

The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

College of Education

**SAUDI TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT READING INSTRUCTION  
IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL)**

A Dissertation in

Curriculum and Instruction

by

Abdulaziz M. A. Althewini

© 2016 Abdulaziz M. A. Althewini

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2016

The dissertation of Abdulaziz Althewini was reviewed and approved\* by the following:

Jamie Myers  
Professor of Education  
Dissertation Adviser  
Chair of Committee

Anne Whitney  
Associate Professor of Education

Sinfree Makoni  
Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics

Elizabeth Smolcic  
Assistant Professor of Education

William Carlsen  
Professor of Education  
Director of Graduate and Undergraduate Education

\* Signatures are on file in the Graduate School.

## **Abstract**

English teachers' beliefs about reading instruction, in a foreign language learning context, are an important issue that has not been examined by teacher education researchers although they have proven that teachers' beliefs shape their teaching practices and impacts their outcomes. This research took this gap into consideration and generated a quantitative study to identify these beliefs in order to assist teacher educators become aware of their teachers' attitudes and properly address their concerns with relevant professional development workshops. The research significantly contributed to the EFL (English as a foreign language) teacher education field and to the Saudi context more specifically by exploring and pinpointing EFL teachers' beliefs about reading instruction and connecting those to recent research on second language reading instruction.

Based on the cognitive theory of reading, a survey of 81 questions was conducted, using a 5-point Likert scale, in order to determine teachers' degree of agreement and disagreement with a variety of different teaching practices in reading. Another goal was to examine whether teachers were more inclined toward one of the prevalent models of reading instruction: skills-based, whole language, and metacognitive strategy approach. The theory and application of these models are discussed, especially within the Saudi context and relevant literature.

The survey was distributed to 78 teachers in two large Saudi universities: King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences and Shugra University. Basic numerical analysis was used to determine the weighted means as well as the agreement proportions of their responses for each item on the survey; and

bootstrap statistical analysis was employed to determine which reading instruction model was more dominant.

Findings indicated that teachers favored the metacognitive strategy approach more than the others. Most teachers (81.7%) identified with the metacognitive strategy approach, while 70.6% and 63% chose whole language and skills-based approach, respectively. Moreover, the study included a micro examination of the teachers' responses within evidence-based major components of reading instruction. It was found that every teacher should be aware of these components, regardless of their preferred models since each model does not capture the total picture for reading processes, but focuses on a certain part of it.

Those components, underlined in the cognitive theory of reading instruction, are six overarching skills that teachers should assist their students to acquire. These are as follows: help students acquire word recognition, gain reading comprehension, be aware of text structure, improve reading fluency, engage in strategic reading, and practice extensive reading. The study found out that teachers highly valued most of these skills except for reading fluency and extensive reading. The study connected this finding with current and relevant research on second language reading, illustrating why these two latter skills are neglected and underestimated; and looked at how teachers support their students' learning of all six skills by offering strategies and practices that enable their students to excel in their reading ability.

## Table of Contents

List of Figures .....	viii
List of Tables .....	ix
Chapter 1.....	1
Introduction .....	1
Background of the Study... ..	1
Importance of Saudi Teachers' Beliefs about EFL Reading.....	2
Research Question .....	3
The Context of the Study: English as a Foreign Language in Saudi Arabia .....	3
Overview .....	3
Common teaching methods in Saudi Arabia and attendant problems.....	5
Chapter 2.....	7
Importance of Foreign Language Teachers' Beliefs .....	7
Introduction.....	7
Definition of Teachers' Beliefs.....	7
Teachers' Beliefs and Practice .....	8
Teachers' Prior Learning Experience and Their View of Teaching .....	9
Teachers' Ability to Change Their Beliefs.....	11
Impact of Teacher Education on Teachers' Beliefs.....	12
Scarcity of Research on EFL Teachers' Beliefs .....	13
Chapter 3.....	14
Theory of Foreign Language Reading .....	14
Reading in a Foreign Language: Adopting a Cognitive Perspective .....	14
Lower-level Processes.....	15
Word recognition .....	16
Syntactic parsing. ....	19
Meaning proposition encoding.....	19
Working memory's role in lower-level processes. ....	20
Higher-level Processes.....	21
Conclusion .....	24
Chapter 4.....	25
Models of EFL Reading Instruction .....	25
Skills-based Approach.....	25
Whole Language Approach .....	29
Whole language approach in the Saudi EFL context.....	33
Metacognitive Strategy Approach.....	34
Metacognitive strategy approach in the Saudi EFL context.....	38

Conclusion .....	39
Chapter 5.....	41
EFL Studies on Teachers' Beliefs about Reading.....	41
Kuzborska (2010): EFL Reading Teachers in Lithuania.....	41
Critique of Kuzborska's study: Contributions and limitations. ....	44
Hernandez-Laboy (2009): EFL Reading Teachers in Puerto Rico .....	45
Critique of Hernandez-Laboy's study: Contributions and limitations. ....	48
Chiou (2004): EFL Reading Teachers in Taiwan .....	49
Critique of Chiou's study: Contributions and limitations. ....	50
Khonamri and Salimi (2010): EFL Reading Teachers in Iran .....	51
Critique of Khonamri and Salimi's study: Contributions and limitations.....	53
Sarairah (2003): EFL Reading Teachers in Jordan .....	53
Critique of Sarairah's study: Contributions and limitations.....	56
Alsamadani (2012): EFL Reading Teachers in Saudi Arabia.....	57
Critique of Alsamadani's study: Contributions and limitations .....	58
Chapter 6.....	60
Methodology.....	60
Format.....	61
Construction .....	62
Pilot Study and Implementation.....	67
Data Collection and Analysis .....	70
Conclusion .....	71
Chapter 7.....	72
Results.....	72
Exploratory Data Analysis .....	74
Saudi teachers' background information.....	74
Numerical Analysis.....	79
Saudi teachers' responses to survey items. ....	79
Statistical Analysis .....	88
Conclusion .....	92
Chapter 8.....	94
Discussion.....	94
Acquiring Word Recognition.....	95
Learning Reading Comprehension .....	100
Awareness of Text Structure .....	103
Becoming a Strategic Reader.....	106
Improving Reading Fluency.....	109
Practicing Extensive Reading.....	112

Conclusion: Implications and Limitations.....	116
References.....	118
Appendix.....	128

## **List of Figures**

Figure 7.1. A sample of the survey core question.....	73
Figure 7.2. A sample of background questions.....	73
Figure 7.3. Participants' gender distribution. ....	74
Figure 7.4. Participants' age distribution.....	75
Figure 7.5. Participants' years of university teaching distribution.....	76
Figure 7.6. Participants' overall experience of English teaching distribution.....	77
Figure 7.7. Participants' highest qualifications distribution.....	78
Figure 7.8. Participants' attended reading courses distribution.....	79
Figure 7.9. Boxplot of weighted means for the survey questions.....	80
Figure 7.10. Skills-based teachers distribution in bootstrap analysis.....	90
Figure 7.11. Whole language teachers distribution in bootstrap analysis.....	91
Figure 7.12. Metacognitive strategy teachers distribution in bootstrap analysis.....	92



## **List of Tables**

Table 6.1. Skills-based approach items.....	63
Table 6.2. Whole language-based approach items.....	64
Table 6.3. Metacognitive strategy approach items.....	65
Table 6.4. Types of reading genres.....	66
Table 7.1. Agreement percentage and weighted means for the teachers' attitude toward the process of reading.....	82
Table 7.2. Agreement percentage and weighted means for the teachers' attitude toward the learning of reading.....	83
Table 7.3. Agreement percentage and weighted means for the teachers' attitude toward the teaching of reading.....	84
Table 7.4. Agreement percentage and weighted means for the teachers' attitude toward the types of reading material.....	86
Table 7.5. Agreement percentage and weighted means for the teachers' attitude toward teaching materials used in reading courses.....	87
Table 7.6. Agreement percentage and weighted means for the teachers' attitude toward their aim of reading instruction.....	88
Table 8.1. Teachers' attitudes toward word recognition.....	95
Table 8.2. Teachers' attitudes toward reading comprehension.....	100
Table 8.3. Teachers' attitudes toward text structure awareness.....	103
Table 8.4. Teachers' attitudes toward strategic reading.....	106
Table 8.5. Teachers' attitudes toward reading fluency.....	110

Table 8.6. Teachers' attitudes toward extensive reading.....	113
--	-----

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

After reviewing many different studies on EFL teacher education and second language reading, and considering my national needs and individual interests, I elected to examine the importance of Saudi teachers' beliefs in and perceptions of EFL reading instruction. This topic has not been widely explored in the EFL context in general and in a Saudi context specifically. Here, in the first chapter, I describe and discuss my study—background, context, and the research question.

### **Background of the Study**

I became interested in the field of EFL Saudi teacher education for two reasons. First, I learned about teacher education and its subfields during my master's study. I came to realize the importance of this topic and began to relate it to my own social and cultural contexts. My master's thesis focused on the design of a local workshop that utilized a learner-centered approach in developing teachers' linguistic and pedagogical knowledge, skills, and abilities. My first step was to shed light on this topic and attempt to create a contextualized product for the benefit of teachers. My personal concern for this issue continued after graduating from the master's program almost seven years ago.

The second reason for selecting this topic was that as a Saudi national and bilingual researcher specializing in this area, I recognized the local need. There has been little research on and about the Saudi context while there has been significant local focus on teaching methods, student learning and several other areas. I

interacted with various Saudi teachers and gained insights into their concepts, struggles, contexts, and complaints. They verbalize their concerns about the absence of their voice in scholarly research, universities' academic programs, and government-mandated curricula and assessments. In addition, some blame these teachers for students' failures despite the fact that these teachers have strict government-mandated limitations on curriculum, assessment, time, and classroom size. Local Saudi research on EFL teachers is needed to improve EFL teaching and outcomes.

### **Importance of Saudi Teachers' Beliefs about EFL Reading**

In addition to learning about EFL reading during my last six years of public school, I taught EFL reading for three years in the preparatory year program at the King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences, and was exposed to the processes involved in creating syllabi, selecting textbooks, developing teaching materials, and designing exams. I observed teachers' implementation of their beliefs about reading as reflected in the classroom. Such beliefs include the importance of having a glossary, pronunciation, teaching extensive vocabulary with few practice exercises, reading aloud, and written exams. They do not show knowledge of research and theory, but attribute teaching methods to their personal experiences. There has been no discussion or argument about how to teach reading. Development workshops seem not to be useful since they do not critically explore beliefs and practices, but rather focus generally on several topics in EFL teaching. According to recorded outcomes for teaching reading in the university context, almost 20% of students fail each semester. This number is considered normal by

program heads and administrators. Clearly, while there are some problems in teaching reading, addressing, updating, and changing EFL teachers' beliefs so that they are in line with current research and theory is a major problem.

### **Research Question**

The main research question was:

- What beliefs do Saudi university teachers have about EFL reading instruction?

### **The Context of the Study: English as a Foreign Language in Saudi Arabia**

Before discussing the importance of teachers' beliefs about EFL reading, it is necessary to have essential information about the local context for my study. This section outlines the current state of English language instruction in Saudi Arabia. A brief history of EFL instruction in Saudi Arabia and some common problems and challenges in this context are provided.

**Overview.** Saudi educational policymakers added English to the national curriculum in response to increased tourism by non-Arabic-speaking people and the growing globalization of the oil industry. English has been made a required subject in both intermediate and secondary schools via a curriculum locally developed to ensure its appropriateness to Saudi values and customs. In addition, this curriculum never touches on cultural aspects of English-speaking countries.

English as a foreign language was first taught in Saudi Arabia in 1927 (Al-seghayer, 2005). Saudi Arabia was never colonized so a foreign language was not imposed from outside—rather, “it was the Saudi government that undertook the initial steps in introducing English to its people” (Al-seghayer, 2005, p. 125). The

Saudi government foresaw the importance of English in future relations with other countries outside the Arab world. According to Al-seghayer (2005), there was "... great expansion of the oil industry [that] crystallized the importance of developing a foreign-language program that would train citizens to staff government and Arabian American Oil Company positions" (p. 126). This economic need forced the Saudi government to have bilingual citizens.

During the early period of oil production, the Saudi government needed employees who could communicate with the rest of the world. Western prominence in the oil industry was the major reason for deciding to teach English to students in public schools. Furthermore, almost two million Muslims come from all over the world annually to Mecca to perform the Islamic rituals of Hajj. Some of these people do not speak Arabic, but rely on English as a global lingua franca with their Saudi hosts.

Consequently, English was brought into intermediate and secondary schools around 1927, "but with no definite learning objectives" and "no defined curriculum" (Al-seghayer, 2005, pp. 126, 128). In the 1960s, educational policymakers began to develop syllabi based on specific objectives of teaching English, using Allen and Cooke's Living English for the Arab World curriculum as the standard (Al-seghayer, 2005). Since 1980, the English curriculum has been revised several times. These revisions were designed to facilitate students' learning of English and to help them use it outside the classroom. The Saudi government's support for these projects indicates the true importance of English to Saudi policymakers and government administrators.

Al-seghayer (2005) noted that English today has high prestige in Saudi Arabia. It is the only foreign language taught in the entire country, both in intermediate and secondary schools, and is offered in universities as an elective or a major field of study. English proficiency has become important in the job market because both public and private corporations require employees to have some English ability.

**Common teaching methods in Saudi Arabia and attendant problems.** Al-seghayer (2005) stated that Saudi teachers mostly use the audio-lingual method (ALM) and the grammar translation method (GTM) in language instruction. The audio-lingual method involves “monotonous grammatical rule drills and repetition of words and phrases” (Al-seghayer, 2005, p. 129). Zaid (1993) noted that language laboratories, an essential component of the audio-lingual method, are typically absent from Saudi English classrooms, so that students are not exposed to real spoken English. Concerning the grammar translation method, Alhaydib (1986) noted that teachers focus on grammar explanation and vocabulary memorization. Both systems suggest that English instruction consists merely of grammar/vocabulary drills and reading/writing activities.

Within these two systems, teachers must follow the curriculum and assessment systems required by the Saudi Ministry of Education. The obligation to stick to a proscribed curriculum prevents teachers from creating their own materials and/or assessment measures. Thus, teachers’ role has been restricted.

Saudi teachers also rely on extensive use of Arabic in English classes, which Almulhim (2001) characterized as “overuse.” Of course, this is not a local

phenomenon; studies have shown, for example, how South Korean and Taiwanese English teachers use their respective native languages as the languages of instruction in school (Li, 1998; Savignon & Wang, 2003). It may be that explaining grammar rules and vocabulary meanings in students' native language facilitates learning and understanding. However, this extensive usage of Arabic in English classes is one common problem that would not help students improve their English over time.

Nevertheless, according to Al-seghayer (2005), the overuse of Arabic and the practices of ALM and GTM in the present system of English education in Saudi Arabia "fail to produce learners who can carry on a basic conversation or comprehend a simple oral or written message" (p. 129). There has been a low return on investment from six years of classroom instruction. In sum, teachers' usage of native language and of ALM and GTM in the Saudi context are not helping students in learning English.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Importance of Foreign Language Teachers' Beliefs**

This chapter establishes the significance of recognizing and identifying EFL Saudi teachers' beliefs. Some theoretical definitions of teachers' beliefs within a broader context and the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practice are discussed. It clarifies how teachers' prior learning experiences shape their view of teaching and whether teachers are able to change their beliefs. The impact of teacher education on teachers' beliefs is argued, followed by an articulation of the rationale for studying EFL teachers' beliefs about reading.

#### **Introduction**

Investigating teachers' perceptions of their teaching and learning is an interesting line of research that indeed will lead to a better conceptualization of education (Fang, 1996). Mainstream educational research has highlighted the importance of teacher cognition over the last 25 years and produced valuable and agreeable findings: "teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalised, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs" (Borg, 2003, p. 81). It shows teachers as major players who reflect on their beliefs and take actions within their teaching arena.

#### **Definition of Teachers' Beliefs**

Teachers' beliefs have been defined as "implicit theories" (Clark, 1988), "knowledge structure" (Roehler et al., 1988), and "personal practical knowledge" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987). These definitions show that teachers' beliefs are a sort

of special knowledge gathered during learning and teaching experiences, but not always explicitly displayed.

Eisenhart et al. (1988) pointed to the “difficulty of finding a working definition of teachers’ beliefs in the educational research literature” which is due to “the fact that researchers have other different conceptions of the source of teacher beliefs” (p. 52). Different sources influencing teachers’ beliefs have led researchers to rarely focus on definition. Taking on different attitudes and ignoring the problem of defining teachers’ beliefs, other researchers have begun to identify, examine, and assess the connection between teachers’ beliefs and practice (McCarty et al., 2001) and whether prior experience with language learning influences their beliefs and whether it is possible to change teachers’ beliefs (Gregoire, 2003; Tillema, 1995).

### **Teachers’ Beliefs and Practice**

It has been stated that teachers develop their own theoretical beliefs about language learning and teaching, which in turn outline their actual teaching practices (Davis & Wilson, 1999; Gebel & Schrier, 2002; Harste & Burke, 1977; Johnson, 1992; Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991; Woods, 1996). Research has shown a connection between teachers’ beliefs and practices. Studies have demonstrated consistency between teachers’ beliefs and their practices (Deford, 1985; McCarty et al., 2001). These results have led researchers such as Deford (1985) and Borg (2001) to consider that beliefs predict and guide practices.

This connection has been rejected in other studies (Fang, 1996; Wilcox-Herzog, 2002). Lenski et al. (1998) interpreted the divergence between beliefs and practices as due to social, cultural, and contextual factors. These factors are

important in indicating whether teachers are able to implement their beliefs.

Teachers may be hindered from practicing their beliefs by their particular government, school, and community standards. The evolution of those beliefs may also play a role as teachers change their beliefs periodically (Lenski et al., 1998).

Connections between beliefs and practices can be established but with an awareness of the impact of reality, involving several external factors, on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices.

### **Teachers' Prior Learning Experience and Their View of Teaching**

Teachers' experiences as learners influence their cognitive views of teaching and learning. More specifically, their prior experience with language learning shapes their beliefs. As second-language students, they internalize many aspects of teaching—Lortie (1975) characterized this as the “apprenticeship of observation” theory. This conclusion stems from several studies of second language teachers. Bailey et al. (1996) asked seven MA candidates to write an autobiography and reflect on how their prior language learning experience had shaped their teaching philosophies. These participants cited several factors that had made their learning experiences positive:

- Teachers have good personality and style;
- They are caring teachers with clear expectations;
- They show respect to their students;
- The students have enough motivation to keep learning;
- And both teachers and students create positive classroom environment.

Bailey et al. (1996), commenting on their study results, stated that “the memories of instruction gained through their [teachers’] ‘apprenticeship of observation’ function as de facto guides for teachers as they approach what they do in the classroom” (p. 11). Teachers’ opportunity to explore themselves through autobiographical reflection helps them in formulating teaching theories and influences their classroom practices.

Johnson (1994), in a study of preservice teachers’ instructional decisions during a practicum, showed that these decisions were based on their view of teachers, practices, and materials. She found that, “preservice ESL teachers’ beliefs may be based largely on images from their formal language learning experiences, and in all likelihood, will represent their dominant model of action during the practicum teaching experience” (p. 450). Teachers’ personal concepts of teaching are influenced by their learning journey and inform types of instruction they elect to implement in the classroom.

Similar to her study, Numrich (1996) reported that novice teachers’ experience as learners guided them in avoiding or promoting certain teaching activities. Some valued the inclusion of cultural elements in their teaching because they liked having them in their learning experience. Others disliked teaching grammar due to negative experiences with it and so withheld grammatical instruction from their teaching. Other studies of novice teachers (Almarza, 1996; Farrell, 1999; Golombek, 1998; Richards & Pennington, 1998) asserted the role of prior experience in establishing teachers’ beliefs.

Substantial evidence of the importance of prior learning experience has been

offered in research on practicing teachers. Borg (1999) found that teachers preferred not to use grammatical terminology too often due to past experiences in fruitless learning contexts where grammar-based teaching had been dominant. Ebsworth and Schweers (1997) examined teachers' experiences with grammar learning and identified a profound impact of such learning experiences on their teaching. All in all, teachers' prior learning experiences formulate their conceptualization of language teaching.

### **Teachers' Ability to Change Their Beliefs**

In addition, research has shown that teachers rarely change their beliefs; offering tools and information toward that end has not improved the outcome (Kagan, 1992). Teachers' experiences and beliefs about learning and teaching often act as obstacles to considering other, more up-to-date teaching methods, in some cases because doing so contradicts their beliefs. Kagan (1992) noted the difficulty of changing teachers' beliefs, while Eisenhart et al. (1988) found otherwise, highlighting the possibility of shifting beliefs when teachers are provided with related and additional knowledge. This intransigence does not necessarily indicate that their beliefs are wrong per se, but teachers may hold ideas inconsistent with findings from recent research, signifying a gap between research and practice.

To help teachers update their beliefs, professional development workshops improve teachers' knowledge but must address their beliefs (Chiou, 2004). Chiou (2004) commented on teacher professional development, "[i]n order to make knowledge digestible and applicable, teachers' current beliefs have to be identified before they can be changed" (p. 16). Workshops developed by teacher educators

should consider teachers' beliefs and explore them within a constructive discussion. Such training opportunities should aim to facilitate their learning and further develop teachers' instructional techniques (El-Okda, 2005). Their beliefs must be addressed in a manner that encourages teachers to supplement and update experiences and beliefs with more valuable and related knowledge.

### **Impact of Teacher Education on Teachers' Beliefs**

There has been an argument in the literature about whether teacher education could change teachers' beliefs. Kagan (1992) revealed an insignificant relationship between these variables. However, most researchers in the area of language teaching recognize the impact of teacher education on teacher cognition (Borg, 2003). Richards et al. (1996), studying five trainees in a teacher training course in Hong Kong, found that training changes the participant's beliefs about their role in the classroom, professional discourse, continuity in lessons, and teaching evaluation. Such impact is shown differently for each trainee, indicating that none masters the course at the same level. Rather, their individuality emerges based on their personal experience.

Sendan and Roberts (1998), who were interested in identifying types of impacts on teacher education, asked this question: "what is the nature of observed changes (if any) in the structure and content of the student teachers' personal theories at different stages of the training programme?" (p. 234). They found that teachers' ongoing and dynamic experiences in absorbing new information led them to reflect on and restructure their beliefs in order to gain a clear and complex map of their personal theories. They found that training exerted an effective impact on

teachers' beliefs, with variability among teachers based on their cognitive process of learning and the extent to which they change their beliefs accordingly.

### **Scarcity of Research on EFL Teachers' Beliefs**

Few studies have been conducted of EFL teachers' beliefs. Borg (2003) reported that between 1976 and 2002, 64 studies were performed in the field of second/foreign language teachers' beliefs. Most did not explore teacher beliefs within a specific area of teaching, such as reading, but examined more general themes such as knowledge growth and change. There has been some focus on gaining an understanding of teachers' beliefs in first language settings, but little attention has been paid to teachers' cognitions in foreign language contexts (Borg, 2003, 2006). Another gap in this field is the lack of studies on in-service teachers' beliefs in foreign language settings (Borg, 2009)—very few have been conducted.

As for teachers' beliefs about reading, Chou (2008) stated that, "the little amount of studies on investigating teachers' beliefs in the area of second language reading instruction have indicated an unclear picture of teachers' beliefs construct in teaching reading" (p. 192). Borg (2003) indicated that only four studies on teachers' beliefs about second/foreign reading instruction were conducted before 2002. One Saudi study investigated this issue from one side (teaching cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies), but without reaching out to a large number of Saudi teachers and exploring social and school factors (Alsamadani, 2012). An examination of this study and its gaps may be found later in the dissertation. Thus, there is a need to examine EFL reading teachers' beliefs in general foreign language contexts and in the Saudi context, more specifically.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Theory of Foreign Language Reading**

Saudi instructors of English as a foreign language struggle with their students' lower levels of proficiency, in a cultural context in which the ability to read in a foreign language is not socially motivated. Increased effectiveness will require Saudi teachers to re-conceptualize their EFL reading instruction according to their contexts and current research on best practices in EFL reading instruction. In all, they should be aware of what would make their instruction more suitable and interesting to their students.

To assist these teachers in improving their knowledge of and practices in EFL reading instruction, given the lack of research on Saudi EFL reading instruction practices, the following literature review highlights my view of EFL reading. In the next chapter, the three models of reading instruction—skills-based, whole language, and metacognitive strategy approach—are examined in detail within the Saudi EFL context.

#### **Reading in a Foreign Language: Adopting a Cognitive Perspective**

Reading has been framed by many researchers as mental processes used by readers to comprehend a text. Grabe (2009) clarified this cognitive aspect of reading by stating that reading is “a combination of text input, appropriate cognitive processes, and the information that we already know” (p. 74). Reading is a complex task that requires the integration of several mental processes at the same time. This focus on the cognitive aspects of reading is necessary for teachers as a major knowledge base on which to build



their curriculum and teaching practices. There have been two divisions of reading-related cognitive processes within EFL reading instruction: lower-level and higher-level. Both are very vital for readers who seek better reading comprehension (Grabe, 2009).

In order to understand how reading works, we must be aware of the complexity of reading and its component skills. A number of studies on reading have attempted to understand its complexity and what sort of component skills create a fluent reading process. They, as already stated, classify reading skills into two complex categories: lower-level and higher-level processes.

### **Lower-level Processes**

In this section, I discuss in detail lower-level processes and outline their functions and how they work (Grabe, 2009; Koda, 2005; Pressley, 2006). Lower-level processes of reading focus on the automatic ability of readers to recognize the linguistic features of the text and consist of three components: word recognition, syntactic parsing, and meaning encoding as proposition.

Central to these processes is working memory, which is necessary for these processes to exist and coordinate with one another. Before explaining each process, we should be conscious of two things. First, labeling these processes as lower level does not imply that they are simple. Instead, they are essential to fluent reading once they become automatized. In other words, reading could not take place without acquiring and learning these lower-level processes. Second, these processes are complex categories, each one with its individual nature and properties.

Combining these processes together would provide a clear picture of how reading

works (Anderson, 2000; Grabe, 2009; Stanovich, 2000). Below is an elaboration of lower-level processes—word recognition, syntactic parsing, and meaning encoding as proposition—along with some relevant issues that impact how these processes operate.

**Word recognition.** Word recognition is a vital process in fluent reading and is used to predict reading comprehension abilities (Adams, 1999; Perfetti, 2007; Grabe 2009). Word recognition is considered the most important factor in successful reading since it is not possible for readers to comprehend without being able to recognize words quickly and accurately and being sensitive to orthographic, phonological, and semantic usages (Grabe, 2009; Kuzborska, 2010). Word recognition should be automatic and rapid to improve the reading fluency of a reader. Research has confirmed that reading comprehension cannot be successful without identifying and understanding the graphic symbols connected to each word.

Research also has produced some outstanding statistical findings (Grabe, 2009). First, a reader focuses on 80% of the content words (Pressley, 2006; Stanovich, 2000). The reader recognizes a word in less than 100 milliseconds (Breznitz, 2006). These numbers have led some researchers to believe that a fluent reader could read a text at 250–300 words per minutes (wpm) (Grabe, 2009).

The word recognition process demands sub-skills that are necessary for fluent reading (Grabe, 2009; Perfetti & Hart, 2001). This method constitutes an interaction of orthographic, phonological, semantic, and syntactic processes. It also

involves automatic and rapid word recognition with activated access to the reader's mental lexicon. An explanation of each one of these sub-skills is provided below.

***Orthographic processing.*** It is important for the reader to have visual recognition of word forms, which include letters, letter groups, and visual word shapes (Grabe, 2009). Research affirms a correlation between time needed for visual processing and length of a word, as the more letters the word has, the more time needed by the reader to recognize the word (Pressley, 2006).

Along with this relationship, orthographic processing is important for recognizing complex words with morphological affixes such as un-, ful-, and in-. Many words in English are actually expanded by adding morphemes (Biemiller, 2005). Identifying the original words graphically helps the reader's automatic word recognition when they encounter the same words with morphemes. Thus, both graphic and morphological forms are necessary for successful reading (Carlisle, 2003; Grabe, 2009).

***Phonological processing.*** The phonological activation of words helps in recognizing the word more automatically. It involves a simultaneous interaction between orthography and meaning. Readers develop their phonological processing over extended periods of years while acquiring their reading abilities (Grabe, 2009; Hulme et., 2005).

***Semantic and syntactic processing.*** There has been an argument about the role of semantic and syntactic processing as related to lexical access. According to Grabe (2009), semantic and syntactic information is acquired after word recognition and is essential for a better comprehension process. On the other hand, before word

recognition, semantic and syntactic information has an impact on automatic spreading activation (Coltheart et al., 2001). Spreading activation means that when words are activated, they spread energy so their semantic neighbors (e.g., other words) have similar meanings. As the spreading activation is processed, related words are accessed and connected with the activated words (Grabe, 2009; Balota, Yap & Cortese, 2006). Semantic and syntactic processing is important for connecting words together in the lexical network.

***Lexical access.*** When readers encounter certain word forms, their mental lexicon is activated to look for similar forms. For example, when they read the word 'hat,' they recognize its form orthographically and phonologically and their mental activation associates this word with other words with similar features (e.g., fat, tab, etc.). As these word forms are activated more than once with similar visual and sound features, they become more solid in the readers' mental lexicon. This activation requires significant energy to retrieve the matching lexical item and make it available for the working memory.

***Automaticity.*** Orthographic, phonological, and semantic processes rely on automaticity. In order for readers to carry out successful word recognition, their processes must be automatized in the sense that they cannot stop themselves from doing these processes. Automaticity is seen as being central to fluent reading since readers engage in these processes simultaneously. This ability is acquired through repeated practice of a certain procedure until readers do not need to attend deliberately to the task. Word recognition processes become automatic only after continual practice, exposure, and learning of words.

**Syntactic parsing.** Syntactic parsing or word integration is the second lower-level process and is considered important for reading comprehension (Perfetti, 1999; Grabe, 2009). In addition, syntactic parsing ability is the rapid awareness of the grammatical order of a sentence, phrasal groupings, and pronoun references; it helps readers to read accurately and recognize how they should understand a sentence (Grabe, 2009; Kuzborska, 2010).

Information is gained from word order, tense, modality, and other grammatical features such as prepositions and qualifiers to support reading fluency. Such grammatical resources contribute to reading processing time; Carpenter et al. (1994) showed that complex syntactic structure negatively impacts reading processing time. Readers' level of comprehension depends, in part, on their familiarity with different types of grammatical structures.

**Meaning proposition encoding.** This encoding is seen as the third lower-level process, and it involves readers' mental gathering of information from words and structures to build semantic meaning units (Fender, 2001; Grabe, 2009). In this process, readers combine their word recognition and syntactic parsing into meaning units to make sense of what they read. In other words, understanding both the meaning of the words and the sentence structure enables readers to have a clear idea of the writer's message (Grabe, 2009; Kuzborska, 2010).

These semantic meaning units (also called semantic propositions) are generated in the same time with word recognition and syntactic parsing. Grabe (2009) provided an example of semantic meaning units. These units are a network of types of information, connected by a meaning unit. The information is linked with

one another, and the network is available when readers combine inputs from word recognition and grammatical structure. An activated network linkage is added to other networks so that readers have a sense of semantic propositions and their connections in their reading. Semantic propositions are used as units of information necessary for reading comprehension, according to several articles in the research literature (see, e.g., Singer & Leon, 2007; Grabe, 2009).

**Working memory's role in lower-level processes.** Working memory is seen as vital to reading comprehension because it engages in all processing operations needed (Baddeley, 2006; Grabe, 2009). Working memory, as explored by cognitive psychologists, is an important component of human memory, and serves the human brain side-by-side with long-term memory. It has active storage with a limited capacity that enables it to carry out limited processes. It keeps information active for two seconds while information may be stored longer through rehearsal and reactivation (Grabe, 2009; Kintsch, Patel, & Evicsson, 1999).

Working memory, as explained by Grabe (2009), is not a box or a place away from long-term memory. It is actually a collection of networks in the long-term memory that can be activated at any time. These networks are formed by certain inputs that make it active. This recently created network is called working memory and has simultaneous processes. Both working and long-term memory create a link that enables an integrating and storing process so some information used in working memory may remain in the long-term memory while others may stay for a little while and then vanish. Therefore, both memories cooperate with one another when activation becomes available.

Working memory plays an important role in lower-level processes (Grabe, 2009). It facilitates the working of phonological, orthographic, syntactic, and semantic processes as it stores activated words. It assists reading comprehension by storing information necessary for text comprehension and suppresses non-relevant information (Baddeley, 2006; Grabe, 2009). It collects information on words and clauses to form a network that helps readers to comprehend and make sense of relevant information.

### **Higher-level Processes**

These processes enable readers to reach a complete understanding of the reading text. They encompass the skills of establishing purposes for reading, using reading strategies, making inferences, forming a summary of what the text is about, and developing an attitude toward the text. When thinking of the most important process in higher-level comprehension, the process of coordinating and integrating ideas from the text allows readers to draw a total picture of the text. This process involved in forming a meaningful representation of the text is called a text model of reading comprehension (Grabe; 2009; Kintsch & Rawson, 2005).

This model takes place when clause-level meaning units are developed by gathering information from syntactic parsing and semantic proposition formation; and then these units are added to a network of ideas derived from the text (Grabe; 2009). The new units may join the network in different ways—by the repetition of an idea, object, or character; by the reference to the same idea with different expression; or by inferences that link new units with existing information in different relationships such as part-whole and subordinate-superordinate.

Once the connections among network ideas are repeated and clearly formed, the main ideas in the text are easily guessable. Such repeated ideas are more active in the network than other ideas that do not relate to and support the connecting inferences and are not used primarily for linking the whole text together. These latter types of ideas quickly fade from the network. Therefore, only relevant ideas remain active as long as they are linked together and shown to be crucial for text understanding.

The text model of comprehension is the readers' internal summary of the text's main ideas as they develop an understanding of it. However, those readers with lower-level language skills or little background knowledge experience more difficulties in comprehending a text since they cannot draw conclusions and make inferences about it. It is essential for readers to increase their language level and background knowledge as they become familiar with different text genres. Predicting the discourse organization of the text comes from numerous reading experiences and helps in inferring the gist of the text. Internal text summary is very vital as it motivates readers to draw perspectives on the text.

As the text model of comprehension is established, the situation model of reader interpretation takes place (Grabe; 2009). The readers' method of interpreting the text is influenced by their background, motivation, task, and goal. Readers form their interpretation of the text by focusing on their feeling about it and whether it relates or contradicts background knowledge. Readers build the situation model when they are able to integrate text information with other ideas developed



from their background knowledge; and they interpret it based on such background knowledge.

In other words, their background knowledge, along with their motivation and goal, determine and impact their interpretation of the text. Someone who is reading a book on English education in the United States expects, through their goals of reading, culture, and interest, to identify ways in which they will use the book and interpret it. Being able to integrate such text information with background knowledge is indeed a sign of fluent reading.

The text model should precede the situation model in offering critical information on understanding the text. However, the situation model, which draws on the text model, pushes readers to dig deeper to understand the text based on their purposes and provide a critique of it. The situation model does require more knowledge of language and genres. It is important to note that genres play a crucial role in terms of how to see and interpret the text.

The situation model offers readers a chance to connect information with skills in background knowledge and inferencing. Both skills have a huge impact on reading outcomes. When readers form their text model of comprehension and then expose their information for interpretation, background knowledge and inferencing shape their reaction to and perspective on the text. Both could offer the opportunity for incorrect interpretations when readers make inaccurate inferences or do not have relevant and sufficient background knowledge.

The text and situation model is the best for readers who wish to improve their ability to monitor their comprehension, use strategies when needed, establish

their reading goals, and fix their comprehension problems. Several studies have confirmed the importance of working memory and attentional processing although how it works cognitively is not clear yet (Baddeley, 2007; Grabe; 2009). However, working memory helps readers to be selective in terms of focusing on a certain passage and evaluating whether they have a good understanding of it. The extent to which working memory operates efficiently differs among people, leading to individual differences in reading abilities.

## **Conclusion**

Both lower- and higher-level processes facilitate reading activity by performing certain cognitive processes outlined in this chapter. Viewing reading comprehension processes in this way highlights the complex nature of reading, which requires coordinating several processes in a rapid way. Mastering these processes ensures an ultimate reading experience. Both processes are represented on different dimensions by the three EFL reading instruction models illustrated in the next chapter, each of which considers the teaching of reading from distinctive foundations and principles.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Models of EFL Reading Instruction**

This chapter outlines the three models of reading instruction and discusses them in detail, explains their implications for instruction, and contextualizes them within the Saudi EFL reading context.

#### **Skills-based Approach**

The skills-based approach views reading instruction as a bottom-up, lower-level decoding process of recognizing words, emphasizing sound relationships, and focusing on the smallest units (letters and words). It focuses on improving skills relating to sight words by promoting word recognition instruction, viewing vocabulary and knowledge of spelling and grammar as the most important elements in reading comprehension (DeFord, 1985). In this process of learning vocabulary and finding its meaning, students rarely use their own experience and background knowledge, but should report the exact meanings intended by writers. Meaning is framed “as a commodity that resides in texts to be reproduced by readers and reported to teachers” (Kuzborska, 2010, p. 95).

This approach is based on the notion that learning to read requires learning separate linguistic components such as grammar, vocabulary and phonics. Instructional practices view learning language as skills that need to be acquired and practiced in the classroom, using graded basal readers or curricula organized according to levels of vocabulary and grammar (Wallace, 1992). Teachers should work on these skills, especially grammar and spelling,

and divide their time among them, with the central activity being control of their classrooms to assist students in gaining basic knowledge of language. Their teaching is explicit in presenting and transmitting knowledge of correct pronunciation, grammar rules, and vocabulary meaning with the goal of students' accurate achievement and completion of learning tasks (Kuzborska, 2010).

In addition, their teaching using the skills-based approach “tends to be exclusively on *what* is to be taught rather than considering *how* learning takes place” (Wallace, 1992, p. 54). It does not emphasize how and in what ways teachers could help their students acquire language more easily in an engaging and exciting environment, but rather focuses on which linguistic components to teach and whether students will be able to learn accurately.

Students, when learning about sound-symbol relationships, are required to produce and use words accurately, as well as syntactic patterns in a manner leading to well-formed sentences, while in a systematic and cohesive way transferring ideas into a written text (Kuzborska, 2010). They receive feedback on their oral and written mistakes to ensure that they are aware of the accurate usage of language and have more product-oriented activities that value the accurate construction of certain learning tasks (Kuzborska, 2010; Wallace, 1992). For example, when learning specific grammar rules, students should not only complete learning activities provided by their teachers, but also generate correct answers to confirm their learning of the grammar rules. This focus on accuracy as the major criterion of

assessment, rendering students simply able to reproduce words, may not help them to make sense of a text with their language background and experience (Wallace, 1992).

Teachers also recognize that fluency, in addition to accuracy, is another major purpose of reading and method of assessment. They create reading-aloud activities that help students not only to read texts accurately but also to read them faster with a high level of word recognition. However, they disregard their students' personal attitudes and critiques of the texts by not giving them chances to explore and express their understanding and evaluation of them (Carrell et al., 1988).

Kuzborska (2010) summarized the characteristics of the skills-based approach into the following points, clarifying students' and teachers' functions:

- Students:
  - Should read words accurately
    - Focusing on pronunciation
  - Must know all words in a text in order to understand it
    - Learn a lot of vocabulary
  - Should learn grammar to help their reading comprehension
  - Should use translation to improve their comprehension
- Teachers:
  - Should transmit necessary knowledge and skills
  - Frequently ask students to read aloud

- Teach word chunks in English such as prefixes and base words
- Follow textbook by covering all possible material and activities
- Ask factual questions on some details in a text
- Teach new vocabulary before reading
- Immediately correct student's oral mistakes
- Discuss a text with the whole class
- Use textbooks that are graded and sequenced in terms of language structure and vocabulary
- Have the following purposes in teaching reading:
  - To help students read accurately
  - To help students pass exams
  - To improve students' vocabulary
  - To help students understand grammar
  - To improve students' reading fluency

**Skills-based approach in the Saudi EFL context.** Most EFL teachers generally follow some principles of this reading instruction approach, based on my personal background and observation as an English learner in Saudi public schools for six years and EFL teacher for three years. Teachers focus more on grammar, spelling, and teaching vocabulary with more explicit and direct methods of delivering teaching content, with the emphasis on valuing accuracy.

However, they do not think about how to make their teaching useful and appealing to their students, creating more opportunities to engage in language production and collaboration with their peers, such as writing papers, assembling a portfolio, and engaging in group work. They do not examine ways in which to improve their students' learning performance by looking at their contextual learning problems such as difficulties with self-learning and motivation to practice the language. This teaching method must be changed because many Saudi students graduate from public schools with a minimum level of language learning, and sometimes lack the ability to talk and write.

### **Whole Language Approach**

Whole language approach, a top-down model and a higher-level focus of reading, delineates general rules for teaching and learning but without providing concrete teaching activities. A major concept in this approach is that language is whole. Language systems are interconnected and never should be separated, as reflected in the call to integrate reading, writing, and other skills. This approach does not tolerate any teaching activity that focuses on small segments of skills and patterns of grammar, vocabulary, and phonics. Those following this approach believe that knowledge is socially constructed, valuing multiple interpretations of one text rather than one single understanding. Students read the text for comprehension while they communicate with the writer by sharing their ideas and analyses of their text.

Whole language approach stresses that teaching and learning must be authentic. The beliefs is that “language is natural, and so is language learning” (Chiou, 2004, p. 20). Teachers are motivated to expose students to authentic learning experiences by reading authentic texts found in literature, newspapers and other materials in which students are interested; controlled vocabulary and preselected stories such as basal readers are not used (Pearson, 1989). There is a greater focus on meaning than on accuracy and skills (Smith, 1985); teachers’ first priority is to help students comprehend text.

Whole language instruction emphasizes reading as an active process to which students must bring their prior experience and background knowledge, allowing them to engage with the text by making predictions and looking at particular information without reading the whole text (Smith, 1986). This background knowledge includes any relevant information that students connect with their actual reading texts; students construct meaning using their own understanding, examining the text content and ideas, not its grammatical features. Also, students are required to use context when they face a difficulty understanding certain words. They must guess the meaning of these problematic words, based on their comprehension of the whole text and on some contextual clues and they should be provided with emotional support and praise, even if their guesses are incorrect (Birch, 2007).

Reading in the whole language approach is viewed as a natural ability that students acquire by reading, similar to the development of their oral language when they learn to speak with others by speaking. The students’



pre-reading experiences with interesting materials helps them to improve their reading skills (Goodman, 1989; Smith, 1986). Rich reading experiences are central in helping students acquire reading skills.

Kuzborska (2010) stated that the whole language approach is similar to humanistic theory in terms of emphasizing student-centered classrooms, where students should collaborate with others and speak on their perspectives and choices. Whole language also highlights how knowledge and language are socially constructed; students should be given chances to produce their understandings and ideas, making it similar to the constructivist school. Students are major active participants who are motivated to learn and collaborate and are able to construct their ideas.

Whole language theory views teaching second/foreign language reading in a manner similar to first-language instruction in terms of promoting meaning construction but ignoring grammar. Teachers are facilitators who help students learn by offering support and resources to produce their knowledge and who value their experiences and varied interests. Teachers should not be forced to create a pre-existing plan, but should base their teaching on their students' background. They should create an environment in which students collaborate with and build on each other's ideas and tolerate language errors. Instructors teach grammar and vocabulary in an incidental way and relate it to the reading text (Kuzborska, 2010; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This approach aims for collaborative learning which respects and recognizes student interests.

In summary, the whole language approach has the following features, according to Kuzborska (2010):

- Students:
  - Create their own meaning of a text
  - Relate their background knowledge and experience to a text
  - Guess unknown words by using context
  - Read extensively and silently in and out of classroom, with no exercise after reading
  - Read a text selectively, focusing on certain parts that are interesting to them.
  - Develop their learning of reading naturally, with little explicit teaching of reading
  - Role-play what they understand from a text
  - Discuss their reading in a working group
  - Reading texts that are interesting to them
    - Texts should be chosen by them
- Teachers:
  - Assess students on their writing, speaking, and performing rather than multiple-choice or short-answer tests.
  - Use do pre-reading activities such as looking at graphs and headings
  - Ask inferential questions

- Teach vocabulary incidentally when meeting new words in a text and when students ask
- Have the following purpose in teaching reading:
  - To develop students' reading interest

**Whole language approach in the Saudi EFL context.** This approach has some interesting fundamentals such as collaboration, student-centered classroom, building the curriculum on students' interests, and focusing on students' production of the language, which should be promoted among Saudi teachers. However, the whole language approach would not work in the Saudi context for several reasons. Learning a foreign language is not the same as learning a first language, especially in the Saudi context, where students are not motivated to learn English; also, it is difficult for teachers to create authentic learning.

Students need a pre-modified curriculum and teaching materials that focus on grammar and vocabulary more clearly since authentic texts are incontrovertibly difficult for them, creating more learning obstacles that include their pre-existing demotivation—these all act to prevent easy access to and understanding of the language. Authentic texts even cannot be implemented because teachers are not able to collect sufficient materials to interest their students socially and culturally since English publishing in the Saudi context, focusing on their values, is scarce.

Moreover, students do not have English pre-reading experiences within an Arabic culture; thus, whether authentically or not, they may be

exposed to English reading only in the classroom. While it is true that learning to read requires more experience and practice, it is difficult for teachers to force students to read outside the classroom with their self-selected texts since reading for pleasure or learning is not common among Saudi students. A motivating environment at home or school is needed where they may read, learn on their own, and share their ideas.

Students also may not be able to use their background knowledge and prior experiences to analyze reading texts with their predictions unless they engage in a more systematic and close learning of vocabulary and grammar, which would gradually help them to read easily and with understanding. Whole language theory has some exciting learning components such as student collaboration and opportunities to express ideas, but as a 'whole,' it cannot be implemented in the Saudi EFL context.

### **Metacognitive Strategy Approach**

The metacognitive strategy approach is derived from interactive models that view reading as a combination of both higher- and lower-level processes. It states that readers either may use both models or one of them, based on different factors such as text type, proficiency level, reading purpose, and strategy use (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). The aim of the metacognitive strategy approach is to raise awareness of reading processes such as text structure understanding, comprehension monitoring, usage of background knowledge, and inferencing. This view of reading shows how complicated reading is, involving many processes and factors.

Kuzborska (2010) pointed to two major aspects of this approach. Readers should be able to reflect on their cognitive processes, otherwise called “knowing about comprehension.” This means that readers are aware of anything they do not understand. They should know that a certain text is not making sense to them. The second aspect is metacognition, called “knowing how to comprehend,” which is readers’ ability to control or regulate their thinking while reading. In this approach, readers use a combination of fix-up strategies when they struggle with comprehension. These strategies aim to help readers read with more comprehension. They include looking back, rereading, summarizing, and finding any missing information or contradiction in the text. Such strategies create more reading engagement and control.

Students must learn the processes they need to have in order to comprehend a text. These processes include knowledge of text structure and discourse organization and learning to use the fix-up strategies and monitor their comprehension, albeit for an advanced learning level (Grabe, 2009; Kuzborska, 2010). They are not only aware of their reading difficulties but also of several processes and tools they can use, independently, for comprehension. By being explicit in students’ learning, these processes make this approach a unique method that aims not just to teach content but also skills and strategies students need throughout their school and job lives.

Teachers’ emphasis on reading strategies with different texts and contexts is a major objective of the metacognitive strategy approach. Teachers prepare their curriculum in a more systematic way to introduce

comprehension strategies such as finding the main idea in a text and recognizing its structure. This curriculum also includes intensive training on how to use these reading strategies more effectively.

As facilitators, teachers should clarify the importance of each strategy and model its use in different contexts and with other strategies. Class time is used to assist their students to acquire these strategies and practice them gradually in order to become strategic readers (Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Kuzborska, 2010).

In addition, teachers focus on preparing their students to learn about reading for academic purposes and selecting materials based on their students' needs and goals (Grabe, 2009; Kuzborska, 2010). For example, if their students are to major in medical areas, they should be exposed to medical and scientific reading texts and learn their nature, structures, and specific vocabulary. With this information, they would be able to create their own text in the same genre as well as a variety of materials on different topics, including textbooks, fiction, students' written works, and news reports, and apply their reading strategies frequently (Hyland, 2006; Kuzborska, 2010).

Based on this view of reading, this approach has the following components, as listed by Kuzborska (2010):

- Students:
  - consciously use certain and relevant strategies to comprehend a text
    - Should learn these strategies and apply them

- Monitor and control their reading comprehension
- Have a purpose in reading
- Learn text structures such as narrative or expository
- Learn how to fix comprehension problems
- Differentiate between opinions and facts
- Teachers:
  - Teach how to find the main ideas in a text
  - Teach transition words such as thus and since
  - Teach how to use graphic organizers
  - Use locally produced textbooks
  - Use corpus materials to identify certain language examples for a writer in a particular area
  - Use a wide variety of texts on different topics
  - Use genres of fiction such as novels and short stories
  - Use written works by students
  - Use instruction manuals, internet texts, news reports, research article, and brochures
  - Have the following purposes in teaching reading:
    - To improve students' study skills
    - To help them be independent readers
    - To develop their critical thinking
    - To help them to read in other subject classes
    - To help them write well

**Metacognitive strategy approach in the Saudi EFL context.** Saudi teachers would find this teaching method more flexible in terms of recognizing their students' needs and offering needed tools and strategies. They would be able to address their reading problems since the approach's emphasis on "knowing about comprehension" and "knowing how to comprehend" requires the teachers to have insights into their students' level of proficiency and base their curriculum on those levels. Also, this approach focuses on teaching reading for academic purposes, which is the case in Saudi EFL classrooms. Students learn reading strategies in order to become independent readers in their major of study.

In addition, Saudi teachers should teach a set of reading strategies such as learning about text structure and distinguishing between facts and opinions, using different reading contexts and materials. This offers students more time to learn about these strategies and practice them with learning groups. While learning from their teachers' explanations and modeling of the strategies, they invest their classroom time on applying what they learn by using them.

The metacognitive strategy approach seems to work well in the Saudi EFL context. However, it requires Saudi teachers to first learn about reading processes and strategies, how to teach them, how to create supplementary materials and activities, and how to assess their students' learning. They also must take into account their students' different needs and language levels and develop a local curriculum that bears on them.



Saudi teachers who are facing these challenges should be aware of this approach's learning-related advantages, such as creating more engaging and student-centered classroom, with more reading materials relevant to their students' interests and more practice on reading strategies. The metacognitive strategy approach should be considered by Saudi EFL teachers and educators since it views reading as a local need that motivates teachers to create, experiment, and implement their curriculum.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I discussed different methodological divisions (skill-based, whole language, and metacognitive strategy approach), all of which attempt to address reading from different dimensions but with a goal of helping EFL students to become better readers. I demonstrated the principles of these models, offering examples and critiques of how they work within the Saudi EFL context.

The metacognitive strategy approach has some advantages because it takes into account both lower- and higher-level reading processes and focuses on local students' needs by creating a curriculum designed to assist them in becoming independent readers through frequent practice and application of reading strategies. Those strategies include: finding the main idea, using sentence context to identify the meaning of unfamiliar words, and recognizing text structure.

However, this approach needs to be situated within the Saudi EFL context by constructing unique ways of teaching reading that fit with students' culture, interests, and needs, and which may be gradually absorbed by teachers by acquiring

knowledge of reading strategies, learning how to introduce them in an engaging and interactive way, and being able to assess their students' learning.

In addition, skills-based approach helps the teachers to focus on lower-level reading processes since they should create activities in word recognition to develop their students' vocabulary knowledge. However, the students need to go beyond that as the whole language approach offers them an opportunity to focus on reading and gaining a comprehension of higher-level skills such as inferencing, using background knowledge, and being exposed to authentic reading texts.

Saudi EFL teachers' beliefs and attitudes about these approaches have been explored in a survey adopted from Kuzborska (2010), which is discussed in chapter 6. Exploring whether these teachers hold a dominant view of reading instruction and whether they experience different principles in teaching reading is an interesting inquiry.

## **Chapter 5**

### **EFL Studies on Teachers' Beliefs about Reading**

The chapter contains a detailed discussion of relevant studies on teachers' beliefs about reading in similar EFL contexts from multiple perspectives. It provides an extensive summary of each study and then offers a critique of its contributions and limitations. The critique focuses on the similarities and differences between this Saudi study on teachers' beliefs about reading instruction and other studies.

#### **Kuzborska (2010): EFL Reading Teachers in Lithuania**

Kuzborska (2010) believed in the relationship between beliefs and practice. To examine these beliefs, she conducted a study on eight Lithuanian EFL reading teachers at the university level, since there had been very little research on this issue in this context. She subscribed to the cognitive theory of reading process, which is divided into two categories: lower-level (such as automatic word recognition) and higher-level (such as monitoring comprehension) processes. She believed in the importance of strategic reading, highlighting a metacognitive-strategy approach to reading instruction as the most suitable method for a university context. She highlighted the importance of explicit teaching of cognitive abilities as part of a higher-level comprehension process and the value of motivation for reading. She used an evaluative-interpretative paradigm that is evaluative in terms of comparing these experiences with established findings in reading research.

Her focus was on identifying teachers' beliefs and practices and their interpretations of them.

Over a five-month period, she studied teachers who had various years of experience, no certificate for TESOL and no training on TESOL in the last three years. Some teachers used their in-house textbooks while two used commercial textbooks. Their students were first-year undergraduates. She used a beliefs questionnaire, lesson observations, interviews, document data analysis, and video-stimulated recall to identify and describe teachers' beliefs and practices. During her 90-minute observations, she audio- and video-recorded teachers' lessons. In video-stimulated recalls, soon after recording their lessons, she asked participants to listen to or watch a certain episode of the recording as stimulus and then had them explain what they were thinking about at that moment. She also asked some general questions about reading.

Her data analysis involved deductive and inductive approaches. Her deductive approach compared her teachers' experiences with established norms in research on reading. Her inductive approach looked at the realities, settings, and contexts surrounding her teachers' experiences. She did not explain how her deductive and inductive analysis worked.

After coding and constructing a table of all observations, she placed all of them under three major categories: a whole-language approach, a skills-based approach, and a metacognitive-strategy approach. She found that most teachers preferred the skills-based approach, focusing on vocabulary and reading aloud.

Verbalizing their beliefs about reading process, these teachers saw reading as a decoding process involving words and sentences, and if the text is difficult, readers should translate it. They believed that readers should understand all the words to understand the text, so they focused in their teaching on helping students study words and translate them.

However, referring to some theories, the researcher indicated that one could construct text meaning by integrating their prior knowledge with the text information, considered as “ the hallmark of expert reading in a topical domain” (Grabe & Stoller, 2002, p. 8). Focusing on every detail in the text would convince students to view reading as a decoding process, read slowly, and not develop their reading speed. Also, the researcher stated that not all words are important, referring to Nuttall (2005), since readers’ background knowledge could compensate for their gaps in vocabulary.

The teachers believed that learning of reading consisted of vocabulary, translation, accurate reading, and text discussion. All of them assumed that learning certain vocabulary in order to improve students’ reading abilities was their high priority. The researcher agreed with the teachers about the importance of vocabulary, supported by reading research literature. She suggested the positive use of focused vocabulary instruction, vocabulary learning strategies, students’ awareness of individual words’ frequencies and meanings, and graphic organizers. The author also stated the argument of using translation in the classroom, but she valued translation as a positive tool in student learning. She also talked about the controversy in reading aloud, on

which little research has been conducted. She indicated that reading aloud can be beneficial at the beginning and advanced levels.

The teachers preferred whole class discussion as their mode of interaction with students. The author, however, stressed the importance of collaborative learning, where teachers should have excellent strategies for forming groups. She did not explain whether something was wrong with the whole class discussion.

She found a gap between theory and practice, which is due to not helping teachers “to reflect on and question their existing classroom practices” (Kuzborska, 2010, p. 120). As for teacher training seminars, the author noted “congruence between what teachers want and need to learn and what language educators teach them” (Kuzborska, 2010, p. 120). These seminars do not address the impact of their ideas on teachers’ practice, so the teachers would not be able to see their value. The author suggested that teacher educators who introduce new theories of reading teaching should help their teachers to be conscious of that and let them practice and evaluate this theory within their classroom experience.

**Critique of Kuzborska’s study: Contributions and limitations.** Her small-scale study is the most recent study on teachers’ beliefs in the EFL university context, and the only one to use both quantitative and qualitative methods. Another strength is her comparison of her teachers’ responses with established findings in second language reading research. Also, she examined the contexts surrounding teachers’ experiences. She offered a good explanation of her views on reading and

her appreciation of the metacognitive-strategy approach to reading instruction. Her findings clarified those beliefs held by teachers and offered a detailed examination. Based on these findings, she asserted the importance of addressing teachers' beliefs and instructional values in order to connect theory with practice.

However, the study had some limitations. The author did not demonstrate how well the metacognitive-strategy approach would work in her EFL context, and the ways in which teachers could apply it explicitly in their classrooms. She did not investigate the reasons for teachers' preference for whole-class discussion and non-use of cooperative learning.

Kuzborska's study and this Saudi research on EFL reading teachers' beliefs are similar in terms of highlighting EFL reading teachers' beliefs and connecting them with EFL reading research. Kuzborska's study outlined some beliefs held by teachers within the three models: whole-language approach, skills-based approach, and metacognitive-strategy approach. These frameworks served as a foundation for classifying and identifying teachers' beliefs in both studies. However, in a different context, the Saudi research, is a large-scale study that aimed to quantify these beliefs and revealed their prominence within Saudi EFL reading instruction.

### **Hernandez-Laboy (2009): EFL Reading Teachers in Puerto Rico**

For her dissertation project, Hernandez-Laboy (2009) studied Puerto Rican EFL teachers' beliefs about reading comprehension and strategies, using a questionnaire for descriptive statistics and frequencies. She asked four questions. What reading strategies did teachers use in the classroom to improve comprehension? What knowledge did teachers have about systematic teaching of

reading strategies? How frequently did they use reading strategies? And how effective were reading strategies?

Her participants were 34 in-service teachers from different levels and types of schools but in the same area. From her 15 years of experience as an English program supervisor, she noted that reading is a major difficulty for EFL learners and on standardized tests, students showed weak reading abilities. Thus, she sought to learn more about the common practices of reading strategy instruction through a survey so that she could obtain a comprehensible view and relate it with established norms in research on reading. Her research findings were aimed at guiding and preparing future research on EFL reading teachers.

Her proposed view of reading instruction was that students must engage in explicit instruction in reading strategies to be able to read beyond what was stated in the text. They should use their background knowledge and higher level of thinking with the text. Her objective was to discover whether it was possible to implement explicit strategic reading instruction to improve comprehension.

She used convenience sampling, which is a nonprobability sampling type. One strength of her study method was that its findings could be generalized to her population—EFL teachers in the Santa Isabel School District. This area was selected due to students' low EFL scores. She controlled selection of the area of sampling.

She used the descriptive statistical method because she wanted to gain insights into the existing situation for EFL instruction in reading strategies. She structured questions and limited possibilities for her participants. She viewed such controls as positive since they “facilitate interpretation”, are “less time consuming”



and control for teachers' individual differences (p. 40). There was a significant reliance on number. The advantages in using a survey, according to Rea and Parker (2005), include implementing it in a timely fashion and with a well-structured sample, and generating standardized data for statistical analysis.

The survey was used for self-report information and to allow generalizing of findings. However, she did not explain her method for developing her survey, which emphasized cognitive and social-constructivist approaches. She did not explain how these approaches related to reading. After creating her survey, she asked three experts to review it. It was divided into three sections: demographic information, teachers' beliefs about reading comprehension, and teachers' use of reading strategies in the classroom. She used this survey to identify commonly held beliefs about reading instruction.

Her findings were as follows:

- Most teachers frequently used reading strategies in the classroom;
- They did not implement the think-aloud protocol and use of text structure;
- They were not perceptive about students' lack of enthusiasm;
- They expressed their doubts about students' ability to answer inferential questions;
- They engaged in good management of comprehension difficulties;
- They did not teach how to have a purpose in reading;
- They did not teach how to generate questions;
- They did not teach comprehension monitoring; and

- They agreed on the need for effective comprehension strategies.

She generally found that teachers value reading strategies but differed in which strategies and how to use them in their classroom.

### **Critique of Hernandez-Laboy's study: Contributions and limitations.**

Hernandez-Laboy clearly focused on whether Puerto Rican ESL teachers engaged in strategic reading instruction and gathered information by having them respond to her questionnaire. Her survey sample was small, and the study was conducted in one area of Puerto Rico. Her findings included counting some common practices in strategic reading instruction, which offered information on how these teachers viewed reading instruction.

Her study had some limitations. She did not explain how she composed her survey and on what theoretical principles it was designed. She delineated some best practices in reading instruction such as using background knowledge and critical thinking, but did not demonstrate how these practices would work in her study context and how they were related to her survey. Her view of strategic reading instruction was unclear, given that most of her literature review on reading instruction was borrowed from first-language reading settings.

Connecting her study to this Saudi study of EFL reading teachers' beliefs, first, both are quantitative studies, examining teachers' beliefs about reading. The Saudi research had a broader framework for EFL reading instruction, adopting the cognitive theory of reading instruction and using the three models of reading instruction. A survey was distributed to two larger universities in Saudi Arabia to get a clear and general picture of the current state of EFL reading instruction.

### **Chiou (2004): EFL Reading Teachers in Taiwan**

Chiou (2004) studied Taiwanese elementary EFL teachers' beliefs about reading and language teaching. She also wished to look for similarities and differences among teachers in terms of beliefs about reading and language teaching. The significance of her study was in offering findings that could help teacher educators to gain greater insights into teachers' beliefs as well as into teacher preparation programs. It has been one of the few big studies conducted in the EFL context and more specifically in Taiwan.

Study participants were 271 preservice and 180 inservice teachers. She used the quantitative approach by adapting three surveys: the 1985 Deford Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP), Horwitz's (1985) beliefs about the language learning inventory (BALLI), and the Foreign Language Attitude Survey (FLAS) (De Garcia, Reynolds, & Savingnon, 1976). TORP is a survey containing 28 statements about reading, and using a 5-point Likert scale. Participants' survey responses were categorized into three theoretical reading orientations: phonics, skills, and whole language. BALLI is another survey that looks to identify teachers' beliefs about foreign language teaching. It includes 27 statements divided into four areas: attitude toward foreign language, difficulty with language learning, nature of language learning, and language learning strategies. FLAS is also used in examining teachers' beliefs about foreign language teaching. It has 25 items in three areas: grammar-translation, audiolingual, and communicative methods.

The researcher translated these three surveys from English into Chinese to facilitate teachers' responses. The researcher did a pilot study using these surveys

with 10 teachers to check testing time; all participants were able to answer the surveys. Her sampling was based on cluster sampling of selected groups. All people in each group participated in the study.

Collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) statistical software. Statistical methods included descriptive analysis and independent T-test. She found that a large majority of teachers preferred skills instruction for vocabulary learning, which highlights vocabulary building. A very low number of teachers preferred phonics instruction. None liked the whole language approach.

In terms of their attitude toward foreign language teaching, most valued fluency and disagreed about the importance of accuracy over fluency. Most thought that cultural knowledge and simulated real-life situations would help students' learning process, but a pure focus on linguistic features would not help. There was no difference between preservice and inservice teachers' responses to the TORP survey. However, teacher statuses were found to influence teachers' beliefs about foreign language teaching. Preservice teachers were more optimistic about being able to deal with language learning difficulties.

**Critique of Chiou's study: Contributions and limitations.** Her study was a large-scale study based on three questionnaires. She explained the components of each survey and her translation process from English to Chinese. For her reading questionnaire, dividing her participants into three groups (phonics, skills, whole language) with clear boundaries helped her to analyze the data easily and identify differences among the groups.

Chiou 's study had some limitations. She did not delineate her assumptions about which reading instruction approach would work better and why. Her study lacked some background information about reading instruction and teacher education in Taiwan and their strengths and weaknesses. She did not examine why most of her teachers preferred the skills approach and looked for school and social factors.

Chiou's study is an excellent complement to the Saudi EFL reading teachers' beliefs project. Both studies emphasized the value of teachers' beliefs about EFL reading instruction, used quantitative methods, and had a large number of participants. The Saudi research scanned the current state of reading instruction, exploring teachers' beliefs and identifying some major actual characteristics of Saudi EFL reading instruction.

### **Khonamri and Salimi (2010): EFL Reading Teachers in Iran**

Khonamri and Salimi's (2010) study investigated Iranian EFL high school teachers' beliefs about reading strategies. They also sought to compare their beliefs with their practices to identify discrepancies or consistencies. They talked about the importance and value of teachers' beliefs, which can be derived from their experiences, personality, and educational principles (Richards & Lockhart, 1996). Such beliefs are complex and eclectic (Clark & Peterson, 1986). There has been disagreement about whether their beliefs influence their practices (Pajares, 1992). It is believed that some social, psychological, and environmental factors influence teachers' classroom practices and hinder them from showing their beliefs. Such factors include school requirements, social expectations, and mandated curricula.

Study participants differed by age, experience, qualification, and specialty. The authors used Chou's (2008) Teaching Reading Strategies Questionnaire. A 5-point Likert scale ranged from least to most important. The questionnaire had two sections: reading strategy and individual background. The first section, reading strategy, had three parts: (a) the importance of reading strategies in reading comprehension, (b) the necessity of reading strategies in teaching practices, and (c) actual employment of reading strategies in teachers' classes. The individual background section was designed to gather personal information such as age and teaching experience. The study sample was composed of 57 teachers from Mazandaran, an Iranian region.

Findings showed that teachers believed in the importance and necessity of teaching reading strategies. In their answers to part A of the survey, teachers indicated valuing metacognitive strategies the most and the linguistic category the least. In part B, metacognitive strategies were rated as being of the highest importance while translation was the lowest. Their findings are consistent with those from Chou's (2008) study.

However, results indicated a significant degree of inconsistency between their beliefs and practices. Such a mismatch can be expected (Fang, 1996) and may refer to factors such as lack of procedural knowledge and of training in reading strategies (Mohammed, 2006), or contextual ones such as big classes, students' different levels, workload, motivation, and parents' demands (Fang, 1996). These factors could hold teachers from implementing their beliefs.

### **Critique of Khonamri and Salimi's study: Contributions and limitations.**

Their study had an additional layer that other studies did not have: It connected beliefs with practices. It reflected on the importance of thinking about social, psychological, and environmental factors that held teachers from applying their beliefs. Rather than observing several teachers for long periods of time, the researchers used a questionnaire emphasizing both beliefs and practices. Although their findings showed how well teachers valued metacognitive reading strategies, they indicated that teachers were not able to implement them.

The study had some limitations. It did not survey a large number of EFL teachers from different areas of Iran in order to get broader and richer results. It did not discuss the context of Iranian EFL reading instructions such as the strengths and weaknesses identified by other local researchers and teachers. It did not deeply explore reasons for a mismatch between teachers' beliefs and practices, with reference to their actual teaching context.

Connecting this study with the Saudi research, both used a survey to identify teachers' beliefs. The Saudi research, however, did not observe teachers' practices and compare them to their survey responses. A different and broader survey, adopted from Kuzborska (2010) was used instead. In addition to surveying teachers about their beliefs, the Saudi research examined their beliefs and connected them with evidence-based research and practice.

### **Sarairah (2003): EFL Reading Teachers in Jordan**

Sarairah (2003) sought to explore Jordanian elementary EFL teachers' beliefs about three major theoretical orientations to reading instruction: skills, phonics,

and whole language approach. His goal was to determine whether a relationship existed between their beliefs and education level and between their beliefs and their gender.

To show the significance of his study, he demonstrated that the effective teaching of reading depends on the teachers (Harste & Burke, 1977). According to Duffy (1977), the teachers are the most critical variable in instructional effectiveness. Due to the high value of teachers in this area, the researcher identified and examined their beliefs about reading instruction. Given its context, the study was important to local teachers because it examined their beliefs and provided deeper insights on them and their teacher educators.

To gather data, the researcher used Deford's (1985) Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP) in order to identify which approach teachers preferred most. As a rationale for using this questionnaire, he showed that theoretical orientation influences teachers' practices (Moss, 1980), and referred to Deford's (1985) questionnaire, which is designed to classify teachers and allow them to explore theories and practices more deeply. Also, Deford (1985) stated that this instrument was designed to assist both teachers and researchers in making their instruction consistent with research and theory.

The sample was composed of 229 teachers, male and female, with different qualifications (bachelor's degree or two-year college degree), drawn randomly. Data were analyzed using descriptive and statistical procedures such as means, standard deviation, and two-way ANOVA.

Findings were as follows:



- The majority of teachers (56.8 %) preferred the skills approach, which means teaching reading via decoding, vocabulary, grammar and comprehension. Such tasks are taught in isolation. Teachers agreed with some statements from TORP such as the importance of fluency, glossary, and word repetition over time. This majority attitude implied that their teaching is teacher-centered and that they viewed second language acquisition as an “unnatural” process requiring systematic instruction (Sarairah, 2003, p. 116). This result is consistent with some previous studies such as Feng (1992), Hall and Napier (1994), and Mastrini-McAteer (1997). The author interpreted this result as being due to the foundation of EFL teaching on “preconceived curriculum, instruction moves from part to whole, literacy related knowledge flows from teachers to the students” (Sarairah, 2003, p. 117).
- Findings also showed that 31% of teachers supported the phonics model. These teachers believed in the importance of letter-sound emphasis in decoding. A total of 87.8% of teachers preferred bottom-up theories (skills and phonics) which emphasize the importance of decoding words and isolating teaching tasks.
- The whole language approach was supported by 12.2% of teachers who believed that reading skills (speaking, writing, reading) are interrelated and integrated in one meaningful context.

- There was a significant difference between teachers' beliefs and their gender "in favor of female" (Sarairah, 2003, p. 121). More female teachers favored phonics, skills, and the whole language model.

**Critique of Sarairah's study: Contributions and limitations.** This large-scale study was conducted not only in Jordan but also in the Arab world. He justified the importance of analyzing teachers' beliefs when he noted that his study would provide some feedback about how teachers think. He also explained his theoretical framework, emphasizing the validity of the whole language approach. His study sample was very large, which gave his study more reliability. Similar to Chiou (2004), he used Deford's (1985) questionnaire, but in his own local context. He connected his findings with some other studies, but added one more layer by examining the potential influence of gender role on teachers' beliefs.

His study had some limitations. He surveyed only public elementary school EFL teachers and so his results and recommendations were relevant only in the Jordanian context. Although he explained his preference for the whole language approach from the research point-of-view, he did not spotlight whether this model would work in his local context, taking into account school and social factors that may shape how teachers believe and behave. He did not examine why many teachers favored the skills approach, probably by creating another questionnaire or interviewing them.

Sarairah's study is a worthy contribution, uncovering several beliefs held by Jordanian teachers. Both his study and the Saudi project had similar settings in terms of common social and religious grounds. The Saudi research, in addition to

using three models of reading instruction as a holistic signal of the teachers' beliefs, did examine certain individual beliefs within research-based major components of reading instruction, regardless of the model to which the teachers were more inclined. Practical strategies and tools for better reading instruction were offered.

### **Alsamadani (2012): EFL Reading Teachers in Saudi Arabia**

Alsamadani (2012) was the only Saudi researcher to examine Saudi EFL teachers' beliefs about cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies. According to his own experiences, teachers focused more on silent reading and comprehension questions. He condemned that practice and preferred to focus on metacognitive strategies. His major goal was to see if the teaching process was "proceeding properly" (p. 831). His concern was that if teachers' beliefs were not being reflected in their practice, "this could indicate that something is amiss that might undermine the entire process" (p. 831). He demonstrated his interest in teachers' attitudes by quoting Squires and Bliss (2004) that teachers' beliefs influence their teaching. He used an attitude questionnaire to collect quantitative data on 60 male teachers in Mecca, which is located in the western region of Saudi Arabia, and looked at means and standard deviations. An initial draft of the survey was reviewed by five EFL college-level teachers for its content and face validity. He also observed the practices of ten teachers based on variance in their answers to the questionnaire, and interviewed four of them. He did not explain the criteria and procedures for interviewing the teachers. He compared their practices with their attitudes and found that these teachers recognized the importance of cognitive reading strategies while disregarding/not being familiar with metacognitive strategies. All preferred

reading strategies were cognitive—this was evident in interview findings where 75% of the teachers knew almost nothing about the metacognitive. Survey findings indicated, however, that some non-preferred strategies were cognitive, so it may not matter to them whether they were cognitive or not. Teachers needed more time to teach reading strategies and claimed that it was difficult to teach metacognitive ones. There was no significant relationship between teachers' qualifications and their attitudes, using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient.

### **Critique of Alsamadani's study: Contributions and limitations**

Similar to Kuzborska (2010), he focused on whether teachers implement cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies. His findings showed that a large percentage of teachers preferred cognitive reading strategies. He talked about problems teachers experience while teaching reading, such as time limits. These factors prevent teachers from applying a better instructional method.

While the first local examination of this issue, this study had several limitations:

- Small sample to be generalized to all Saudi teachers;
- Sample from one region of Saudi Arabia;
- Focus only on whether teachers liked to teach to metacognitive or cognitive strategies;
- No investigation of why Saudi teachers preferred certain strategies over others;
- No investigation of

- EFL reading curriculum and whether it focused on specific strategies and prevented teachers from practicing their beliefs,
- teachers' school and social environment, and
- teachers' beliefs about students' learning of reading; and
- No look at the difference between first and foreign language settings when analyzing teachers' beliefs about metacognitive reading strategies.

Conducted in the same context as this study, Alsamadani's study intended to examine teachers' beliefs about reading instruction. The Saudi study, when compared with Alsamadani's study, examined teachers' beliefs not only about metacognitive reading strategies but also about skills-based and whole language reading instruction approaches. It created a more obvious picture of what sorts of beliefs teachers had and connected them with established findings in the research.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Methodology**

Given the importance of teachers' beliefs about reading instruction and the absence of research on EFL teacher education in the Saudi context, a study was needed. To ensure a broader context, I examined Saudi teachers' beliefs about EFL reading instruction, using a survey to collect as much relevant data as possible. The advantages of using a survey with a 5-point Likert scale included the ability to: conduct the study over a short period of time, establish a well-structured and wide sample, and generate standardized data for statistical analysis (Rea & Parker, 2005). The survey may be used to gather teachers' self-report information, gain access to information on their beliefs, and allow the generalizing of findings within the broad sample. One major disadvantage is that it has been used with researcher-determined statements and thus may not allow participants to express their beliefs in a detailed manner and construct their own categories. However, it offers those teachers information on how to teach EFL reading in their Saudi context, or at least in their ideal EFL context.

The survey used in this study was adapted from one used by Kuzborska (2010) in an EFL context (see Appendix). It was created to evaluate teachers' beliefs about EFL advanced reading instruction at a university in Lithuania. To ensure that the survey was appropriate for the context of this study, the Lithuanian context was replaced with the Saudi one without modifying survey content since the beliefs and practices on which the survey focused were very similar in both EFL contexts. Here, I describe the survey format and offer information on its construction, report on a

pilot study with reliability and internal consistency, and analysis, and look at how it was used in the Saudi EFL context.

### **Format**

The survey was divided into two parts. Part A, the core of the survey, focused on reading and contained 74 items in six categories: process of reading, learning of reading, teaching of reading, types of reading material (genres), sources of reading material, and goals of teaching of reading. These categories, according to Kuzborska (2010), were taken from Richards and Rodgers (2001). The survey items are based on research literature on first- and foreign language reading instruction. They represent three major theoretical approaches to reading instruction: skills-based, whole language-based, and metacognitive strategy. Part B asked teachers for demographic and professional information, such as age, English teaching experience, and qualifications, in a multiple-choice format. The information gathered via the survey was vital—it allowed for a deeper analysis of the teachers' beliefs as constituted in their professional background.

Part A used a closed statement format with a Likert scale of five levels to capture participants' levels of agreement with each item, from strongly disagree – 1, disagree -2, uncertain -3, agree -4, to strongly agree -5. The survey was written in English since EFL teachers would be more familiar with its terms and statements and would understand it better. While the survey could be translated into Arabic, teachers would find some translated terms ambiguous and unclear.

## **Construction**

In this section, survey content is clarified with regard to how it was built on the three methods of EFL reading instruction: skills-based, whole language-based, and metacognitive strategy approach. All three have been examined in EFL reading research. According to the history of foreign language reading research, there have been three general models of reading, providing different teaching principles of reading: bottom-up, top-down, and interactive model. These have been influential in producing three different instructional methods: the skills-based approach in the 1960s (bottom-up), the whole-language based approach (top-down) in the 1980s, and the recent metacognitive strategy approach (interactive) (Grabe, 2009; Kuzborska, 2010). These instructional approaches have been used as a framework for developing and constructing survey items to determine whether Saudi EFL teachers are adopting a certain view of reading instruction.

In Tables 6.1–6.3, each individual item in the survey is connected with its EFL reading approach and survey category (such as process of reading, learning of reading, teaching of reading, etc.); and Table 6.4 showcases the items related to types of reading genres, such as textbooks or fiction EFL teachers might consider using in their class. These may be useful in examining teachers' beliefs about these different reading genres, but Kuzborska (2010) did not include them with a certain reading approach.



Table 6.1

*Skills-based approach items*

Survey category	Item number	Item description
<b>Process of reading</b>	1	The reader getting meaning from a text by working out how to read words accurately
	6	The reader knowing that his/her understanding of a text comes from understanding the words of which it is composed
	9	The reader understanding all the words he/she reads in order to understand the meaning of a text
<b>Learning of reading</b>	11	The student learning a lot of vocabulary words in order for his/her reading comprehension to improve
	12	The student paying more attention to the correct pronunciation of the words than to the meaning of a text when reading a text silently
	13	The student often translating sentences into Arabic in order for his/her reading comprehension to improve
	15	The student learning a lot of grammar in order for his/her reading comprehension to improve
<b>Teaching of reading</b>	22	Passing on knowledge and skills necessary for students to read
	24	Asking students to read aloud to the whole class on a frequent basis
	26	<b>Teaching</b> word chunks in English (i.e. Prefixes, suffixes, base words, etc)
	27	Trying to cover almost all the material and exercises given in a textbook
	31	Often asking students to answer factual questions about a text (i.e. facts and details about the text content)
	33	Almost always <b>teaching</b> students new vocabulary before reading a text
	44	Immediately correcting students' oral reading mistakes
	45	Usually discussing texts with the whole class
<b>Reading materials</b>	56	Integrated textbooks (commercial textbooks, e.g. 'market leader', 'cutting edge')
	57	Materials which are carefully graded and sequenced in terms of language structures and

<b>Purposes of the teaching of reading</b>		vocabulary (both in and out of a classroom)
	58	Texts chosen by English teachers as they know best which texts are appropriate for improving their students' reading ( <b>for classroom study</b> )
	62	Develop students' skills in reading aloud
	65	Help students pass tests/exams
	66	Extend students' vocabulary
	68	Help students learn grammar
	72	Help students read faster

Table 6.2

*Whole language-based approach items*

<b>Survey category</b>	<b>Item number</b>	<b>Item description</b>
<b>Process of reading</b>	2	The reader interpreting a text to create or construct his/her own meaning
	4	The reader relating ideas in a text to his/her knowledge
	7	The reader skipping unknown words and guessing meaning from a text (e.g. by looking at words near it, looking at pictures in the text)
<b>Learning of reading</b>	10	The student reading silently in English as much as possible, in and out of the classroom
	16	The student learning to read a text selectively, omitting irrelevant sections and focusing on portions of text most relevant to him/her
	18	The student learning that the quality of text comprehension is more important than the quantity of reading
	19	The student reading silently in every lesson with no follow-up exercises after reading
<b>Teaching of reading</b>	23	Letting students learn to read naturally (i.e. with little or no explicit teaching of reading)
	25	Assessing students' reading comprehension more through students' writing, speaking, or performing rather than through multiple-choice or short-answer format tests
	28	Asking students to role play what they have read
	30	Helping students relate events in a text to their own experiences
	32	Letting students spend most of their reading time

		working in groups
	34	Often doing pre-reading activities or discussions with students about a text (e.g. by looking at portions of the text such as pictures, graphics, titles, headings)
	37	Often asking students to answer inferential questions about a text (i.e. where the meaning is implied rather than explicitly stated in the text)
	43	<b>Teaching</b> new vocabulary as it occurs in the reading text (i.e. <b>teaching</b> new words only when students ask for their meaning while reading or discussing a text)
<b>Reading materials</b>	54	Texts which are interesting for students to read ( <b>i.e. texts for classroom study</b> )
	60	Texts most of which are freely chosen by students ( <b>for classroom study</b> )
<b>Purposes of the teaching of reading</b>	63	Develop a lifelong interest and enjoyment in reading
	64	Improve students' reading comprehension
	71	Expand students' views of the world

Table 6.3

*Metacognitive strategy approach items*

<b>Survey category</b>	<b>Item number</b>	<b>Item description</b>
<b>Process of reading</b>	3	The reader consciously selecting strategies (mental activities that readers use to comprehend a text) and using them to work out the meaning of a text
	5	The reader always monitoring and regulating his/her reading comprehension
	8	The reader moving through a text with specific purposes in mind
<b>Learning of reading</b>	14	The student learning sets of reading strategies and applying them when reading a text
	17	The student learning about different text structures (i. e. narratives, expository, or descriptive structures)
	20	The student learning to think about the content of what is read
	21	The student learning to identify specific problems

		when comprehension breaks down and to take steps to solve them
<b>Teaching of reading</b>	29	<b>Teaching</b> students how to distinguish between opinions and facts presented in a text
	35	Assisting students with direct explanation of a text structure (i. e. <b>explicitly teaching</b> about a narrative, expository, or descriptive structure)
	36	<b>Teaching</b> students to identify the main ideas of a paragraph or a text
	38	Instructing students to pay attention to transition words in a text (e.g. thus, because, since, and)
	39	<b>Teaching</b> students to monitor their comprehension while reading a text
	40	Developing students' strategies relevant to their reading
	41	Always planning how and when to introduce and <b>teach</b> reading strategies to students
	42	<b>Teaching</b> students how to make and use graphic organizers of a text structure (e.g. web diagrams, strings)
<b>Reading materials</b>	55	In-house textbook (i.e. locally produced materials)
	59	Materials incorporating research findings (i.e. corpus-texts which include specific language examples of student or expert writing in particular fields or institutions) ( <b>for classroom study</b> )
	61	A variety of materials on a wide range of topics - <b>both</b> on content (subject-related) area and general area topics ( <b>for classroom study</b> )
<b>Purposes of the teaching of reading</b>	67	Develop research and study skills
	69	Help students become independent readers
	70	Develop skills in critical thinking
	73	Help students read English texts in their subject classes
	74	Help students become better writers

Table 6.4

*Types of reading genres*

Item number	Item description
46	Textbook texts

47	English novels, short stories
48	Written work produced by other students (e.g., model essays, personal letters)
49	Instruction manual
50	Internet texts
51	News report
52	Research article
53	Brochures

### **Pilot Study and Implementation**

Kuzborska (2010) clarified the process she followed in using the survey in her pilot study, checking its reliability and internal consistency and eliminating any item that was confusing or not understandable. This pilot study had five subjects who were EFL teachers at Kaunas University of Technology (KTU), who had a range of English teaching experiences. None had TESOL qualifications and three did not have any training in the teaching of reading.

The participants completed the survey online at a convenient time, sent it back to the researcher, and provided feedback about the survey. They were asked to answer certain questions that emphasized their experience with the survey. These questions asked them how long it had taken them to complete the survey, and whether any item was ambiguous or unclear. If they'd found items to be unclear, they were asked to write the numbers of those items and explain their problems with them. They were also asked to indicate whether any item had been difficult to answer, and whether any item should be changed and why.

The participants in Kuzborska's (2010) pilot study indicated that few items had to be changed. She also adopted McKay's (2006) framework of item analysis of questions to look at items on which participants had the same response, to ascertain

whether the wording of these items might have led them to respond in the same way. She found few items to which participants had a similar reaction, but indicated that these results reflected the teachers' actual beliefs.

For instance, the teachers had positive reactions to the following items: "the student learning a lot of vocabulary words in order for his/her reading comprehension to improve" and "the student reading silently in English as much as possible, in and out the classroom" (Kuzborska, 2010, p. 323). The teachers' agreement with these items was considered their real beliefs about reading instruction.

Also, Kuzborska (2010) looked for any items omitted or not answered by the participants, but found none. She examined the reliability and internal consistency of her survey, focusing particularly on items on similar issues but stated in different ways and noted few inconsistencies. For example, one had to do with teachers' response to reading monitoring. They did disagree on one item in the section on reading process regarding whether readers had to monitor their reading, while they totally agreed with a similar item in the section on learning on reading that their students had to learn how to monitor reading by teaching them how to do so. However, Kuzborska (2010) decided to include those two items since they were "considered important to preserve for the main questionnaire" and should be further analyzed when undertaking her main study (p. 324).

In addition, her pilot study teachers asked that some words be added to the items such as always, sometimes, and every lecture—these were then inserted in some items (for example, item numbers 5, 13, 27, and 31), but the core meaning of

these items was not changed. Also, some asked for elaboration of some items. One item, for example, which states that “the students learning to read a text selectively” (item 16) was not clear, so it was explained with the following sentence: “omitting irrelevant sections and focusing on the portions of text most relevant to him/her” (Kuzborska, 2010, p. 325).

Another item which was also ambiguous to teachers was “teaching new vocabulary as it occurs in the reading text” (item 43) since the phrase “as it occurs in the reading text” was vague; thus, a further explanation was added to the item clarifying what was really meant: “teaching new words only when students ask for their meaning while reading or discussing a text” (Kuzborska, 2010, p. 325).

Two items were deleted from the survey. The first one, “teacher asking students to draw a picture about a text”, was considered unnecessary since one teacher said that they taught, at KTU, technical texts that made it unsuitable to draw pictures about the reading. The other item was, “the teacher having separate tasks for reading and separate tasks for writing, listening or speaking”—this was believed not to be appropriate for this KTU context (as well as the Saudi EFL context), since the reading teachers’ time was spent on vocabulary and speaking (Kuzborska, 2010, p. 325).

Kuzborska’s (2010) pilot study offered her valuable information that benefited her full questionnaire distribution. The feedback from her five teachers helped her to focus on the clarity and reliability of her items. She edited some items, deleted some, and had a clear idea about her teachers’ experiences due to their answers to the whole survey. This information guided her main study, which was

also at KTU, where 34 EFL teachers completed the survey in 20–30 minutes anonymously and returned it in envelopes.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

In my study, I distributed the survey to 78 Saudi university EFL teachers, regardless of their teaching level and experience, in a broader context than that for Kuzborska's (2010) study, where her participants totaled 34 from one university. The survey is suitable for all teaching levels because its content touches on general beliefs and practices in reading instruction. One of the survey items, for example, has to do with pre-reading activities or teaching new vocabulary before reading, which is a typical practice that occurs not only at advanced levels but also at beginner levels. Since it was impossible to survey every teacher, I focused only on two universities in one major region in Saudi Arabia—Riyadh. The two universities were: King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences and Shugra University. In order to reach out to these teachers, I visited these universities, met the teachers, and asked them to fill out a hard copy of the survey. Once I received the survey, I copied the teachers' responses onto an Excel spreadsheet, on which their responses were displayed.

After collecting the survey from teachers, I analyzed responses using R, a statistical analytic software, in order to obtain exploratory data analysis, including weighted means and agreement percentages with each item. I also manipulated a certain statistical analysis to find out which reading approach the teachers tended to believe in more. This analysis, as to be illustrated in chapter 7, showed the most and least frequent patterns about beliefs held by teachers. It created a broad picture of



teachers' attitudes toward skills-based, whole language-based, and metacognitive strategy approaches. I identified these beliefs and compared them with established findings in the second language reading research. I offered practical strategies based on them in chapter 8.

## **Conclusion**

I investigated Saudi EFL teachers' beliefs about reading instruction using Kuzborska's (2010) survey, which has three reading instruction approaches prominent in the EFL reading research. In this chapter, I delineated how the survey was constructed, reflected on a pilot study to check its reliability and internal consistency, and explained how I collected the data and analyzed survey results. The survey had 81 questions, and was given to 78 EFL Saudi teachers. The questions required the respondents to indicate how much they agreed with certain styles for undertaking reading instruction. Responses to these questions were given on a 1–5 Likert scale with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree". There are 3 approaches to reading instruction. Under each approach are questions that correspond to it. The survey was designed to quantify Saudi EFL teachers' beliefs with regard to their identification with each of these three approaches by using these responses. The statistical analysis of agreement proportion with each item was used to tackle this issue, with the help of the R statistical program.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Results**

The results of the survey are presented here in details. In illustrating the results, I first provide a short overview of the survey and its goals. In the exploratory data analysis section, I offer background information on my participants. Then, in the numerical and statistical analysis section, I show the participants' agreement proportion for every survey question and examine which reading instruction approach they mostly agreed with, identifying the bootstrap method used for this purpose.

The data were collected using a 81-question survey with 78 respondents. The survey had two parts. Part A had 74 questions. Among these 74 questions, 66 contained a statement on one of three approaches: the skills-based approach, the whole-language based approach, and the metacognitive strategy approach. The other eight questions had to do with beliefs about the kinds of materials suitable for students to read. These questions did not belong to any of the three approaches. The skills-based approach had 23 questions; the whole-language based approach had 20 questions and the metacognitive strategy approach had 23 questions. The respondents provided opinions on each statement using a 1–5 Likert scale. A teacher's agreement with one statement was evidence of his or her beliefs on the approach behind the statement (Figure 7.1).

I believe that <u>teaching of reading in English at university</u> is a process which should involve <u>me as a teacher...</u>		Strongly disagree A	Disagree B	Uncertain (I don't know) C	Agree D	Strongly agree E
22	passing on knowledge and skills necessary for students to read					
23	letting students learn to read naturally (i.e. with little or no explicit teaching of reading)					
24	asking students to read aloud to the whole class on a frequent basis					

Figure 7.1. *A sample of the survey core questions*

Part B consisted of seven questions designed to gather teachers' demographic and professional information, such as age, English teaching experience, and qualifications. A sample of these questions are shown in Figure 7.2.

**B. Background Information**  
Please write down or choose one of the responses that will indicate your background

**75. Nationality:**

A. Saudi	B. Arab	C. Indian/Pakistani	D. American/Canadian/ British	E. others
----------	---------	---------------------	-------------------------------	-----------

**76. Gender:**            A. Male            B. Female

**77. Age:**

A. 20-30            B. 31-40            C. 41-50            D. 51-60            E. 60+

**78. How long have you been an English teacher?**

A. 5            B. 10            C. 15            D. 25            E. 35+

Figure 7.2. *A sample of background questions*

## Exploratory Data Analysis

**Saudi teachers' background information.** Figure 7.3 shows the proportion of males and females in the sample. There were significantly more males (~70%) than females.

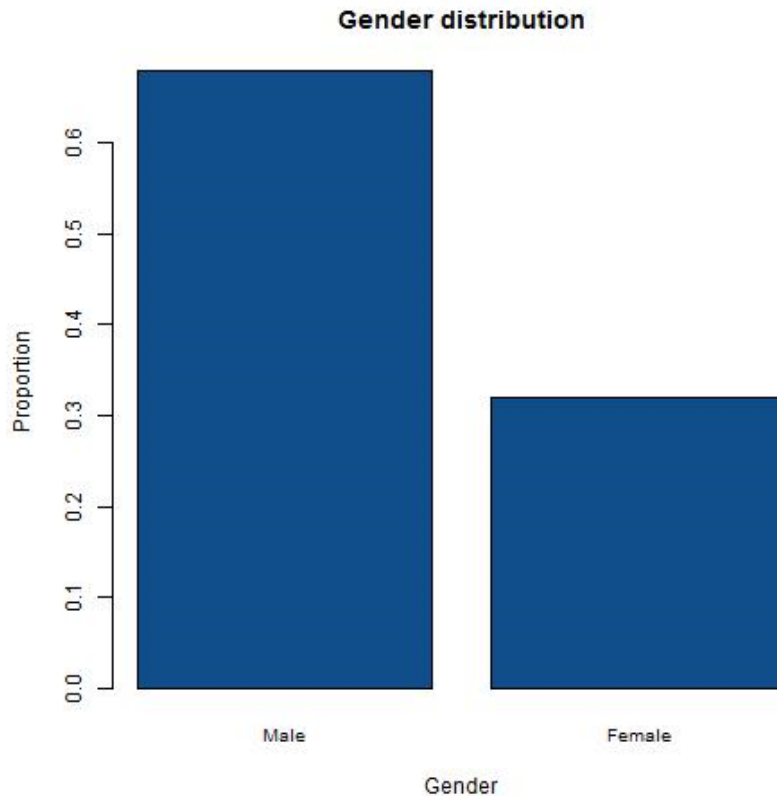


Figure 7.3. *Participants' gender distribution*

Figure 7.4 shows the age of the participants, 41% of whom were between 31 and 40 and 30% between 41 and 50. They had rich experience in English teaching since they were within the age range above 31.

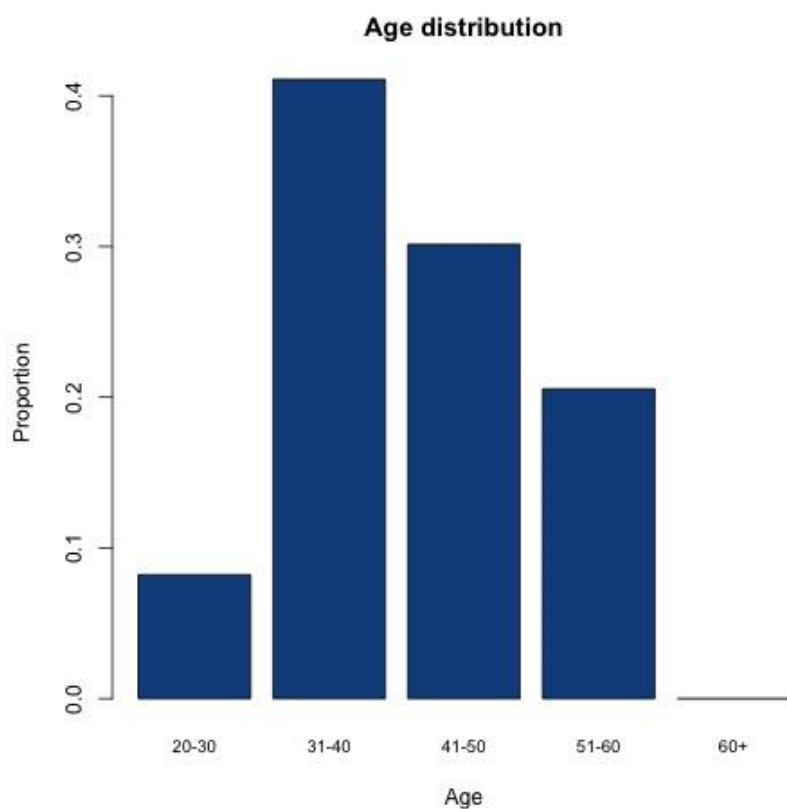


Figure 7.4. *Participants' age distribution*

Figure 7.5 shows the distribution for the number of years teachers in the sample had taught English at the university level. Most (70%) had taught for five years. This fact shows that most teachers had fresh and quite new experience in university teaching.

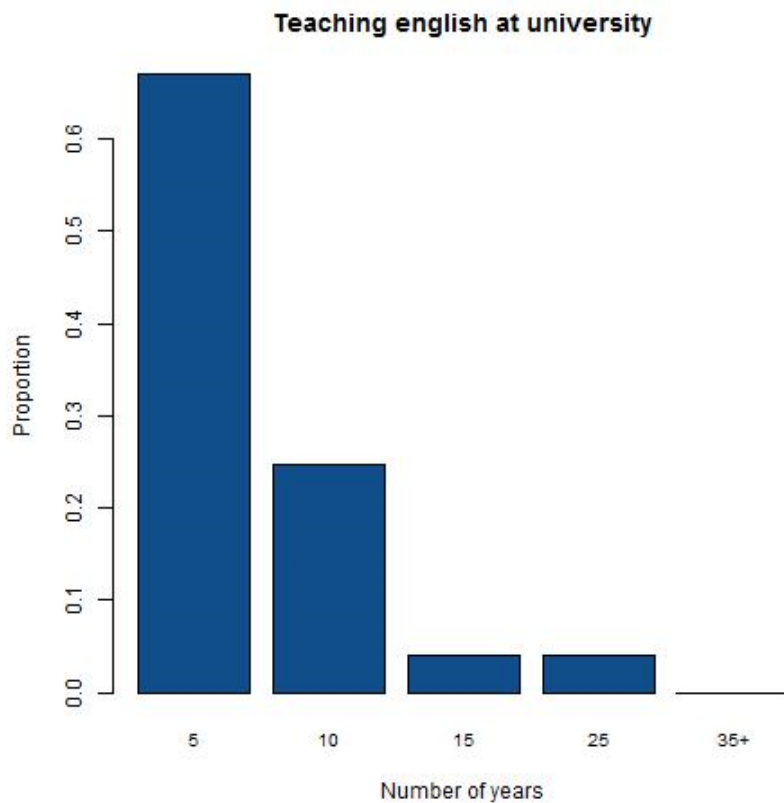


Figure 7.5. *Participants' years of university teaching experience*

Figure 7.6 shows the teachers' overall experience in teaching English, regardless of educational level at they have taught. In all, 50% had 10–15 years of experience, which was confirmed by their age factor above 31. Those teachers had developed their teaching experience within a long period of time, which could contribute to their understanding of their teaching context and subjects.

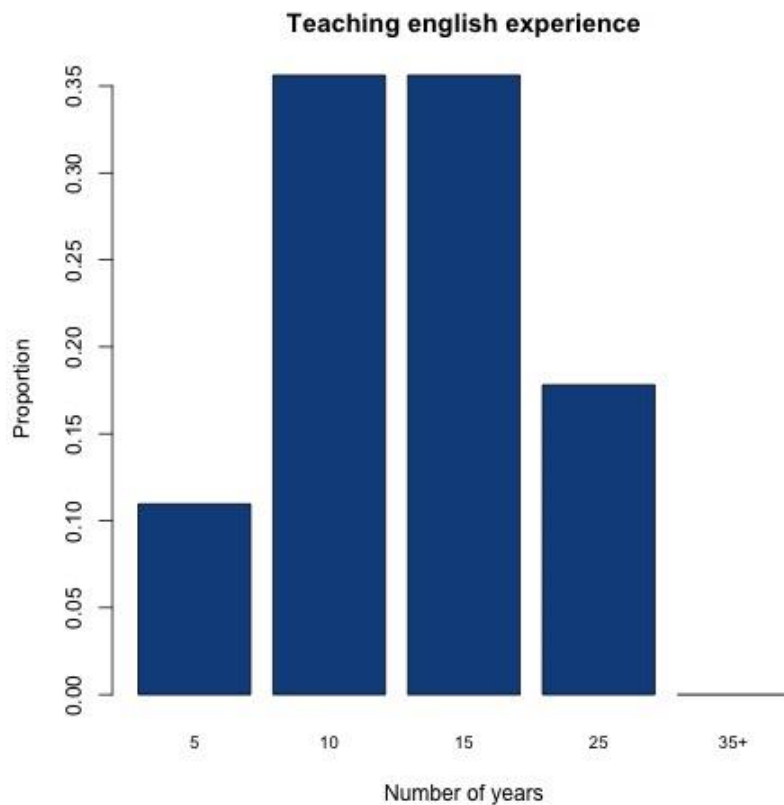


Figure 7.6. *Participants' overall experience in English teaching distribution*

Figure 7.7 shows the educational background of survey respondents. The relevant survey question asked for the highest qualification held. It was answered by only by 72 of 78 respondents. The results showed that about 75% of the sample had a master's degree, followed by about 20% who had a bachelor of arts degree.

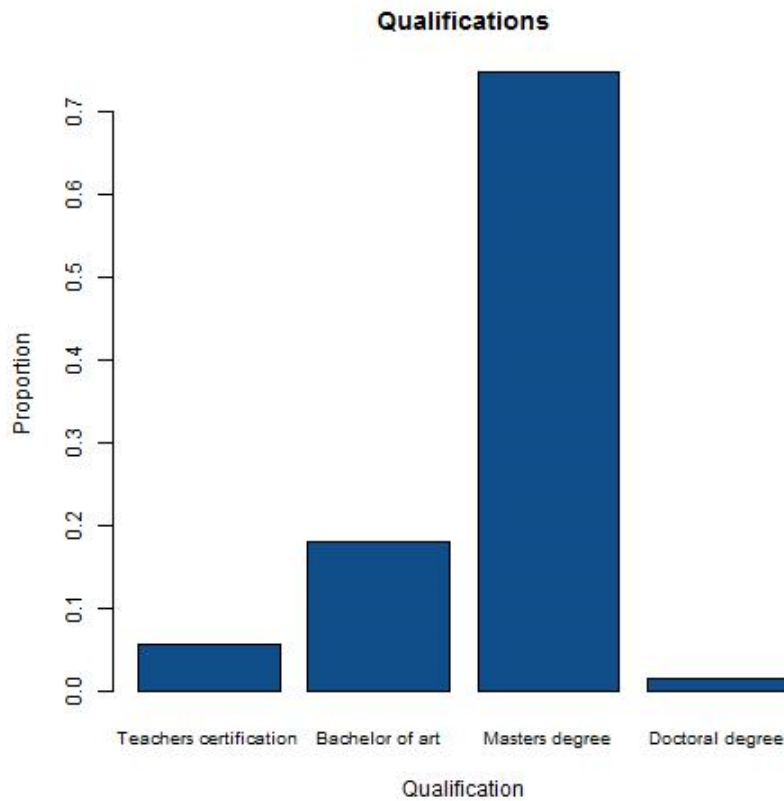


Figure 7.7. *Participants' highest qualifications distribution*

Figure 7.8 illustrates their expertise in reading instruction and whether they had ever attempted to engage in professional development workshops about reading instruction in their last three years. In all, 50% of the teachers had attended 1–3 workshops and almost 20% had enrolled in 4–6 workshops.



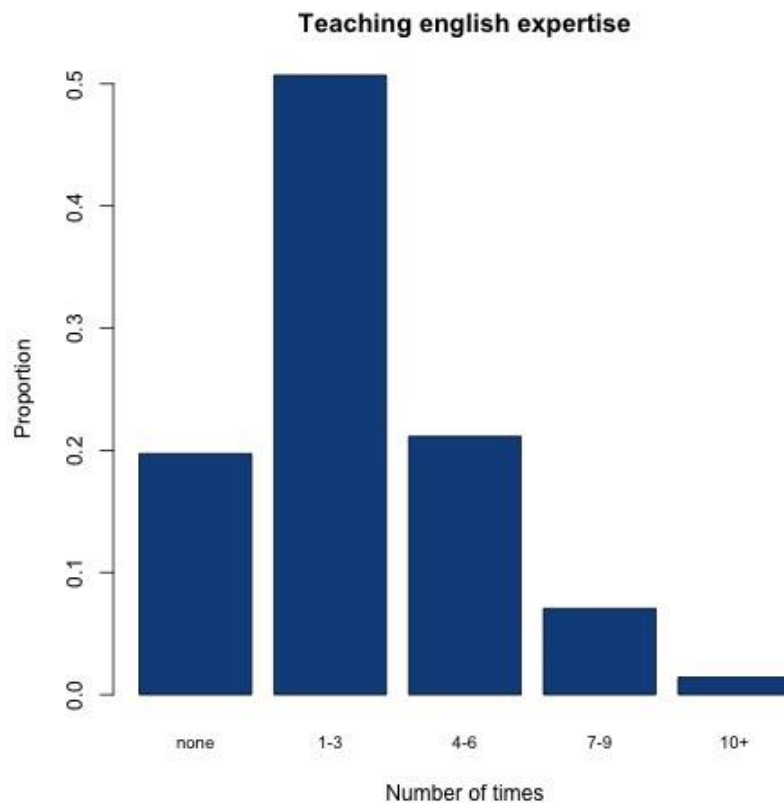


Figure 7.8. *Participants' attendance of reading courses distribution*

Overall, when looking at this background information, the sample, which was mainly male, had rich experience in English teaching, considering their ages and years of experience. Their expertise in reading instruction showed their dedication to improving their professional knowledge and being engaged in relevant courses.

### **Numerical Analysis**

**Saudi teachers' responses to survey items.** In this section, I look at analyses conducted on scores recorded on survey questions. In the survey format example, 1 was coded as Strongly disagree and 5 as Strongly agree. Essentially, when interpreting any of the following results, I interpreted a higher number to be better, meaning that it showed a higher level of agreement.

As a simple measure to analyze numerically the responses, I calculated a weighted mean score for each question. For any given question, the value was calculated as below:

**Weighted mean =**

$$(1 * \text{\#strongly disagree}) + (2 * \text{\#disagree}) + (3 * \text{\#undecided}) + (4 * \text{\#agree}) + (5 * \text{\#strongly agree})$$

---

# who responded to the question

Figure 7.9 is a boxplot of weighted means for the survey questions. The median was about 3.8 and the distribution was slightly right-skewed. This means that the average of these weighted means was greater than the median.

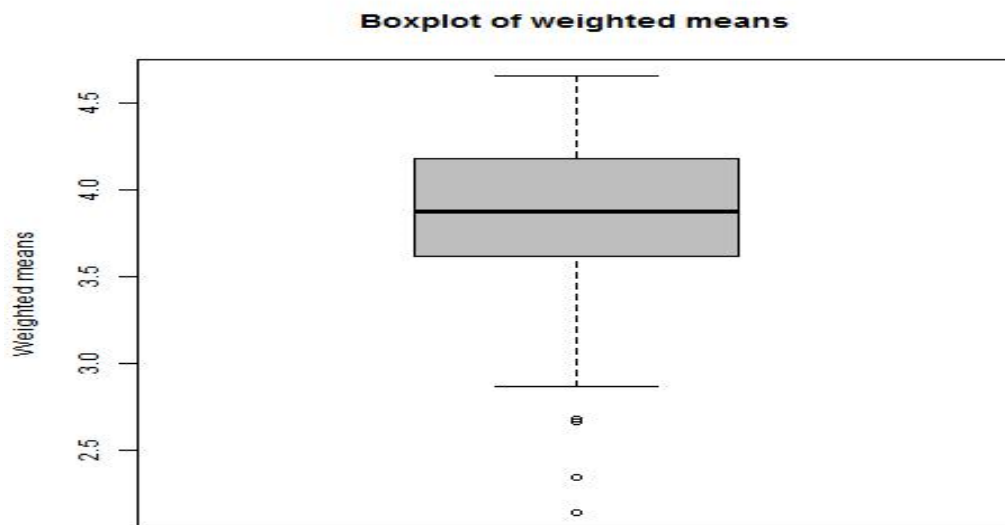


Figure 7.9. *Boxplot of weighted means for the survey questions*

Two key observations can be made based on this plot. The first pertains to the outliers. Five questions with weighted means were identified as outliers in this boxplot. Questions 9, 12, 13, 19 and 44 had weighted means less than the minimum. The number 3 was the middle value that would indicate indecision from respondents. If we were to look at weighted means below 3, only one question (number 27) would be added to the list. Except for number 19, all of these questions below 3 were skill-based approach items. Although this does not indicate anything definitive about the approach itself, it shows that this category had a higher level of average disagreement as compared to other categories.

The second important observation is that 38 of 66 questions had a weighted average greater than 4. These 38 questions were well distributed across the three methodologies. The goal of the survey was to assess which of the three methodologies was most preferred by the teachers. However, it may be that many of the teachers agreed (or highly agreed) with items across categories.

In addition to the weighted means, the agreement percentage was obtained to show the extent to which the teachers agreed and identified with each item. Tables 7.1–7.6 present weighted means, percentage agreement, and corresponding reading approach for each item. Note that approach 1 refers to skills-based, approach 2 refers to whole language, and approach 3 to metacognitive strategy.

Table 7.1

*Agreement percentage and weighted means for the teachers' attitude toward the process of reading*

<b>I believe that <u>the process of reading in English at university</u> should involve...</b>		<b>Approach</b>	<b>Weighted means</b>	<b>Agreement percentage</b>
1	The reader getting meaning from a text by working out how to read words accurately	1	3.807692308	76.92307692
2	The reader interpreting a text to create or construct his/her own meaning	2	3.884615385	75.64102564
3	The reader consciously selecting strategies (mental activities that readers use to comprehend a text) and using them to work out the meaning of a text	3	4.166666667	80.76923077
4	The reader relating ideas in a text to his/her knowledge	2	4.230769231	88.46153846
5	The reader always monitoring and regulating his/her reading comprehension	3	4.038461538	75.64102564
6	The reader knowing that his/her understanding of a text comes from understanding the words of which it is composed	1	3.753246753	72.72727273
7	The reader skipping unknown words and guessing meaning from a text (e.g. By looking at words near it, looking at pictures in the text)	2	3.705128205	70.51282051
8	The reader moving through a text with specific purposes in mind	3	3.935897436	75.64102564
9	The reader understanding all the words he/she reads in order to understand the meaning of a text	1	2.679487179	30.76923077

Table 7.2

*Agreement percentage and weighted means for the teachers' attitude toward the learning of reading*

<b>I believe that <u>learning of reading in English at university</u> is a process which should involve ...</b>		<b>Approach</b>	<b>Weighted means</b>	<b>Agreement percentage</b>
10	The student reading silently in English as much as possible, in and out of the classroom	2	3.820512821	70.51282051
11	The student learning a lot of vocabulary words in order for his/her reading comprehension to improve	1	3.884615385	74.35897436
12	The student paying more attention to the correct pronunciation of the words than to the meaning of a text when reading a text silently	1	2.141025641	10.25641026
13	The student often translating sentences into Arabic in order for his/her reading comprehension to improve	1	2.346153846	21.79487179
14	The student learning sets of reading strategies and applying them when reading a text	3	4.064102564	79.48717949
15	The student learning a lot of grammar in order for his/her reading comprehension to improve	1	3.012820513	43.58974359
16	The student learning to read a text selectively, omitting irrelevant sections and focusing on portions of text most relevant to him/her	2	3.615384615	64.1025641
17	The student learning about different text structures (i.e. Narratives, expository, or descriptive structures)	3	3.858974359	74.35897436
18	The student learning that the quality of text comprehension is		3.805194805	72.72727273

	more important than the quantity of reading	2		
19	The student reading silently in every lesson with no follow-up exercises after reading	2	2.142857143	14.28571429
20	The student learning to think about the content of what is read	3	4.346153846	92.30769231
21	The student learning to identify specific problems when comprehension breaks down and to take steps to solve them	3	4.256410256	84.61538462

Table 7.3

*Agreement percentage and weighted means for the teachers' attitude toward the teaching of reading*

<b>I believe that <u>teaching of reading in English at university</u> is a process which should involve <u>me as a teacher</u>...</b>		<b>Approach</b>	<b>Weighted means</b>	<b>Agreement percentage</b>
22	Passing on knowledge and skills necessary for students to read	1	4.467532468	88.31168831
23	Letting students learn to read naturally (i.e. With little or no explicit teaching of reading)	2	3.090909091	48.05194805
24	Asking students to read aloud to the whole class on a frequent basis	1	3.256410256	61.53846154
25	Assessing students' reading comprehension more through students' writing, speaking, or performing rather than through multiple-choice or short-answer format tests	2	3.871794872	75.64102564
26	<b>Teaching</b> word chunks in English (i.e. Prefixes, suffixes, base words, etc.)	1	4.038461538	78.20512821
27	Trying to cover almost all the material and exercises given in a textbook	1	2.871794872	39.74358974
28	Asking students to role play what they have read	2	3.756410256	74.35897436

29	<b>Teaching</b> students how to distinguish between opinions and facts presented in a text	3	4.243589744	88.46153846
30	Helping students relate events in a text to their own experiences	2	4.230769231	91.02564103
31	Often asking students to answer factual questions about a text (i. E. Facts and details about the text content)	1	3.961538462	83.33333333
32	Letting students spend most of their reading time working in groups	2	3.115384615	43.58974359
33	Almost always <b>teaching</b> students new vocabulary before reading a text	1	3.525641026	61.53846154
34	Often doing pre-reading activities or discussions with students about a text (e.g. By looking at portions of the text such as pictures, graphics, titles, headings)	2	4.256410256	88.46153846
35	Assisting students with direct explanation of a text structure (i. E. <b>Explicitly teaching</b> about a narrative, expository, or descriptive structure)	3	3.820512821	78.20512821
36	<b>Teaching</b> students to identify the main ideas of a paragraph or a text	3	4.205128205	89.74358974
37	Often asking students to answer inferential questions about a text (i.e. Where the meaning is implied rather than explicitly stated in the text)	2	4.141025641	84.61538462
38	Instructing students to pay attention to transition words in a text (e.g. Thus, because, since, and)	3	3.884615385	79.48717949
39	<b>Teaching</b> students to monitor their comprehension while reading a text	3	3.769230769	69.23076923
40	Developing students' strategies relevant to their reading	3	4.307692308	91.02564103

41	Always planning how and when to introduce and <b>teach</b> reading strategies to students	3	4.076923077	82.05128205
42	<b>Teaching</b> students how to make and use graphic organizers of a text structure (e.g. Web diagrams, strings)	3	3.87012987	74.02597403
43	<b>Teaching</b> new vocabulary as it occurs in the reading text (i.e. <b>Teaching</b> new words only when students ask for their meaning while reading or discussing a text	2	3.038461538	48.71794872
44	Immediately correcting students' oral reading mistakes	1	2.666666667	35.8974359
45	Usually discussing texts with the whole class	1	4.08974359	88.46153846

Table 7.4

*Agreement percentage and weighted means for the teachers' attitude toward the types of reading material*

<b>I believe that <u>types of reading material in English</u> that university students should be exposed to for <u>classroom study</u> involve...</b>		<b>Weighted means</b>	<b>Agreement percentage</b>
46	Textbook texts	4.179487179	88.46153846
47	English novels, short stories	3.935897436	82.05128205
48	Written work produced by other students (e.g., model essays, personal letters)	3.820512821	76.92307692
49	Instruction manual	3.282051282	51.28205128
50	Internet texts	3.794871795	74.35897436
51	News report	4.102564103	89.74358974
52	Research article	4.064102564	87.17948718
53	Brochures	3.653846154	66.66666667



Table 7.5

*Agreement percentage and weighted means for the teachers' attitude toward teaching materials used in reading courses*

I believe that <u>teaching materials</u> that English teachers should teach university students from involve ...		Approach	Weighted means	Agreement percentage
54	Texts which are interesting for students to read ( <b>i.e. Texts for classroom study</b> )	2	4.448717949	93.58974359
55	In-house textbook (i.e. Locally produced materials)	3	3.282051282	47.43589744
56	Integrated textbooks (commercial textbooks, e.g. 'market leader', 'cutting edge')	1	3.717948718	69.23076923
57	Materials which are carefully graded and sequenced in terms of language structures and vocabulary (both in and out of a classroom)	1	4.064102564	78.20512821
58	Texts chosen by English teachers as they know best which texts are appropriate for improving their students' reading ( <b>for classroom study</b> )	1	3.833333333	74.35897436
59	Materials incorporating research findings (i.e., Corpus-texts which include specific language examples of student or expert writing in particular fields or institutions) ( <b>for classroom study</b> )	3	3.794871795	74.35897436
60	Texts most of which are freely chosen by students ( <b>for classroom study</b> )	2	3.025641026	39.74358974
61	A variety of materials on a wide range of topics - <b>both</b> on content (subject-related) area and general area topics ( <b>for classroom study</b> )	3	4.076923077	83.33333333

Table 7.6

*Agreement percentage and weighted means for the teachers' attitude toward their aim of reading instruction*

<b>I believe that <u>an important aim of teaching students to read in English at university</u> is to...</b>		<b>Approach</b>	<b>Weighted means</b>	<b>Agreement percentage</b>
62	Develop students' skills in reading aloud	1	3.039473684	50
63	Develop a lifelong interest and enjoyment in reading	2	4.415584416	92.20779221
64	Improve students' reading comprehension	2	4.653846154	98.71794872
65	Help students pass tests/exams	1	3.58974359	67.94871795
66	Extend students' vocabulary	1	4.423076923	94.87179487
67	Develop research and study skills	3	4.333333333	92.30769231
68	Help students learn grammar	1	3.688311688	71.42857143
69	Help students become independent readers	3	4.623376623	97.4025974
70	Develop skills in critical thinking	3	4.461538462	93.58974359
71	Expand students' views of the world	2	4.179487179	79.48717949
72	Help students read faster	1	3.857142857	74.02597403
73	Help students read English texts in their subject classes	3	4.179487179	89.74358974
74	Help students become better writers	3	4.115384615	85.8974359

### Statistical Analysis

A statistical method that can be used to determine which teaching method most teachers agree with is the bootstrap method. The bootstrap method is a well-known and -developed statistical method. The basic idea is to use empirical distribution to replace an unknown true probability distribution to make inferences about a population. The bootstrap method is used in statistical analysis for the following reasons:

- Because of the discrete nature of the Likert scale, methods that rely on normality assumptions will likely not be valid.
- In relation to the above, the bootstrap method will give more accurate and reliable results than the results obtained under the assumption of normality.
- It has the advantage of being simple. It is a straightforward way to make inference on the standard errors and confidence interval that is set at 95%. It is also an easy way to check the stability of the results. In undertaking the analysis of the proportion of teachers who believe in different approaches, I had the following assumption.

*For each approach, if I sample a teacher randomly, and sample a question belonging to that approach randomly, the expectation of the probability of the teacher agreeing with that question (Likert scale 4 and 5) is the proportion of teachers who believe in that approach.*

Under this assumption, I used the bootstrap method to make inferences about the proportion of Saudi EFL teachers who believe in each approach. Along with that, I used the Cronbach's alpha method to quantify the internal consistency of the data for each approach. This measure indicates the degree to which the items making up the scale (responses to each question associated with its approach) measure the same underlying variable (tendency towards approach). Below are the results of both the bootstrap method and Cronbach's alpha for each approach.

Figure 7.10 shows the bootstrap proportion of teachers who believed in the skills-based approach (approach 1). It provided the following insights:

- The estimation of the proportion of teachers who believed in the skills-based

approach was 63.0%.

- The standard error for this estimate was 1.11%.
- The 95% percent confidence interval of the proportion of teachers who believed in the skills-based approach was [60.6%, 64.5%].
- The Cronbach's alpha for this approach was 0.8090144.

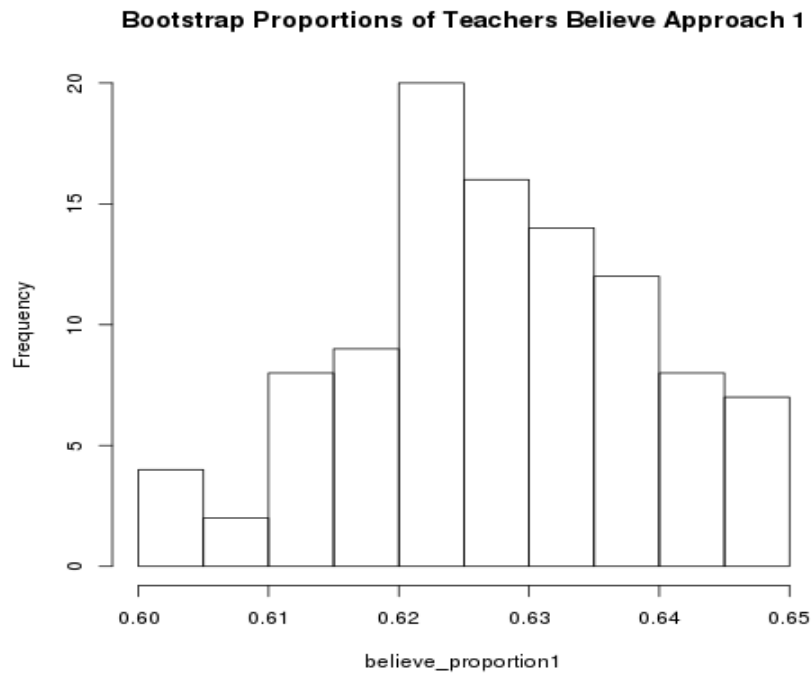


Figure 7.10. *Distribution of skills-based teachers (bootstrap analysis)*

Figure 7.11 shows the bootstrap proportion of teachers who believed in the whole language-based approach (approach 2). It shows the following information:

- The estimation of the proportion of teachers who believed in the whole language based approach was 70.6%.
- The standard error for this estimate was 1.24%.

- The 95% percent confidence interval in the proportion of teachers who believed in the whole language based approach was [67.8%, 72.8%].
- The Cronbach's alpha for this approach was 0.5945967.

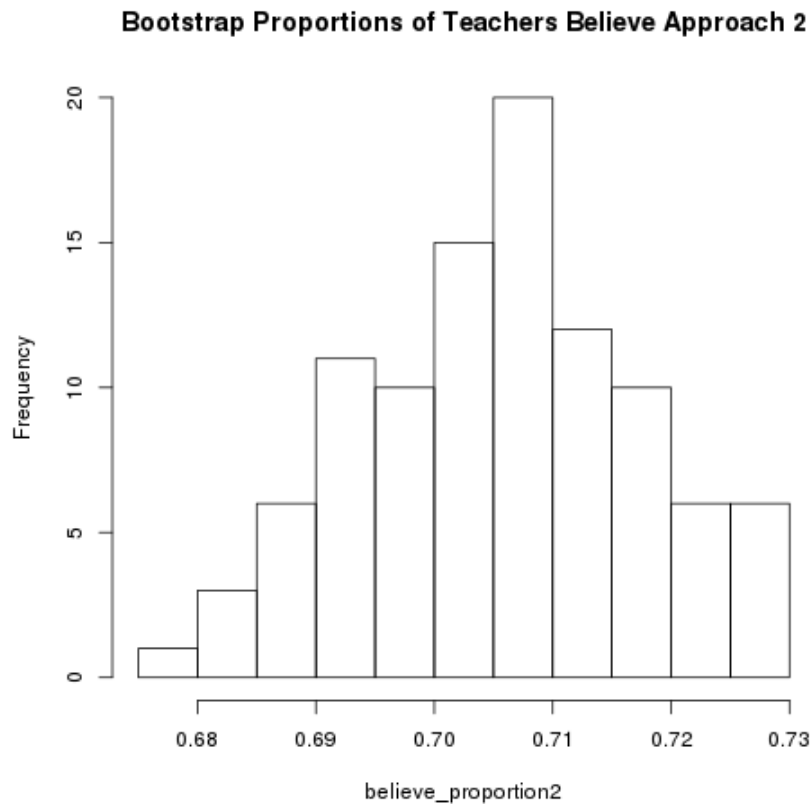


Figure 7.11. *Distribution of whole language teachers (bootstrap analysis)*

Finally, Figure 7.12 reflects the bootstrap proportion of teachers who believed in the metacognitive strategy approach (approach 3). It offered the following information:

- The estimation of the proportion of teachers who believed in the metacognitive strategy approach was 81.7%.
- The standard error for this estimate was 0.93%.

- The 95% percent confidence interval of the proportion of teachers who believed in the metacognitive strategy approach was [79.7%, 83.7%].
- The Cronbach's alpha for this approach was 0.8661027.

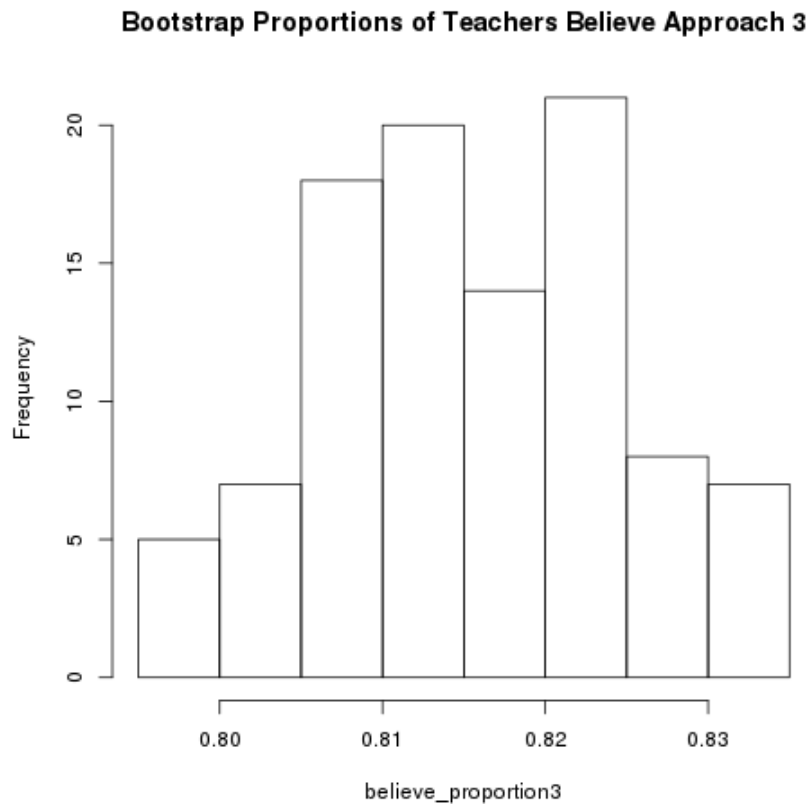


Figure 7.12. *Distribution of metacognitive strategy teachers (bootstrap analysis)*

## Conclusion

The results of the bootstrap method showed that most teachers (81.7%) identified with the metacognitive strategy approach. The whole language (70.6%) and skills-based approaches (63%) were second and third, respectively. These results provide a holistic view of how the teachers felt about reading instruction. However, in the next (discussion) chapter, rather than looking at this from a macro perspective and arguing whether one approach is better than others, I look closely

at most of the items and discuss the teachers' thinking about them, and connect this discussion with relevant research and evidence-based practices. Reading instruction's complex and related components deserve a micro examination.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Discussion**

This study's results illustrate some interesting findings worthy of discussion and examination. In this chapter, I discuss these findings within major components of reading instruction about which every teacher should be aware, regardless of whichever models they believe in since each model does not capture the total picture of reading processes but focuses on a certain aspect of it. Providing more overarching direction to an ideal reading classroom, these components are evidence-based skills as underlined by the cognitive theory of reading instruction, discussed in an earlier chapter. I not only discuss the theory of these skills, but also illustrate how they could be taught in the classroom. Reading teachers should assist their students in gaining the following skills:

- Acquiring word recognition
- Learning reading comprehension
- Being aware of text structure
- Improving reading fluency
- Becoming strategic reader
- Practicing extensive reading

These skills represent the hallmark of reading instruction curricula—when students practice them a lot, they may achieve a high level of reading. These skills, supported by research on reading instruction, are critical to building effective reading instruction. If one of them is dismissed, it would negatively impact the students'



performance of reading. Below is a discussion of these components in relation to the survey findings.

### Acquiring Word Recognition

The teachers had certain opinions about word recognition and its practices.

Table 8.1 shows some of those beliefs.

Table 8.1

*Teachers' attitudes toward word recognition*

Item #	Item description	Approach	Agreement percentage
1	The reader getting meaning from a text by working out how to read words accurately	1	76.92307692
9	The reader understanding all the words he/she reads in order to understand the meaning of a text	1	30.76923077
6	The reader knowing that his/her understanding of a text comes from understanding the words of which it is composed	1	72.72727273
11	The student learning a lot of vocabulary words in order for his/her reading comprehension to improve	1	74.35897436
12	The student paying more attention to the correct pronunciation of the words than to the meaning of a text when reading a text silently	1	10.25641026
13	The student often translating sentences into Arabic in order for his/her reading comprehension to improve	1	21.79487179
26	<b>Teaching</b> word chunks in English (i.e., Prefixes, suffixes, base words, etc.)	1	78.20512821

They believed that their students should learn a lot of vocabulary and hold correct understandings of it since their comprehension depends on vocabulary knowledge. However, most doubted that their students should use translation as a major tool in reading comprehension and also focus on pronunciation, regardless of meaning. Most of these survey items on vocabulary knowledge align with skills-based approach mainly stressed manipulating word learning activities for students.

When discussing these beliefs, one should be aware of the value of word recognition in reading instruction. Carver (2003) confirmed the strong relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. Teachers should help their students develop word recognition skills that include the ability to comprehend letter-sound correspondences and identify words more rapidly (Grabe, 2009). Students, at their beginning level, gradually develop sight words that represent core vocabulary items, and become more automatically aware of them (Grabe, 2009; Sinatra, 2003). These sight words, after practice and exposure, become a part of long-term memory and help in developing the students' reading fluency. Sight words are important and thus should be emphasized by the teachers.

The teachers should diagnose their students' level of vocabulary and determine whether they have any trouble with that. One diagnostic strategy is to ask students to read a basic word list rapidly and accurately (Grabe, 2009; Wang & Koda, 2005). If some students fail this activity, they should be given extra training, especially on fluent pronunciation and connecting the letter with its sound. Such a tool is necessary as it helps teachers to gain a sufficient background to assist their students with their learning needs.

Next, teachers should engage their students in word recognition activities, which also improve their skills in reading fluency and extensive reading. These activities, as described by Grabe (2009), focus on word and phrase recognition and timed semantic connection. Word and phrase recognition activities help students read and recognize words rapidly. These activities are designed in a beat-clock format in which students are given a list of key phrases or words set in a column; the students must match each word and phrase with its similarities in the row. For instance, the word “hat” appears in the column and in the row, and there are three words: cat, bat, and hat. Students must select the word “hat” quickly. This activity has a huge benefit in increasing students’ rapid reading fluency and word recognition.

The other activity is timed semantic connection, which aims to improve the students’ sense of both word recognition and lexical access. In this activity, students are asked to read the keywords in the column and select those in the row with a similar meaning. For example, the word “however” is in the column and in the row, where there are three words: also, sometimes, and but. The students should select the word that has a similar meaning with “however” rapidly and automatically. With more practice in lexical access activity, students would be able not only to recognize the word and its meaning but also connect it with others in various networks.

These activities are pure examples created by teachers to assist their students absorb words more rapidly and fluently and increase their vocabulary knowledge. However, the question is the extent to which students should increase their vocabulary knowledge. The more extensive the vocabulary knowledge, the

better the students' reading comprehension will be. This relationship, as asserted by Laufer (1997) and Pulido and Hambrick (2008), illustrates that the students should minimally understand 95% of the words they see in a text; if they understand more, they will have better comprehension. Full comprehension occurs when the students are able to identify 98–99% of the words (Grabe, 2009; Nation, 2006). To achieve 95% coverage of the text, the students should know at least 10,000 to 15,000 words; to achieve 98–99%, the students should know between 36,000 and 40,000 words (Schmitt, 2008).

These numbers would probably be shocking for students beginning to learn language, but teachers should place their effort toward teaching their students the first 2,000 most frequently used words. Then, using an abundant array of vocabulary practices, they should help them to reach 10,000 words, which is considered to be realistic for advanced learners (Grabe, 2009). While teaching these words, teachers should foster a classroom environment that supports and motivates vocabulary learning, offers activities that help students follow word learning strategies, and creates various and different exercises for practicing vocabulary. These activities and exercises are important since it is not enough for the students only to memorize words.

The teacher could create a motivational classroom for learning vocabulary in several ways (Grabe, 2009). They could place the students' work or interesting output such as a poem and an article that motivates students to learn vocabulary via the appearance of materials placed on walls or bulletin boards. They could also place keywords they are learning on the walls. Utilizing a word wall approach is not

enough unless it is supported by further learning activities such as organizing the words around a strategy such as a thematic unit, part of speech, word families, and words with positive and negative connotations. Changing the classroom to remind students of the super activity of learning vocabulary is extremely motivating and useful.

Identifying ways in which teachers can help their students acquire more vocabulary each day and attain a minimum of 10,000 words is a very important issue. In addition to the word wall approach, teachers should think about a systematic way of selecting and explaining words that are worthy of attention (Grabe, 2009). A graphic organizer may be created through which words are categorized into three types: words that need explicit instruction, words that are not involvement in instruction at all, and words that are less important but deserve some if not full instructional time. Another way of explaining words is a concept-of-definition map, which is used to help students look at an essential word at the center of their classroom board and connect it with other words used to define it. In this manner, students not only learn the keyword but also learn additional words and phrases connected to it.

Gaining vocabulary knowledge is mandatory for students who wish to proceed with their reading. Research (see, e.g., Laufer, 1997; Nation, 2006) has confirmed that vocabulary knowledge, with automatic and rapid word recognition, is a prerequisite for reading comprehension and a predictor of students' reading performance. Thus, an emphasis on vocabulary instruction is necessary for teachers.

## Learning Reading Comprehension

In this study, teachers had a collective attitude toward reading comprehension and its skills. Table 8.2 shows some of those beliefs.

Table 8.2

*Teachers' attitudes toward reading comprehension*

Item #	Item description	Approach	Agreement percentage
2	The reader interpreting a text to create or construct his/her own meaning	2	75.64102564
18	The student learning that the quality of text comprehension is more important than the quantity of reading	2	72.72727273
19	The student reading silently in every lesson with no follow-up exercises after reading	2	14.28571429
20	The student learning to think about the content of what is read	3	92.30769231
25	Assessing students' reading comprehension more through students' writing, speaking, or performing rather than through multiple-choice or short-answer format tests	2	75.64102564
30	Helping students relate events in a text to their own experiences	2	91.02564103
36	<b>Teaching</b> students to identify the main ideas of a paragraph or a text	3	89.74358974

Most teachers emphasized the importance of reading comprehension for their reading instruction. Their students should be able to understand the meaning of their texts, have a better quality of reading comprehension, be engaged in post-reading activities, and use their background information to relate to the text. Such

skills are supported by both the whole language and metacognitive strategy approaches because of their focus on helping readers with their comprehension.

Certainly, comprehension is a vital goal of reading. Anderson (2009) stated that students need to learn not only how to comprehend but also how to gain the skills that will aid their comprehension. They need to develop their ability to understand a text although it takes time to achieve a good level of reading comprehension after intensive practice. They should have enough background in vocabulary, grammar, text structure, and reading strategies (Grabe, 2009). Their teachers should help them develop their reading abilities, covering all of these areas of expertise. However, teachers sometimes ignore grammar in their reading instruction although it is considered a valuable resource for reading comprehension (Grabe, 2009; Nation, 2009). This does not mean that grammar should be at the center of reading instruction, but it should be used as a tool to improve students' reading comprehension whenever needed. A balance of emphases on various areas of reading comprehension will help students perform better.

When thinking about reading comprehension, most teachers believe in the importance of main-idea comprehension and accordingly plan their activities to emphasize this. Main-idea comprehension activities should be a priority in teachers' instruction (Grabe, 2009). However, the teachers should manage creation of these activities, focusing on post-reading questions that facilitate their interaction with students and assess their comprehension (Anderson, 2009). This strategy of post-reading questions help teachers to assess their students' grasp of a text's possible main ideas, negotiate and request others' assessment of answers, ask for evidence

from the text, and discuss and evaluate their answers, with some instruction on how to better guess the main idea. An extended conversation is required between the teachers and their students that would help them in sharing their ideas, comprehending how the text details are connected, and relating details to students' background knowledge (Grabe, 2009).

In relation to the strategy of post-reading discussion, teachers could use elaborative interrogation (Pressley, 2006) which is an approach to questions that assess reading comprehension. It uses follow-up “why” questions to help students explain the reasons for their answers by locating evidence in the text. Such questions push students to illustrate their strategies for finding answers and learn how their other classmates get their answers. It requires a lot of practice and effort to become comfortable in explaining their answers and anticipating how others may think about them.

Main-idea comprehension also requires teachers to look at certain vocabulary that may help students to identify the main ideas. Such vocabulary would indicate to students where the main ideas are and how the text is structured and connected. An emphasis on summarizing the text is an important skill that assists students in illustrating their understanding of the text as well as connecting its information. The students would have some difficulty, at first, in summarizing the text, but with gradual practice and modeling, they would be able to identify summarizing techniques. It is so critical for students to learn the summarizing skill since it improves their oral and written demonstration of their understanding which they need for future studies and careers.



Along with text summarization, teachers should focus on comprehension monitoring (Grabe, 2009) which is often neglected although it has more benefits for main-idea comprehension. Comprehension monitoring guides students in thinking about why they are reading, identify their text structure and main ideas, relate the text to their background knowledge, reread when needed, and focus on areas in which they are having reading difficulty. It offers students much richer information when these strategies become a major part of their reading comprehension process. However, it requires support from teachers since they should model these strategies, providing instruction on how, why, and when students should use them.

Reading comprehension, with a focus main-idea, should include various sources and activities such as post-reading discussion, summarization, and comprehension monitoring to improve the students' performance of reading. The students need time and practice as well as support from teachers to learn reading comprehension.

### **Awareness of Text Structure**

The teachers had a strong tendency toward text structure learning skills.

Table 8.3 contains a list of some of their beliefs about it.

Table 8.3

*Teachers' attitudes toward text structure awareness*

Item #	Item description	Approach	Agreement percentage
29	<b>Teaching</b> students how to distinguish between opinions and facts presented in a text	3	88.46153846
35	Assisting students with direct explanation of a text structure		78.20512821

	(i.e., Explicitly teaching about a narrative, expository, or descriptive structure)	3	
38	Instructing students to pay attention to transition words in a text (e.g. ,Thus, because, since, and)	3	79.48717949
42	<b>Teaching</b> students how to make and use graphic organizers of a text structure (e.g., Web diagrams, strings)	3	74.02597403

The teachers firmly believed in what the metacognitive strategy approach calls for in terms of reserving a section of their teaching time for promoting discourse awareness. Using tools such as graphic organizers to illustrate how text structure work, the teachers created activities to instruct their students on text structure, illustrating and practicing different types of structures and recognizing how some words signal text organization.

Students' awareness of text structure is essential since without it, they would not be able to locate the main idea and its evidence (Meyer & Poon, 2001; Mohan, 1986; Pearson, 2009). They need explicit instruction on text structure, including discourse signaling markers and discourse organization, in order to identify successfully the sort of expository structures they have in their text, from comparison to problem-solution (Carrell, 1985; Grabe; 2009). Direct instruction on text discourse also helps students to realize how they could write their piece within a certain discourse structure and organize their information according to their purpose in writing. By being aware of various text structures, students can find the main idea and easily locate its evidence. Students need consistent practice in

reading authentic texts and materials not prepared for classroom study so they may see how their learning of text structure is related—classroom discussion would then center on ways to identify the text structure, its organization, and its goal.

The teachers could engage in various activities to help their students develop their awareness of text structure (Grabe; 2009). In pre-reading activities, teachers should ask their students to look over the text and its headings and guess what the text could be about. Teachers should also urge their students to look at a particular section and paragraph and examine its keywords and function as if it presents an argument, offers a solution, or provides a suggestion. In during-reading activities, teachers should ask their students to identify words and clues that reflect discourse structure such as cause-effect or comparison and write an outline of the text so they could share them in their post-reading discussion and compare their understanding of the text structure. The teachers also should create other activities after reading that include cutting the text into random pieces and asking students to reorganize it. Another activity involves asking students to examine a summary of the text and locate a line or part that does not belong to it.

Thus, these activities improve students' awareness of text structure. Not only that, but it also helps them develop a habit of a good reader who examines the text structure carefully, looking at the ways in which the text is organized and identifying words according to rhetorical patterns, transitions, and headings. This leads them to comprehend the text better and more rapidly and recall what the text looks like and presents (Hudson, 2007).

## Becoming a Strategic Reader

The teachers were inclined toward certain teaching strategies for reading comprehension. Table 8.4 shows some of their beliefs.

Table 8.4

*Teachers' attitudes toward strategic reading*

Item #	Item description	Approach	Agreement percentage
5	The reader always monitoring and regulating his/her reading comprehension	3	75.64102564
7	The reader skipping unknown words and guessing meaning from a text (e.g. By looking at words near it, looking at pictures in the text)	2	70.51282051
14	The student learning sets of reading strategies and applying them when reading a text	3	79.48717949
16	The student learning to read a text selectively, omitting irrelevant sections and focusing on portions of text most relevant to him/her	2	64.35897436
21	The student learning to identify specific problems when comprehension breaks down and to take steps to solve them	3	84.61538462
39	<b>Teaching</b> students to monitor their comprehension while reading a text	3	69.23076923
41	Always planning how and when to introduce and <b>teach</b> reading strategies to students	3	82.05128205

Since strategic reading is highlighted in the metacognitive strategy approach, teachers generally pointed to the importance they place on teaching their students strategies necessary for reading. They planned the sets of strategies they wanted to

teach, asked their students to monitor their comprehension and locate certain problems that complicate their comprehension, and created practice activities. However, they had different opinions about whether their students should read the text selectively by skipping some sections. Such incongruence among the teachers illustrates how each teacher had his/her own preferred set of reading strategies, which may or may not be based on research.

Students need to use several reading strategies when reading for comprehension (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2008). These strategies help students understand the text better and require some attention and practice (Pressley, 2002). They include determining a goal for the reading, forming predictions, reading selectively, pointing out important information, guessing unknown words, solving difficulties, and summarizing and reflecting on the text. Teachers must have these strategies in mind when providing students with a list of selected strategies and explaining how to use them, and then plan frequent practice on their usage at different times (Grabe, 2009). Further, teachers should model these strategies by reading aloud and verbalizing clearly which strategies they use (Duffy, 2002). Such explicit modeling improves students' awareness of reading strategies and helps them learn how a fluent reader might read and motivate them to share their attempts to use these strategies with the whole class.

Teachers also should make strategic reading important for their students by revisiting it frequently until students automatically use strategies when reading. This requires teaching these strategies and supervising students' work on them. Directed reading-thinking activity is one approach which teaches strategic reading

(Blachowicz & Ogle, 2008; Grabe, 2009). In this approach, students use several strategies, including applying their background knowledge and identifying reading goals.

One central strategy of this approach is to ask students for predictions at various points of the text—that is, to state what may be coming in the next paragraph or section. The class then approves or disapproves of predictions, evaluates them, and discusses evidence from the text. The teachers should engage their students in discussing their predictions, their reasons, whether they want to change them, and what clues help them in their predictions. This cycle of predictions, with pauses selected by the teacher throughout the text, helps students monitor their comprehension and practice main-idea comprehension.

Some students may find it difficult to make predictions, especially when they go through the text, but teachers should point to certain information and clues that help them form their predictions. Teachers should plan carefully how much text should be read between pauses, helping students to have enough time and information to revisit and adjust their predictions. Such information would help students to evaluate their predictions while providing them with clues about the coming section. Moreover, to help students more actively participate in the activity, teachers should assure their students that no one should read beyond their selected sections at every pause and plan accordingly so that such pauses should be at the page end or at a good section and discourage their students from reading ahead. This directed reading-thinking activity, with whole class discussion and reasoning,

helps students to practice predicting and evaluating their ideas and ways to modify them.

Another issue with strategic reading is to teach students how to engage with a challenging text (Grabe, 2009). Teachers should show students how to figure out and understand the difficult text by asking them first to identify it, determine its sources of difficulty, and discuss how to solve it. The sources of text difficulty include absence of clear examples, abstract imagery, density of new ideas, and grammatical complexity (Hudson, 2007). Students would learn a lot if they spent more time seeking an understanding of the difficult text and discussing ways to understand it. The result is not only knowing how to understand it but also identifying possible strategies to use when faced with another challenging text.

Research has proven that strategic reading has a positive impact (Pressley, 2002) on students' performance of reading. Despite the careful planning and time required from teachers, it fosters an active classroom environment as well as learning opportunities and platforms for students to practice these various strategies for improving their reading comprehension. Teachers play a huge role in modeling and creating activities for it.

### **Improving Reading Fluency**

The teachers expressed their doubts about reading fluency. Table 8.5 lists some of their beliefs.

Table 8.5

*Teachers' attitudes toward reading fluency*

Item #	Item description	Approach	Agreement percentage
12	The student paying more attention to the correct pronunciation of the words than to the meaning of a text when reading a text silently	1	10.25641026
23	Letting students learn to read naturally (i.e., With little or no explicit teaching of reading)	2	48.05194805
24	Asking students to read aloud to the whole class on a frequent basis	1	61.53846154
62	Develop students' skills in reading aloud	1	50
72	Help students read faster	1	74.02597403

Reading fluency, along with word recognition, is an essential part of the skills-based approach. As the table shows, there is incongruence among teachers about whether reading fluency should matter in their classroom. Most teachers undervalue word pronunciation activities. Half did not support reading-aloud practices while most urged their students to read faster, which is clearly a contradiction since students would not be able to read faster without intensive activities in pronunciation and reading aloud. Results showed that some teachers were not fully conscious of reading fluency's positive impact on students.

Students need to develop their reading fluency, which means rapid and accurate reading (Blevins, 2005). As Nation (2008) pointed out, reading fluency is often ignored in the reading classroom since teachers and students want to learn new things, while reading fluency requires working on the same material multiple



times. In contrast to what teachers and students think, research has pointed to the importance of reading fluency to successful reading instruction (Grabe, 2009; Nation, 2008). Reading fluency improves students' word recognition, reading speed, and reading comprehension.

Teachers should plan and implement reading fluency activities over a longer period of time if possible since students need time to enhance their fluency (Iwahori, 2008). They should demonstrate to their students the value of reading fluency to their reading performance. Such motivation helps students attain the goal of fluency activities and compete in their exercises. At the word recognition fluency level, students would practice exercises using flashcards and reading a word list under beat-the-clock conditions (Grabe, 2009). At the passage level, they should practice rereading their texts silently and aloud, with extensive reading and recycling of texts they have already read in timed reading activities.

Recycling texts is considered an important reading practice (Grabe, 2009; Rasinski, 2003). One way to recycle texts is repeated reading. Students should be involved in assisted or unassisted repeated reading. Assisted repeated reading asks students to read a passage silently using an audiotape or their teachers. Unassisted repeated reading involves asking students to read their passage aloud on their own to reach a targeted reading rate.

Another manner of recycling texts involves rereading, which helps reading fluency a lot (Grabe, 2009). Teachers and their students may underestimate the value of rereading since they may be rereading familiar texts, yet rereading offers a golden opportunity for fluency practice and vocabulary recycling. Students should

know the reasons for rereading to have a sense of their activities. These reasons may include, for instance, summarizing texts, confirming the main idea, inferencing, and identifying the author stance, etc.

In addition to repeated reading and rereading practices to increase reading fluency, students should engage in oral paired reading (Grabe, 2009). This process involves asking students to read a familiar text with a classmate as quickly as possible within a predetermined period of time while the other classmate follows along and assists their partner if needed. Then they switch roles and repeat this process for two or three rounds, trying to increase number of words read within less time. The goal is to increase students' reading rate. Oral paired reading activity is essential to reading a familiar text, understanding it and knowing its words.

Reading fluency activities should take place in the reading classroom although many teachers believe that doing so wastes their time and has no clear impact on reading comprehension. However, such assumptions have been tested in reading research and eventually rejected (Anderson, 2008). These activities have been proven to have a positive impact on students' fluency, revising their vocabulary knowledge and enabling them to grasp texts better (Nation, 2009). Therefore, reading fluency should be a critical part of reading instruction.

### **Practicing Extensive Reading**

The teachers differed in their attitudes toward including extensive reading in their reading curriculum. Table 8.6 lists some of their beliefs about it.

Table 8.6

*Teachers' attitudes toward word recognition*

Item #	Item description	Approach	Agreement percentage
10	The student reading silently in English as much as possible, in and out of the classroom	2	70.51282051
57	Materials which are carefully graded and sequenced in terms of language structures and vocabulary (both in and out of a classroom)	1	78.20512821
60	Texts most of which are freely chosen by students ( <b>for classroom study</b> )	2	39.74358974

In the whole language approach, students are urged to read as much as they can in and out of their classroom. In addition, recent research has advocated for extensive reading in the belief that students would not master reading without extensive practice. The teachers in this study agreed to support their students' reading outside of their classroom, but rejected an opportunity to offer their students freedom to select and discuss a certain text. However, extensive reading requires teachers to incorporate their students' texts into their curriculum and to ask them what they read, describe their reaction to it, and discuss a portion of it (Aebersold & Field, 1997; Day & Bamford, 2002).

A reading curriculum that emphasizes teaching how to read rather than asking them to read may be restrictive; under certain circumstances students are not given the chance to explore reading outside of school. On the other hand, in order to improve their reading and linguistic competence generally, they should

continue reading in and out of school (Horst, 2009). Extensive reading offers a way, as integrated in the reading curriculum, to motivate students to keep reading in order to improve their reading abilities incrementally (Grabe, 2009). Students should read interesting materials of their own choice such as graded readers or read texts at appropriate levels, remembering that the only way to become better readers is to keep reading. Extensive reading, however, requires teachers to motivate students, oversee their reading efforts, and offer sufficient time and resources. Students should be allowed to read as much as possible with no follow-up exercises, with access to a variety of materials at the appropriate linguistic level. Students should be allowed to select their texts and read them individually and silently, without need of a dictionary, and keeping track of their progress.

The teachers, in order to implement extensive reading in their class, must initiate a classroom conversation about reading (Grabe, 2009). They should motivate students to read and explain to them the reasons for doing so, explaining, for instance, how extensive reading is the only way to improve reading abilities. They should talk about the sorts of texts they like to read and why, and urge them to share their interests and information on what they read, with a short summary.

The teachers should also save a portion of class time for silent reading to initiate this reading habit. One method for doing so is sustained silent reading (Grabe, 2009). Within this approach, the teachers have regular sessions of silent reading with no explicit instruction and interruption and offer their students flexibility in choosing and changing their materials while the teachers indulge themselves in reading materials interesting to them. This practice allows teachers to

practice extensive reading with their students and coach them when they face obstacles or issues.

Extensive reading provides huge benefits for students—growth in reading abilities depends on the length and quantity of reading experiences. The more they read, the stronger their reading comprehension abilities will be (Stanovich, 2000) and the more positive their attitudes toward reading will grow (Wang & Guthrie, 2004). These benefits should motivate teachers and their schools to adopt extensive reading as a unique program and create accessible and abundant reading resources on different topics and interests (Day & Bamford, 1998). Offering library resources would guarantee that students practice reading for pleasure outside of class, gaining its benefits over an extended period of time.

### **Conclusion: Implications and Limitations**

This research on Saudi EFL teachers' beliefs about reading instruction generated significant results. More teachers favored the metacognitive strategy approach than the other two examined in this study. Most teachers (81.7%) identified with the metacognitive strategy approach while 70.6% and 63% chose the whole language and skills-based approaches, respectively. Moreover, I conducted a micro examination of teachers' responses within evidence-based major components of reading instruction. Those components, underlined by the cognitive theory of reading instruction, are six skills that teachers should aid their students in acquiring. Study findings showed that the teachers highly valued most of these skills, with the exception of reading fluency and extensive reading. This finding was examined within current and relevant research on second language reading and how teachers support their students' learning of all six skills.

This research took the scarcity of studies on EFL teachers' beliefs about reading instruction into consideration and took a quantitative approach in identifying teachers' beliefs. Findings significantly contribute to the EFL teacher education field and to the Saudi context more specifically by exploring and pinpointing EFL teachers' beliefs about reading instruction and connecting them to recent research on second language reading instruction. Taking the initiative to investigate this issue assists teacher educators in becoming aware of their teachers' attitudes and enables them to properly address their concerns through attendance of professional development workshops.

The study had some limitations. It did not include EFL K–12 teachers in public schools and those who are in other cities. It did not compare teachers' beliefs with those of teacher educators nor does it include discussion of whether the teacher educators shaped their beliefs. It did not connect the teachers' prior experiences in English teaching with their beliefs about local or global EFL teacher education programs and the types of courses, materials, and teaching strategies with which they are familiar.

In addition, this study did not examine teachers' beliefs, using qualitative research tools, or explore what more teachers could say about their beliefs and whether they had any constraints, socially, financially, and academically, which held them back from implementing those beliefs. It did not attempt to observe teachers in their classroom or to evaluate their curriculum and school environment, to confirm whether they were being forced to execute certain teaching practices that they did not like.

These limitations should be considered in future studies whose findings hold promise for the field of EFL teacher education as well as reading instruction. More research would help teachers voice their beliefs and better equip their teaching with effective teaching strategies and practices. The ultimate experience of teaching reading is a broad and time-consuming goal, but an achievable one.

## References

- Adams, M. J. (1999). Afterword: The science and politics of beginning reading practices. *Reading development and the teaching of reading*, 213–227.
- Aebersold, J. A., & Field, M. L. (1997). *From reader to reading teacher: Issues and strategies for second language classrooms*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Alhaydib, M. (1986). *Teaching English as a foreign language in the schools of Saudi Arabia*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Kansas. Lawrence.
- Almarza, G. (1996). Student foreign language teachers' growth. In D. Freeman & J. Richards (Eds.), *Teacher learning in language teaching* (pp. 50–78). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Almulhim, A. (2001). *An English language needs assessment of Saudi College of Technology students with respect to a number of business sectors in Saudi Arabia*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Mississippi. Oxford.
- Alsamadani, H. (2012). Reading strategy instruction in Saudi schools. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 3(5), 829–837.
- Al-Seghayer, K. (2005). Teaching English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Slowly but steadily changing. In G. Braine (Eds.), *Teaching English to the world: history, curriculum, and practice* (pp.125–134). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Anderson, N. J. (2009). ACTIVE reading: The research base for a pedagogical approach in the reading classroom. In Z. Han & J. Anderson (Eds.), *Second language reading research and instruction: Crossing the boundaries* (pp. 117–143). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Anderson, N. J. (2008). *Practical English language teaching: Reading*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Anderson, J. R. (2000). *Learning and memory: An integrated approach*. New York: John Wiley
- Baddeley, A. (2007). *Working memory, thought, and action*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baddeley, A. (2003). Working memory and language: An overview. *Journal of communication disorders*, 36(3), 189–208.



- Bailey, K., Bergthold B., Braunstein B., Fleischman N., Holbrook M., Tuman J., Waissbluth X., & Zambo L. (1996). The language learners' autobiography: examining the "apprenticeship of observation". In D. Freeman & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *Teacher Learning in Language Teaching* (pp. 11–29). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Balota, D. A., Yap, M. J., & Cortese, M. J. (2006). Visual word recognition: The journey from features to meaning (a travel update). *Handbook of psycholinguistics*, 2, 285–375.
- Biemiller, A. (2005). Size and sequence in vocabulary development: Implications for choosing words for primary grade vocabulary instruction. In E. H. Hiebert & M. L. Kamil (Eds.), *Teaching and learning vocabulary: Bringing research to practice* (pp. 223–242). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Birch, B. (2007). *English L2 reading. Getting to the bottom*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Blachowicz, C. L., & Ogle, D. (2008). *Reading comprehension: Strategies for independent learners*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Blevins, W. (2005). The importance of reading fluency and the English language learner. *The Language Teacher*, 29(6), 13–16.
- Borg, S. (1999). The use of grammatical terminology in the second language classroom: A qualitative study of teachers' practices and cognitions. *Applied Linguistics*, 20(1), 95–126.
- Borg, M. (2001). Teacher belief. *ELT Journal*, 55(2), 186–188.
- Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do. *Language Teaching*, 36(02), 81–109.
- Borg, S. (2006). *Teacher cognition and language education: Research and practice*. London: Continuum.
- Borg, S. (2009). Language teacher cognition. In A. Burns & J. Richards (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education* (pp. 163–171). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Breznitz, Z. (2006). *Fluency in reading: Synchronization of processes*. New York: Routledge.
- Carrell, P., Devine, J., & Eskey, D. (1988). *Interactive approaches to second language reading*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Carrell, P. L. (1985). Facilitating ESL reading by teaching text structure. *TESOL quarterly*, 19(4), 727–752.
- Carlisle, J. F. (2003). Morphology matters in learning to read: A commentary. *Reading Psychology*, 24(3–4), 291–322.
- Carpenter, P. A., Miyake, A., & Just, M. A. (1994). Working memory constraints in comprehension: Evidence from individual differences, aphasia, and aging. In G. Gernsbacher (Ed.), *Handbook of psycholinguistics* (pp. 1075–1122). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Carver, R. P. (2003). The highly lawful relationships among pseudoword decoding, word identification, spelling, listening, and reading. *Scientific studies of reading*, 7(2), 127–154.
- Chiou, A. (2004). *Taiwanese EFL teachers' beliefs about reading and language teaching*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Texas's Woman University. Texas.
- Chou, Y.C. (2008). Exploring the Reflection of Teachers' Beliefs about Reading Theories and Strategies on Their Classroom Practices. *Feng Chia Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 16, 183–216.
- Clandinin, J. & Connelly, M. (1987). Teachers' personal knowledge: What counts as 'personal' in studies of the personal. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 19, 487–500.
- Clark, C. (1988). Asking the right questions about teacher preparation: Contributions of research on teaching thinking. *Educational Researcher*, 17(2), 5–12.
- Clark, C.M., & Peterson, P.L. (1986). Teachers' Thought Processes. In M. Wittrock (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (pp. 255–296). NY: MacMillan Publishing Company.
- Coltheart, M., Rastle, K., Perry, C., Langdon, R., & Ziegler, J. (2001). DRC: a dual route cascaded model of visual word recognition and reading aloud. *Psychological review*, 108(1), 204–256.
- Davis, M. M., & Wilson, E. K. (1999). A Title 1 teacher's beliefs, decision-making, and instruction at the third and seventh grade levels. *Reading Research and Instruction*, 38(4), 290–299.
- Day, R. R., & Bamford, J. (1998). *Extensive reading in the second language classroom*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Day, R. R., & Bamford, J. (2002). Top ten principles for teaching extensive reading. *Reading in a foreign language*, 14(2), 136–141.
- De Garcia, R., Reynolds, S., & Savignon, S. (1976). Foreign-language attitude survey. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 32(3), 302–304.
- Deford, D. (1985). Validating the construct of theoretical orientation in reading instruction. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 20, 351–367.
- Duffy, G. (2002). The case for direct explanation of strategies. In C. Block & M. Pressley (Eds), *Comprehension instruction: Research-based best practices* (pp. 28–41) New York: Guilford Press.
- Duffy, G. (1977). *A study of teacher conceptions of reading*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 151763).
- Ebsworth, M., & Schweers C. (1997). What researchers say and practitioners do: Perspectives on conscious grammar instruction in the ESL classroom. *Applied Language Learning*, 8, 237–260.
- Eisenhart, M., Shrum, J., Harding, J., & Cuthbert, A. (1988). Teacher beliefs: Definitions, findings, and directions. *Educational Policy*. 2(1), 51–70.
- El-Okda, M. (2005). EFL student teachers' cognition about reading instruction. *The Reading Matrix*, 5, 43–60.
- Fang, Z. (1996). A review of research on teacher beliefs and practices. *Educational Research*, 38(1), 47–65.
- Farrell, T. S. C. (1999). The reflective assignment: unlocking pre-service teachers' beliefs on grammar teaching. *RELC Journal*, 30(2), 1–17.
- Feng, J. (1992). *Relationships between first-grade teachers' theoretical orientation to reading, their instructional practice, and students' attitude toward reading*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Memphis State University.
- Fender, M. (2001). A review of L1 and L2/ESL word integration skills and the nature of L2/ESL word integration development involved in lower-level text processing. *Language Learning*, 51(2), 319–396.
- Gebel, A., & Schrier, L. (2002). Spanish language teachers' beliefs and practices about reading in a second language. In J. H. Sullivan (Eds.), *Literacy and the second language learner*. (pp. 85–109). NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Golombek, P. (1998). A study of language teachers' personal practical knowledge.

- TESOL Quarterly*, 32(3), 447–464.
- Goodman, K. (1989). Whole-language research: Foundations and development. *Elementary School Journal*, 90, 207–225.
- Grabe, W., & Stoller, F. L. (2002). *Teaching and researching reading*. Harlow: Longman.
- Grabe, W. (2009). *Reading in a second language: Moving from theory to practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Gregoire, M. (2003). Is it a challenge or a threat? A dual-process model of teachers' cognition and appraisal processes during conceptual change. *Educational Psychology Review*, 12(2), 147–179.
- Hall, A., & Napier, L. (1994). *Attitudes and perceptions across the state of Mississippi toward the whole language approach to teaching reading*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 381542).
- Harste, J. C. (1989). The future of whole language. *Elementary School Journal*, 90(2), 243–249.
- Harste, J. C., & Burke, C. L. (1977). A new hypothesis for reading teacher research: Both the teaching and learning of reading is theoretically based. In P. Pearson (Ed.), *Reading: Theory, research and practice* (pp. 32–40). Clemson, SC: National Reading Conference.
- Hernandez-Laboy, O. (2009). *Reading strategies ESL teachers utilize to enhance comprehension in students: Implications for classroom practices*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Puerto Rico. Rio Piedras.
- Horst, M. (2009). Developing definitional vocabulary knowledge and lexical access speed through extensive reading. In Z. Han & J. Anderson (Eds), *Second language reading research and instruction: Crossing the boundaries* (pp. 40–64). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Horwitz, E. (1985). Using student beliefs about language learning and teaching in the foreign language methods course. *Foreign Language Annals*, 18(4), 333–340.
- Hulme, C., Snowling, M., Caravolas, M., & Carroll, J. (2005). Phonological skills are (probably) one cause of success in learning to read: A comment on Castles and Coltheart. *Scientific studies of reading*, 9(4), 351–365.
- Hudson, T. (2007). *Teaching second language reading*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Hyland, K. (2006). *English for academic purposes: An advanced resource book*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Iwahori, Y. (2008). Developing reading fluency: A study of extensive reading in EFL. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 20(1), 70–91.
- Johnson, K. E. (1992). The relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices during literacy instruction for non-native speakers of English. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, 24(1), 83–108.
- Johnson, K. E. (1994). The emerging beliefs and instructional practices of preservice English as a second language teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 10(4), 439–452.
- Kagan, M. (1992). Implications of research on teacher belief. *Educational Psychologist*, 27, 65–90.
- Khonamri, F., & Salimi, M. (2010). The interplay between EFL high school teachers' beliefs and their instructional practices regarding reading strategies. *Research on Youth and Language*, 4(1), 96–107.
- Kintsch, W & Rawson, K. (2005). Comprehension. In *The Science of Reading: A handbook* (pp. 209–226). Malden: Blackwell.
- Kintsch, W., Patel, V. L., & Ericsson, K. A. (1999). The role of long-term working memory in text comprehension. *Psychologia*, 42(4), 186–198.
- Koda, K. (2005). *Insight into second language reading*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kuzborska, I. (2010). *The relationship between EFL teachers' beliefs and practices in reading instruction to advanced learners of English in a Lithuanian University context*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Essex. Colchester, UK.
- Laufer, B. (1997). The lexical plight in second language reading: Words you don't know, words you think you know and words you can't guess. In J. Coady & T. Huckin (Eds), *Second language vocabulary acquisition* (pp. 20–34) New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lenski, S. D., Wham, M. A., & Griffey, D. C. (1998). Literacy orientation survey: A survey to clarify teachers' beliefs and practices. *Reading Research and Instruction*, 37(3), 217–236.
- Li, D. (1998). It's always more difficult than you plan and imagine: Teachers'

- perceived difficulties in introducing the communicative approach in South Korea. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32, 677–703.
- Lortie, D. (1975). *School teacher: A sociological study*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mastrini-MacAteer, M. (1997). *Teacher beliefs and practices as they relate to reading instruction and student achievement*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Colorado. Denver.
- McCarty, F., Abbott-Shim, M., & Lambert, R. (2001). The relationship between teacher beliefs and practices, and Head Start classroom quality. *Early Education and Development*, 12, 225–238.
- McKay, S. L. (2006). *Researching second language classrooms*. NJ: Routledge.
- Meyer, B. J., & Poon, L. W. (2001). Effects of structure strategy training and signaling on recall of text. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 93(1), 141.
- Mohammed, N. (2006). *An exploratory study of the interplay between the teachers' beliefs, instructional practices, and professional development*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation).
- Mohan, B. A. (1986). *Language and content*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley Publishing Company.
- Mokhtari, K., & Sheorey, R. (Eds.). (2008). *Reading strategies of first-and second-language learners: See how they read*. MA: Christopher-Gordon Pub.
- Moss, K. (1980). *Classroom analysis of teachers' theoretical orientation to reading*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 198496).
- Nation, I. (2009). *Teaching ESL/EFL reading and writing*. New York: Routledge.
- Nation, I. (2008). *Teaching vocabulary: Strategies and Techniques*. MA: Heinle Cengage Learning.
- Nation, I. (2006). How large a vocabulary is needed for reading and listening? *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 63(1), 59–82.
- Numrich, C. (1996). On becoming a language teacher: Insights from diary studies. *TESOL Quarterly*, 30 (1), 131–153.
- Nuttall, C. (2005). *Teaching reading skills in a foreign language*. Oxford: Macmillan Education.

- Pajares, M. F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research. *Review of Educational Research*, 62(3), 307–332.
- Pearson, P. D. (2009). The roots of reading comprehension instruction. In S. Israel & G. Duffy (Eds), *Handbook of research on reading comprehension* (pp. 3–32). New York: Routledge.
- Pearson, P. (1989). Reading the whole-language movement. *Elementary School Journal*, 90(2), 231–241.
- Perfetti, C. (2007). Reading ability: Lexical quality to comprehension. *Scientific studies of reading*, 11(4), 357–383.
- Perfetti, C. & Hart, L. (2001). The lexical basis of comprehension skill. In D. Gorfien (Ed.), *On the consequences of meaning selection* (pp. 67–86). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Perfetti, C. (1999). Comprehending written language: A blueprint of the reader. In C. Brown & P. Hagoort (Eds.), *Neurocognition of language* (pp. 167–208). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pressley, M. (2006). *Reading instruction that works*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Pressley, M. (2002). Metacognition and self-regulated comprehension. In A. Farstrup & S. Samuels (Eds), *What research has to say about reading instruction* (pp. 291–309). NJ: International Reading Association.
- Pulido, D., & Hambrick, D. Z. (2008). The virtuous circle: modeling individual differences in L2 reading and vocabulary development. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 20(2), 164–190.
- Rasinski, T. V. (2003). *The fluent reader: Oral reading strategies for building word recognition, fluency, and comprehension*. New York: Scholastic Inc.
- Rea, L. M., & Parker, R. A. (2005). *Designing and conducting survey research: A comprehensive guide*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Richards, J., Ho B., & Giblin K. (1996). Learning how to teach in the RSA Cert. In D. Freeman & J. Richards (Eds.), *Teacher learning in language Teaching* (pp. 242–259). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. & Rodgers, T. (2002). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J., & Lockhart, C. (1996). *Reflective teaching in second language Classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Richards, J., & Pennington M. (1998). The first year of teaching. In J. Richards (Eds.), *Beyond Training* (pp. 173–190). Cambridge: CUP.
- Richardson, V., Anders, P., Tidwell, D., & Lloyd, C. (1991). The relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices in reading comprehension instruction. *American Educational Research Journal*, 28(3), 559–586.
- Roehler, R., Duffy, R., Herrmann, A., Conley, M., & Johnson, J. (1988). Knowledge structures as evidence of the 'personal': Bridging the gap from thought to practice. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 20, 159–165.
- Saraireh, B. (2003). *A survey study of clarifying elementary English teachers' beliefs and their theoretical orientations to reading instruction in public schools of Jordan*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Ohio University.
- Savignon, S. & Wang C. (2003). Communicative language teaching in EFL contexts: Learner attitudes and perceptions. *IRAL*, 41(3), 223–249.
- Schmitt, N. (2008). Instructed second language vocabulary learning. *Language teaching research*, 12(3), 329–363.
- Sendan, F. & Roberts, J. (1998). Orhan: A case study in the development of a student teachers' personal theories. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 4, 229–244.
- Singer, M. & Leon, J. (2007). Psychological studies of higher language processes: behavioral and empirical approaches. In F. Schmalhofer & C. Perfetti (Eds), *Higher level language processes in the brain* (pp. 9–25). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum
- Sinatra, R. (2003). *Word Recognition and Vocabulary Understanding Strategies for Literacy Success*. MA: Christopher-Gordon.
- Smith, F. (1985). *Reading without nonsense*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Smith, F. (1986). *Understanding reading: A psycholinguistic analysis of learning to read*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Stanovich, K. E. (2000). *Progress in understanding reading: Scientific foundations and new frontiers*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Squires, D., & Bliss, T. (2004). Teacher visions: navigating beliefs about literacy learning: teachers can use 'visioning' as a tool to clarify how their beliefs play out as instructional practices. *The Reading Teacher*, 57(8), 756–763.



- Tillema, H. (1995). Changing the professional knowledge and beliefs of teachers: A training study. *Learning and Instruction*, 5(4), 291–318.
- Wallace, C. 1992. *Reading*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Wang, J., & Guthrie, J. (2004). Modeling the effects of intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, amount of reading, and past reading achievement on text comprehension between US and Chinese students. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 39(2), 162–186.
- Wang, M., & Koda, K. (2005). Commonalities and differences in word identification skills among learners of English as a second language. *Language Learning*, 55(1), 71–98.
- Wilcox-Herzog, A. (2002). Is there a link between teachers' beliefs and behaviors? *Early Education and Development*, 13(1), 81–106.
- Woods, D. (1996). *Teacher cognition in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Zaid, M. (1993). *Comprehensive analysis of the current system of teaching English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabian intermediate schools*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Colorado. Boulder.

## Appendix

### Survey of English Teachers' Beliefs about Reading Instruction in Saudi Arabia

#### **A. Your beliefs about reading, learning of reading, teaching of reading, reading materials and reading purposes at Saudi universities.**

Listed below are statements containing views about how we perceive reading in English at university. Please indicate **the extent to which you agree** with each statement by placing (✓) in the appropriate column. By indicating your views please respond in the way that reflects most closely **your own beliefs and practices when teaching reading in English to university students**.

- A. strongly disagree
- B. disagree
- C. uncertain
- D. agree
- E. strongly agree

<b>I believe that <u>the process of reading in English at university</u> should involve...</b>		<b>Strongly disagree A</b>	<b>Disagree B</b>	<b>Uncertain (I don't know) C</b>	<b>Agree D</b>	<b>Strongly agree E</b>
1	the reader getting meaning from a text by working out how to read words accurately					
2	the reader interpreting a text to create or construct his/her own meaning					
3	the reader consciously selecting strategies (mental activities that readers use to comprehend a text) and using them to work out the meaning of a text					
4	the reader relating ideas in a text to his/her knowledge					
5	the reader always monitoring and regulating his/her reading comprehension					
6	the reader knowing that his/her understanding of a text comes from understanding the words of which it is composed					

7	the reader skipping unknown words and guessing meaning from a text (e.g. by looking at words near it, looking at pictures in the text)					
8	the reader moving through a text with specific purposes in mind					
9	the reader understanding all the words he/she reads in order to understand the meaning of a text					

<b>I believe that <u>learning of reading in English at university</u> is a process which should involve ...</b>		<b>Strongly disagree A</b>	<b>Disagree B</b>	<b>Uncertain (I don't know) C</b>	<b>Agree D</b>	<b>Strongly agree E</b>
10	the student reading silently in English as much as possible, in and out of the classroom					
11	the student learning a lot of vocabulary words in order for his/her reading comprehension to improve					
12	the student paying more attention to the correct pronunciation of the words than to the meaning of a text when reading a text silently					
13	the student often translating sentences into Arabic in order for his/her reading comprehension to improve					
14	the student learning sets of reading strategies and applying them when reading a text					
15	the student learning a lot of grammar in order for his/her reading comprehension to improve					
16	the student learning to read a text selectively, omitting irrelevant sections and focusing on portions of text most relevant to him/her					

17	the student learning about different text structures (i. e. narratives, expository, or descriptive structures)					
18	the student learning that the quality of text comprehension is more important than the quantity of reading					
19	the student reading silently in every lesson with no follow-up exercises after reading					
20	the student learning to think about the content of what is read					
21	the student learning to identify specific problems when comprehension breaks down and to take steps to solve them					

<b>I believe that <u>teaching of reading in English at university</u> is a process which should involve <u>me as a teacher</u>...</b>		<b>Strongly disagree A</b>	<b>Disagree B</b>	<b>Uncertain (I don't know) C</b>	<b>Agree D</b>	<b>Strongly agree E</b>
22	passing on knowledge and skills necessary for students to read					
23	letting students learn to read naturally (i.e. with little or no explicit teaching of reading)					
24	asking students to read aloud to the whole class on a frequent basis					
25	assessing students' reading comprehension more through students' writing, speaking, or performing rather than through multiple-choice or short-answer format tests					
26	<b>teaching</b> word chunks in English (i.e. prefixes, suffixes, base words, etc)					

27	trying to cover almost all the material and exercises given in a textbook					
28	asking students to role play what they have read					
29	<b>teaching</b> students how to distinguish between opinions and facts presented in a text					
30	helping students relate events in a text to their own experiences					
31	often asking students to answer factual questions about a text (i. e. facts and details about the text content)					
32	letting students spend most of their reading time working in groups					
33	almost always <b>teaching</b> students new vocabulary before reading a text					
34	often doing pre-reading activities or discussions with students about a text (e.g. by looking at portions of the text such as pictures, graphics, titles, headings)					
35	assisting students with direct explanation of a text structure (i. e. <b>explicitly teaching</b> about a narrative, expository, or descriptive structure)					
36	<b>teaching</b> students to identify the main ideas of a paragraph or a text					
37	often asking students to answer inferential questions about a text (i.e. where the meaning is implied rather than explicitly stated in the text)					
38	instructing students to pay attention to transition words in a text (e.g. thus, because, since, and)					

39	<b>teaching</b> students to monitor their comprehension while reading a text					
40	developing students' strategies relevant to their reading					
41	always planning how and when to introduce and <b>teach</b> reading strategies to students					
42	<b>teaching</b> students how to make and use graphic organizers of a text structure (e.g. web diagrams, strings)					
43	<b>teaching</b> new vocabulary as it occurs in the reading text (i.e. <b>teaching</b> new words only when students ask for their meaning while reading or discussing a text					
44	immediately correcting students' oral reading mistakes					
45	usually discussing texts with the whole class					

I believe that <u>types of reading material in English</u> that university students should be exposed <u>to for classroom study</u> involve...		Strongly disagree A	Disagree B	Uncertain (I don't know) C	Agree D	Strongly agree E
46	textbook texts					
47	English novels, short stories					
48	written work produced by other students (e.g. model essays, personal letters)					
49	instruction manual					
50	internet texts					
51	news report					
52	research article					
53	brochures					

I believe that <u>teaching materials</u> that English teachers should teach university students from involve ...		Strongly disagree A	Disagree B	Uncertain (I don't know) C	Agree D	Strongly agree E

54	texts which are interesting for students to read ( <b>i.e. texts for classroom study</b> )					
55	in-house textbook (i.e. locally produced materials)					
56	integrated textbooks (commercial textbooks, e.g. 'Market Leader', 'Cutting Edge')					
57	materials which are carefully graded and sequenced in terms of language structures and vocabulary (both in and out of a classroom)					
58	texts chosen by English teachers as they know best which texts are appropriate for improving their students' reading ( <b>for classroom study</b> )					
59	materials incorporating research findings (i.e. corpus-texts which include specific language examples of student or expert writing in particular fields or institutions) ( <b>for classroom study</b> )					
60	texts most of which are freely chosen by students ( <b>for classroom study</b> )					
61	a variety of materials on a wide range of topics - <b>both</b> on content (subject-related) area and general area topics ( <b>for classroom study</b> )					

<b>I believe that <u>an important aim of teaching students to read in English at university</u> is to...</b>		<b>Strongly disagree A</b>	<b>Disagree B</b>	<b>Uncertain (I don't know) C</b>	<b>Agree D</b>	<b>Strongly agree E</b>
62	develop students' skills in reading aloud					
63	develop a lifelong interest and enjoyment in reading					

64	improve students' reading comprehension					
65	help students pass tests/exams					
66	extend students' vocabulary					
67	develop research and study skills					
68	help students learn grammar					
69	help students become independent readers					
70	develop skills in critical thinking					
71	expand students' views of the world					
72	help students read faster					
73	help students read English texts in their subject classes					
74	help students become better writers					

## B. Background Information

Please write down or choose one of the responses that will indicate your background

### 75. Nationality:

A. Saudi	B. Arab	C. Indian/Pakistani	D. American/Canadian/ British	E. others
----------	---------	---------------------	-------------------------------	-----------

### 76. Gender:                      A. Male                      B. Female

### 77. Age:

A. 20-30                      B. 31-40                      C. 41-50                      D. 51-60                      E. 60+

### 78. How long have you been an English teacher?

A. 5                      B. 10                      C. 15                      D. 25                      E. 35+

### 79. How long have you been teaching English at university?

A. 5                      B. 10                      C. 15                      D. 25                      E. 35+

### 80. What qualifications do you presently hold (e.g. teachers' certificate, bachelor of art, masters, or doctoral degree)

- a) Teachers' certificate
- b) Bachelor of art
- c) Masters degree



d) Doctoral degree

**81. How many times have you attended courses or workshops in the teaching of reading in the last three years?**

A. None            B. 1-3 times        C. 4-6 times        D. 7-9 times        E. 10 times +

**Abdulaziz M. A. Althewini**  
**ama270@gmail.com**  
**011-966-555-279795**

## **Education**

Ph.D. Language, Culture and Society  
Department of Curriculum & Instruction  
*Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA*  
• GPA: 3.91  
May 2016

M.A. Teaching English as a second language  
Department of Applied Linguistics  
Schreyer Honors College  
*Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA*  
• Dean's list  
• GPA: 3.85 / 4.00  
• Thesis: Professional Workshop for Saudi Foreign English Teachers  
December 2009

B.A. English Literature  
Department of English  
Schreyer Honors College  
*Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA*  
• Honors in Teaching English as a Second Language  
• Dean's list  
• GPA: 3.80 / 4.00  
• President's Fund for Undergraduate Research  
December 2009

## **Related Experiences**

English Language Lecturer  
*King Saud ibn Abdul Aziz University for Health Sciences,*  
*Riyadh, Saudi Arabia,*  
Spring 2010 – 2013

## **Certificates**

2009: Phi Beta Kappa certificate, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA  
2009: Pennsylvania State University's Teaching English as a Second Language Specialist certificate  
2009: Pennsylvania State University's Teaching with Technology certificate  
2008: Superior Academic Achievement certificate, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA  
2006: Superior Academic Achievement certificate, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA  
2003: the Holy Qura'an Memorization certificate, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia