, Fuchs and Müller-Hartmann (2012) highlighted that self-reflection and collaboration in classroom practices play an important role in promoting independent learning among students. Hoxa and Tafani (2015) affirm that self-reflective and self-assessment tools, such as portfolios, could contribute to learner autonomy. Basco (2021) further confirms that exit slips are for both teacher-trainees or future teachers and students alike, as they help in building confidence and taking responsibility for their own progress. Overall, these studies suggest that exit slips allow students to know their needs, reflect, and actively participate in the learning process.

2.4 Research Gap

Overall, the literature review reveals that reading comprehension, self-reflection, and learner autonomy are closely linked in the EFL context. Exit slips function as a useful tool in monitoring and enhancing comprehension, reflecting thinking, and independent learning (Zou et al. 2024). There is evidence from the existing studies that exit slips facilitate deeper learning, allow metacognitive self-reflection, and encourage learner autonomy (Leigh, 2012). These studies support the idea that learner awareness, reflective feedback, and student participation enhance academic productivity (Hamdy & Kalisah, 2020). Existing studies show how the use of exit slips assisted in improving reading comprehension, but they do not specify which aspects of exit slips helped in the improvement. There is no study on how exit slips influence higher-order reading comprehension strategies. Most studies dealt with perceptions, and they do not analyze the findings quantitatively making it difficult to draw a strong conclusion. There is limited evidence on how self-reflection enhances reading performance in the EFL reading context. Only a few studies focused on how exit slips helped learner autonomy in general and not specifically on reading comprehension. In the Omani higher education context, there are a few studies that highlight the reading difficulties of students, but these studies didn't focus on how reflective tools like the exit slips enhance students' reading comprehension, self-reflection, and learner autonomy. Also, no research was done by integrating three indicators like pre-posttests, reflective entries, and autonomous learning to measure the effectiveness of exit slips as an interventional strategy to address the students' academic learning process. Thus, this study aims at addressing the above mentioned research gaps.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A quantitative descriptive research method was adopted to examine the effect of exit slips on students' reading comprehension skills, self-reflection, and autonomy. Paired t-test, frequency distribution, and descriptive statistics with mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data collected through the pre-test, post-test scores, and students' responses on exit slips.

3.2 Participants

The study participants were 34 Level 1 students of the General Foundation Program studying in the Preparatory Studies Centre at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences - Ibra, Oman. Purposive sampling (Tajik et al. 2025) was used as the participants belonged to a class where exit slips were implemented regularly. The participants shared a similar language proficiency level, which was based on the results of a placement test conducted by the Preparatory Studies Centre. The study focused on one institution, and it had a small sample size so it cannot be statistically generalized to other higher educational institutions in Oman, but the insights derived from this study may strengthen the existing teaching practices by fostering the use of exit slips in similar educational contexts.

3.3 Data Collection

Data for this study were collected using pre-test, exit slips and post-test over a four-week intervention period. The pre-test was conducted in the first week of study to assess the reading comprehension level of the students. Then, during the intervention period, exit slips were distributed to students at the end of each reading lesson. A total of 16 exit slips were collected from 34 students over a four-week intervention period, and they were given 5 minutes at the end of the reading lessons to complete them independently. After the four-week period, a post test was administered using the same reading exam to find any changes in students' reading comprehension levels. Also, the exit slips had 5-point Likert scale items to measure students' self-reflection on their reading comprehension progress. All this data was collected during the regular class and was recorded in Excel and SPSS.

3.4 Instruments

3.4.1 Reading Pre-test and Post-test

A reading comprehension test was given before and after the intervention to determine the improvement in reading. The test included matching the main idea, multiple choice, true, false, and not given, 'wh' comprehension questions, and completing the passage with appropriate vocabulary. The task types in the test were matched with the curriculum and the language proficiency level of students. There were 25 questions, and each carried one mark. There were two reading texts of 350 words each. The first reading text had 10 'wh' comprehension questions, and reading text 2 had 15 questions, 5 matching the main idea with the paragraphs, 3 true or false or not given statements, 3 multiple choice questions, and 4 summary completion with correct words respectively. The reading test paper used for the pre-and post-tests was adopted from the previously administered practice exams given to Level 1 students of the Preparatory Studies Center. Since the exam was given to similar Level 1 students, and it followed the content and format appropriate for the Level, and there were no modifications made to the exam, a pilot test was not conducted. So, the same question paper was given for the pre-test and the post-test. This method ensured the validity and reliability of the content and provided a comprehensive result of students' performance in the reading before and after the use of the exit slips.

3.4.2 Exit Slips

Exit slips were used daily at the end of every lesson. The intervention was given for 4 weeks. Exit slips had prompts focusing on 1. "What did you learn today?" 2. "Which part of the lesson was difficult (skimming, scanning, comprehension)?" 3. How well did you understand today's topic? The first two questions are close-ended questions focusing on learning reading strategies and challenges of reading comprehension. The third question is a 5-point Likert-scale focusing on comprehension (1- not at all and 5- fully understand). These questions were self-developed by the research team. The prompts were based on the objectives of the reading lesson. These questions were formulated in simple and easy-to-understand language suitable for Level 1 students. These questions were given to three teachers in the Preparatory Studies Center to validate the content. They confirmed that these questions addressed the lesson objectives and also satisfied the students' level of proficiency. The same set of questions was given during a 4-week intervention period to ensure reliability and to establish a comprehensive comparison of students' input given during the intervention. The students were given an orientation on the purpose of using the exit slips and how to answer the exit slip questions effectively. This procedure satisfied the pedagogical relevance and strengthened the data collection process.

3.4.3 Procedure

Flow-Chart

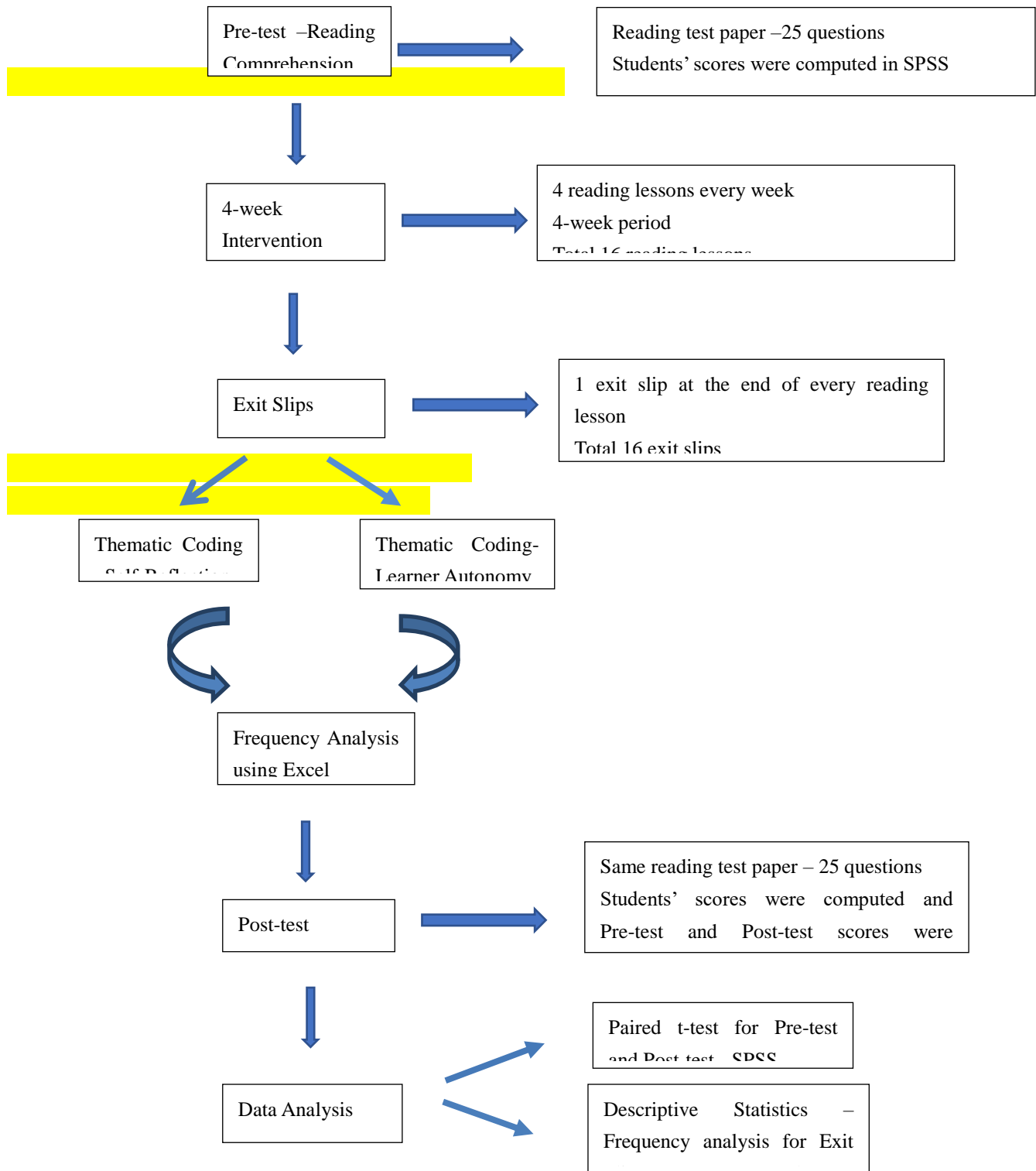


Figure 1. Stages of Implementation

The flow chart shows three stages of implementation of the intervention. In the first stage, a pre-test was administered before giving the intervention to examine students' comprehension level in the reading. The test score of the students was computed in an Excel sheet.

Based on the pre-test results, three tailored questions as mentioned above were formulated. Following this, a four-week intervention was implemented for students. At the end of the intervention period, a post-test was administered. The same set of questions was given. The results were computed and analyzed in SPSS. The Shapiro-Wilk test was run to check the normality of the pre- and post-test results. Since the data was normally distributed, a paired t-test was run to determine whether there was any significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results.

In the intervention period, exit slips with three questions were printed and distributed to students at the end of every reading lesson for four-weeks. Students were given 5 minutes at the end of the lesson to answer the exit slip independently. The exit slips were collected, recorded, and reviewed, and the following lessons were designed based on students' reflections. A total of sixteen exit slips were collected over a four-week period. The insights from the exit slips helped the researcher to understand students' learning deficits, monitor them, and provide them with appropriate learning guidance. The exit slip questions were encoded in an Excel sheet and were interpreted to find out the trends and patterns related to the three questions. The student responses on exit slips of the first two questions, 'What did you learn today?' and 'Which part of the lesson was difficult?' were qualitative in nature but were categorized into themes and were analyzed quantitatively through frequency analysis to see the patterns over the four-week period. The key indicators of self-reflection (awareness on learning process, identification of difficulties, assessment of using appropriate strategies) and learner autonomy (demonstrate responsibility for their own learning, take initiative to address the challenges and apply the strategies without teacher intervention). Frequency analysis was done for these indicators to show their trends over the four-week period. The third question, "How well did you understand today's topic?" used a 5-Likert scale. Descriptive statistics were done to determine the mean and standard deviation scores of students' self-assessed comprehension levels across the four-week intervention period. The findings from the pre-test and post-test, and the results of the sixteen exit slips, were analyzed and compared to confirm that exit slips influence students' reading comprehension, self-reflection, and learner autonomy.

3.5 Data Analysis

The pre-test and post-test data were analyzed quantitatively, and the exit slips data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The pre-test and Post-test data were coded in SPSS. First, a Shapiro-Wilk test was run to check the normality distribution of the data. Since the data satisfied the normality distribution, a Paired t-test was run to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between level 1 students' pre-test and post-test reading comprehension scores after using exit slips. The exit slips responses were analyzed to examine students' self-reflection and learner autonomy. The responses of question 1 "What did you learn today?" and question 2 "Which part of the lesson was difficult (skimming, scanning and comprehension) were qualitative in nature so they were first coded thematically to find evidence for indicators of self-reflection reflection (awareness on learning process, identification of difficulties, assessment of using appropriate strategies) and learner autonomy (demonstrate responsibility for their own learning, take initiative to address the challenges and apply the strategies without teacher intervention). Then, a frequency analysis was done using descriptive statistics to examine the changes in students' approach to reading strategies and their awareness on the reading comprehension challenges. The third exit slip question "How well did you understand today's topic" used a 5-point Likert scale. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Mean and standard deviation were calculated to evaluate the self-assessed comprehension levels of students over the four-week intervention period.

4. Result Section

4.1 Normality Test for pre-test and post-test Scores

Normality of the data was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test. The pre-test (W = 0.973, p = 0.543) and post-test scores (W = 0.969, p = 0.440) were normally distributed, allowing the use of parametric tests.

4.2 Hypothesis Tests

Hypothesis 1: There is a statistically significant improvement in students' reading after using the Exit Slips.

Table 1. Paired t-test of Students' Reading Comprehension Scores before and after using Exit Slips

Comparison	Mean	N	Mean Diff	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t- value	p-value	Cohen's D value
Pre-Test	13.59	34	2.59	4.85	0.83	3.71	0.001**	0.64
Post-Test	16.12	34		3.44	0.59			

Table 1 illustrates the comparison of pre-test and post-test scores of students in their reading tests. To compare students' scores in reading skill before and after using exit slips, a paired-samples t-test was conducted. The test result showed a statistically significant increase in scores from pre-test (M = 13.59, SD = 4.85) to post-test (M = 16.12, SD = 3.44) with a mean difference of 2.52, t 3.71, p = 0.001. However, Cohen's d = 0.64 indicates a medium effect, suggesting that the intervention had a moderate improvement on the post-test scores after the intervention. The mean score of the post-test indicates a substantial improvement in the reading performance.

Hypothesis 2. The use of exit slips significantly shifts students' focus from lower-order reading strategies to higher-order comprehension strategies over the four-week period.

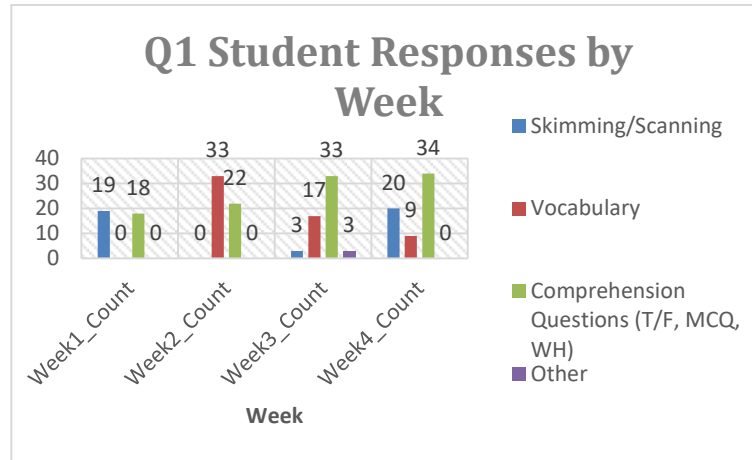


Figure 2. Student Responses by Week

The bar chart demonstrates the students' responses by week for a four-week intervention period to the exit slip question, "What did you learn today?" In week 1, the chart shows that students gave priority to identifying skimming and scanning strategies because their primary focus was on finding the specific information. Similarly, in week 2, students gave priority to understanding vocabulary as independent words and in context. However, from week 3, students' focus shifted from the surface level reading strategies like skimming, scanning, and vocabulary recognition to deeper level strategies like comprehension questions (T/F, MCQ, Wh). By week 4, the higher-order strategies, like the comprehension strategies, secured a dominant focus among students. Their ability to process, understand, and reflect on the reading content increased significantly. This development in students over the four-week period confirms that the use of exit slips promotes reading comprehension and also fosters self-reflection and learner autonomy.

Hypothesis 3. The use of exit slips significantly enhances students' awareness of reading difficulties, shifting from vocabulary-level and scanning challenges to comprehension-level challenges.

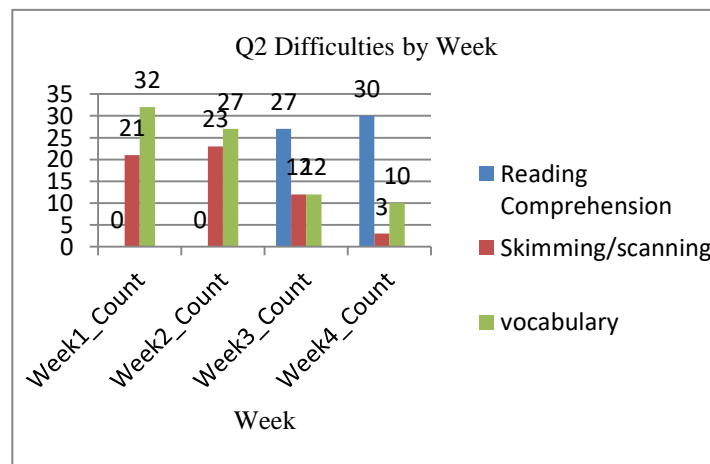


Figure 3. Student Responses on Difficulties by Week

The bar chart displays student responses on difficulties by week for a four-week intervention period to the exit slip question, "Which part of the lesson was difficult (skimming, scanning, comprehension)?" In weeks 1 and 2, students recorded that new vocabulary (32 responses) and skimming and scanning (21 responses) were challenging. This observation reveals that students focused on understanding words and locating specific details in a reading text. By weeks 3 and 4, comprehension of the reading content (27 responses and 30 responses) was more challenging than new vocabulary, skimming, and scanning. From the analysis, it is clear that initially, students focused on lower-order reading skills- skimming, scanning, and new vocabulary- but when students engaged in solving more complex reading texts in weeks 3 and 4, their focus shifted to higher-order reading comprehension skills. Overall, the four-week students' responses show that exit slips supported students to track their learning difficulties from lexical and scanning to comprehension questions and enabled them to reflect on their learning and develop as autonomous learners.

Hypothesis 4. Students' self-assessed comprehension levels increase significantly from week 1 to week 4 as a result of using exit slips.

Table 2. Mean and Standard deviation of students' self-assessed comprehension levels across the four-week intervention period

Week	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1	2.21	0.27	Low understanding
2	3.47	0.34	Moderate understanding
3	4.32	0.16	High understanding
4	4.49	0.04	Very High understanding

Table 2 shows the descriptive analysis of students' self-assessment of their comprehension levels across the four-week intervention period. The mean scores show that students' level of understanding increased steadily from week 1 to week 4. The mean score in week 1 ($M = 2.21$) shows that students struggled to understand the comprehension tasks, but they started improving their understanding in the following weeks, and in the final week, they showed a very high understanding of the comprehension tasks ($M = 4.49$). This suggests that exit slips help students to learn gradually, apply comprehension strategies, and perform better. The result suggests that exit slips also provide the students with the opportunity to employ self-reflection, exercise learner autonomy, and enhance their reading comprehension skills.

5. Discussion

5.1 Effect on Reading Comprehension

The present study results reveal that the use of exit slips has a positive effect on students' reading comprehension. According to the paired-samples t-test results, there is a statistically significant ($p = .001$) improvement in the reading post-test scores of students after the use of exit slips (pre-test $M = 13.59$ to post-test $M = 16.12$) with a medium effect (Cohen's $d = 0.64$). This improvement implies that exit slips as a reflective tool helped students monitor and improve their reading comprehension. Students in the Omani context rely more on exam-oriented reading exam practices because they become anxious about the reading exam, and they focus mostly on getting a passing grade. Moreover, they do not read English texts outside the class because they struggle to read in English, and they are disinterested in reading about contexts that are not relevant to their immediate environment. In addition, their learning environment is mostly teacher-centered. They follow structured instruction that trains them to apply the basic reading strategies to answer the reading exam, and they do not get the opportunity to reflect on their learning process. When reflective tools like the exit slips are incorporated in every day lesson, students' involvement in the learning process is maximized, and this motivates them to transcend from the lower-order reading strategies to higher-order strategies (Chinnathambi et al. 2024a). Furthermore, the exit slip responses showed students' progress from lower-order reading skills, such as skimming and scanning, to higher-order reading comprehension skills. The results of this study align with the study of Hamdy and Kalisah (2020), who found that using reflective summarizing, motivation, and feedback through exit slips improved students' reading comprehension. Likewise, Basco (2021) and Leigh (2012) highlighted that exit slips help achieve necessary reading comprehension by motivating students to use prior knowledge to understand new content, find learning gaps, and thereby strengthen their understanding. Similarly, Chinnathambi et al. (2024a, 2024b, & 2025) discussed the difficulty of Omani EFL learners in moving beyond surface-level understanding to a more profound comprehension. Therefore, these findings confirm that exit slips help scaffold students' progress and encourage them to improve their reading comprehension performance.

5.2 Promotion of Self-Reflection

The gradual improvement in students' comprehension over a four-week self-assessed intervention period (from $M = 2.21$ to $M = 4.49$) shows that exit slips developed metacognitive self-reflection among students. Level 1 students are new intakes to the course. They lack language proficiency and confidence to decide independently about their learning. They depend highly on the teacher to drive them to fulfill their academic goals. Students feel shy, intimidated, and incompetent if they are unable to participate in classroom activities. The structured classroom instruction doesn't give scope to students to self-assess their learning and reflect and improve themselves. The existing practices focus on completion of tasks and don't address individual differences affecting students at a greater level. Lack of awareness of their learning makes students anxious and demotivated, hence they struggle to perform in regular classroom activities and end up performing low in the exam ((Alrabai, 2017; Yousefabadi et al., 2022). However, the use of exit slips at the end of every reading lesson over a four-week period boosts their motivation and confidence as they start reflecting and monitoring their learning progress. Continuous self-reflection helped students to recognize challenges in reading and address them with deeper understanding. This confirms Leigh's (2012) study. He emphasized that exit slips encourage teacher trainees to monitor and evaluate their development. Similarly, a study by Zou, Jeyraj, and Ismail (2024) emphasized that exit slips were helpful in clarifying students' beliefs. In addition, they helped locate the areas that require improvement. The present study draws implications from these studies to apply to reading contexts, indicating that when students regularly reflect on their learning, they can identify their challenges, use suitable strategies, and assess their progress effectively. Furthermore, students' weekly responses showed that exit slips made students engage in reflective practices more deeply, address their challenges in reading comprehension, and showed improvement in their comprehension. This aligns with Basco's (2021) study, which found self-assessment tools like exit slips support both learner awareness and teacher feedback. In the present study, the consistent self-evaluation through exit slips enabled students to take responsibility for their learning, making them conscious of their improvement in reading comprehension throughout the learning process.

5.3 Development of Learner Autonomy

Initially, students' focus was on identifying difficulties related to vocabulary and scanning skills, and in the later weeks, their focus shifted to addressing comprehension challenges. Level 1 students highly depend on the teacher's instruction and intervention to complete tasks in the classroom. They struggle to understand, process, and perform when they are asked to do any task independently. They need the teacher's guidance at every stage of the lesson. This over-dependency limits their decision-making skills. By encouraging students to regularly self-reflect and self-evaluate their learning process, exit slips helped them to monitor their own progress and gradually reduced their dependency on teachers. A four-week use of exit slips initiated more student-teacher interaction, enhanced students' understanding of the tasks, and they were able to identify their reading difficulties and resolve them more independently. This shows that there is improvement in independent learning and in understanding difficult reading tasks among learners. This aligns with Jeyaraj's (2019), Yuliani and Lengkanawati's (2017), and Fuchs and Müller-Hartmann's (2012) studies. They found that reflective practices and self-instruction promote learner autonomy. As students used exit slips regularly to evaluate what they learned and what difficulties they had, they demonstrated greater responsibility for their learning decisions and outcomes. Furthermore, the findings revealed that exit slips helped students demonstrate independent learning through self-evaluating their comprehension levels, identifying and solving their challenges, and showing a comprehensive improvement in their learning. Hoxa and Tafani's (2015) and Basco's (2021) study findings confirm that exit slips increase students' confidence and help in monitoring their progress, and thereby show improvement.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study explored the impact of exit slips on students' reading comprehension through pre-test and post-test scores, and through students' daily exit slips. Sixteen weeks of responses examined how they promoted self-reflection, and developed learner autonomy in an English learning context of a higher educational institute in Oman. The findings showed a statistically significant improvement in students' post-test scores compared to the pre-test scores. This suggests that exit slips are effective as a pedagogical tool to improve students' reading comprehension and enhance their academic performance. In addition, the sixteen exit slips responses revealed that students gradually shifted their focus from the basic reading strategies to more complex comprehension strategies, identified difficulties in reading comprehension and developed independent learning. Exit slips as a self-reflective tool, provided an opportunity to students to develop a deeper understanding of their learning, enabling them to monitor their progress, identify their challenges and improve their academic performance. The use of exit slips enabled students to take ownership of their learning and eventually led to student-centered learning, promoting learner autonomy. The study has important implications for teachers, administrators, curriculum designers, and researchers. Therefore, it is recommended to incorporate exit slips in English learning contexts to improve students' reading comprehension, self-reflection, and learner autonomy.

7. Limitations and Further Studies

Though the study offers valuable insights into the use of exit slips in the reading classrooms, there are some limitations to this study. The study was conducted with a small number of students in one higher education institution in Oman. The implementation of the use of exit slips as an intervention was for a shorter period. Also, the study focused on one skill, especially reading. Other skills, such as listening, writing, and speaking, were not examined. The use of exit slips could also enhance these skills. The data analysis mainly focused on descriptive statistics with frequency distribution, mean, and standard deviation, and the paired t-test. The use of more statistical analysis or mixed methods, like interviews, would have provided profound knowledge on the benefits of exit slips on student learning. Based on the findings and limitations, future research could focus on having a larger group of students from more than one institution, implementing intervention for a longer period, expanding the use of exit slips to other skills, incorporating mixed-method approaches, and conducting comparative studies on exit slips with other formative assessments or reflective practices.

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Authors' contributions

Ms. Latha Anandan is responsible for designing the study, generating data, and writing manuscript

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