

Research Thesis

**TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING
READING TO ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN
LANGUAGE (EFL) STUDENTS IN SAUDI
HIGHER EDUCATION**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores teachers' beliefs about teaching reading and reading instructional practices. The study seeks to answer the questions such as what the English language teachers believe about teaching reading in English to the Saudi EFL learners and how they form/develop their beliefs in this particular context. The study also tries to find out why teachers hold particular sets of beliefs about teaching reading in English and what reading instructional practices do teachers of apparently different beliefs use with Saudi EFL learners.

The main objective of the study is mainly achieved by conducting a survey questionnaire with 75 and audio-recording active interviews with five practising English language teachers who are currently working in Saudi higher education. Thus the study is a combination of both the qualitative and the quantitative research methodologies.

The findings of the study show that the teachers' beliefs are not stagnant, rather they are flexible and are guided by what works well and less well for their learners. A clear consensus is also seen about the significance of teachers' beliefs in teaching reading and teachers have no doubt about the importance of reading in the learners' overall English language learning.

Though there is a general belief of the teachers that their role should be of a facilitator, practically a teacher has to perform a very active role and lead the reading activities in a reading class.

This research study not only brings some useful data to the higher education institutes in Saudi Arabia to help them figure out teachers' beliefs on various aspects of teaching reading but also presents some recommendations on how to improve teaching of reading in the context of Saudi Arabia. The findings of the study can be useful to the English language teachers and researchers in identifying the beliefs of one of the key elements of the educational system.

DEDICATION

This work is lovingly dedicated to

Dr. Altaf Hussain Bouk

for his continuous support and encouragement!

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Acronyms/Abbreviations

A/V Aids	Audio/Video Aids
CELTA	Certificate of English Language Teaching to Adults
DELTA	Diploma of English Language Teaching to Adults
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
L1	Language One (First Language/Mother Tongue)
L2	Language Two (Second or Target Language)
PYP	Preparatory Year Program
TESL	Teaching of English as a Second Language
UK	United Kingdom

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Identification of the Problem:

For learners of English as a foreign language, reading is of crucial importance. In this age of the internet, a reasonable level of reading skill in English is indispensable to get to the wide-ranging sources of knowledge available online. That is why reading is an imperative English language skill that we need in the contemporary world.

Reading in English is taught in Saudi Arabian higher education institutions as one of the four language skills and is also highly focused in integrated English language courses. In both the cases, the reading component of the English language courses in Saudi Arabia focuses on building vocabulary, understanding word meaning and answering specific questions. Some of the required skills related to reading are the processing of the reading texts, logical understanding of the reading passages, and breakdown and explanation of the text. Unfortunately, these skills are barely reinforced through practice.

The need for the study stemmed from the fact that the achievements of the Saudi EFL learners in reading in English have been gradually reducing in recent years. A considerable number of studies in the context of Saudi EFL learners show the low level of proficiency in reading of these learners. Moskovsky and Alrabai (2009), Javid and Al-Khairi (2011), Raihan (2012) and Mohsin (2014) are some of the instances of the studies which note the low level of proficiency and motivation of the Saudi EFL learners in reading. The researcher has been teaching English language at various levels (from secondary school to college and university levels) for last 15 years. In researcher's

experience, one of the biggest challenges that these students face is the lack of vocabulary. Many students try to read a story, an article or a book but soon they lose their interest just because they don't know most of the words in the text. In every reading passage and even in most of the sentences, they find some new words, which make it difficult for them to read and comprehend the text. Long and complex sentences are especially very hard for them to understand because they have a limited vocabulary and cannot establish the structural links between various fragments of a reading passage.

In this scenario, the crucial role of teachers and their beliefs about teaching reading cannot be underestimated. Some important studies and texts establish the importance of studying teachers' beliefs. Teachers' beliefs are important for understanding and making educational practices successful. They are also important because they provide the bases of the strategies teachers practically adopt for addressing the challenges in their daily professional life. Teachers' beliefs also play their vital role in shaping students' learning environment and inspire learners' impetus and accomplishment.

Johnson (1994) identifies three areas which demonstrate the importance of teachers' beliefs: (1) Teachers' beliefs influence their perception and judgment. (2) Teachers' beliefs play a role in how information on teaching is translated into classroom practices. (3) Understanding teachers' beliefs is essential to improving teaching practices and teacher education programs. It might be inferred, based on these suppositions, that teachers' beliefs about their classroom teaching directly impact learners' progress. This shows how significant it is to understand teachers' beliefs towards reading strategies.

In another study Zheng (2009) states that teachers' beliefs play a vital role in understanding their own thought processes, their teaching methods and learning to teach. This study establishes that teachers' beliefs are substantial ideas and form the basis of their teaching practices. Furthermore, Nation and Macalister (2010) in their work endorse the significance of teachers' beliefs by stating that what teachers do can be understood by studying their beliefs. Kuzborska (2011) emphasizes that teachers' beliefs have a great impact on their aims, procedures, their roles and their learners. This remark is especially noteworthy as it explores how beliefs affect different aspects of a teacher's role in learning and teaching process.

Li (2012) goes a step forward and contends that beliefs play a very significant role in language teaching. Such beliefs help teachers understand their world, as well as recognize how new information affects them. On the basis of this understanding, teachers decide whether or not they should accept new information. Moreover, beliefs represent our memories and thus fine-tune our understanding of what is happening around us. Two years ago, Amiryousefi (2015) suggested what Nation and Macalister (2010) had already emphasized that teachers' teaching practices are closely bonded with the beliefs they held.

There is a sufficient body of research to support the importance of studying teachers' beliefs with respect to teaching reading. Chou (2008), Kuzborska (2011) are the examples of the studies which emphasize the need to put teachers' beliefs in focus with special reference to teaching reading. In addition to that, the studies done by Breen et al. (2001), Basturkmen et al. (2004), and Khonamri and Salimi (2010) in this context throw light on the inconsistency between the teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices. Breen et al. (2001), for instance, studied the principles and practices of eighteen instructors in Australia. The findings of their study indicated that teachers share common principles such as the need to consider the learners' individual differences, but when it comes to applying this principle; they differ from each other in their practical approach. The researchers found that some teachers preferred to offer worksheets with various levels of difficulty, while the other teachers teach using oral and visual teaching aids.

Likewise, the study done by Basturkmen et al. (2004) also identifies inconsistency between language teachers' beliefs and their classroom teaching practices. The study showed that the teachers believe about the appropriateness to teach the forms of the language during a lesson but when it comes to practical classroom situation, they seem to focus on meaning. The study also noted inconsistency between the teachers' beliefs and practices when it comes to correcting the learners' mistakes. These studies suggest that various factors such as teaching context may interfere with the ability of the teachers to reflect and implement what they believe and how they practically teach in their classes.

There is some body of research available on the reading in the context of the Saudi EFL learners. Al-Sulaimani (2007), for instance elaborates the factors causing the reading

problems among the Saudi EFL learners. This study highlights a long list of problems such as inadequate teacher training and preparation, extremely high number of teaching hours, lack of encouragement by the authorities to use instructional media, long syllabi to be covered within a limited period of time, overcrowded classrooms, unmotivated students, lack of expensive instructional media, such as language laboratories, scarcity of raw materials in rural areas, and inability to afford high maintenance cost.

Moskovsky and Alrabai (2009) measure the levels of intrinsic motivation of the EFL learners studying at Saudi public schools and universities. The findings of this study show that those learners had fairly substantial ‘dormant’ reserves of motivation. Moreover, Javid and Al-Khairi’s work (2011) study the attitude of the Saudi EFL learners towards pleasure reading and found that 81% of the study respondents stated that they disliked pleasure reading. Raihan (2012) studies the comprehension strategies and general problems in reading faced by the Saudi EFL learners and finds that comprehending the text in English language is very hard for these learners.

The above mentioned studies illustrate on one hand the importance of studying teachers’ beliefs in shaping the current status of teaching reading in Saudi Arabia, while on the other hand, they also point towards the gap in the studies related to teachers’ beliefs particularly about teaching of reading in Saudi context. This study intends to fill this gap. The problem is that we have limited understanding of how teachers’ beliefs are enacted in teaching reading within the context of Saudi higher education. This study represents an attempt to extend the research in this area. Through this research study, the researcher intends to investigate the beliefs the teachers maintain toward teaching reading and their impact on their teaching reading practices.

1.2. Site of the Study:

This study is located in the Saudi context which is very different from the UK and other parts of the world. The study, however, is not intended to make any comparison or judgment about whether it is better or worse, but this study belongs firmly to this particular time, place and context. The study looks into the particular case of teaching reading in Saudi higher education. All the respondents of the study are the teaching

faculty currently working in Saudi higher education institutes and their beliefs about teaching reading in that particular context are explored here.

1.3. Statement of the Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' beliefs about teaching reading and reading instructional practices. The title of this research project 'Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching Reading to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Students in Saudi Higher Education' illustrates the focus of the study. The main objective of this research project; that is to study the teachers' beliefs about teaching reading, is mainly achieved by conducting a survey questionnaire, and audio-recording active interviews with practising English language teachers who are currently working in the Saudi higher education. Thus the study is a combination of both the qualitative and the quantitative research methodologies. These are teachers, not programs, who determine reading instruction, it is "ultimately the teacher who is responsible for providing successful reading experience" (Vacca *et al*, 2006, p. 9).

It is hoped that the study will add to a clearer understanding of what teachers' beliefs about teaching reading are and how such beliefs are formed. Moreover, it is also hoped that the findings of the study will reveal the significance of teachers' beliefs and as a result their instructional choices and how to more effectively support teachers in implementing evidence-based and exemplary reading instructional practices.

1.4. Objectives of the Study:

The specific objectives of this project are to;

1. Investigate teachers' beliefs about teaching reading in English as a foreign language context.
2. Develop an empirical understanding of the processes of the formation of teacher beliefs about teaching reading in an EFL context.
3. Illustrate the ways through which teaching of reading skill is carried out in a concrete academic context in Saudi Arabia.

1.5. Research Questions:

The following research questions provide the basis of the study;

1. What do the EFL teachers believe about teaching reading in English to the Saudi EFL learners?
2. How do teachers develop/form their beliefs on teaching reading in English as a foreign language?
3. Why do teachers hold particular set of beliefs about teaching reading in English?
4. What reading instructional practices do teachers of apparently different beliefs use with Saudi EFL learners? To what do teachers attribute their reading instructional practices?

1.6. Rationale of the Study:

The aim of this study is to develop a research informed basis for improving the teaching situation in Saudi higher education. It seems appropriate to explore the existing beliefs of teachers about their teaching practices in the EFL context. The investigation may lead to some significant features and knowledge of the current teaching beliefs which in turn may lead to making changes in the current state of affairs of the academic scenario. The findings of the study will be useful to the English language teachers in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of their practices regarding teaching English reading.

It is believed that this study will produce a valuable body of research that will be beneficial for the learners, teachers, researchers and scholars. This research encourages teachers to familiarize themselves with what their fellow teachers believe about teaching reading. The study also invites other researchers and educators to come forward and further explore different relevant aspects of the all-important topic under investigation. The research will bring data to the English language teaching institutions in Saudi Arabia.

It will also illustrate the ways through which teaching of reading is carried out in a concrete academic context in Saudi Arabia. The findings of the study will be useful to the English language teachers in identifying their thought processes and classroom practices.

While the researcher is not boasting to generalize or globalize the findings of this study, it is hoped that the study may provide a useful source to help other researchers to build upon its outcomes and findings for further investigation in the area.

Moreover, this study provides a larger picture of the foundations that form the beliefs of the English language teachers and indicates how significant those beliefs are towards the learning and teaching processes of reading in Saudi context. It is, therefore, hoped that the study may also contribute in increasing the mindfulness of both the teachers' beliefs and reading among teachers, learners, and the whole Saudi society.

This research study began when I started questioning around my practice as a language teacher in Saudi Arabia and I realized why things were not as successful as I had hoped, especially in the teaching of reading. Then I started talking with my colleagues about this and found that they had the similar concerns. To investigate the challenges faced by the Saudi EFL learners in reading, I undertook my Master's degree thesis on learner's views on the issue. This present study builds from that base and it seems to me quite logical to study teacher's beliefs and views on the subject.

The research is especially interesting to me for my professional experience as I feel as an EFL teacher in the context under study that teaching of reading poses some challenges and I believe this study provides me insight into my colleagues' views and strategies adopted by them in teaching reading in that context.

1.7. Definition of Beliefs:

About a quarter of a century ago, Eisenhart *et al.* (1988, p. 53) suggested that the term 'beliefs' is "too vague, too varied ...to be clearly defined". Around the same period, some other theorists tried to define the term. For example, Clark and Peterson (1986); Kagan (1992), and Pajares (1992) defined teachers' beliefs as teachers' assumptions which affect what they notice in any set of circumstances and what they regard as possible, the goals they set, and the knowledge they bring into those circumstances. In addition to that, Artzt

and Armour-Thomas (1998, p. 8) described the term 'beliefs' as "an integrated system of personalized assumptions about the nature of a subject, its teaching and learning".

Calderhead (1996) claimed that teacher beliefs are important mediators of teacher behavior. However, Pajares (1992) did not seem to agree to it and contended that the relation between teachers' beliefs and teachers' behavior is far from clear, as teacher beliefs are messy constructs with different interpretations and meanings. Richards (1998) pronounced that the teachers' beliefs are the most valued aspects of a teacher's psychology.

Haney, Czerniak and Lumpe (1996, p. 367) defined the term 'beliefs' particularly in the milieu of teaching and education. They stated that beliefs are "one's convictions, philosophy, tenets, or opinions about teaching and learning". Ghaith (2004), on the other hand, contended that the teachers' beliefs are universal concepts of numerous proportions and they are associated to the beliefs about teaching, education, curricula and the teaching profession in general. He also went on to state that such beliefs formulate the "education culture" which impacts pedagogical goals and principles. Whereas Barcelos (2003, p. 7) defined beliefs as 'a form of thoughts that cover all matters that we do not have a sufficient knowledge about, but we have enough trust to work on them'.

Despite the lack of agreement on one clear definition of the term, an extensive literature on teachers' beliefs has always existed and developed, both in education in general (e.g., Pajares, 1992; Calderhead, 1996; Richardson, 1996) and in relation to language teaching in particular (e.g., Borg, 2006; Freeman, 2002). The study of teachers' beliefs has particularly advanced in the last twenty years as a main area of research in the field of language teaching.

Different aspects and proportions of teachers' beliefs are being investigated by the researchers. Some research look into the correlation and the effect of teachers' belief and their conceptions in creating and organizing classroom practices, (e.g., Aguirre & Speer, 2000; Cheng, Chan, Tang, & Cheng, 2009; Isikoglu, Basturk, & Karaca, 2009) while others investigate teachers' decision making particularly their classroom activities, (e.g., Aguirre & Speer, 2000; Cheng, Chan, Tang, & Cheng, 2009; Marieke, van der Schaafa,

Stokking, & Verloop, 2008), and still others study the relation between teachers' belief and their teaching ability (e.g., Fives & Buehl, 2008).

In addition to these, the role of teachers' belief in implementing new instructional method such as computer technology in the classroom, (e.g., Hermans, Tondeur, van Braak, & Valcke, 2008) and also its role in other disciplines such as mathematics, (e.g., Ozgun-Koca & I'lhansen, 2006) are also being investigated. These all studies show how important is it to study teachers' beliefs from various different angles.

On the basis of the definitions quoted above and the discussions, the researcher considers that the teachers' beliefs are a set of concepts with their origins deep rooted in teachers' psychological and conceptual thing. Moreover, the researcher believes that teachers' beliefs play a fundamental role in shaping their teaching behavior. In this study teachers' beliefs are considered as vigorous, dynamic and frequently growing entities that are situated in a social context and formed through the specific instances of social interaction.

Moreover, beliefs are also regarded as cognitive constructs but they will be "integrated in a larger dynamic model of thought and action, forming not the periphery but the central framework within which all learning takes place" (Woods 2006, p. 202). The context in which teachers work and form their experiences will be taken as an important factor because the beliefs of teachers are "born out of our interaction with others and with our environment". (Barcelos 2006, p. 8)

1.8. Scope and Limitations of the Study:

The scope of the study is limited to the public colleges and universities in Saudi Arabia. English language instructors, lecturers, professors and subject specialists working currently in Saudi Arabian higher education are the subjects of the study. The quantitative data was collected using a questionnaire that was responded by 75 teachers. When the questionnaire data was analyzed, it was realized that some points about teachers' beliefs needed further explanation.

To further strengthen the data, interview questions were designed and five of the practising English language teachers were interviewed to collect the qualitative data for the research. Though the study does not cater to gender distinguished data, it might be

interesting to note that due to the cultural and social limitations of the Saudi society, the dominant number of questionnaire respondents and all interview respondents were male teachers.

The researcher has chosen to study teachers' beliefs because the researcher believes that beliefs are more important and powerful than the practices. They are particularly important where there is a high level of control of teachers' practice. However, if the control is lessened then teachers can build on their beliefs to develop practice. In addition to that, in classroom observations one would see the way that teachers are expected to teach, not necessarily what they thought was the best practice.

Several research studies on teachers' beliefs show that teachers' classroom practices are influenced by their thought processes. The way teachers think, design their lesson plan, make decisions related to teaching and assessment as well as their implicit beliefs, all these aspects are interwoven with their everyday classroom practices and thus have a significant role to play in the very process of learning and teaching. Beliefs provide the basis for the practices. One cannot practice something convincingly that one doesn't believe in truly. But if someone really believes something and cannot practice it, say for example due to some external restrictions, the beliefs will be transformed into practice once the restriction(s) is/are no more there.

Teachers' beliefs influence perception and judgment and they play a role in how information on teaching is translated into classroom practices. Thus, understanding teachers' beliefs is essential to improving teaching practices and teacher education programs.

Moreover, practically there were some socio-cultural issues in exploring the practices as it is not easy to manage classroom observations in the given context. That's why, the

researcher chose to study these teachers' beliefs and actual classroom observations were left out.

1.9. Definitions of Terms:

- **Basic Readers:** The students who understand the meaning of grade-level text and are able to connect the text with their own experiences as well as make basic inferences (NCES, 2006). When learners are reading 'on grade level' it means that they have mastered the skills that they needs to read and understand words and sentences in books at the expected level of difficulty.
- **Best Practices in Literacy Instruction:** These are eight principles: (1) literacy is for building purpose and meaning, (2) prior knowledge is the foundation for literacy, (3) responsibility should gradually shift to the student, (4) collaboration is encouraged, (5) motivation is evident, (6) strategic reading is emphasized, (7) instruction is balanced, and (8) the teacher, not a program, guides the instruction (Mazzoni and Gambrell, 2003).
- **Epistemological Beliefs:** The beliefs about knowledge and knowledge acquisition (Schraw and Olafson, 2002).
- **Epistemology:** The study of knowledge, including what comprises knowledge, where knowledge originates, and how knowledge is obtained or created (Fitzgerald and Cunningham, 2002).
- **Evidence-based Reading Instruction:** The reading instructional practices supported by "reliable, trustworthy, and valid evidence to suggest that when the program is used with a particular group of children, the children can be expected to make adequate gains in reading achievement" (International Reading Association, 2002).
- **Fluency:** The ability to read accurately with adequate speed, phrasing, and inflection (Nichols, 2002).
- **Phonics: Instruction on individual sounds for letters and the blending together of those sounds to sound out words (Cunningham, 2003).**
- **Reading Comprehension:** A reader constructs meaning from written text as a result of the reciprocal exchange of ideas between the reader and the text (Nichols, 2002).

- **Reading:** “A dynamic process in which the reader interacts with the text to construct meaning. Inherent in constructing meaning is the reader’s ability to activate prior knowledge, use reading strategies and adapt to the reading situation” (Pennsylvania Department of Education [PDE], 2006).
- **Struggling Readers:** This phrase is widely used in the reading field to describe students who have difficulties progressing in reading. Synonymous terms include at-risk readers, disabled readers, poor readers, or weak readers. For the purpose of this study, struggling readers will be defined as low-achieving readers who are disengaged from school-related reading activities (Guthrie and Davis, 2003), and/or students identified as Title I readers.
- **Vocabulary:** Stored word meaning and pronunciation essential for communication (Nichols, 2002).

1.10. Design of the Study:

To find the answers to my research questions, a mixed method approach is employed in this study. A mixed method approach combines both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to get more reliable and authentic data. The researcher believes that the research questions of this study suit a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches as the data gathered using both the types of approaches enrich and strengthen each other.

The quantitative data is gathered using a Likert scale questionnaire while the qualitative data is gathered employing active interviewing technique to provide elucidation and insight into teachers’ beliefs and decisions regarding reading instruction.

Both qualitative and quantitative types of approaches and methodologies are believed to assist each other to validate the data collection and findings for a balanced research study. Several researchers have chosen to use mixed-method approach in order to fully reveal beliefs. Some of the examples are of Schraw and Olafson (2002), Pape and Hoy (2002) and Bendixen and Rule (2004).

Questionnaire surveys are believed to be “the most useful for revealing the current status of a target variable within a particular entity” (Thomas 2003, p. 44). It is therefore hoped

that survey questionnaires in this study will reveal teachers' beliefs about their knowledge and reading instruction in this particular context.

Both the quantitative and qualitative types of research are two different approaches or styles of understanding of specific social, cultural, educational, historical, psychological or ethnographic cases in the society. While these are two different approaches, the two styles can also imply each other. If used properly, both types of research approaches help each other in a study to build the case.

According to the statistics retrieved from the Saudi Ministry of Education website at <https://www.moe.gov.sa/en/HigherEducation/governmenthighereducation/StateUniversities/Pages/default.aspx>, there are currently 26 public universities in Saudi Arabia. Out of these, the questionnaire was randomly sent to the teachers working in 14 different universities. This makes about 54% of representation of Saudi universities. The questionnaire was sent to most of the teachers directly. However, in some cases, the teachers forwarded the questionnaire to their colleagues and thus there was a snowball effect as well in reaching out to the respondents of the questionnaire. At the end of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked if they wanted to volunteer as the interview respondents by giving three options (Yes/No/Maybe). Out of 75 respondents of the questionnaire, 12 teachers volunteered to be interview respondents with clear 'Yes', 23 of them said they might be respondents (Maybe), while the rest of 40 respondents declined with 'No'. Out of the 12 interview volunteers, five interview respondents were selected randomly.

To have a more in-depth look into the collected data and to analyze it properly, data triangulation is also done. When we triangulate data, we use multiple data sources in an investigation to produce understanding about the topic under investigation. Triangulation of data is believed to strengthen a research project and allows a researcher to make the data collection and findings richer. To quote some of the theorists who support the utility of triangulation of data, Webb, Campbell, Schwartz and Sechrest (1966), Smith and Kleine (1986), Denzin (1978), Golafshani (2003) can be mentioned here.

1.11. Overview of the Upcoming Chapters:

After this introductory chapter, five more chapters follow.

Chapter two reviews the relevant literature on reading, theories of the reading process, reading in the Saudi context, significance of teachers' beliefs, and their relevance in Saudi context.

Chapter three explores the reflexivity processes at various stages of this study about the choices and approaches made towards the study as well as the theoretical concepts that frame the basis of this study.

Chapter four is about the methodology adopted to conduct this study. In this chapter, the research design, research instruments, data collection and analysis methods as well as ethical considerations are discussed.

Chapter five is about collection and analysis of data. In this chapter, the data collected in forms of active interviewing and questionnaires will be scrutinized and the answers to the research questions would be sought out. A triangulation of both the types of the quantitative and qualitative data is also drawn in this chapter.

In chapter six, the findings of the study are summed up. Conclusions will be drawn from the data analysis and suggestions will be presented to improve the scenario of teaching reading in the Saudi context. At the end, the bibliography and appendices in form of interview transcriptions and questionnaires are also provided.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview:

Three main purposes guided the conduct of this review of the relevant literature. First, the researcher wanted to gain a profound and wide-ranging conceptual understanding of the research done and findings made in various studies to explore teachers' beliefs. Second, it was hoped that this literature review would highlight the gaps in the areas researched thoroughly and the areas which need more contemplation and research in the field of teachers' beliefs, specifically in relation to teaching reading. Third, this literature review was done so that a robust conceptual framework could be provided to appraise the theoretical, methodological and empirical bases for this study.

This research study deals with two major areas; reading and teachers' beliefs, I believe it is reasonable to review the relevant literature on both of these two areas. This literature review is, therefore, divided into two main sections; reading and teachers' beliefs. However, before the literature is reviewed in relation to these two main categories, it seems suitable to briefly review some key texts on overall scenario of English language teaching in Saudi Arabia.

Liton (2012, p. 130) reports that English is taught in Saudi Arabia because of its use in "international trade, diplomacy, economy and contracts, international aviation, higher studies, research, peace talks, affairs of international cooperation across the globe as well as a shared language of peoples throughout the world". However, even though English is learned in Saudi schools from the age of ten (from grade 6), a bulk of studies, like

Aljafen, (2013) and Alrabai (2014) contend that Saudi students usually graduate from high school with limited knowledge and skills in English speaking, listening, reading and writing.

On the other hand, Mahboob & Elyas (2014, p. 128) comment on ever increasing demand of using English saying that, “English in Saudi society have mushroomed in order to be able to meet the 21st-century needs”. Moreover, Elyas and Picard (2010, p. 136) explained how English teaching in Saudi Arabia “is not neutral or disinterested”. This means that the Saudi context, with the beliefs and values held by the people, has its vital impacts on the teaching of English language. The study indicates a direct link between historical teaching practices in early Saudi Arabia and the current teaching of English. The researchers suggest that the concept of “hybridity” is one way for local English teachers to construct identities that meet the contextual challenges.

In addition to that, Mahboob and Elyas (2014, p. 128) pronounced that “there are processes of resistance to English that question its validity and contribute to a shift in the language to suit local beliefs and practices” to highlight how teaching of English language in Saudi Arabia is not a “neutral” way of a language teaching. Therefore, it is important to note that there are many factors (such as religion, culture, economy and politics) which play a significant role in fabricating the beliefs of the local people towards the English language among the Saudi society.

Al-Hajailan (2003), as cited in Alasmri & Khan (2014, p. 317) has stated the purposes of learning English in Saudi Arabia, “to equip the students with at least one of the living languages, in addition to their native language; to help them acquire knowledge of arts and sciences from other communities; and to help them take part in the service of Islam and humanity”.

Al-Seghayer (2014, p. 17) highlighted that “Saudi English education continues to seriously suffer on all aspects and that the outcome has not been satisfying or, to state the least, is not up to the mark”. The study addresses some of the current major constraints facing English education in Saudi Arabia such as beliefs constraints, curriculum constraints, pedagogical constraints and administrative constraints. After discussing all

these factors, the researcher concludes, “Despite the tremendous efforts, the achievement level of students was unsatisfactory and disproportionately low”. (Page 24)

Shah et al. (2013, p. 105) emphasizes that teaching of English is a “painstaking vocation demanding a high degree of professional consciousness that is informed by relevant specialist knowledge and explicit values”. This implies that for teaching English, a high level of intellectual capacity of its variety of pedagogy, a command over appropriate approaches and methodologies and well thought out beliefs and values are required.

To further support this, Rahman and Alhaisoni (2013, p. 115) maintain that English language teaching is “a job that requires a challenge work intellectually, emotionally and physically, which means being qualified or having credentials doesn’t mean necessary to be a good teacher”.

Researchers like Shah et al. (2013, p. 105) pronounce that teaching English in Saudi Arabia is a “challenging phenomenon” as most of the EFL teachers realize how challenging it is to cope with ‘the Saudi pedagogical and sociocultural issues’ that arise in practical classroom teaching in Saudi Arabia. On account of such challenges, English language teachers are sometimes required to adapt the teaching materials in order to meet learners’ needs and class objectives.

In addition to that, Shah et al. (2013, p. 107) assert that it is also ultimately necessary for the EFL teachers to attain the contextual knowledge because it “will develop not only their teaching skills but also the norms of practice expected of them in an educational institution, both inside and out-side the classroom”. This clearly means that the lack of social and cultural mindfulness could be one of the challenges faced by the teachers who are having struggling circumstances in English teaching in the Saudi context. It is, therefore, particularly imperative for English teachers to be greatly conscious of and familiar with the Saudi context so that they may successfully accomplish their objectives in the EFL setting.

Another important thing to consider in the Saudi context is the conflicting issue of teachers’ autonomy versus authoritative management style. Though very few, there are some studies which pronounce this as a bone of contention in educational setting of Saudi

Arabia. To quote some instances here, Al-Harhi (2001), Ovanda & Huckestein (2003) and Jeto (2013) point out that the authoritative practices on the part of the supervisors and managers have caused tension and a lack of trust between authorities and the teacher, in the special context of English language teaching in Saudi Arabia.

Section 1: Reading

It seems useful to extricate theories on reading processes on one hand and theories on teaching reading with special focus on English as a foreign language (EFL) on the other, with the purpose of scrutinizing the similarities and differences in them, and determining whether these theories are distinctly different or embody a general theory of cognitive development specifically applied to reading. This will provide the foundations on which the proceeding discussions in this study will evolve. After that, some literature will also be reviewed on teaching reading in Saudi context. That's how the upcoming sections are organized.

2.1 (i) Importance of Reading:

There are many reasons why reading is one of the most important skills for the EFL learners. The most significant one is that reading can ensure the EFL learners' academic success. In other words, students who are poor in reading cannot excel in their academic endeavors. Several studies, like that of Krashen (2004), indicate that the learners who like to read, perform better in most subjects than the learners who do not like to read. Holloway (1999) also emphasizes that reading skills are indispensable to the academic success of middle and secondary school students. It is, therefore, important to consider reading as something more than 'just a subject' in educational setting. Elena (2015, p. 50) establishes the importance of reading saying,

"We hold reading literacy to be one of the key skills in academic setting, since the vast amount of knowledge is acquired through books, monographs and written documents; and we consider it a core competence in the process of transforming information into understanding."

Another important reason is that good writing is almost impossible without good reading. In other words, reading helps the learners to understand the organizational pattern of writing. After having a lot of reading, finally the learners can gain much information about how to write well; therefore, it can improve their writing skill. Another significant reason why reading is regarded as one of the most important skills to be grasped is that it can improve their vocabulary. Several research studies show that there is a correlation between vocabulary and reading activity. Krashen (1993, p. 23) puts it that way;

"Reading is good for you. The research supports a stronger conclusion, however. Reading is the only way, the only way we become good readers, develop a good writing style, an adequate vocabulary, advanced grammar, and the only way we become good spellers".

The importance of reading emphasized in this well regarded opinion cannot be underrated. Furthermore, researchers like Cunningham & Stanovich (1998) and Smith et al. (2000) have highlighted the importance of reading not only on the basis of accomplishment in other subjects in education, but have also declared it a necessary requirement for effective contribution in most areas of adult life. More recently, Elena (2015, p. 49) has shed light on the significance of reading in the modern times, saying that "in addition to professional, technical and other academic competences, reading literacy ranks among the key competences. It is the core academic competence for processing the information gained, innovating it and consequently creating new knowledge".

While the studies quoted above establish the significance of reading in English language learning and teaching worldwide, the present study intends to contextualize it in the Saudi context and would like to see how much significance the EFL teachers teaching in Saudi higher education attach to it in present times.

Reading can be seen in two relatively large perspectives;

(a) Leisure Reading:

Leisure reading is meant for enjoyment and the text range from newspapers to magazines, from letters to friends' notes, from information on the internet to comic books, from song

lyrics to novels and from stories to poetry. The importance of leisure reading cannot be undervalued because it helps developing learners' imaginations, develop their personality and enhancing their knowledge. It is not necessarily required in leisure reading that the reader reads some authentic or meaningful literature. Rather any kind of leisure reading helps learners procure new vocabulary, ideas, knowledge and approaches to life. Above all, leisure reading develops reading habit among the learners and they start thinking themselves to be readers.

(b) Functional Reading:

The reading related to school, work and everyday life activities is usually termed as functional reading. Some amount of reading is required for almost all kinds of jobs, from simply signing a document to reading directions on the road. More complex kinds of functional reading include official letters, memos, invoices, e-mails or other documents. Not only for studies or work, functional reading is also imperative for commonplace activities at home and in the community. Some of the everyday functional reading examples are the kinds of reading we do while shopping, driving, playing, cooking and paying utility bills.

Although all kinds of assigned activities and reading at school are automatically functional, the importance of functional reading can be highlighted to the learners by giving them authentic texts and literary materials with targeted reading objectives.

Thus reading is regarded as a broad set of reading skills and competencies required to work with texts efficiently. Reading refers to various abilities like comprehending the texts, finding both explicit and implicit meanings and analyzing and interpreting the content. It also includes the ability to make one's own conclusions about texts, and on the basis of the information received, apply the content in creating and building new understanding. When we deal here with reading in the context of Saudi EFL learners, we mainly talk of functional reading, though the same applies to leisure reading as well.

2.1 (ii) Theories of the Reading Process:

Like all other language skills, the teaching of reading is a multifarious task. Multiple factors such as; learners' proficiency, their age group, relations between their first and the

second/foreign language, learners' motivation, aspects related to their cognitive processes, and different elements related to teachers, curricula and learning/teaching resources and instructional setting, all play their significant part in teaching of reading. Keeping all these factors in mind, a conclusion can be drawn that reading is a multifaceted process and requires continuous research on its various instructional practices and other areas.

a. Text-Based View of Reading:

The text-based or bottom-up view of reading focuses on readers picking up information from the letters, words, and sentences in the text. Gough (1972) was perhaps one of the most notable supporters of this theory. Gough believes that information flows in a passive way from bottom to top (the bottom-up) through the human information processing system. It sees the role of the reader as decoding, deciphering, and identifying words in sequence from the text. Meaning is encoded in the text and readers simply decode that message. The model is shown in figure 1.1 below;



Fig 1.1: Bottom-up approach

Dole et al. (1991) term this approach as ‘the traditional view of reading’ and claim that novice readers grasp a set of hierarchically ordered sub-skills. These sub-skills in turn help develop their comprehension ability. The readers who are able to master these skills

are considered to be expert readers who can comprehend what they read. McCarthy (1999) labels this view as 'outside-in' processing. This means that meanings subsist in the printed page; they are interpreted by the reader and then taken in.

Devine et al (1987) state that the main emphasis of this view is on the language of the text to be comprehended rather than the reader's grasp and understanding of the text. They criticize this approach to reading because it views reading as something stagnant. Moreover, in this view, reading is not a two-way process where text and reader may interact, rather this view presents reading only as a non-reciprocal process where emphasis is laid only on comprehending the text and no importance is given to the readers' views.

Carrell et al. (1988) have similarly criticized this view of reading because it sees reading as a linear information processing model and argue that teaching approaches based on this view have failed to produce fluent readers, at least partly because it takes no account of why readers want to read particular texts or what they will do with the text. Thus this view ignores the possibility that reading varies in different contexts. It cannot be said that this view is entirely misguided. Urquhart and Weir (1998, p. 17) contend that "decoding may be an important part but not as a whole process, without understanding a text reading is similar like barking at a print".

Gough's model was significant because it made vibrant, testable estimations on what happens during reading. However, various studies highlighted problems with the model. In his later work, Gough (1986) admitted that it was not correct to claim that the phonemic route was the only way to better lexicon. Thus the limited nature of this view of reading prompted further research. As a result another perspective of reading came to this field, which is widely known as reader-based or top-down view.

b. The Reader-Based View of Reading:

The reader-based or top-down approach to reading assigns extra importance to readers, their expectations and background knowledge. The writers most associated with this view of reading are Goodman (1967, 1970) and Smith (1971, 1978).

Goodman (1967, P. 127) who sees reading as a ‘psycho-linguistic guessing game’, states that “efficient reading does not result from precise perception and identification of all elements, but from skill in selecting the fewest, most productive cues necessary to produce guesses.” Smith (1978, p. 2) argues that fluent readers do not need much visual information; rather they rely on non-visual information. “Fluent reading in fact depends upon ability to rely on the eyes as little as possible.”

The top-down model is shown in the figure 1.2;

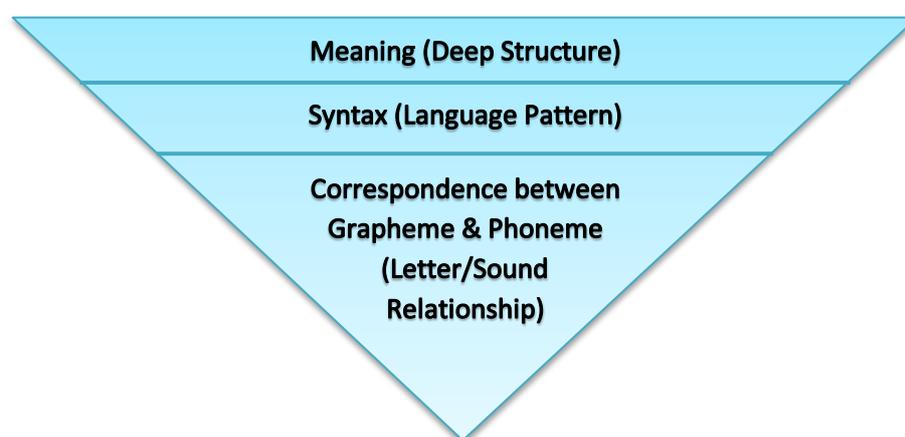


Fig 1.2: Top-down approach

This view of reading was originally meant as a description of fluent native speakers of language who did not need to read the text completely; rather they needed to sample it and get selected cues from the text so that they can make predictions about it. Having made guesses they often went back and forth to the text in order to confirm or reject their predictions.

The good point about the model is that its supporters are explicit in believing that reading is a predictive process where readers confirm their predictions about the text and their understandings have strong effects on the initial stages of reading. However, this model

lacks in the sense that its writers are never clear about the kind of assumptions the readers make. This elusiveness makes it hard to examine or disapprove this model.

c. Interactive View of Reading:

Interactive models of reading were presented by many writers such as Just & Carpenter (1980), Rumelhart & McClelland (1986) and Rayner & Pollatsek (1989). Though the models of these authors differ in some details, they all agree that effective reading takes place when both the bottom-up and top-down approaches interactively come together. Carrell et al. (1988, p. 4) states that “effective reading, be it in first or second language reading, requires both top-down and bottom-up strategies”.

Grabe (2009) also argues that reading is an interactive process that involves both top-down and bottom-up sources of information with resulting emphasis on successful comprehension. Similar ideas are provided by Aebbersold & Field (1997, p. 15) who say;

“The text and the reader are the physical entities necessary for the reading process to begin. It is, however, interaction between the text and the reader that constitutes actual reading”.

Rumelhart (1977) also agrees that interactive views of reading take into account the use of background knowledge, expectations of the reader, context coupled with letter-word recognition, activation of lexical forms etc. Grabe (1988) comments that fluent reading can only take place when decoding and interpretation skills are both involved.

This is further elaborated by Grabe & Stoller (2002) who say that a reader transforms printed words into spoken ones with the help of decoding skill. Urquhart & Weir (1998) and Carrell & Eisterhold (1988) believe that actual reading takes place when readers are involved in the process of interpretation in which they deal with language messages and try to understand them.

Widdowson (1979) supports this views by saying that reading is combination of two sources of information i.e. reader and the text. Readers’ knowledge is activated, modified, refined when they interact with ideas of the writer. Thus reading is interactive in two ways. On the one hand, interaction happens between the reader and the text. In this sense,

information is used by the readers not only from the text but also from their previous knowledge to rebuild their ideas.

There is another contact level which comprises the instantaneous processing communication and this is between several constituent skills which range from prompt instinctive skills of lower-level to some intentional skills of higher-level such as comprehension. It should also be noted here that these two levels of interaction supplement each other.

The interactive model is represented in the following figure.

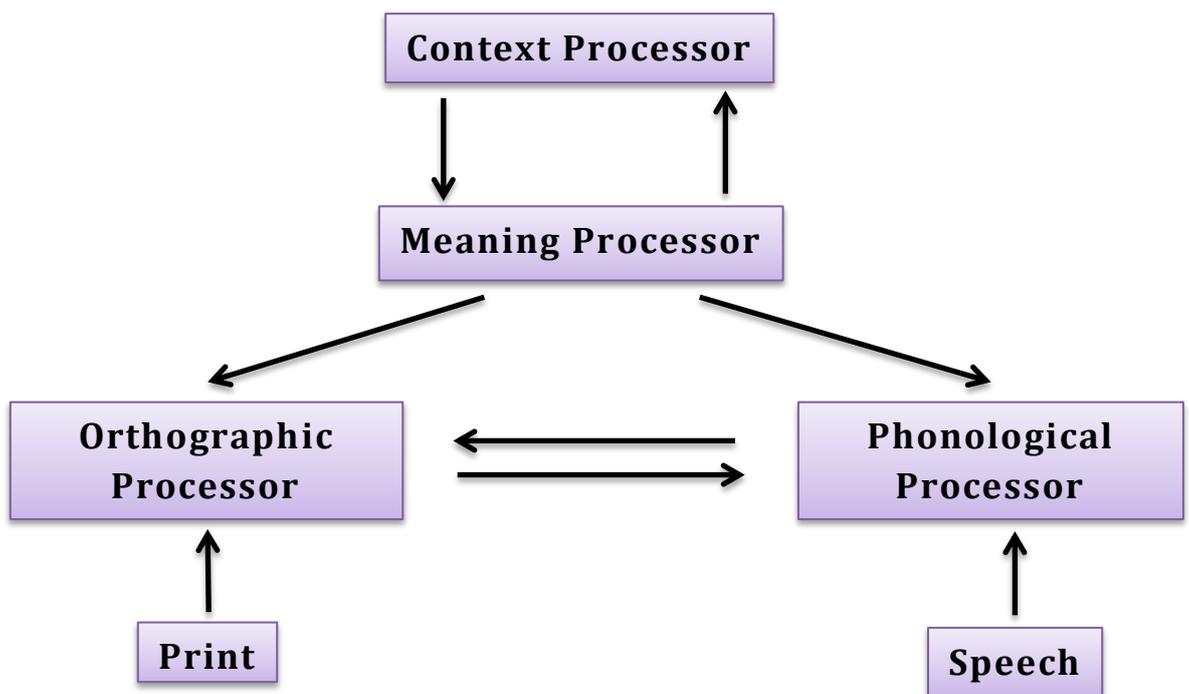


Fig 1.3: Interactive approach

As the figure also elaborates that the processors in the interactive approach are simultaneously stimulating with other processors above and below. All these processes take place in a matter of microseconds and that's why; conscious awareness is not

available to the readers. For the fluent readers, the recognition of the sounds, spelling, and meaning of a known word is virtually immediate and instinctive but for the relatively new learners, it depends on how strongly the learned connections are made and the learning can only be effective if there is ample contact with printed reading material.

A notable study Chou Y. (2008, p. 194) have explored teachers' beliefs on these theories about teaching reading. The Likert scale questionnaire conducted with 42 university teachers in Taiwan showed that the 27 (64%) participants believed that the interactive approach was the most effective approach in teaching reading; 10 (24%) preferred to the top-down approach while only 3 (7%) of them favored the bottom-up approach.

These studies provide a clear foundation of the research done in view of the theories of teaching reading but the researcher realized the need to explore the application of these theories in the Saudi context and that is the gap this present study aims to fill in.

2.1 (iii) Reading in the EFL Context:

Reading in English as a foreign language (EFL) learning happens differently than the way it is learnt in the native context. Although limited but there are a few research studies which indicate that advanced native English-speaking readers are more likely to apply a variety of reading strategies than the EFL readers. Block & Israel (2004), Blackowicz & Ogle (2008), Mokhtari, Reichard and Sheorey (2008) and Baker (2008) are some instances of such studies. Probably vocabulary, skimming, scanning, surveying, inference, predicting and guessing are some of the important areas to be considered particularly in the EFL context.

However, there are some key areas which are significant in any type of reading class. Alyousef (2006) explicates that any reading module of an English language course should relate to these objectives: the capability to read a variety of texts in English, developing an understanding of language which will expedite reading ability, constructing systematic knowledge, the aptitude to familiarize the reading style according to reading purpose such as scanning or skimming, developing an consciousness of the organization of written texts in English, taking an acute position to the texts contents.

To further support the idea, Sariçoban (2002) states that reading comprises a range of cognitive procedures such as scanning, skimming and guessing from the texts. And the reader both reads and tries to work on the material in the text in these processes. The text, the reader, and the interaction between the two form the building blocks of these reading processes.

Language input sources are usually restricted in the context of English as a foreign language learning. Thus reading in that context becomes a workable source of augmenting competency in the foreign language. In this way, reading does not only form an integral part of language learning, but it also assists in achieving academic accomplishment for innumerable foreign language learners throughout the world. Grabe (2009) claims that reading is given extraordinary attention in several foreign language settings and this is done because reading is one of the most important aspects for many EFL learners in their language learning.

Researchers like Gardner & MacIntyre (1992, 1993) have identified individual differences in foreign language learning into three groups;

- (1) There are cognitive aspects including intellect, language propensity, strategies adopted for language learning and language learning background.
- (2) There are affective aspects such as outlooks, enthusiasm, language learning anxiety, self-confidence about the language, personality and learning style.
- (3) Then there are some miscellaneous aspects for example age and socio-cultural issues.

As the present study is set in the EFL context, some of the important aspects highlighted in the above mentioned studies, such as vocabulary building strategies, skimming, scanning and surveying techniques, and inference, predicting and guessing the meanings of unknown words in the reading text will be discussed with the respondents of this present study and teachers' beliefs will be explored in related to this particular context.

2.1 (iv) Research on Reading in Saudi Context:

Though limited, there is some body of research available on the reading in the context of the Arab and/or Saudi EFL learners.

Al-Sulaimani (2007, p. 1) traces the roots of the problem, saying,

“In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia English as a foreign language is taught for at least ten academic years, six years in the intermediate and secondary schools, and at least four years in the university hoping that students graduate with a Bachelor’s Degree in English. Yet, the majority of EFL graduates cannot communicate fluently in English, and can neither read nor understand English newspaper.”

This is the actual situation which has not only been observed by the researcher during his classroom teaching and observations, but has also been validated by many studies by various researchers. Some of them are quoted below.

Javid & Al-Khairi’s (2011) work is significant in studying the attitude of the Saudi EFL learners towards reading. In their study, they asked substantial questions from the Saudi EFL learners such as, *“Do you enjoy pleasure reading?”* The researchers report that thirty out of thirty seven (81%) respondents professed that they disliked pleasure reading. Only seven of them (19%) said that they liked pleasure reading. In response to another question, some 29 students (78%) stated that they sometimes liked to read some material in Arabic language in their leisure time while only eight (22%) affirmed that they sometimes read some texts in English for enjoyment.

The participants of this study were also asked to how many pages they read per week in English. A huge percentage of 76% (28 of the 37 participants) stated that they never read English any material for pleasure. Three respondents said that they read 3, 4 and 5 while the other two participants stated that they read ten to twelve pages a week respectively. A big number of thirty two out of thirty seven (86%) participants stated that that they did not read anything in English during their holidays while only five of them (14%) claimed that they read some English material during in their holidays.

The findings of this study clearly show the attitude of the Saudi EFL learners towards reading. This attitude, along with other factors, results in poor performance in reading by these learners. Citing some studies like those of Moody (2009 & 2012), Mahrooqi & Al-Shihi (2012) have drawn a conclusion that there is a sufficient body of research to prove

that Arab EFL learners are deficient in their attitude towards English language. Al-Mahrooqi (2012, p. 155) states that “the EFL reading difficulties are thought to arise from an absence of a reading culture, word recognition skills, and inadequate reading strategies”.

Some researchers have also tried to trace down the factors that cause poor reading habits among the Saudi EFL learners. A recent research work conducted by Raihan (2012, p. 313-314) studies the comprehension strategies and general problems in reading faced by the Saudi EFL learners with special reference to Najran University, Saudi Arabia. His study infers that these students suffer from the lack of interest in preparation of text.

“The EFL students (25%) never, (62.5%) rarely and (12.5%) sometimes go through the text before lecture. Mean score 1.87 clarifies the tragic situation. Further, the data of his study shows that (62.5%) of students are rarely, (33.33%) sometimes and (4.16%) are never able to understand the meaning of complete text with 2.29 mean score. In addition to that many respondents of his study agreed that the Arab EFL students have quite less understanding of the comprehension text is clear with 2.66 mean score”.

This study provides data relevant to the subject under discussion but one feels that this study is limited in its scope as it deals with the Saudi learners of only one university.

Al-Sulaimani (2007, p. 63-64) elaborates the factors causing the reading problems among the Saudi EFL learners by dividing them into three categories;

(a) teacher-related factors, which are inadequate teacher training and preparation, overwhelming number of teaching hours and school responsibilities, lack of encouragement by headmasters and supervisors to use instructional media, and a long syllabus that should be covered within a limited period of time.

(b) student-related factors, which are overcrowded classrooms, passive and/or unmotivated students, and undisciplined students who vandalize instructional media.

(c) resources-related factors, which are lack of expensive instructional media, such as language laboratories, scarcity of raw materials in rural areas, and inability to afford high maintenance cost.

Moskovsky & Alrabai (2009) exhibit different aspects of motivation in Saudi learners of English as a Foreign Language in their research in the Saudi educational setting. The findings of this study show that Saudi EFL learners have fairly substantial 'dormant' reserves of motivation. However, this motivation can bring positive outcomes by providing encouraging conditions.

In relation to motivation, Liton (2012, p. 133) comments, "in the true sense of the term, Saudi EFL classes suffer from the sheer lack of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Surely enough, it is toiling and challenging for the teacher to teach and manage a poorly motivated class especially in Saudi context."

These researchers enlist the key elements that cause the reading problem among the Saudi EFL learners. The Saudi EFL learners have problems with reading comprehension and they have word recognition problems too. It seems they suffer from code-switching too when they cannot distinguish clearly between the rules of their mother tongue Arabic and the target language English.

More recently, Al-Qahtani (2016) interviewed eight Saudi EFL teachers to explore their opinions on the reading skills of their Saudi students. All the respondents of that study agreed on the poor reading abilities of their Saudi EFL learners. The responding teachers described their students as 'unmotivated', 'struggling' and 'in constant need of help' in their reading lessons. Not only that, the teachers identified that approximately 80% of students were unable to comprehend English texts.

This is an important study but it relies only on one method e, i. the qualitative interviews and focuses only on the poor reading habits of the Saudi EFL learners. While its study and its outcomes helps me in setting the tone of this present study, the research thought it reasonable to take up the subject on a bigger canvas and explore it with the help of both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Section 2: Teachers' Beliefs

2.2 (i) Teachers' Belief about teaching in general:

Over a period of years, there have been various shifts in paradigm with respect to research on teaching. For instance, in 1960s, the researchers were predominantly emphasizing behaviorist approach where teaching was regarded as sets of discernable and describable behaviors. Therefore, the research done on teaching at that time, mostly focused on such behaviors. In such approach, the role of teachers' thinking and their mental processes were not given much importance.

Then came the 1970s and a shift of focus was witnessed as new ideas emerged giving more attention to the role of teachers' thinking in educational and teaching processes. One of the prominent works of that time was the book called, "*School Teacher: A Sociological Study*" by Lortie (1975). In this work, the need to take the teachers' perspectives on the teaching process into consideration was accentuated.

Next two decades saw further expansion on interest in teachers' thinking and it was believed that it is fundamental to comprehend how teachers conceptualize their teaching if we want to understand teaching. Clark & Peterson (1986, p. 265), in their review of teachers' thought processes, argued, "a major goal of the research on teachers' thought processes is to increase our understanding of how and why the process of teaching looks and works as it does".

In 1990's, a more clearer shift in focus was seen in terms of giving importance to teachers' thought processes as Fang (1996, p. 48) states that "the study of teacher cognition is receiving added attention in the literature on teaching in general and on the subject area of reading/literacy in particular". This comment is especially relevant in connection to our present study because it talks about both teachers' beliefs and reading.

Richard and Lockhart (1994, p. 34) trace the basis of teachers' beliefs in their school and college days stating, "teachers' beliefs about learning may be based on their training, their teaching experience, or may go back to their own experience as language learners". This

means that the basis of teachers' belief systems rest in their values, goals and views in connection with their content and methods of instruction as well as their understanding of the system in which they work and play their roles.

Johnson (1994, p. 394) in his study suggests that "teacher beliefs are neither easy to define nor study because they are not directly observable. What we do know is that teacher beliefs consist of tacitly held assumptions and perceptions about teaching and learning that they are generally stable and that they reflect the nature of the instruction the teacher provides to students".

Further, according to Johnson (1994 p. 394), educational research on teachers' beliefs share three basic assumptions:

- (1) Teachers' beliefs influence perception and judgment.
- (2) Teachers' beliefs play a role in how information on teaching is translated into classroom practices.
- (3) Understanding teachers' beliefs is essential to improving teaching practices and teacher education programs.

Numerous research studies on teachers' beliefs show that teachers' classroom practices are influenced by their thought processes. The way teachers think, design their lesson plan, make decisions related to teaching and assessment as well as their implicit beliefs, all these aspects are interwoven with their everyday classroom practices and thus have a significant role to play in the very process of learning and teaching.

It is utmost important to understand teachers' beliefs and their working strategies, as Clark & Peterson (1986, 287) have pointed out, in order to "make explicit and visible the frames of reference through which individual teachers perceive and process information". Cohen & Ball (1990, p. 335) claim that the teachers' beliefs are important "because these existing beliefs act as influences on teachers' (and researchers') attempts to change practice, they themselves may be important sites for change as well".

Borg (2003, p. 81) establishes the importance of these beliefs saying,

“Teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs”.

Freeman (2002, p. 5) comments that "the teacher was viewed as a doer, as an implementer of other peoples' ideas about the curriculum, methodology, and even about how students learned". These comments show that these beliefs stem from well-thought-out principles, teachers' prior experiences, their learning and teaching practices as well as their own personalities.

Phipps and Borg (2009) and Abdi and Asadi (2015) contemplated that teacher's experiences as learners at school impact their beliefs about teaching and learning and later these beliefs are further established when they go to university. As these teachers go through new experiences, and they gain new information, these processes leave deeper and lasting effects on their beliefs and teaching practices. These studies are relevant to this present work in the sense that this present study also wants to investigate how teachers forms and develop their beliefs about teaching reading.

2.2 (ii) Teachers' Belief about teaching reading:

When it comes to studying the effects of teachers' beliefs about teaching reading on their everyday classroom practices, the body of the existing research shows quite mixed inferences.

Clark and Peterson (1986) build a model of teacher thought and action that visualizes the processes of teachers' thinking and observable behavior in classrooms presented in the figure below. The model points out two spheres:

- a) teachers' thought processes, and
- b) teachers' actions and their observable effects that are important in the process of teaching.

The first sphere or domain comprises three unobservable elements, such as teachers' planning, teachers' interactive thoughts and decisions, and teachers' theories and beliefs while in the second domain, elements such as teachers' classroom behavior, students' classroom behavior, and student achievement which are in turn observable are included. A double-headed arrow placed between these two domains indicates that there is a reciprocal relationship between teachers' thought and action.

Clark and Peterson (1986, p. 258) elucidate that "teachers' actions are in a large part caused by teachers' thought processes, which then in turn affect teachers' actions". While these two domains influence each other and shape the different types of behavior teachers display in their practices, other constraints or opportunities (i.e., physical setting, class size, or external influence from schools) also make an impact on the processes of teachers' thought and action. This study is especially relevant to this present work as it hints on how teachers' beliefs are shaped or developed, how they impact their actions and practices and how their actions influence their beliefs. Thus the two-way relationship of beliefs and practices illustrated in figure 1 below is particularly significant in understanding the foundation and impact of teachers' beliefs.

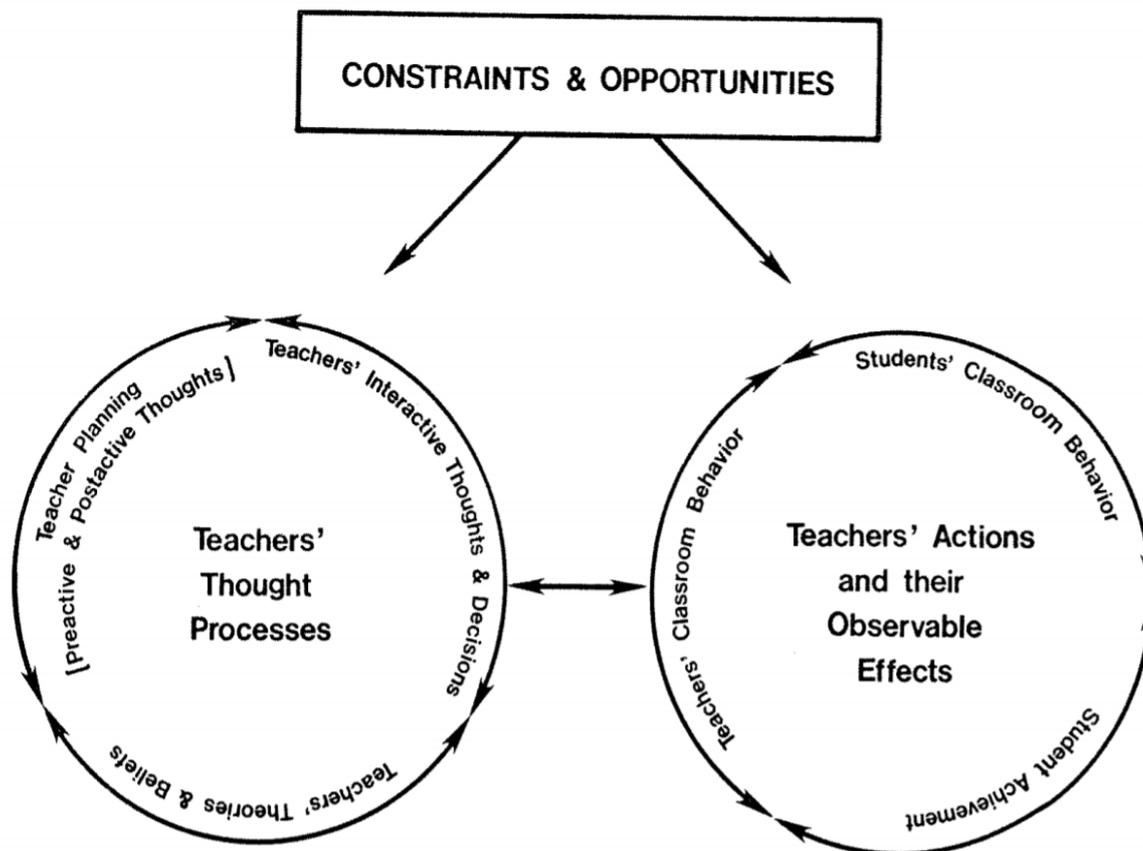


Fig 1.4: A model of teacher thought and action (Clark & Peterson, 1986, p.257)

In his research, Chou (2008) studied how teachers' beliefs are constructed with regards to the approaches that are used in teaching reading. The data was collected from forty two college teachers. The study also tried to find out the relationship between teachers' beliefs about different strategies of reading and their teaching practice in the context of English as a foreign language. The study revealed that the respondents' beliefs and classroom practices in six specific categories (linguistics knowledge, translation, conceptually-driven basis, cognitive strategy, metacognitive strategy and aided strategy) correspond and thus the researcher concluded that the teachers' beliefs and their application of the teaching reading approaches were quite compatible.

Phillips (2009) investigated the beliefs and practices of a novice high school social studies teacher through her first and second years as a classroom teacher. Results of the study indicate that while her beliefs and goals changed little over time, her classroom practices changed and adapted to the school climate and to student needs. This study suggests that, despite the challenges that she encountered, this teacher practiced in ways that were consistent with her beliefs. Though this study is quite limited in its scope in the sense that it focuses only on one teacher, it still can be useful in understanding the relationship of a teacher's stated beliefs and actual classroom practices.

Breen et al. (2001) collected the data about the beliefs of eighteen instructors in Australia and studied its correlation with their actual classroom teaching practices. The findings of the study show that the teachers have somehow common beliefs about teaching reading but when it comes to the actual classroom teaching, there is a clear dichotomy between these beliefs and the classroom practices, especially in relation to learners' individual differences.

Somewhat similar findings can be seen in the work done by Basturkmen et al. (2004). The researchers have noted contradiction between teachers' beliefs and their actual classroom teaching practices. The researchers could not notice any substantial connection between the teachers' beliefs and the kind of the strategies applied by them to correct the learners' mistakes. The researchers also conclude that the dissimilarities between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practice are challenges that need to be addressed.

Furthermore, a study was done by Khonamri and Salimi (2010) to investigate what were the beliefs of the teachers teaching reading in the EFL context. The study also tried to find out the connection between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices. The researchers observed inconsistency between EFL teachers' stated beliefs about teaching reading strategies and their practices. While all the respondents of this study agree on the importance of reading strategies, the researchers observed that only few of them actually employed them.

Another significant work was done by Kuzborska (2011). This qualitative study was done to examine the beliefs construction of the teachers who teach reading to adult English language learners in the context of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Relying on

lesson observation, video stimulated recall along with a follow-up semi-structured interview and document data analysis, the researcher observed that the majority of the teachers reflected a skills-based approach to reading instruction, emphasizing vocabulary, reading aloud, translation, and whole class discussion of texts. The researcher found that the respondents' beliefs on these points were fairly compatible with their classroom practices. The study thus goes on to prove that there is a palpable connection between teachers' beliefs and their application of the approaches of teaching reading.

Thus, the literature reviewed above shows that there are quite a few researches which go on to show the inconsistency between the teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices while there are some others to show that teachers' beliefs and practices are not very much different. All these studies provide a good base in understanding the relationship of teachers' stated beliefs and actual classroom practices. This present study intends to build on this foundation and studies the relationship of the beliefs and practices of the EFL teachers working in Saudi Arabia and with special reference to their teaching of reading.

2.2 (iii) Significance of Teachers' Beliefs in the EFL Context:

Teachers are considered to be the source of knowledge in the school curriculum and their role is to impart knowledge to their students. This role is especially highlighted in the Saudi context where teachers are often viewed as the sole authority in the classroom. In this scenario, it is even more important to study teachers' beliefs and implications of their classroom practices.

Commenting on the importance of the beliefs, Li (2012) states that beliefs have a significant role in language teaching. They help us make sense of the world and impact how new information is understood. They also help us decide whether to accept or reject new information. Beliefs show memories and adjust our understanding of occurrences.

Johnson (1994, p. 394) claims that the study of teachers' beliefs is significant because it gives us "insights into the unique filter through which second language teachers make instructional decisions, choose instructional materials, and select certain instructional practices". Freeman & Richards (1996, p. 1) state that, for the sake of understanding language teaching, we are required to consider teachers' views:

“In order to better understand language teaching, we need to know more about language teachers: what they do, how they think, what they know, and how they learn. Specifically, we need to understand more about how language teachers conceive of what they do: what they know about language teaching, and how they think about their classroom practice”.

Nearly ten years ago, a comprehensive analysis of the research on second and foreign language teachers' thinking and their beliefs on English language teaching was presented by Borg (2006). This research work also establishes the significance of studying teachers' belief system in an educational setting.

It is also studied that teachers' beliefs play a vital role in shaping their classroom practices. Numerous studies have deliberated to analyze how classroom practices in language teaching are affected by teachers' beliefs. One of the examples is the work done by Smith (1996) who studied the impact of teachers' beliefs on the pedagogical decisions of nine experienced ESL teachers. His study showed that teachers' beliefs had a decisive influence on the way they organized the curricula and designed their lesson plans and classroom activities. In her study, focusing on the relationship between instructional decisions, teachers' beliefs, and contextual factors, Smith (1996, p. 214) concluded that "teachers' decisions revealed an eclectic use of theory but an internal consistency between individual beliefs and practices".

In another notable study, Zheng (2009) observed that, in understanding teachers' thought processes, teaching methods, and learning to teach, their beliefs are important ideas. Teacher beliefs are substantial themes in teacher education that have been deliberated to support teachers nurture their understanding and ideologies.

The theorists in these studies seem to recommend that teachers ought to be internally motivated for the sake of their professional development. They should be able to see and bridge the gap between their beliefs and their existing practices. It can also be drawn from the studies that teachers' prior knowledge, beliefs, personalities, outlooks and practices should be thoroughly examined and the teachers must themselves be aware of their implied knowledge, beliefs and practices. That's where, it is believed that this study fits in. The anticipated aim of the study is that the EFL teachers working in the Saudi context

may review their beliefs about teaching reading and may well be able to bridge the gaps in their beliefs and practices, if there are any.

2.2 (iv) Sources of Teachers' Beliefs:

One of the questions this study wants to ponder on is the way the teachers develop/form their beliefs particularly about teaching reading in English. That is why; some of the key texts that explore the sources of teachers' beliefs are discussed here.

Shulman (1987) asserted that there are four sources of teachers' beliefs. They are content knowledge, educational materials, formal teacher education, and experience. While Knowles (1992) articulated that teachers' beliefs are not only formed throughout their life but are also impacted by different factors such as happenings, experiences, and other people in their lives.

On the other hand, Richards and Lockhart (1994) seemed to contest the views of Shulman and Knowles, stating that past experience in learning or teaching is not the exclusive source of beliefs. Richards and Lockhart claimed that some other sources play their vital role in shaping teachers' beliefs. They are termed as established practice, teachers' personality factors, educational principles, research-based evidence, and principles originated from a method.

Furthermore, McGillicuddy-De Lisi and Subramanian (1996), in their study, affirmed the role of culture stating that some beliefs are taken from culture while some others are shaped by experiences accustomed by culture. In another noteworthy study Richardson, (1996) chalked out three main sources of teacher beliefs which are personal experience, teaching experience, and experience with formal knowledge. Around the same era, other theorists like Crow (1987), Clark (1988), Goodman (1988), and Holt-Reynolds (1992) also suggested that both the theoretical elements of teacher training and the teaching behaviors during teaching experience impact teachers' beliefs.

In another notable study by Kukari (2004), the relationship between cultural and religious practices with one's learning and teaching was validated, asserting that these practices express teachers' understanding of learning and teaching before they assume the role of the learners of teaching.

Mansour (2008) in his study emphasized more on a teacher's personal religious beliefs acquired from one's religious ideologies. He states that teachers' teaching beliefs regarding their roles, learners' roles, the objectives of science and their teaching methods all originate from the teachers' religious principles. He went on to declare that teachers' religious beliefs worked as a 'schema' which impacted their ideas.

Moreover, Mansour (2008) marked two different categories of experiences; formal and informal. Formal experiences simply mean a teacher's formal education and training completed from primary school to university level of education. On the other hand, informal experiences include teachers' contacts of their day-to-day life. These later type of experiences are more likely to modify, support, challenge, or change their beliefs.

According to Abdi and Asadi (2011, p. 110), the sources of teachers' beliefs are as follows:

- 1). Teachers' experience as language learners. A lot of teachers know that they were previously learners and how they were taught and these helped them form their beliefs about teaching.
- 2). Experience from teaching. Teaching experience is the main source of teachers' beliefs in that how a specific method is used for a specific group of learners may result in the beliefs about that method.
- 3). Teachers' personality. Some teachers prefer a particular method because it corresponds to their character.
- 4). Education-based or research-based principles. Teachers can get their beliefs from learning principles of second language acquisition research, education, or schools of thoughts like psychology.

A few years ago, Li (2012) articulated that teachers' beliefs are formed during the process of teaching. The beliefs, according to Li, point toward the teachers' objective understanding of the phenomenon of education, predominantly towards their own teaching skills and the learning abilities of their students. In an earlier study, Xin Tao and

Shen Juliang (1999) and in a comparatively recent study Li (2012) pronounced that social history and culture are also two important sources of teachers' beliefs.

Furthermore, Li (2012) accentuated that beliefs are basically originated from their teaching experiences. In addition to those experiences, there are varieties of processes, social and cultural factors which greatly impact teachers' beliefs.

2.2 (v) Link Between Beliefs and Practices:

The bulk of the available literature on teachers' beliefs has documented a number of studies that investigated the link between teaching and beliefs, studies that scrutinized how teachers' beliefs impact on their teaching practice, studies about how teachers' beliefs are influenced by contextual factors and studies that investigated how teachers' beliefs are related to beliefs about learning. Some of those studies are reviewed here.

Samuelowicz & Bain (2001, p. 301), in their study, identify seven orientations to teaching. They include: (1) imparting information; (2) transmitting structural knowledge; (3) providing and facilitating understanding; (4) helping students develop expertise; (5) preventing misunderstandings; (6) negotiating meaning; and (7) encouraging knowledge creation. These teaching conceptions are quite comprehensive and are established across a range of areas and disciplines.

The significant link of teachers' beliefs with their practical work was reaffirmed by Nespor (1987, p. 323) stating that: "... to understand teaching from teachers' perspectives we have to understand the beliefs with which they define their work". Such a view is also supported by Cannon (1983, p. 24) who claims that "there is evidence that strong relationships exist between the field of teaching and attitudes to teaching and learning". Furthermore, Prosser and Trigwell (1997, p. 59) elucidated the interrelationship between teaching beliefs and teaching practice and concluded that "the variations in university teachers' approaches to their teaching were directly related to the variations in their perceptions about the teaching context".

Teachers' beliefs strongly impact their choices and classroom practices. The theorists like Nation and Macalister (2010) and Amiryousefi (2015) accentuated that teachers' actions are branded by their beliefs. Kuzborska (2011) went a step further and pronounced that

teachers decide about their classroom teaching in accordance with their beliefs about language learning and teaching. She highlighted the significance of teachers' beliefs emphasizing their prodigious effect on teachers' aims and objectives, teaching processes, their roles in teaching process, and ultimately on their learners. Richards and Rodgers (2001) asserted that teachers' beliefs about language learning guide them to adopt a particular language teaching approach.

As the studies reviewed show, most of the theorists have seen how teachers' beliefs influence their teaching practices. However, some of the recent researchers have looked into the issue from a different angle too. Some studies have inversely proved that teachers' practical experiences can also impact their beliefs. Greene & Zimmerman, (2000), McKenzie (2003), Schuh, Walker, Kizzie, and Mohammed (2001) are some of the prominent examples of such studies. Nevertheless, the point here is that whether teachers' beliefs influence their practices or vice versa, it remains to be an important and difficult area to explore as pointed by Archer (1999, p. 2) who termed it 'difficult to pinpoint' and stated that, "the causal link between beliefs and practices is not clear cut". Which way this influence might be directed, most of the theorists agree that the belief-practice link is strong.

Conclusion:

The studies presented above signify that teachers' beliefs about teaching can be studied by investigating into their teaching practices. This dynamic relationship between beliefs and practices emphasizes the need and rationale for further inquiry into teachers' beliefs in the educational setting. The considerations of the key areas of concern echoed in the available literature to date calls for further investigation into the point of intersection between teachers' beliefs about their teaching practices in the field of reading in Saudi context.

Research about teachers' beliefs is represented by investigations into the significance of teachers' beliefs, the natures of beliefs held by the teachers, beliefs in various contexts and the impacts of beliefs on teaching practices. Despite the apparent wealth of literature based on teachers' beliefs, there seems to be a gap among teachers' beliefs in the area of teaching reading in Saudi context and this is where this present study fits in as it tries to

fill in the gap by exploring teachers' beliefs about teaching reading in this particular context.

Some of the key points highlighted in the above literature review are as follow;

- Starting from Krashen (1993) to Elena (2015), theorists agree to the significance of reading and its role in overall language learning. We'll see if there is any change in the current scenario and what teachers working in the Saudi context believe about the importance reading in the present times.
- The text-based or bottom-up view of reading which focuses on readers picking up information from the letters, words, and sentences in the text was backed by theorists and researchers like Gough (1972), Dole et al. (1991), and McCarthy (1999). The reader-based or top-down approach to reading which assigns extra importance to readers, their expectations and background knowledge was supported by theorists and researchers such as Goodman (1967, 1970) and Smith (1971, 1978). However, later on, interactive models of reading were presented by many writers such as Just & Carpenter (1980), Rumelhart & McClelland (1986) and Rayner & Pollatsek (1989). This present study will try to explore teachers' beliefs and practices about the application of the three views and will try to find out which views these teachers believe is the most suitable for their learners in this particular context.
- The literature also establishes that reading in English as a foreign language (EFL) happens differently than the way it is learnt and taught in the native context and thus the important areas to be considered particularly in the EFL context were studied in the about literature review. This present study is particularly contextualized in the EFL setting. As some of the study respondents are either English native speakers or have worked as language teachers in that context, they will be to comment on the similarities and differences of teaching reading in the two contexts.
- While exploring the existing body of research on the reading in the context of the Saudi EFL learners, it was noted that the learners in this special context face numerous challenges in reading and teachers have to exert extra effort in teaching reading to these learners. Here, we need to examine if this situation still exists or

there are any changes in the scenario. The study respondents will particularly express their beliefs about the challenges they are facing in this context and the strategies they are using to overcome them.

- In the second part of this chapter, teachers' beliefs about teaching in general were discussed and it was seen that how some shifts were witnessed in paradigm with respect to research on teaching. Most importantly, the prominent research work done so far on teachers' beliefs about teaching reading in various contexts was studied. The present study will try to take the existing body of research to a next level and will explore what teachers believe about teaching reading at its three stages (pre, while and post reading) in this context.
- At the end, the literature reviewed above presents the summary of the prominent studies done on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices. In that section, it was noticed that some studies establish compatibility between the two while some others observe that there were clear incongruities in the two. The present study will try to examine what the case is in teaching of reading in the Saudi setting.

Thus, this present study builds on the literature reviewed above and explores the teachers' beliefs on various aspects related to teaching of reading in this particular context. This seems to be in line with the findings of a large number of research studies, such as Quinlan (1999), Hativa, N. and Goodyear, P. (2002) McShane (2002) and Mohsin (2014) where the researchers have recommended that further research is needed into the beliefs about learning and teaching held by the teachers who are one of the key players in educational process, to be able to increase knowledge and understanding of teachers' beliefs.

As a sum and substance of the studies reviewed above, the researcher realized that while these studies have influenced this work in terms of building on a method and providing foundations on the type of the work done so far, the following gaps in the literature relevant to the subject were also identified.

There are a few quantitative studies done but with fewer participants and with no qualitative data collection. These gaps in the literature helped me to see what I needed to

explore. Also, there is a reasonably good body of research to establish the significance of reading in English language learning and teaching worldwide, as well as the significance of studying teachers' beliefs, but it was realized that these beliefs are required to be contextualized in the Saudi higher education setting.

Moreover, the theories of teaching reading and their application is examined in various educational settings throughout the world but a gap was felt in terms of studying the application and suitability of these theories in the Saudi context and that is the contribution this study aims to make in the body of the existing research.

In addition to that, some studies provide data relevant to the reading comprehension but most of them are limited in scope as they either rely on only one research method or collect data from a very limited number of respondents, related to one particular educational institute, city or area of Saudi Arabia. On the other hand this present study combines both qualitative as well as quantitative research methods and tries to cover 14 out of 26 Saudi public sector universities which make up a handsome percentage (54%) of the respondents of the total population.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND REFLEXIVITY

3.1 Overview:

This chapter describes the development of the conceptual framework which underpins this study as well as the reflexivity processes the researcher went through during the literature review, the choices and approaches made towards research methodologies in this research work. The reflections are also made on the processes and outcomes of the small scale pilot study conducted by the researcher. The main aim of this research study is to explore teachers' beliefs about teaching reading in special context of Saudi higher education. In the small scale pilot study on the same topic, a respondent was interviewed as a part of the qualitative research methodology and a questionnaire as a quantitative research tool was administrated with six teachers, in order to test out the proposed methodology of this research work.

This chapter is divided into three parts. In part 1, the conceptual framework of this study is discussed. In part 2, the theoretical context of reflexivity and its different aspects are introduced. In the third part, the researcher's personal reflexive processes during the course of this research work are summarized. This will throw a light on how the conceptual framework and the reflective thought processes of the researcher have contributed to the structure of this work.

PART 1

Conceptual Framework:

To view teachers' beliefs about teaching reading, a sociocultural theory was picked as an appropriate theoretical lens through which teachers' beliefs are deliberated for this present study. In this theory, learning is regarded as an interactive process, which takes place through the collaboration of individuals and their environments. According to Burr (1995), such collaboration of individuals with their environment is formed as a result of the social, cultural and historical developments in a society. As teachers' beliefs are considered to be significant elements to influence their classroom decisions, some researchers, for instance Woods (2006), advocate that teachers' beliefs should be examined within a social context in which teachers situate their work. This theory emphasizes the postulation stated by Wertsch (1991, p. 18) that "action is mediated and that it cannot be separated from the milieu in which it is carried out". This means that specific contexts, such as classrooms, curricula, and student needs, can influence teachers' beliefs and practices.

The sociocultural theory finds its roots in the notable work of the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978). Later on, some other psychologists like, Leontiev (1981) and Wertsch (1991) made key contributions to the theory. One of the central features of this theory is that it views learning as a social phenomenon where meaning is derived through language use within the social context. In contrast with the supporters of cognitive theories where mediation between stimulus and the response is believed to be the focal point, Vygotsky's (1978) theory scrutinizes the behavioral context or the social circumstances where the action takes place. The basic supposition in Vygotsky's theory is that psychological structures are not present in the individual's mind; instead, they are shaped in relation with the social framework. This implies that mental functions emerge as a result of social interaction.

Mitchell and Myles (2004) are of the view that sociocultural theory considers learners as active builders of their own learning environment. Guoxing (2004) went a step ahead and

stated that this way, learners are responsible for their own learning environment and the environment can develop and support them. Not only the learners, according to this theory, teachers are also seen as active constructors of their own teaching environment. Teachers' beliefs and thought processes about the language learning of the learners will certainly impact their teaching environment. Teachers' continuous practice and evolution as language teachers will restructure their perceptions, beliefs and practices of foreign language teaching.

For this present study, the researcher believes that the social constructivist view provides the suited conceptual framework. As theorists like Dewey (1938), Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1986) construe, the researcher holds that knowledge is constructed individually, socially, and culturally. The theoretical orientation underpinning this study has been molded and formed over time. The lens through which the researcher views the world, his teaching, and his research is not a static one, but instead is moving and changes as the researcher's experiences continue and his thinking evolves. The researcher thinks that his beliefs impact his life and therefore impact the conditions he feels necessary for teachers to name their beliefs. The seven beliefs that influence and undercurrent this study the most are;

- (1) learning is an active process,
- (2) learning is a social process,
- (3) learning is a reflective process,
- (4) learning is contextual,
- (5) learning in school involves learning academic discourse,
- (6) the classroom needs to be a safe place, and
- (7) students come to knowing by traveling a different path.

Bruner (1986) advocated that learning is an active process in which learners construct knowledge by building from what they already know. He coined the term scaffolding, which is very similar to Vygotsky's (1978) 'zone of proximal development'. Bruner

(1986, p. 19) explained scaffolding as “the steps taken to reduce the degrees of freedom in carrying out some task so that the child can concentrate on the difficult skill he/she is in the process of acquiring”. A teacher can increase learning by connecting new learning to a learner’s past experiences and by providing support, through scaffolding, as the learner actively engages with the new learning.

As a practising teacher, my beliefs are influenced by the ideas presented by theorists like Dewey (1938), Vygotsky (1978), and Bruner (1986). They suggested that all teachers should create an environment where students are active participants in the learning, not inactive bystanders. Furthermore, Rosenblatt (1978), and González et al, (2005) suggested that learning is contextual. Dewey (1938) believed that learning should be tied to a child’s experiences and interests. He explained that teachers could do this by making connections to the diverse contexts that are represented in a classroom to students’ home life, community, and broader world. Dewey thought that teachers should allow students to search for meaning in relationships that make sense and were relevant to their world. When teachers teach in a way that privileges contextual learning, students no longer have to ask the question, “Why am I learning this?”

Rosenblatt (1978) argued that meaning takes place in the transaction between the reader and the text. Readers are not alone while reading. The text is interacting with the reader through language, and language is always attached to context. When reading a text with students, Rosenblatt (1978) further elaborates that, it is important to help students make connections to the context of the text being read. This connection to prior understanding allows students to ground new learning in something known. If teachers allow conversations to take place around texts, students can also use others’ experiences to help construct connections to new contexts.

González et al, (2005, p. 133) explained that each student comes to school with unique funds of knowledge. They used this term “to refer to the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual function and well-being”. It is critical for teachers to be constant investigators of their students in order to deeply know the funds of knowledge each student brings to the

classroom. Knowing and using students' funds of knowledge allows teachers to best make learning relevant for each and every student.

When a teacher does not invest in knowing his/her students inside and outside of school, trying to make learning relevant becomes a superficial endeavor. Dewey (1933), Rosenblatt (1978), and González et al, (2005) have influenced the way I teach and the way I facilitated naming beliefs. I do not believe one can learn when what is being learned is separated from context; relevance and meaning is then lost.

Connecting all this with the present study, the researcher believes that the sociocultural theory not only applies to the broader contexts of a society but also applies to the sociocultural environment a teacher and students create within an institute and particularly within a classroom. This study tries to explore some key elements of that environment in which teaching of reading is done in Saudi context and this will be done by studying what teachers believe about teaching reading in this particular context.

PART 2

Reflexivity:

Reflexivity and 'reflective practice' have different connotations in different intellectual circles and disciplines. Even in the same area of subject or discipline, there are capricious and manifold expositions and understandings of the terms reflexivity and reflective practice. Fortunately however, some consensus seems to emerge on its overall understanding.

Many scholars and researchers such as Mezirow (1981); Boud and Fales (1983); Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1985) and Jarvis (1992) see it as the process of learning through and from experience towards gaining new insights of self and/or practice. This implies for me as reflexive researcher that I need to look back and examine my everyday practices as a researcher to be self-aware and systematically evaluate my own work. This also means that I need to recollect my practice experiences and critically ponder over them so that I

can develop new understandings to expand my vision for future practices. This is a continuous process and makes learning and pondering a life-long practice.

Etherington (2004) explains reflexivity in these words;

“Researcher reflexivity [is] the capacity of the researcher to acknowledge how their own experiences and contexts (which might be fluid and changing) inform the process and outcomes of inquiry. If we can be aware of how our own thoughts, feelings, culture, environment, social and personal history inform us as we dialogue with participants, transcribe their conversations with us and write our representations of the work, then perhaps we can come close to the rigour that is required of good qualitative research”.

While Dewey (1933) provided the basis of ‘reflective practice’, noticeable contribution in understanding of reflective practices was made by Schon (1983) in his pivotal work, ‘The reflective practitioner: how professionals think in action’. This work throws light on the ways in which practitioners could become cognizant to their implied understanding and learn from their practice and experience.

Schon (1983) did not focus mainly on defining and describing the process of reflection. Rather, he predominantly dedicated his attention on expediting the development of reflective practices among the practitioners. However, in this field, one the most prominent and lasting contributions made by him was to pinpoint two types of reflection: The one was named by him as ‘reflection-on-action’ which means that one reflects on one’s actions when the action or process ends. It is also termed as ‘after-the-event thinking’. The other one, however, is of continuous nature and the process of reflection or thinking continues while the action/process is still in progress. It is often called as ‘reflection-in-action’ or ‘thinking while doing’.

Further on the subject of reflexivity, Zeichner and Liston (1996) present five different levels of reflection process in teaching:

1. Rapid reflection - immediate, ongoing and automatic action by the teacher.

2. Repair – in which a thoughtful teacher makes decisions to alter their behavior in response to students’ cues.
3. Review – when a teacher thinks about, discusses or writes about some element of their teaching.
4. Research – when a teacher engages in more systematic and sustained thinking over time, perhaps by collecting data or reading research.
5. Re-theorizing and reformulating – the process by which a teacher critically examines their own practice and theories in the light of academic theories.

After experiencing my concerns with the prevailing scenario of teaching reading in Saudi context, as a practising teacher, I discussed my concerns with my other fellow teachers; I believe I entered into the third level of my reflective process as chalked above. Taking it further to research level (fourth) was an attempt to systematically work on the subject and collect data to study different aspects of the subject under investigation. This process makes reflexivity a continuous and sustained process of gaining insight into the subject and efforts are made to come up to authentic solutions and long lasting procedures to address the concerns.

Another significant contribution was made by Finlay (2003, p. 16) who proposes that reflexivity is a holistic process, which can:

- ‘Examine the impact of position, perspective, power and presence of the researcher’.
- ‘Promote insight through the examination of interpersonal dynamics’.
- ‘Open up unconscious motivations and implicit biases in the researcher’s approach’.
- ‘Empower others by giving them a voice’.
- ‘Evaluate the research process, methods and outcomes’.
- ‘Enable public scrutiny of the integrity of the research process’.

During last couple of decades, a lot of work has been done on reflexive practices, especially in the field of education. To quote here one of the noticeable examples, the

work done by Grushka, Hinde-McLeod and Reynolds (2005) is of special significance as they distinguish between three dichotomies of ‘reflection for action’, ‘reflection in action’ and ‘reflection on action’.

The three terms ‘reflexive practices’, ‘critical reflection’ and reflexivity do not mean the same and are not interchangeable, there is an essential difference in the three. On one hand, reflexive practices simply mean ‘thinking about’ something after the event, reflexivity tends to be more an instantaneous and a vibrant practice and it comprises continuing self-awareness and self-assessment. Critical reflection stands at some point in between the two.

Reflexivity is therefore an unequivocal assessment of the self. If we look into its etymological origins, we find that ‘re-flexivity’ implicates looking again, looking towards one’s self, and turning one’s contemplation to the self. This obviously means that reflexivity embroils reflecting our thinking back to ourselves. Ontologically, it induces interpretivist approach which considers people and the world are not alienated but are interconnected and there is a continuous dialogue between the two.

Further, Gibbs’ Reflective Cycle (1988) is often referred to in nursing and education as a way to facilitate reflexivity. This model is also referred to as an iterative model and it implies that the process of learning happens best through repetition. Reflexivity in itself involves the very essence of repetition.

When one looks back to one’s actions, it is a kind of repeating the same action. There are obvious chances that one goes dissatisfied with one’s actions and thinks of doing it again in a better way. In this sense, Gibbs’ reflective cycle is quite relevant to reflexivity and reflective processes. Moreover, if we look into the elements of Gibbs’ reflective model, most of them relate to reflexive process. This model therefore suggests some very basic but extremely worthwhile interrogations to help form reflection.



Fig 1.5: Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

Some researchers believe that a wide-ranging and critically more reflexive approach should be adopted at higher level. For instance, Zeichner and Liston (1996, p. 10) contend that “reflective teachers should move beyond questions about whether or not their practice is working to critically examining values and how practice can lead to change, commitment to quality and respect for difference”.

PART 3

Reflectivity vs Reflexivity:

This section clarifies the difference in reflectivity and reflexivity as well as describes the reflective and reflexive processes adopted by the researcher during the course of this study. When we reflect, we think back over our actions and try to see what happened. In the process, we learn from our reflections and decide if we need to change anything in the course of action taken.

On the other hand, in reflexivity, we see how we influence all aspects of the study including the data collection method, analysis and reporting of the findings and how the study influences and changes us.

Here, both the reflective and reflexive processes are described separately in relation to this research work.

(A) Reflective Processes:

Ely et al, (1991, p. 179) believe that “doing qualitative research is by nature a reflective and recursive process”. Furthermore, Wellington (2000, p. 22) interprets methodology as “the activity or business of choosing, reflecting upon, evaluating and justifying the methods you use”. So methodologies are the working out arguments and justifications we use to explain our choices in developing our research. Thus, methodology is more concerned with the philosophy of how we are developing our research.

For the researcher, the reflective process has been an attempt to recognize, do something about, and concede the limitations of this research and its various aspects such as its location, its subjects, its process, its theoretical context, its data, its analysis, and how accounts recognize that the construction of knowledge takes place in the world and not apart from it.

Though the bases of my interest in the subject under investigation rest in my personal experiences as a teacher in the same context, the foundation ground for the recent study was provided by my previous study on reading challenges faced by the Saudi EFL learners. Reflecting on the outcomes of that study, I thought it was logical enough to take this subject to a next level of investigation and while learners’ perspectives were somehow addressed in my previous work, I thought it to be reasonable to look into teachers’ perspectives on the subject of reading in Saudi context. I must admit here, that I was fully aware right from the beginning of my project that it was not going to be an easy task on account of several cultural and social constraints,. In addition to such outside factors, I was also aware that my values and beliefs could affect my work in both positive and negative ways. Reflective processes give me opportunity at such points to re-evaluate my direction and see if things are moving towards right direction and my role as a researcher is supported positively by my teaching experiences.

As far as the research methodology is concerned, I am convinced that combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research methodology yields more reliable results. Adopting the same approach in my small scale pilot study and reflecting on its outcomes, I believe that the combined research approach helps finding the answers to the research questions effectively.

In addition to that, active interviewing technique allows me to play my active part and bring my own experience as a practising English language teacher to this study. This also helps me decide my 'place' as an insider or outsider in the research. I believe I am both insider and outsider when it comes to this particular study. I am insider in the sense that I am one of the teachers whose beliefs are being studied and I am teaching reading as a part of English language teaching programs in Saudi Arabia for about 15 years now. However, as I am not a Saudi national myself and there are several social and cultural differences that make me an outsider in that context.

Furthermore, most of the research respondents are not Saudis. They are the teachers from different nationalities and thus they bring different cultural backgrounds and range of experiences with them into the study. I believe drawing comparisons on various social and cultural aspects of their experiences of their home countries with those of Saudi Arabia is an added advantage to the study. Overall, this outsider view is very interesting for me and may give a different 'flavour' to the study.

I am also mindful of the fact that a practising professional brings his/her own bias to the research work. Personal and professional postulations and beliefs cannot be separated easily. I believe this emphasizes the need of both reflectivity and reflexivity even more intensively so that a balance can be maintained between subjective ideas and objective outcomes of the project.

During the course of this study, I was also copiously mindful of the ideological, cultural and political constraints of the Saudi context as I have been working in this setting for quite a long time. Special considerations are taken to be watchful about the cultural and political sensitivities of the society, both in contextual and methodological approaches. In the same context and to avoid any unforeseen political and cultural issues, it was decided by the researcher to keep the interview respondents anonymous.

In addition to that, field notes through class observations as one of the research tools was in my original plan but reflecting on its possible aftermaths I had to adjust my methodological approach and do away with the observation.

(B) Reflexive Processes:

Over the past few years of contemplating, reading and writing about my research work, my understanding and conceptualization of the themes on teachers' beliefs and practices related to teaching reading have gone through vital changes. My thinking evolved gradually to view my research as concerned with the beliefs developed by the practising teachers, in particular, those related to their practice of teaching reading in their day to day classrooms activities.

My own professional and practical experiences in the same context continuously impacted on shaping the overall conceptual framework on the subject. Thus the focus became the impact of the some key elements of the social and cultural environment in which teaching of reading is carried out. More recently, I have become more interested in exploring how teachers' beliefs are related to their actual classroom practices in relation to their teaching of reading, especially in Saudi EFL learners' context where reading is not regarded as quite an enthusiastic skill or habit.

I believe this long-drawn-out reflexive exploration has proved to be vital, not only in shaping my beliefs and understanding of a rather challenging experience of teaching reading in Saudi context which proved to be a blessing in disguise as it ultimately urged me to do this research project, but has also set the bases and direction of the research itself. I believe it is of utmost importance to engage with teachers' beliefs, ideas, and concepts as well as practices to be able to rectify any issues in learning/teaching process. My beliefs in the significance of the role of practising teachers engaged with society are based on my own experiences as a teacher working in the same background for about a decade and a half.

Wilkinson (1988, p. 494-498) has categorized reflexivity into three, interconnected levels: 'personal', 'functional', and 'disciplinary'. At personal level, reflexivity can be perceived as the intention of the researchers to make themselves prominent in various steps of the

research process ranging from research design to approaches and from data collection to critical evaluation. The purpose at this level could be to make their research actions visible and to recognize their influence on the research process.

At the functional level, efforts are made from the reflexive researcher to take stock of identities, different roles and power structures associated with the whole research process. At the last and disciplinary level, reflexive researchers become very critical about the position of their research and reflect on it keeping in view the wide-ranging disciplinary deliberations both in theoretical and practical perspectives. Wilkinson (1998) opines that reflexivity generally involves interpretation of unambiguous research schemas and plans. This is a continuous process and happens repeatedly over the course of research project.

Keeping in mind these three levels, when I reflect on my work, I have no hesitation in admitting that my teaching experiences have been so influential that they have not only motivated me to conduct this research project but have also influenced, intentionally or unintentionally, the research design, methodology, data collection, and data analysis processes.

Working on this project, I have realized that, as a researcher, there is a strong likelihood in me that I can lead the flow of my research, my thoughts, ideas and predisposition. This is more likely to happen when I collect and interpret data from the responses of the participants. As I am also one of them, working in the same setting, I could have interpreted their experiences in light of my own beliefs.

Thus, various elements of the research, right from reviewing the relevant literature to selection of participants, and from collection of data to interpreting and analyzing it, could be affected by my thoughts and bias. This made me over-conscious of my role and place in the research and called for adopting such approaches and strategies that minimized undue intervention so that an authentic body of research could be produced.

Fortunately however, McCabe and Holmes (2009) have suggested ways to temperate the impact of overwhelming personal experiences in a research work. They proposed that researchers should adopt collaborative strategies and should work with the research participants at various stages such as data gathering and analyzing.

Keeping this in mind, I worked in collaboration with the research participants so that both the researcher and the participants could bring their stories together and in turn these stories now form an integral part of the research. This was done when consultation of some of the research participants was sought at the stages of questionnaire design and application of Alpha Cronbach test as well as when the interview transcripts were sent back to the interview respondents for their reviews and debriefing. Also, in interviews sessions, I expressed my beliefs about the topic under discussion and sought the opinion of the respondents on them. I believe this helped me a lot in attaining a balance between subjectivity and objectivity of the research work.

At the second i.e. functional level, emphasis is laid on the need to evaluate and appreciate the roles and identities of those who are engaged in the research work. Reflexive view is particularly taken in the context of the associated power structures spawned within the research process.

At functional level, a critical perspective provides the basis of a research process. Reflexivity at this stage gives a researcher a privileged position as the researcher exercises special power to repeat and amend what is believed to be dominant 'truths' and 'discourses' taken by the researcher. The researcher enjoys this privilege through his/her capacity to establish the research agenda around identity. Like my personal reflexivity, at a functional level as well, most of my reflexive apprehensions are addressed by collaborating with research participants and actively engaging in the research process.

At the disciplinary level, I can use my reflexive experiences in a more confident way as they relate directly to my daily professional life as a teacher. At this level, my reflexive explorations help keep my research work within the broader disciplinary agendas. At the same time, it helps me to understand how my research is positioned within the greater theoretical and pedagogic setting. In this case, my research is located within some fundamentals of sociocultural theory which views learning as a social phenomenon where meaning is derived through language use within the social context.

The theory supports learning, including second language acquisition, because according to sociocultural theory, involvement in socially mediated activities is indispensable. It regards instruction as fundamental to second and foreign language development and

should be geared to the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). It believes that learning in a foreign language context should be a collective achievement and not an isolated individual's effort where the learner works unassisted and unmediated.

Conclusion:

As the main subject of this research work is teachers' beliefs, it also establishes the need to reflect the beliefs, understandings, experiences, and interpretations of those involved in the research process. Obviously, it is not totally possible for the researcher to do away with his beliefs, understandings, experiences, and interpretations from the research process. The point is that we do not come empty headed to a research project. This means that the start of a research project cannot be a blank canvas on which anything can be painted, but instead the project is conceived in the context of the values, beliefs, views and understandings of those involved in the study. These, of course, require reflecting on the research processes again and again. One could therefore argue that any research work that does not reflect on its processes tends to compromise on the authenticity and genuineness of the whole research process.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4. 1. Overview:

This study intends to investigate teachers' beliefs about teaching reading as well as teachers' reading instructional practices. One of the particular interests is to find out the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices. This chapter provides the rationale for conducting a mixed-method study, describes participants' characteristics and the context of the study, chronicles the procedures, summarizes the quantitative and qualitative data sources, and finally, outlines the plan for data analyses. A Likert-scale questionnaire comprises the survey portion of the study while active interviews are added to get depth and clarity on teachers' espoused beliefs and classroom practices related to teaching of reading in Saudi higher education context.

Thus in this chapter, the preferred research paradigm for this study is described, analyzed and evaluated. The research also aims to show here how this approach has subsequently worked in (1) making the choices of research methodologies and approaches, (2) selecting the research participants, (3) gathering data and (4) analyzing it. This chapter provides a rationale for combining quantitative and qualitative methods.

4. 2. Research Strategy and Rationale:

(a) Designing the Research Questions

Designing research questions is an important step in any research work. In the researcher's view, research questions provide and set the direction of a research project. Lyn (2009) suggests three questions must be asked while designing the research questions, they are:

- What are you asking?
- How are you asking it?
- What data will you need to provide a good answer?

Bordage and Dawson (2003, p. 378) have highlighted the importance of designing research questions by emphasizing that the research questions make the single most important element of a study. They put it as, "the keystone of the entire exercise". Therefore, the most important step in research is to get the research questions right for what a researcher wants to achieve.

Designing the research questions correctly and defining the aims of the study clearly are the main factors that govern all other characteristics of the whole research design. Thus this whole process consists of two key steps; they are selecting an appropriate topic and defining timely and apt research questions. The way defining learning outcomes and objectives clearly in a classroom teaching context helps us organize learning and teaching activities, setting the research questions right and defining the aims of the study provide an unblemished focus for the whole research process.

To further establish the significance of making the research questions clear, Bordage and Dawson (2003, p. 377) suggest that a researcher should consider these nine questions during the research questions designing stage.

- What topic (idea) of study are you interested in?
- What has already been done in this area (the literature)?

- What major outcome(s) (dependent variable) are you interested in?
- What intervention (independent variable) are you interested in?
- Are you looking for differences or a relationship (association)?
- To what group (population) do you wish to apply your results?
- What is your specific research question?
- What answer to your question do you expect to find (the research hypothesis)?
- Why is this question important today (relevance)?

The researcher of this study endeavors to discuss the answers of these questions on the following pages of this chapter.

At the same time, a researcher needs to be confident that the research will be significant enough in contributing to educational knowledge, no matter even if this is on a small level or for local/organizational purposes only, rather than replicating work that has already been produced. This means that a researcher should craft new ideas with a new message. This message should be new to a particular audience or this message should be able to expand on a previous idea. Defining sound research questions thus helps to clarify exactly where the research fits into the broader scheme of existing body of knowledge and establishes the focus of the study.

Stake (1995, p. 15) emphasized the importance of designing the appropriate research questions by suggesting that perhaps it was the most difficult task a researcher must tackle. In Stake's opinion, the most significant thing is to design 'good' research questions that will 'direct the looking and thinking enough, but not too much'. Bassey (1999) suggests that some degree of conceptual organization is required for every kind of research design. Bassey (1999, p. 73) terms them as "conceptual bridges, or a conceptual background from what is known to the practice and conduct of the research".

Stake (1995, p. 16) designates the research questions as "cognitive structures to guide data gathering and outlines for presenting interpretations to others". Thus setting the research questions and objectives right hones the focus of the research and helps a

researcher to concentrate on the central issues of the study. This ultimately helps in producing a focused and productive study on the subject under investigation.

(b) Research Questions

The following research questions form the basis for this present study;

1. What do the EFL teachers believe about teaching reading in English to the Saudi EFL learners?
2. How do teachers develop/form their beliefs on teaching reading in English as a foreign language?
3. Why do teachers hold particular set of beliefs about teaching reading in English?
4. What reading instructional practices do teachers of apparently different beliefs use with Saudi EFL learners? To what do teachers attribute their reading instructional practices?

4. 3. Selection of Research Approach and Methodologies:

To find the answers to these research questions, the mixed method approach was employed because it adds value by increasing validity in the findings, informing the collection of the second data source, and supporting in knowledge creation.

The quantitative data was used to identify teachers' beliefs on teaching reading and to find out any relationships between beliefs and practices. On the other hand, the qualitative data gathered employing active interviewing technique provides elucidation and insight into teachers' complex belief systems and decisions regarding reading instruction. So the purpose of this study is to identify not just what teachers believe, but how and why they subscribe to those beliefs. This way the methodology and pragmatic approaches intended to adopt in this study are aligned with the researcher's value system.

4. 3(a). Rationale for Choosing Quantitative Approach:

There are many instances where researchers chose to develop and use quantitative instruments for their epistemology studies. These studies have inspired the researcher to add a quantitative 'flavor' in this study too. To quote some of them here; Baxter Magolda

(1992) constructed a quantitative measure of beliefs. In another study, Marlene Schommer (1990) formed an instrument to quantify beliefs. The instrument consisted of 36 Likert-scale statements aligned to beliefs identified by previous qualitative studies. In addition to these instances, there are a number of theorists who have asserted the application of quantitative instruments in education and other social sciences. To quote some examples here, the works of Mertens (2010), Johnson and Christensen (2012), Arthur, et al. (2012) and Creswell (2012) have encouraged the researcher to choose quantitative research methods for this present study.

Moreover, the researcher intends to use quantitative research method in this study because it provides measurable data in the form of numbers as the main unit of analysis and this can help organize the data and provide a means to introduce quantitative methods for interpretation. This is useful in this particular study because the researcher wants to see if all the responses from the big sample of the study seem to fit in the same category or they are spread out and have different beliefs about teaching reading. In other words, the researcher hopes that the quantitative method will help corroborate the findings of the research in form of numbers. Although scientific and clinical research studies mostly use this method, it is also used in educational studies to validate the findings of the research numerically. Data can be gathered quantitatively in number of different ways and various research instruments are used for this purpose.

In educational and social science studies, one of the most commonly used instruments to gather numerical data is the survey questionnaire. In such surveys, a series of closed questions are asked to which respondents give their responses against a Likert or other type of scale. Researchers like Schommer (1990) have most recurrently used surveys to construct their work on the basis of systems of beliefs. Such surveys were used to measure the beliefs of the respondents on a Likert-type scale.

Likert scale questionnaire was used as a tool to collect quantitative data for this study. One good aspect of such scales is that they can be used to collect large amounts of data from a number of people and the data collected in this way can be analyzed quite candidly through the participation of a large sample of respondents in a research project. The

Likert scale survey in this study was conducted with 75 teachers working in the Saudi higher education.

There are various ways in which survey questionnaires are conducted. They can be given out face to face, they can also be sent by post or email and nowadays they are conducted online as well. To be able to achieve a high response rate, the researcher contacted some 35 respondents face-to-face in 6 different universities in nearby cities. King Abdul Aziz University, University of Jeddah, Umm Al Qura University Makkah, Taibah University Madina, Islamic University of Madina and Yanbu University College are in researcher's easy approach. Therefore the researcher met these potential respondents working in these universities personally at different times in 2017 and explained to them the topic and the objectives of the research study. These 35 teachers agreed to respond to the questionnaire and gave their email addresses to the researcher. The questionnaire was then sent to them and they all responded within 2 weeks' time.

The teachers working in areas far from the researcher's place were contacted through emails. The email addresses of most of the teachers are available in their respective universities' portals. The questionnaire was sent via emails to some 52 teachers working in eight other Saudi universities. The universities included Najran University, Jazan University, Taif University, King Saud University Riyadh, Qassim University, Majmaah University, Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University Al-Kharj, and King Khalid University Abha.

Moreover, in some cases, a snowball method was also adopted. Wherever teachers' email addresses were not available with the researcher, he requested some of his friends working in some Saudi universities to forward the questionnaire to their colleagues. Some 18 teachers in various Saudi universities were contacted in this indirect way. Thus, the questionnaire was sent to a total of 106 teachers working in 14 different Saudi universities. Out of these 106 teachers, 75 responded. Thus, the response rate was approximately 71%.

As mentioned above, the questionnaire respondents were chosen randomly among the teachers working in 14 out of the 26 existing public universities in Saudi Arabia. This makes the representation of some 54% of the Saudi universities. The questionnaire

respondents were both male and female teachers, though data analysis does not address the gender differences. These 14 universities are in different provinces of Saudi Arabia so it can easily be claimed that the data represents the majority of Saudi universities throughout Saudi Arabia.

As the researcher wanted a wide range of data from different teachers, the principle of easy access was adopted and those teachers were chosen as respondents whom the researcher could reach easily. This approach served the purpose and the responses in the required numbers were received initially for the purpose of questionnaire's validity and reliability and later for the main survey conducted. All the respondents, whether they were contacted by the researcher directly or they were approached indirectly, sent their responses to the researcher directly. The data of the 75 respondents' sent responses is saved for the researcher's record.

4. 3(b). Rationale for Choosing Qualitative Approach:

In addition to quantitative approach, the researcher also used qualitative research methods because it is one of the best means of understanding, describing and analyzing a problem. Thus it serves well in finding the possible solution to the problem. The words spoken in individual interviews can be recorded face to face or on the telephone. Similarly, interviews can be conducted individually with respondents one by one or they can be organized in groups. Other than interviews, focus groups or conversations are also used to collect data in qualitative research approach. Even written words of an account or description or diary records can form the source of qualitative methods and thus inform us about feelings, beliefs and thought processes of the participants.

While qualitative research tends to be hugely intensive and laborious, because interviews or focus groups are mostly required to be transcribed so that the data gathered through these tools can be analyzed, it is comprehensive and a researcher can cover as many aspects of the topic under investigation as he/she wants. Therefore, qualitative approach is considered to be a useful method of gathering rich and variant data. Whereas, only numbers cannot express the many aspects of human feelings, ideas, beliefs and thoughts as words can. Therefore, qualitative data is known for its variety and richness of data that

can be gathered through it and for the same reasons, the researcher chose to add qualitative data in this present study.

A review of a huge number of studies conducted over a period of last twenty years shows that many researchers chose to use qualitative approach for such studies. This provides another convincing reason to choose qualitative approach for this study. Some of such studies are quoted here for instance. Among the most prominent studies were those conducted by Kuhn (1991), Pirttilä Backman (1993), King and ^[P.]_[SEP] Kitchener (1994), and Hofer and Pintrich (1997).

The study done by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1997) and Perry (1999) are especially relevant to this present study as they suggested that individuals' beliefs, ideas and views about knowledge and constructing knowledge are important. In some later examples of studies, some notable studies pertinent to this work include Qian and Alvermann (2000), Many, Howard, and Hoge (2002), Findlan (2006) and Stefan Parry (2013). These studies are significant to this work not only because of the subject matter but also because they are inspirational for the researcher in choosing the qualitative research method. These studies have motivated the researcher to use the qualitative approach because they have a very rich data and provide deeper understanding of the subject under discussion.

Practically, at the stage of questionnaire designing, the researcher felt that there were many aspects of teachers' beliefs which could not be fully covered in close-ended questions. There are some areas which need explanation and should be followed-up with open-ended questions so that the respondents may express their beliefs and views freely and fully. Some of the main issues which needed further explanation and follow up are summarized here to justify the addition of the qualitative research data;

- a. The survey questionnaire had indirect questions about respondents' preference for top-down or bottom-up views of teaching reading. While analyzing the questionnaire data, it was noticed that both the views got similar responses, which indicates that the respondents take a mixed and flexible approach to reading. The researcher thought it reasonable to take up this point in interview questions and see how interview respondents agree or disagree to it. It was decided by the researcher

that a direct question about the respondents' choice of their preferred view of teaching reading would be a good idea. Furthermore, it also seemed logical to find the reasons of this choice.

- b. Several studies in the literature review such as Al-Sulaimani (2007), Javid & Al-Khairi's (2011), Raihan (2012), Al-Seghayer (2014) and many more have identified multiple challenges faced by the EFL teachers in Saudi context. The responses of some of the survey questions indicated indirectly towards such challenges. The researcher thought to further explore the issues and directly explore the teachers' beliefs about the challenges they face in this particular context and in special reference to teaching reading.
- c. The case of language teaching differs with respect to native, ESL and EFL contexts. As the study is specifically contextualized in the EFL context, it was deemed reasonable to explore the similarities and contrasts of this context with those of the native and ESL ones, specifically in relation to teaching reading. The survey questionnaire seemed to miss this area and so it was considered to raise it in the interviews.
- d. The dichotomy of teachers' autonomy and authoritative style of management needed some clarifications. Unfortunately, this topic could not be taken up fully, yet some interesting views were presented on this subject by some interview respondents.
- e. Another important area which was not addressed in the questionnaire was teacher's beliefs about their role in a reading class. The researcher realized it was reasonable to explore what teachers believe about their role in this particular context. It was surprising for the researcher the way a dichotomy was spotted in teachers' espoused belief about their role as a facilitator while practically they had to play a much more active role.
- f. One of the main objectives of this study is to find out how teachers form or develop their beliefs about teaching reading. It was realized that the quantitative research tool does not offer any detailed answer to this question. That is why; the interview

respondents were asked to describe the factors that have most influenced their beliefs about teaching reading.

As these points were felt to be unaddressed in the survey questionnaire, the researcher thought to follow them up in active interviews.

The qualitative part of this present study rests on active interviewing technique devised by Holstein and Gubrium (1994). Active interviewing is a method of conducting an interview where both the respondent and the interviewer give their opinions, and thus are actively engaged in interview process by expressing their thoughts on the subject under discussion. It is a form of interview with continuous informational output, resources and directions. That's why; Garfinkel (1967: 74) calls it 'practical reasoning'.

To choose the interview respondents of the qualitative part of this research, the questionnaire respondents were requested to volunteer for the interviews. For this purpose, a request to show their willingness by choosing out of 'Yes', 'May be' or 'No' was added at the end of the survey questionnaire. The researcher informed the survey questionnaire respondents that five of the questionnaire respondents are required to volunteer to be the interview respondents. It was also informed that each interview would be arranged at the location of the respondent's convenience and choice. The purpose, possible duration, and ethical considerations of the interviews were also explained. It was also mentioned that not all the participants who volunteer to be the interview respondents would be contacted. Out of 75 respondents of the questionnaire, 14 (19%) responded with clear YES while 23 (31%) of them chose MAY BE and 38 respondents (50%) chose not to volunteer for the interviews.

Out of those 14 volunteers, the researcher chose five teachers working in five different Saudi universities. Only those respondents were selected who were easily accessible. They were contacted on their given contact numbers and emails were exchanged to arrange the suitable time and place of their convenience to audio record the interviews.

After audio recording the interviews, the interviews were transcribed and sent back to the interview respondents for their reviews and debriefing. Three of the five respondents

made some minor changes in the transcriptions while the rest of the two commented that they were happy with the written versions of their interviews.

4. 4. Triangulation of Data:

To have a more in-depth look into the collected data and to analyze it properly, data triangulation was done.

When we triangulate data, we use multiple data sources in an investigation to produce understanding about the topic under investigation. The researcher is of the view that triangulation of data strengthens a research project and allows a researcher to make the data collection and findings richer. Moreover, inadequacies and shortfalls found in one-source data can be reduced as multiple sources verify and validate by complementing different types of data gathering tools. When data is supported and confirmed through various sources, more insight and understanding is gained about the topic. In other words, triangulation makes it possible for a researcher to collect more comprehensive and multidimensional data. Not only that but triangulation also helps recognize and remove any inconsistencies in data.

As it draws on multiple standpoints in research, triangulation increases the integrity and credibility of the research. During the course of this study, the researcher felt confident when he realized that the work was moving toward accuracy and reliability as variety of sources of information were being employed. While some theorists assume that a weakness in one method will be compensated by another method, researchers generally use this technique to ensure that an account is rich, vigorous, comprehensive and finely honed.

Creswell (2008) states that researchers triangulate among different sources of data to enrich precision and accuracy in their studies. This is, however, a quite simplistic description. Gorard and Taylor (2004) believe that the desired outcome for a researcher from triangulation in research is for new material to synergize from the triangulated material.

The data triangulation was done in this study as the researcher is inclined towards the logics presented by Denzin (1978). In “Practical Triangulation”, Kennedy (2009) states that Denzin presents four reasons for undertaking triangulation:

- Enriching: The outputs of different informal and formal instruments add value to each other by explaining different aspects of an issue
- Refuting: Where one set of options disproves a hypothesis generated by another set of options.
- Confirming: Where one set of options confirms a hypothesis generated by another set of options
- Explaining: Where one set of options sheds light on unexpected findings derived from another set of options.

The researcher believes that the data triangulation done in this study has incorporated all these positive points in the study. The inputs of both the instruments have helped enriching the various facets of the teachers’ beliefs. Whereas at the most of the places, both the instruments confirm the results of each other, there are a few examples of refutation as well. Also, wherever some points remained unclear in the outcomes of the survey questionnaire, the researcher used the tool of active interviews to get the points clarified and explained. Thus both the instruments have come hand in hand in producing the clearer analysis and finding the answers of the research questions.

Another convincing point in favor of triangulation is that it helps minimize bias in research. Relying on just one option or one type of data may result in some kind of biased results. This may compromise the research integrity and reliability.

As far the present study, the details of the data triangulation will be presented in the next chapter of data analysis. However, it seems to be appropriate to mention here that when both the types of the data were triangulated, mostly similarities and some traces of differences in teachers’ espoused beliefs and practices were spotted. Where some points were felt as unexplained especially in quantitative data, the qualitative data seems to

enrich and explain the points. Thus Denzin’s (1978) four points mentioned above seem to hold true in data triangulation here.

4. 5. Research Participants:

a) *Survey Respondents:*

The 75 respondents of the survey questionnaire were all teachers working in higher education sector at present in Saudi Arabia and are associated as full-time teachers with 14 Saudi colleges and universities in various regions of Saudi Arabia.

To collect their data, the respondents were requested to provide information about their gender, nationality, academic and professional qualifications and the number of years of teaching experience (both in Saudi Arabia and overall) in the first part of the questionnaire. This information is presented here in the form following categories;

o Gender:

Out of 75 questionnaire respondents, as many as 69 (92%) respondents were male teachers and questionnaire responses could only be collected from 6 (8%) female teachers. The lack of female respondents is due to the social and cultural restraints in the Saudi society and it is very difficult for a male researcher to interact freely with the female respondents. This was even harder to manage in face-to face interviews, and that’s why, unfortunately, no female interview respondent could be included in the qualitative part of the study.

o Nationality:

The teachers from about a dozen different nationalities (but all currently working in Saudi Arabia) took part in the questionnaire responses. This was done to get data from the respondents belonging to multicultural backgrounds. The following table shows the nationalities of the questionnaire respondents;

Nationality	American	British	Pakistani	Indian	Jordanian	Sudanese	Egyptian	Saudi	Yemeni	Filipino	Other
No. of Respondents	1	2	32	5	10	5	1	3	2	3	11
Percentage	1.3%	2.7%	42.7%	6.7%	13.3%	6.7%	1.3%	4%	2.7%	4%	14.7%

○ **Educational & Professional Qualification:**

To get a teaching position in Saudi higher education, normally the minimum requirement is a Master's degree in the relevant field plus a teacher training certification in English as a foreign language.

Qualification	Doctorate	Masters	B. Ed	PGD/DELTA	TEFL/CELTA
No. of Respondents	16	59	9	5	16
Percentage	21.3%	78.7%	12%	6.7%	21.3%

○ **Teaching Experience:**

The respondents were asked to write the number of years of teaching experience in Saudi Arabia and overall. Later on, the responses were converted into the following ranges;

No. of Teaching Year experience	1 to 10 years	10 to 20 years	20 to 30 years	More than 30 years
Overall	11	38	23	3
In Saudi Arabia	53	21	1	0

The level of qualifications of these respondents coupled with the teaching experience they have, especially in the given context, ensures that the respondents make up the right choice to participate in and respond to the study questions.

b) **Interview Respondents:**

For the qualitative part (active interviews) of this study, five English language teachers working currently in the Saudi higher education were selected out of the 14 teachers who had volunteered to be interview respondents at the end of the survey questionnaire. All the five respondents are currently working in five different Saudi colleges and universities. Their names are kept anonymous for the sake of cultural and job related restraints of the particular context they are working in. However, it seems appropriate to present their brief portfolios here;

- Respondent 1 is currently working as an English Language Instructor at a Saudi university for last 10 years. Previously, he has taught at secondary school level in Saudi Arabia for 6 years. His highest qualification is MA English language & literature and he has earned a Bachelor of Education degree as well.
- Respondent 2 is also currently working as an English Language Instructor at a Saudi university for last 9 years. Previously, he has taught at various levels in Pakistan for 14 years. His highest qualification is PhD and he has also Cambridge Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults (DELTA) on his credit.
- Respondent 3 is a native English speaker and is currently working as an English Language Instructor at a Saudi college for last 12 years. Previously, he has taught at school level in the UK for 3 years. His highest qualification is Bachelors with honours and he has also got Cambridge Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA).
- Respondent 4 is currently working as an EFL Instructor at a Saudi university for last 8 years. Previously, he has taught school level in the UK for 6 years and at various levels in Pakistan for some 15 years. His highest qualification is MA TESOL and he has done some TEFL certification courses as well.
- Respondent 5 is working at present as a Lecturer in English language studies at a Saudi university for last 9 years. Previously, he has taught at various levels in Philippines for 8 years. His highest qualification is Doctorate in Education (EdD). He completed Philippine Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) in 1999 and Certification in TESOL in 2015.

The profiles of both the survey and interview respondents clearly show that they are not only qualified teachers and know the subject under discussion but also have a vast experience of teaching; especially they have enough experience of teaching in the Saudi context. The profiles also indicate that all of them are capable of presenting comparative and contrastive views on teaching reading in the native, ESL and EFL contexts.

4. 6. Research Instruments:

a. Questionnaire

Questionnaires are widely used in research studies in almost all the disciplines of knowledge. If designed carefully and properly, they are considered to be scientific measuring instruments. Questionnaires make up the basis of every survey-based statistical measurement. They are the most important measurement instruments used to collect data on an area under investigation.

There are various kinds of questionnaires. For this research, a Likert scale questionnaire comprising 48 statements and divided into four categories was used. This type of questionnaire follows an ‘agree-disagree’ method to measure attitudes, gather opinions and collect data on a certain subject. For decades, it is now being used quite widely in opinion polls, market research, government surveys and academic studies.

Likert scales are also called ‘summated scales’ because the responses of the respondents are summed in each statement or item of the questionnaire. Normally ‘strongly disagree’ is coded as 1 while ‘strongly agree’ as 5, keeping 2 as ‘disagree’, 4 as ‘agree’ and 3 as neutral. The same criterion was adopted in this research.

For designing the questionnaire for this study, a list of relevant topics from the reviewed literature was made. These topics were then categorized and after that, questions were written related to each category. Here are the identified topics with citations of a few instances of the literature reviewed in Chapter 3 above, in relevance to each point;

- **Significance of teachers’ beliefs in teaching**

Johnson (1994), Smith (1996), Freeman & Richards (1996), Borg (2006), Zheng (2009), Nation & Macalister (2010), Kuzborska (2011), Li (2012), Amiryousefi (2015)

- **Teachers’ beliefs about the importance of reading**

Cunningham & Stanovich (1998), Holloway (1999), Krashen (1993, 2004), Smith et al. (2000), Grabe (2009), Elena (2015)

- **Teacher's beliefs on different approaches to teaching reading**
Goodman (1967, 1970), Gough (1972), Smith (1971, 1978), Just & Carpenter (1980), Rumelhart & McClelland (1986), Rayner & Pollatsek (1989), Dole et al. (1991), McCarthy (1999), Chou Y. (2008), Grabe (2009)
- **Challenges faced by teachers in teaching reading in Saudi context**
Al-Sulaimani (2007), Moskovsky & Alrabai (2009) Moody (2009 & 2012), Javid & Al-Khairi's (2011), Raihan (2012), Mahrooqi & Al-Shihi (2012), Rahman & Alhaisoni (2013), Al-Seghayer (2014), Al-Qahtani (2016)
- **Teachers' beliefs about various aspects of teaching reading like phonics, comprehension, skimming, scanning etc.**
Sarıçoban (2002), Block & Israel (2004), Blackowicz & Ogle (2008), Mokhtari, Reichard & Sheorey (2008), Baker (2008)
- **Teaching strategies adopted by teachers at various stages (pre, while and post reading)**
Goodman (1967, 1970), Smith (1971, 1978), Urquhart & Weir (1998), Samuelowicz & Bain (2001), Grabe & Stoller (2002), Alyousef (2006), Chou Y. (2008), Grabe (2009)

Out of these categories, questions were formed and organized. Moreover, as cited above with each topic, some studies done on teachers' beliefs and/or on teaching reading in various different contexts and the research tools used in them were also studied. However, the most noticeable document remains the DeFord (1979) theoretical orientation to reading profile which helped form the basis of the questionnaire for this study.

At the first place, the questionnaire was sent to seven learned researchers to check its face validity. Five of them (a PhD from the Leeds University UK currently working as a professor of English language studies in a Pakistani university, a PhD from Lancaster University, UK and currently working as an assistant professor (TESOL) at Community College of Philadelphia, USA, a PhD scholar from The National University of Modern

Languages (NUML) Pakistan and currently working as an assistant professor in a Saudi university, a PhD in applied linguistics from the University of al-Jazirah, Sudan and currently working as an assistant professor in a Saudi university and a current part-time PhD student at Lancaster University who is working as a lecturer in a Saudi university) gave their worthy comments. The questionnaire was edited and adjustments were made in it in the light of those comments. A few changes were suggested in the order of some questions. Some scholars pointed out that some questions were either repeated or were said to be unnecessary or inappropriate. Some questions were reported to be ambiguous and therefore they were rephrased to make them clear for the respondents.

In the next phase, Cronbach Alpha reliability test was employed to check the reliability and internal consistency of the questionnaire.

The internal consistency of a scale is applied to see if the items are meant to measure the phenomena they are designed for. There are two ways to check the internal consistency. One is to review the items and compare the content to see that there should not be any inconsistencies and repetitions in the questionnaire items. However, this is a subjective approach. To make it objective and reliable, internal consistency is measured statistically. Cronbach Alpha reliability test is considered to be a standard method of measuring the reliability and internal consistency of a Likert scale questionnaire.

Lee Cronbach developed Alpha reliability test in 1951 to get a measure of the internal consistency of a test or scale; it is expressed as a number between 0 and 1. (Cronbach 1951: 297) If the result of the test is closer to 1, the scale is considered to be internally consistent. However, most of the researchers and scholars agree that anything above 0.7 is acceptable.

To apply the test on the research tool, the questionnaire was initially given to 12 English language teachers working in various colleges and universities in Saudi Arabia. The responses of the teachers were put in the excel sheet and the Cronbach Alpha reliability test was done using the SPSS Statistics version 20. The internal consistency result was 0.941 which indicates higher consistency and reliability.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
0.912	0.923	48

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test

As the above table indicates the Likert scale questionnaire has 48 items. These items cover four main categories related to the research questions of this study. They include:

- 1) Beliefs about Teaching Reading (Q1-17)
- 2) Classroom Strategies for Teaching Reading - Pre-Reading Stage (Q17-27)
- 3) Classroom Strategies for Teaching Reading - While-Reading Stage (Q28-43)
- 4) Classroom Strategies for Teaching Reading - After/Post Reading Stage (Q44-48)

As the result of the Cronbach Alpha reliability test shows the high reliability, it was concluded that the questionnaire tool was ready to be used. It was therefore sent to the potential respondents for the purpose of data collection.

b. Active Interviewing:

As mentioned earlier, “active interviewing” technique chalked down by Holstein and Gubrium was employed to collect data for this study. Interviews with all the five respondents were conducted, audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The transcriptions were then sent back to the respondents for their reviewing and debriefing. After that, the data from the interview transcripts was analyzed. For transcribing the interviews, the researcher used the de-naturalism approach of transcription.

Bailey (2008, p. 127) provides valuable comments on this process,

“Many qualitative studies collect audio or video data (e.g. recordings of interviews, focus groups or talk in consultation), and these are usually transcribed into written form for closer study. Representation of audible and visual data into written form is an interpretive process which is therefore the first step in analyzing data”.

Serovich, and Mason (2005, p. 1273-1274) have elucidated the differences between the “two dominant modes: naturalism, in which every utterance is transcribed in as much detail as possible, and de-naturalism, in which idiosyncratic elements of speech (e.g., stutters, pauses, non-verbals, involuntary vocalizations) are removed”.

For this study, de-naturalism approach for transcription of the interviews was used. This means that in transferring the contents of the interview recordings, the speech idiosyncrasies like pauses and instinctive vocalizations were not included. After that, the transcribed texts were sent back to the interview participants for debriefing.

4. 7. Data Processing and Analysis:

Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 10) have rightly concluded that, “the strengths of qualitative data rest on the competence with which their analysis is carried out”.

If we look back on the developmental stages of data analysis methods, perhaps one of the most significant founding works on data analysis was done by Miles and Huberman (1994) in which they conceptualized and described nineteen within-case analyses. They included partially ordered display, time-ordered display, role-ordered display, and conceptually ordered display. The researchers also described eighteen cross-case analyses comprising partially ordered display, case-ordered display, time-ordered display, and conceptually ordered display. To date, this work serves as the most inclusive guidebook on qualitative analysis.

Stake (1995. P. 19) suggests that researchers use two main strategies to develop new meanings; ‘categorical aggregation of instances’, and ‘directed interpretation’. A researcher focusing on quantitative data looks for the development of meaning from repetition of phenomena, while the one whose focus is on qualitative side tries to find the emergence of meaning in a single instance. In both cases, the search for meaning usually

aims at finding the patterns, contradictions, uniformities, and/or inconsistencies within a set of conditions or phenomena. Sometimes, a researcher knows or assumes these patterns in advance and uses them as a template for further analysis. However, there are equal chances that such patterns will emerge from the data analysis.

Robson (2002, p. 486-488) offers a data analysis strategy which consists of three main tasks: 'thinking', 'developing categories', and 'progressive focusing'. Thinking means getting to know the data and trying to figure out what the data informs us. Developing categories means that the data is organized in some order. It is quite natural that these organizations and categorizations are not fully perfect and flawless in the beginning. This is where progressive focusing comes into play. With continuous reviews and active process of categorization and re-categorization, the data can be made well organized, refined and ordered. Thus, this process leads to the precise presentation of the data which help draw valuable conclusions.

The collected data for this study also went through these processes. During and after collection of data, the processes of thinking and developing categories continued coupled with progressive focusing by backward and forward reviewing of the data. Thus the research data was analyzed both during the data collection phase, as part of the collaborative narrative approach, and on completion of the data collection activities. As the mixed method analysis was employed, the findings from the quantitative data along with those from the qualitative data were presented in categories, with the help of tables (in appendices), charts and figures to clearly present the outcomes of the study.

Furthermore, Leech et al. (2008) have done a noteworthy work by defining no less than eighteen techniques of qualitative analysis: Those techniques include; (1) word count, (2) constant comparative analysis method, (3) key words-in-context, (4) domain analysis, (5) taxonomic analysis, (6) classical content analysis, (7) componential analysis, (8) analysis of conversation, (9) discourse analysis, (10) secondary analysis, (11) membership categorization analysis, (12) micro-interlocutor analysis, (13) narrative analysis, (14) semiotics, (15) manifest content analysis, (16) qualitative comparative analysis, (17) latent content analysis, and (18) text mining.

Later on, Denzin et al. (2011) made valuable contribution by recording the history of qualitative research. The span of this history is described to comprise nine moments. The first one is termed as the “traditional” moment and then the description of various moments continues through to the ninth moment, which is called as the “fractured future”. It is said that present moment is of the fractured future moment as far as analysis of qualitative research is concerned.

In the recent times, however, the work done by Onwuegbuzie et al. (2011) is of great significance. This present study finds its motivation in data analysis from this work. Onwuegbuzie et al. (2011) introduced an integrated structure in which they proposed to combine qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis. This is called ‘a mixed analysis’. As the name suggests, a researcher combines both quantitative and qualitative analysis, no matter even one type of analysis is predominant and is focused more in a particular study.

For this research project, when the data from the questionnaire was compiled and all the five interviews were transcribed, the data analysis process using the mixed analysis technique was carried. The qualitative analysis was also supported with the quotes from the interview responses. The analysis was also reinforced by some other empirical research studies done on the topic. The data analysis from the quantitative research was done statistically. Some tables, charts and graphs were formed and presented to clearly elaborate the analysis and the outcomes of the study.

4. 8. Procedures of the Study:

To achieve the aims of the study, the researcher used the following procedures:

- 1) Reviewing the relevant literature
- 2) Preparing the questionnaire and testing its validity and reliability
- 3) Collecting data from the teachers using the questionnaires
- 4) Conducting interviews and transcribing them
- 5) Analyzing the data and discussing the results;
- 6) Getting outcomes, giving conclusions and recommendations.

4. 9. Ethical Consideration:

As this study required the participation of human respondents (professional teachers), certain ethical principles were also considered. The fundamental rights of the research participants should be understood and abided by a researcher. Some of the basic rights include the rights of free and informed consent, privacy, protection from misuse, and protection from harm. It is a profound responsibility of a researcher to consider and apply the moral code.

The researcher of this study complied with the University of Hertfordshire's (UH) regulations on the ethical conduct of research. Ethical approval for the research was granted by the Ethical Committee of the UH Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, Protocol Number EDU/PG/UH/01013 issued on August 28, 2015.

As the questionnaire in the Appendix 1 shows, the respondents of the questionnaires were informed about the purpose of this study. A request for the interview volunteers was also added at the end of the questionnaire. It was done by explaining the main purpose of the study, the purpose and the approximate duration of the interview. It was also clarified that the personal information of the interview respondents would strictly remain confidential. Out of 75 respondents of the survey questions, 14 respondents volunteered to be the interview respondents. Out of them, five were contacted and the time and place of their convenience was sought out to conduct the interviews.

Lastly, when interviews were transcribed, the respondents were given the right of reviewing and debriefing which meant that the interview transcripts were sent to the relevant interview respondents. Thus, they were able to make any changes in the interview contents to further clarify their point of views on the topic. By explaining these important details, the respondents were able to understand the importance of their role in the study.

Conclusion:

Both the qualitative and quantitative methods were employed in the study where the beliefs of the teachers about teaching reading in the Saudi higher education context were

brought under investigation. The responses of the teachers were studied and analyzed. The quantitative data analysis was done in the study mainly employing the means, the standard deviations of the responses of the participants to the questionnaires, and sometimes frequencies when needed. The data collected by means of interviews was analyzed by using qualitative method. At the end, triangulation of the data was done and subsequently the findings, conclusions and recommendations were presented.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

5.1 Approaches to Data Analysis:

Four fundamental objectives drove the collection of the data and the subsequent data analysis. They were;

- To explore the teachers' beliefs about teaching reading in the Saudi EFL context.
- To develop an empirical understanding of the processes of the formation of teacher beliefs about teaching reading in an EFL context.
- To identify the ways through which teaching of reading is carried out in a concrete academic context in Saudi Arabia.
- To compare teachers' espoused beliefs with their classroom practices in terms of teaching reading.

In the first part of this chapter, the quantitative data is presented and analyzed while the second part of this chapter will focus on the qualitative data analysis. Finally triangulation of both the types of the data will also be presented.

The data analysis of the questionnaire was done by using SPSS Statistics version 20. The basic descriptive statistics taken in the study were the means, frequencies, standard deviations, and the percentages of each variable. The responses of the participants were correlated with the research questions which aimed at exploring the teachers' beliefs about teaching reading in Saudi higher education.

The researcher employed Likert's five-scale format where the statements used had the following values:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

Table 2: Likert scale values

In this study the researcher assumed that values greater than ($M=3$) can be termed as positive or statistically significant, and those below this value can be termed as negative or statistically insignificant. However, the researcher suggested grading these values as follows:

4 - 5	3 to < 4	1 to < 3
High	Average	Low

Table 3: Gradation criterion used for the mean values

Therefore, means that have values between 4.00 to 5.00, for example, are termed as high, and those that have values between 3.00 to 3.99 can be termed as average and from 1 to 2.99 as low.

The means, its percentage and the standard deviations for the four categories of the questionnaire items are presented in the tables in appendices II through V. For each category, two tables are presented. In the first table, overall mean, mean percentage and standard deviation are presented while in the second table, frequencies and percentages of the responses in 5 scales are presented.

5.2 Quantitative Data Analysis:

Analysis of Responses in Category 1

Initial questions in category 1 are related to the importance of teachers' beliefs in relation to their roles in the decision making about the class size, learner's proficiency level and teaching methodologies. The respondents seem to have a clear consensus about the significance of teachers' beliefs in teaching reading. As the data in Appendix II, Table 5 (A) shows, while making decisions on teaching reading, almost 87% of the questionnaire respondents believe that the authorities should consider teachers' beliefs on the class size, 88% of them believe that the authorities should consider teachers' beliefs on learners' proficiency level and 84% believe that teachers' beliefs should be given weightage while deciding about teaching methodology.

Further questions explore teachers' beliefs about the importance of reading in learning English. Here again, it seems that teachers have no doubt about the significance of reading in the learners' overall English language learning. A little more than 91% of the respondents believe that proficiency in reading helps EFL learners to improve their writing skill, almost 86% of them believe it helps improve speaking skill, 81% think that it helps in learning listening skills while 92% teachers agree that proficiency in reading helps in improving thinking skill.

Question 8 is related to teachers' belief about their pre-service and in-service training and here again approximately 86% of them believe that such training should prepare them for teaching reading.

Questions 9 through 11 directly deal with teachers' views on reading theories. Some 87% of the respondents consider teaching of the word recognition as an important aspect of teaching reading while 81% of them believe that teaching phonics is an important way of helping learners learn to read. On the other hand, however, 91% of the respondents view comprehension as a significant thing in learning to read which indicates that a high number of respondents also favor top down view of reading.

The high responses of next questions (from Q12 through Q16) in category 1 also directly or indirectly support the text-based or bottom-up view of reading. A little more than 81%

of the respondents believe that the EFL learners learn to read English as they acquire other language skills and 85% of them believe that recognizing different parts of speech is among the signs of proficient reading.

On contrary to that, the responses in favour of top down aspect of reading are also significantly prominent. A very high number of respondents (92%) believes that the EFL learners should be taught how to guess the meanings of unknown words, using the contextual clues while some 83% of them agree that root forms and small words should be taught to these learners before introducing long words. As far as the sub-skills of reading like scanning, skimming and summarizing are concerned, 91% of the respondents are in favour of training the Saudi EFL learners in such sub-skills.

These views seem to be aligned with the contemporary research in the EFL context. To quote a few here, Sariçoban (2002) states that reading comprises a range of cognitive procedures such as scanning, skimming and guessing from the texts. Furthermore, Alyousef (2006) expounds that any reading module of an English language course should relate to these objectives: the capability to read a variety of texts in English, developing an understanding of language which will expedite reading ability, constructing systematic knowledge, the aptitude to familiarize the reading style according to reading purpose such as scanning or skimming, developing an consciousness of the organization of written texts in English and taking an acute position to the texts contents.

Analysis of Responses in Category 2

Overall responses in the second category indicate that the teachers teaching in Saudi EFL context give a considerable significance to pre-reading activities. The responses in Appendix III, Table 6 (A) show that as high as 91% of the respondents claim to ask students to preview the reading topic and look at the title to guess the subject of the text, before start reading. Likewise, some 87% of the respondents agree that they ask the students to skim the text quickly before reading. Other pre-reading activities like, pre-teaching some relevant vocabulary and encouraging learners' to guess the meanings of unknown words in the text are also supported by almost 90% of the respondents.

However, one question (Q27) which has got as low as 57% of the response is using a fixed strategy for teaching all kinds of texts. This means that these teachers say they do not use any fixed strategies for their pre-reading activities and are quite flexible in their approach. This is also evident in the responses of another question (Q24) where some 88% of the respondents agree that they adjust their teaching strategies to the purpose of reading.

Analysis of Responses in Category 3

Further responses indicate that most of the respondents ask their students to read the text more than once. This might be because of the low level of proficiency as well as lack of motivation of the Saudi EFL learners as indicated in many studies such as Al-Sulaimani (2007), Elyas and Picard (2010), Javid & Al-Khairi's (2011), Al-Mahrooqi (2012), Liton (2012), Rahman and Alhaisoni (2013), Shah et al. (2013), Al-Seghayer (2014) and Mahboob and Elyas (2014).

Furthermore, the respondents of this study seem to show an unenthusiastic response when it comes to encouraging the students to pay attention to the parts of sentences such as phrases and clauses and to the sentence structure, such as subjects and objects. On the other hand, high responses of Q31 to Q33 show the respondents' overall agreement on encouraging the students to use parts of words (prefixes, suffixes, and stems), to use their background knowledge to work out the meaning of unknown words, and to think critically while reading in the classroom.

Another notable point here is that some 57% of the respondents say that they encourage students to translate the text into their first language L1 (Arabic). Though this figure of 57% is categorized in this research as an insignificant response, the idea of translating the words or the text into learners' first language is interesting as it hints how teaching of reading in general is different from the specific case of teaching reading in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL) which we are dealing with here in this study.

However, other 'while reading activities' get notably high response such as in asking students to distinguish the main idea from minor ones (86%), to deduce meaning from the

context (87%), to take notes, highlight or underline the important points in the reading text (89%), and to give active roles to the students in the reading lessons (84%).

Analysis of Responses in Category 4

In the post reading category too, there seems to be a general consensus by the respondents of this study on different activities done by them in their reading lessons. The highest percentage of responses (94%), however, is seen in Q45 where most of the respondents believe that they ask comprehension questions to the students about the text when they finish the reading text. This is perhaps due to the realization that the Saudi EFL learners struggle with comprehending reading texts as is highlighted in other empirical studies such as Al-Sulaimani (2007) and Raihan (2012).

This strong focus on comprehension also indicates that most of the teachers teaching in Saudi context have their mental bend towards the text-based view which is termed as ‘the traditional view of reading’ by Dole et al. (1991). The researchers claim that the supporters of the text-based view of reading focus on decoding, deciphering, and identifying words in the reading process. These sub-skills thus help develop their comprehension ability. Furthermore, the responses of the survey questionnaire indicate that, at the post-reading stage, the main focus of the respondents remain on comprehension of the text. As high as 94% of the respondents state that they ask comprehension questions about the text at the post-reading stage. In contrast to that, an average number (only 79%) of the respondents claim that they ask the learners to evaluate and criticize the text.

The questions related to supporting bottom-up or top-down views of reading were asked indirectly in the questionnaire. The data seems to suggest that some 81% respondents favour bottom-up view, while 91% of the respondents seem to support top down view of reading. Though, the responses in favour of top down view are 10% higher than the other view, it can be safely concluded that the responses in support of both the views are high enough to point the respondents’ inclination towards the interactive approach.

In a reading comprehension, when learners use their knowledge of the genre to predict what will be in the text, it is top down approach, and their understanding of affixation to

guess meaning is bottom up. Therefore, the above data analysis suggests that there is an overlap in the approaches and it seems that teachers use an appropriate range of approaches and are not fixed on any one particular strategy.

Thus, it suggests that teachers teaching in Saudi higher education take a mixed and flexible approach to reading. This may be due to their experience, the way they have been taught, their experience with these learners or their personal beliefs about the right way of doing things. The reasons, however, will be discussed with the respondents of the qualitative data respondents in their interviews and the finding will be presented in the next section.

5.3 Qualitative Data Analysis:

The qualitative data gathered from the interviews conducted with the five teachers is analyzed in this part of the chapter. The data analysis and the discussions are presented in the following six categories;

5.3. (a) Beliefs about Teaching Reading Strategies:

The overall responses of the interview respondents seem to suggest that teachers are flexible and adjust their teaching of reading strategies based on number of things including learners' proficiency level, course objectives, level of difficulty of the given text, as one of the respondents points out;

“Learners’ background training, lesson design, course objectives and learner’s status as a reader, these are the factors which influence our decisions about our teaching methodology”. (Respondent 2, line 25-28)

Another respondent throws light on the topic under discussion in these words;

“It depends on the level of the class, and the level of difficulty of the reading text. If the text is easy, then may be just a short introduction and an explanation of some of the vocabulary or doing exercises to explain some of the vocabulary as pre-reading exercise. If a text is more difficult, we might use some mind maps or some preparatory exercise before we do the reading so the students are more

familiar with the topic and they are not encountering so much text that they don't know". (Respondent 3, line 15-22)

Further on the topic, another respondent believes that dividing the learners into level groups and starting with basic, simple reading is the best way to do the reading activity with these learners is the best strategy. (Respondent 4, line 17-18)

The same respondent elaborates his point saying;

"I ask my students to work in groups where they help one another. Their previewing, scanning and skimming techniques are poor, so we have to work very hard to help them read". (Respondent 4, line 27-30)

Spending time of making preparations and planning the lesson to suit the students' proficiency level and their needs seem to be right things to do for a successful reading activity. One of the respondents of this study explains his beliefs about an effective strategy to teach reading stating;

"I make decision about the strategy or method to use for my reading class on the basis of my diagnosis about the needs and interests of my students so that I can make connection like that in the schema theory. So, first I diagnose their interests and needs, their reading level, their level of vocabulary, their comprehension level etc and then I think of my strategy and I try to connect the text with their previous knowledge". (Respondent 5, line 13-19)

The strategies stated by the interview respondents seem to be in line with other research studies on the topic as there are various studies which chalk out somehow similar approaches. The studies by Koda (2007) and Trehearne and Doctorow (2005) are two instances of such studies. Koda (2007) highlights the variables which affect the teaching of reading to the EFL learners involve vocabulary knowledge, prior knowledge, metacognitive information, and reading strategies.

Trehearne and Doctorow (2005) pinpoint some other factors such as learners' reading attitudes, useful teaching on comprehension methods, versatility, text form, and being

aware of various reading comprehension strategies. Some other contemporary studies such as Nergis (2013) and Meniado (2016) have also thrown light on such factors.

While the respondents of this present study describe their beliefs and teaching strategies about teaching reading in the Saudi EFL context, one thing that can be noticed quite prominently is the extraordinary focus on pre-reading activities. We have already noticed high responses (all the seven questions related to pre-reading activities got 'High' level of percentages) by the quantitative data respondents in the second category of the survey questionnaire. Talking about his pre-reading strategies of teaching reading, one of the respondents states;

“When I teach reading, I get my students ready for that. I give them some pre-reading activities. I ask them to think about the reading topic”. (Respondent 1, line 22-24)

Further emphasizing the significance of pre-reading activities, another interview respondent says;

“I might use some mind maps or some preparatory exercise before I do the reading so the students are more familiar with the topic and they are not encountering so much text that they don't know”. (Respondent 3, line 19-21)

It seems to be a good idea to get the learners mentally ready and engaged in pre-reading activities so that they don't take reading as something boring and hard for them. Another respondent highlights his emphasis on pre-viewing activities stating;

“I do a lot of pre-viewing and I want to make them comfortable and ready to read. I brainstorm some ideas related to the reading text and then we read and discuss the text in groups”. (Respondent 4, line 63-65)

There are quite a number of studies which support the same idea and emphasize the significance of the pre-reading or pre-viewing activities, especially in the EFL context. For instance, Yeeding (2007) examined the effects of pre-reading activities on learners' motivation and reading comprehension ability. After the experiment, the

researcher concluded that not only the learners were highly motivated and enthusiastic to read but they also scored significantly higher.

In another empirical study, Alemi and Ebadi (2010) investigated the effects of pre-reading activities among 40 undergraduate engineering students' ESP reading comprehension. The students were divided into two groups: experimental and control. Three pre-reading activities (pictorial context, vocabulary pre-teaching, and pre-questioning) were given to the experimental group. The researchers concluded that using the pre-reading activities improves students' reading comprehension abilities. Zhao and Zhu (2012) argued that by asking questions at the pre-reading stage, teachers can create an active classroom atmosphere and arouse students' reading interest.

Furthermore, the researchers like Mihara (2011) and Maghsoudi (2012) also advocate the use of pre-reading activities. In a recent study in the Saudi EFL context, Hana (2014) concludes that if EFL teachers are to facilitate reading comprehension in reading classes, then the employment of pre-reading strategies is highly recommended.

5.3. (b) Teachers' Beliefs about Reading Theories:

When it comes to theories about teaching reading, it seems that the respondents of this study have a very flexible approach. This might be interesting to note that most of the interview respondents' first response to the question of using any specific reading theory was 'No'. To quote a few instances here, when asked if they apply any specific reading theory in their reading class, one of the respondents says;

"No, I go my natural way. I like to use all the theories whatever suits the given circumstances of the class. We know that students have individual differences. So, I go my natural way to suit their needs". (Respondent 1, line 37-40)

It seems that all this study's interview respondents agree unanimously that being flexible and pragmatic to the needs of these learners is the right approach to adopt. Another respondent puts it this way;

"I am not really upon theories to younger students. I am just practical whatever I can use practically in class". (Respondent 3, line 37-38)

Another respondent explains his beliefs in these words;

“I don’t follow any specific strategy but I focus more on vocabulary skills, word building, phonics, pronunciation etc so I guess I am inclined towards bottom-up strategy”. (Respondent 4, line 35-37)

The fifth of the interview respondents seems to be quite definite in his stance about using the top-down theory, and he states;

“I apply the top-down theory wherein I always begin my reading instruction with schema activation. I believe that when readers can connect their previous knowledge with the text, comprehension would be easier for them”. (Respondent 5, line 31-34)

One of the respondents takes more practical approach and claims that it depends on what he is aiming to achieve in a particular lesson. He elaborates his point of view with an example, saying;

“If you are focussing on specific information, then you might go for the bottom-up approach. If you are aiming that your students should be able to answer some open ended questions which involve some critical thinking, then you might go for top-down approach”. (Respondent 2, line 44-48)

He further explains that for the beginner’s level, he mostly applies bottom-up approach where discrete items, multiple choice questions, true/false type of questions are used.

This whole discussion seems to suggest that the teachers in Saudi higher education are not rigid and are quite open in their approach when it comes to following the theories of teaching reading. Thus it can be inferred that they believe in using the interactive view of teaching reading which combines both the top-down and bottom-up techniques. This seems to be in line with other studies such as those by Grabe & Stoller (2002) and Chou Y. (2008). Carrell et al. (1988) suggests that effective reading involves both top-down and bottom-up strategies. Grabe (2009) also declares reading to be an interactive process that implicates both top-down and bottom-up sources of information with resulting emphasis on successful comprehension.

5.3. (c) Beliefs about Challenges in Teaching Reading:

The responses of the interview respondents show that the teachers are well aware of the challenges they face in their reading classes. It also shows that the challenges are too many and the teachers are using their training and experience to cope up with the situations.

(1) The very first challenge seems to be these learners' low level of motivation for reading.

One of the respondents says;

“Reading is not very attractive for Saudi learners. They feel that reading is quite boring, especially when it comes to reading large paragraphs.” (Respondent 1, line 30-32)

Another respondent elaborates the point at length;

“Because they (the Saudi EFL learners) don't have the habit of reading, they have very limited range of assimilation and that's why they feel tired and bored after reading a small passage”. (Respondent 2, line 68-70)

The interview respondent 5 (line 41) also points out the lack of interest in reading on the part of Saudi learners. This seems quite in line with the existing body of research on the topic. Liton (2012, p. 133) notes,

“In the true sense of the term, Saudi EFL classes suffer from the sheer lack of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Surely enough, it is toiling and challenging for the teacher to teach and manage a poorly motivated class, especially in Saudi context”.

In another interesting study, Mourtaga (2012) asked his research participants (EFL teachers) that roughly how many pages of English their students read a week. The average page number given by the teachers was 3.1 pages a week.

In a recent study, Al-Qahtani (2016) in his interviews with eight Saudi EFL teachers found that the Saudi EFL learners possess poor reading abilities. The respondents of the

study described their students as ‘unmotivated’, ‘struggling’ and ‘in constant need of help’ in their reading lessons. Furthermore, the teachers identified that nearly 80% of students were unable to understand English texts.

(2) Another noticeable challenge seems to be these learners’ limited vocabulary of English language. This is pointed out by all the interview respondents. To quote a few examples here, one of the respondents states;

“We have mixed ability classes here. There are students who cannot speak or read. They have very limited vocabulary”. (Respondent 4, line 15-16)

A similar kind of stance is expressed by another respondent, who says;

“They have comprehension problems. They also find the meanings of lots of words. It means their vocabulary is very poor”. (Respondent 1, line 45-47)

Another respondent declares the limited vocabulary of the Saudi EFL learners to be the most pressing of all the challenges;

“I believe the most pressing challenge these Saudi learners face is their limited knowledge of vocabulary”. (Respondent 5, line 37-38)

Another of the respondents throws light on the problems and its effects, saying;

“Because of limited vocabulary, unfamiliarity with the rhetorical structure of the text, they cannot decipher the meaning of the text”. (Respondent 2, line 70-72)

Thus we note that there is unanimity in teachers’ beliefs when it comes to the limited vocabulary of English language on part of the Saudi EFL learners. This concern has been raised in many of the existing research studies. For instance, Block (1992) monitors the comprehension of Saudi students in English. He finds that they are especially weak in vocabulary.

Furthermore, two particular studies have investigated Saudi learners’ vocabulary knowledge: Al-Hazemi (1993) and Al-Bogami (1995). These two studies suggested that Saudi students leave high school with disappointingly low vocabulary knowledge.

To quote another example here, Al-Brashdi (2002) conducted a study at the University of Reading, UK to investigate what type of challenges the Arab EFL learners have in English reading text comprehension and how these learners handle such reading texts. Her study concluded that the greatest difficulty faced by the Arab EFL learners was English vocabulary.

(3) Another challenge seems to be the poor reading background in Saudi culture. One of the interview respondents elaborates this saying;

“The first challenge is the student himself because the learning background he comes from does not support reading. In Saudi culture, they don’t even read in their first language. So, reading is not part of their culture”. (Respondent 2, line 56-60)

Another respondent adds to the same point;

“Another thing is the learners’ poor reading background from the school. It seems they don’t read at all in school”. (Respondent 4, line 45-46)

One of the respondents says;

“We know for a fact that Saudis don’t have this culture of reading. So, aside from their limited knowledge of vocabulary, the lack of reading culture is a big challenge and it hampers their ability to comprehend the text”. (Respondent 5, line 41-44)

Another respondent takes it to further and elaborates it in detail;

“The problem is that, if the text is difficult and is culturally distant from them (the learners); they won’t understand the conventions there have been used. They are doubly difficult because I don’t have to explain the language only; I have to explain the cultural context as well. So, it makes it more difficult”. (Respondent 3, line 56-60)

The absence of reading culture in the Saudi society has been highlighted in a number of studies. One example is of Al-Mahrooqi (2012, p. 155) who says, *“The EFL*

reading difficulties are thought to arise from an absence of a reading culture, word recognition skills, and inadequate reading strategies". Moreover, the studies such as Alsamadani (2009), Al-Mansour (2009), Gawi (2012) and Al Nooh & Mosson-McPherson (2013) describe the same factor.

(4) Some issues related to management and lack of freedom on the part of teachers also seem to impede teaching of reading in this particular context. For instance, a respondent believes that classes are too crowded in Saudi colleges and universities to give proper attention to every individual student. He says;

"The number of students is very high in a class. Big class size is a challenge we have to face". (Respondent 4, line 40-41)

The same respondent further pronounces that the pacing schedule is another burden on the teachers and it is quite demanding for them.

Several other studies such as Al-Jarf (2006), Tanveer (2007), Al-Mohanna (2010) and Bahanshal (2013) have highlighted how Saudi classes are overcrowded and how this factor hampers these learners' language learning.

Another of the respondents points out an important managerial issue related to teaching of reading in the Saudi EFL context;

"We cannot choose the text. It is there in the textbook and the textbooks are selected by the management. The teacher has to teach the text in the textbooks". (Respondent 5, line 24-26)

The point has further been elaborated by another of the interview respondents in detail;

"Mostly we are given pre-set textbooks and we assume that there is some curriculum development committee at a higher level and that committee decides the course design and development issues. Teaching is simply delivering and teacher here in Saudi context has no autonomy to design the course or select the text. A teacher here delivers what he is provided with". (Respondent 2, line 30-36)

This might have something to do with social and cultural set-up of Saudi Arabia. There are some studies which point out the authoritarian style of management prevailing in Saudi Arabia. Parnell and Hatem (1999), for example, state in their study that employees often choose not to disagree with their supervisors and that seeking subordinate participation is regarded as ‘weak management’ in Arab culture.

Hala A. SS. (2012) cites an interesting comparison of some Western and the Middle East countries, in Hofstede scores and this might be helpful to understand the inputs of some management studies on Arab business culture.

DIMENSION	SCORES											
	USA	FRA	DEU	GBR	NLD	AVG	KSA	UAE	LBN	JOR	EGY	AVG
Power Distance	40	68	35	35	38	43	95	90	75	70	70	80
Individualism	91	71	67	89	80	80	25	25	40	30	25	29
Masculinity	62	43	66	66	14	50	60	50	65	45	45	53
Uncertainty Avoidance	46	86	65	35	53	57	80	80	50	65	80	71
Pragmatism	26	63	83	51	67	58	36	NULL	14	16	7	18
Indulgence	68	48	40	69	68	59	52	NULL	25	43	4	31

Table 4: Country Values – Hofstede Centre retrieved from <http://geerthofstede.com/countries.html>

The only point which I want to highlight briefly from the above table is the power distance. In the Western countries the average is 43 while in the Arab countries, the average mounts to 80 and in particular case of Saudi Arabia it is 95. This means that the managers in Saudi Arabia generally tend to hold all powers with them and it hints towards authoritarian way of decision makings.

Hakan Y. & Selcen O. (2014) conducted a study on Saudi management practices and concluded that authoritarian management is predominant in large organizations. The research participants of the study agreed that Saudis have a very centralized management which was stated as ‘one man show’. Moreover, the points such as the rigidity and conservative nature of the managers, less delegation to their subordinates, not sharing know-how to emphasize their personal power, dependency to one man show at the expense of limiting the progress of organization were highlighted.

Connecting the above brief discussion on authoritarian management practices in general in Saudi Arabia, a handful of studies such as those by Al-Harhi (2001), Ovanda & Huckestein (2003) and Jeto (2013) point out in the context of English language teaching in Saudi Arabia that the authoritative practices on the part of the supervisors and managers have caused tension and a lack of trust between authorities and the teachers.



Fig 1.6: Visual Representation of the Challenges Faced by the Saudi EFL Learners in Reading

5.3. (d) Teachers' Beliefs about their Role in Teaching Reading:

The question of teachers' beliefs about their role in a reading class is also very interesting and yields a useful discussion. While almost all the respondents of this study seem to believe theoretically that a teacher's role should be of a facilitator, however, due to the special context of Saudi Arabia and probably because of the challenges faced by the teachers in this context, the practical case seems to be a different one. Responding to this question, a respondent of this study puts it this way;

“Ideally, as the book says, it should be of a mentor or a facilitator. But in reality it is not the case. In reality when a teacher enters a classroom, and situation demands that a teacher needs to use a lot of scaffolding, for example. I believe at various stages of teaching reading, a lot of input from the teacher is needed in order to complete the reading exercises”. (Respondent 2, line 86-91)

As the teachers have to lead and guide in most of the activities, it seems that a learner centered class is far from practical reach in this context. Highlighting the constraints of the special context under study, another respondent puts it this way;

“I like to have a learner centred class where a teacher serves as a facilitator; however, considering the level of students, it is very difficult to do here in Saudi context. We still go back to the teacher centred paradigm wherein a teacher has to do most of the things, like a teacher talks more or teacher’s talk time is more than that of learners because of the learners we have. I have tried the learner centred approach many times in reading, but because of the limited vocabulary and world knowledge, I couldn’t avoid having a teacher centred approach”. (Respondent 5, line 69-77)

It seems that simply ‘setting up the reading activities and letting the learners do on their own’ scenario is quite an ideal one but practically a teacher has to do a lot more than that. As accentuated above, the biggest challenge faced by the teachers seems to be of the low level of motivation for reading among the Saudi EFL learners, a teacher has to perform multiple roles. This is emphasized by another respondent in these words;

“I have quite an active role and I feel we have to motivate and encourage them to read”. (Respondent 4, line 67-68)

It seems that the proper word to describe the role of a teacher in Saudi context is ‘monitor’ instead of a ‘facilitator’ as most of the time, a teacher needs to intervene to handle the practical challenges their students face in their reading classes. A respondent throws light on this subject saying;

“In Saudi Arabia, may be you as a teacher intervene a little bit more sometimes. When you are at monitoring stage, you might often intervene a lot because students are not progressing or there is lack of motivation or the text is too difficult in some way for them”. (Respondent 3, line 165-169)

One can notice that challenges like low level of motivation and difficult text seem to affect and dictate a teacher’s role and require much more than just being a facilitator to ensure the smooth flow and successful completion of reading activities in the class.

While no particular study investigates the teachers’ role in the special context of Saudi EFL learners’ reading lessons, there are studies like those by Bernaus and Gardner (2008), Bernaus, Wilson and Gardner (2009), and Papi and Abdollahzadeh (2011) that have examined the relationship between the use of motivational strategies by teachers and L2 learners’ achievements. Researchers like Assor, Kaplan, & Roth (2002) assert that when teachers do not assure the relevance of text or reading activity, students tend to avoid reading.

5.3. (e) Teachers’ Beliefs about the Context:

Another important discussion and body of knowledge emerged when the interview respondents were asked to compare their experiences of teaching reading in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. By chance, two of the respondents had got experience of teaching in the UK (the native context), one of them had taught previously in Pakistan (the ESL context) and another one had taught in Philippines (the ESL context).

One of the respondents who is teaching in Saudi Arabia and has taught sometimes in the past in the UK differentiates the teaching to Saudi students from their British counterparts saying;

“In our context here, mostly you try to get them (the Saudi learners) to understand the text. If they have understood the text and vocabulary in the class, your job is done. The focus here is mostly on basic comprehension and not on critical thinking. You can try that, but the first hurdle for a teacher is to get them to comprehend the text”. (Respondent 3, line 82-87)

The fourth respondent of this study taught English language in the UK for about 5 years and is now teaching in Saudi Arabia for last 10 years and he suggests that the graded readers used in the UK are very interesting for the learners while the reading texts provided to the learners here in Saudi Arabia are not relevant to their interests. He further elaborates that the course books are void of their culture and they are mismatched culturally with the learners' local culture and that's why; they are least interested in them.

One of the respondents, who is teaching in Saudi Arabia for last 16 years and has previously taught in Pakistan for 14 years, states;

“The basic difference is that English is a second language (ESL) in Pakistan and when we compare Pakistani ESL learners with the Saudi EFL learners, we realize that Pakistani students have a lot of English language background input. This is of course not a case in Saudi Arabia. Saudi learners have very limited exposure to English language. Pakistani ESL learners are pretty much exposed to English and this affects their English reading positively”. (Respondent 2, line 76-83)

Similar is the case of Philippines where English is a second language. So the respondent clarifies the difference of teaching reading to the ESL and the EFL learners stating;

“In the ESL context, we assume that the learners have already got a certain level of vocabulary and comprehension so teaching reading is easier as compared to teaching reading here because we need to unlock a lot of vocabulary here for our learners and this sometimes obstructs the flow of the learners' comprehension”. (Respondent 2, line 57-62)

Many theorists have highlighted the differences in teaching of English in native, ESL and EFL contexts. To quote here one, Ellis (2008, p.243) claims that in an ESL situation, *“the learner is learning English in an environment in which language plays an institutional and social role in the community. While foreign language learning takes place in settings where the language plays no major role in community and is primarily learnt only in the classroom”*. The author further suggests that in a foreign language situation, students

have no or direct contact with the language, the people and the culture and that is why it can be challenging to find real-life communicative contexts in which the target language can be practiced.

5.3. (f) Factors Affecting Teachers' Beliefs:

This topic is directly related to the research question of this study in which the researcher aims to find out how teachers form and develop their beliefs on teaching reading in English as a foreign language. It has already been discussed in detail that teachers' beliefs shape their planning and decisions about teaching, their methodology, their class management and their practices. But what shapes teachers' beliefs the most? Kennedy (1997) states that the sources of teachers' beliefs might not be crystal clear but they could be a product of their upbringing, a reflection of their life experiences, or a result of socialization processes in schools.

Social psychologists believe that the beliefs take root from the teachers' own direct experiences. Each teacher has different processes of self-construction and that is why; social psychologists accentuate the significance of social and cultural impact on a teacher's beliefs. When asked what factors have shaped or influenced your beliefs about reading instruction, one of the respondents of this study states, "*Probably teacher training is the most important thing*". (Respondent 3, line 157)

Another respondent makes the similar point but adds experience with professional training. He claims, "*I believe that for a teacher, the impact or influence comes from professional training and experience*". (Respondent 2, line 152-153)

This looks to be a little inconsistent when we see the findings of the researchers like Verloo et al. (2001), Borg (2003) and Saydee (2016) who contend that teacher training programs have little influence on teachers' pre-established beliefs about teaching and learning.

Another respondent of this study puts it this way;

“I would say that environment played a vital role in developing my ability and passion to read. My personal experience on how I learned to read influenced my view of reading”. (Respondent 5, line 113-115)

Researchers like Peacock (2001) believe that the teachers’ prior foreign language learning experiences influence their pedagogical beliefs and instructional decisions when they become teachers.

Riebe (2010) makes an interesting comment stating that constant implementation of the same strategy, due to the rigid nature of curricula that teachers regularly use in their classrooms, may affect teachers’ beliefs about teaching and learning strategies, as actions become habits, and habits become character.

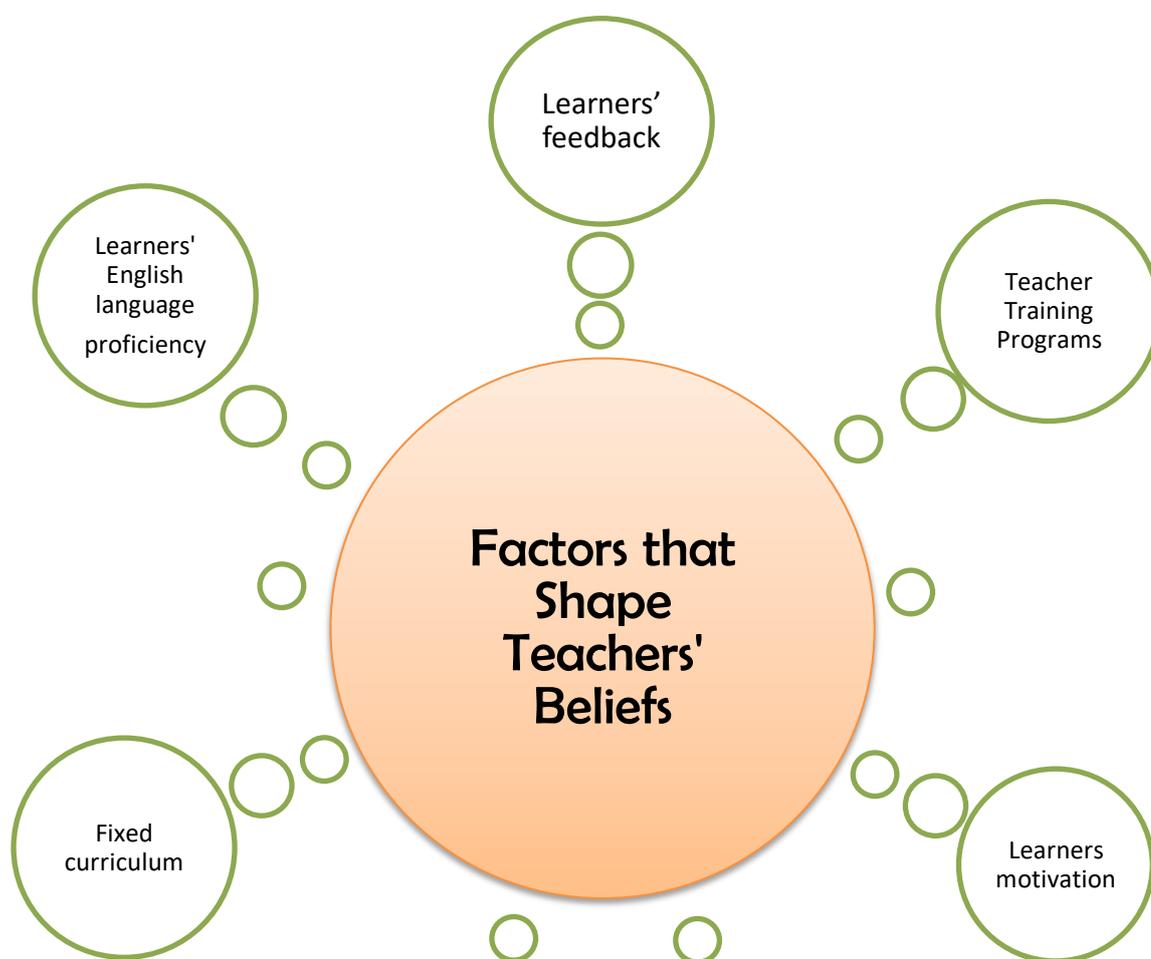


Fig 1.7: Visual Representation of the Factors that Shape Teachers’ Beliefs

Overall, analyzing the responses of the respondents of this study, the researcher can conclude that learners' level of motivation as well as their proficiency level in English language, learners' feedback, fixed curriculum, teachers' own learning experiences, and the teacher training and professional development programs are the main factors that seem to mostly shape up teachers' beliefs about teaching reading in this particular context.

5.4 Triangulation of the Data:

In this part of the data analysis, a comparison is drawn and points of similarity and divergence in qualitative and quantitative data gathered in this study are highlighted. Not only that, as one of the main research questions of this study endeavors to investigate, similarities and differences in teachers' espoused beliefs and their classroom practices related to teaching of reading will also be underlined here.

As far the points of similarity, all the respondents of the qualitative and quantitative data seem to agree on the extraordinary significance of the pre-reading activities. Among the respondents of the quantitative data, some 87% of the respondents agree that they ask the students to skim the text quickly before reading. Other pre-reading activities like, pre-teaching some relevant vocabulary and encouraging learners' to guess the meanings of unknown words in the text are also supported by almost 90% of the respondents. The same has been emphasized by all the interview respondents of this study. This is not only shared unanimously by the respondents of the both types of data of this study but seems to be perfectly in line with the prevailing body of the research on this topic.

Another point of similarity is noticed in the use and application of strategies for teaching reading. When asked about using a fixed strategy for teaching all kinds of texts, in the quantitative research tool, the response was as low as 57%. Likewise, four out of the 5 respondents (80%) of the qualitative data expressed their flexibility and pragmatic approach and clear inclination towards interactive approach when choosing their strategy for teaching reading.

Yet another point of consensus looks to be the emphasis on the comprehension skills. As high as 94% of the quantitative data respondents believe that they ask comprehension

questions to the students when they finish reading the text. This post reading activity seems to be the focal point of all the five qualitative data respondents as well. However, all of these respondents further elaborated that due to limited vocabulary and low level of motivation, Saudi EFL learners face problems in comprehending the texts.

One area where the respondents of both the qualitative as well as quantitative data respondents seem to converge is the importance of teacher training and professional development program for teaching reading. In the quantitative data responses, as high as 86% of the respondents believe that teacher training programs should prepare the teachers for teaching reading. All the five qualitative data respondents of this study unanimously agree to this point. However, as has been noted above, some researchers, such as Verloo et al. (2001), Borg (2003) and Saydee (2016) oppose this belief saying that teacher training programs have little influence on teachers' pre-established beliefs about teaching and learning.

While a very high number of quantitative data respondents (92%) believes that the EFL learners should be taught how to guess the meanings of unknown words, using the contextual clues and some 83% of them agree that root forms and small words should be taught to these learners before introducing long words, one realizes that all the five respondents of qualitative data also emphasize the extraordinary need of building vocabulary strategies for these learners. Moreover, both the questionnaire and interview respondents seem to agree that higher reading skills such as critical thinking and evaluation of the text is not done in this context because most of the time is consumed in word-meaning and comprehension skills.

As high as 87% respondents of the survey questionnaire claimed that they encourage learners to think critically about the reading text. This seems to be a little divergent to the beliefs the interview respondents as none of the five respondents mentioned critical thinking while describing their while-reading and/or post-reading activities. On the other hand, three of the five interview respondents suggested that, due to limited vocabulary level of the Saudi EFL learners, the focus mostly remains on basic comprehension and not on critical thinking.

Generally, similarities are seen in both the types of data respondents in their beliefs such as significance of the pre-reading activities, strategies for teaching reading, emphasis on the comprehension skills, importance of teacher training and professional development program, emphasis on building vocabulary strategies for these learners while dissimilarity is noticed on the classroom practice of doing the critical thinking in a reading lesson. On the basis of the above discussion, it can safely be concluded that most of the beliefs expressed in both the types of the data are matching and have convergence in them. However, only one point of disparity can be observed. Overall, teachers' belief in one type of data seems to support and validate their beliefs and practices described in the other type of the data.

Conclusion:

The data analysis presented above throws light on teachers' espoused beliefs about teaching reading and thus provides answers to the research questions of this study. The respondents of the study seem to be clear, expressive and confident about their beliefs. Their expressed beliefs on teaching reading in Saudi Arabia can be summarized as follow;

1. What do the EFL teachers believe about teaching reading in English to the Saudi EFL learners?

Going through the main findings of the study, it can be concluded that the EFL teachers generally hold the following beliefs about teaching reading to the Saudi EFL learners;

- Reading is one of the most important skills in English language learning, especially in the EFL context.
- Teachers' beliefs possess a vital role and should be considered in making all important decisions related to English language teaching.
- The Saudi EFL learners take reading as one of the difficult or challenging skills.
- The Saudi EFL learners face problems in vocabulary, sentence structure, and comprehension while reading English language.
- There are many factors that cause reading problems for Saudi EFL learners. Lack of motivation, learners' limited vocabulary, absence of reading culture in overall society,

poor reading background, and authoritative issues seem to form some of the main factors.

2. How do teachers develop/form their beliefs on teaching reading in English as a foreign language?

The study shows that the following factors help teachers develop/form their beliefs on teaching reading in English as a foreign language;

- Teachers' own experiences as learners to become readers,
- Their teachers,
- Their teacher training programs,
- Their colleagues,
- Curriculum and
- Their experiences with the learners in a particular context

3. Why do teachers hold particular set of beliefs about teaching reading in English?

The findings of the study show that teachers hold these particular beliefs because of their own learning experiences. At the second stage, their professional training as a teacher and later on continuous professional development programs reinforce, refine, influence and develop these beliefs. However, one thing which really helps shaping teachers' beliefs is their actual teaching practices. When these teachers interact with these students in the given context, their beliefs are reinforced, strengthened, reshaped, influenced and altered. Thus, we can say that these teachers' beliefs are not static, they are very much influenced by what works well and unwell for them and they are practice-oriented in the given context. The beliefs and pedagogical practices of these teachers are inter-related; teachers try out their beliefs in their own pedagogical practices and give shape to other beliefs from those practices. Consequently, beliefs originate from teachers' own learning experiences, their own classroom practices, their fellow colleagues, their school context and most importantly their own learners.

4. What reading instructional practices do teachers of apparently different beliefs use with Saudi EFL learners? To what do teachers attribute their reading instructional practices?
- English language teachers seem to be flexible and practical when it comes to using teaching strategies for teaching reading. They utilize both top-down and bottom-up views of teaching reading as suited to their learners' needs and thus they predominantly seem to favour the interactive approach of teaching reading.
 - Setting up the reading activities and pre-reading or pre-viewing activities take the main focus of reading lessons.
 - Most of the reading class time seems to consume in vocabulary building and comprehending activities.
 - As the learners are not self-motivated and enthusiastic about reading, a teacher's role becomes pro-active and he has to lead most of the reading activities in the class.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Overview:

The findings of the study largely provide answers to the research questions of the study. The beliefs of the teachers related to various aspects of teaching reading in this particular context are studied at length. The ways these teachers form and develop their beliefs about teaching reading are also explored in this study. Furthermore, findings of this study show predominantly that there are similarities in teachers' espoused beliefs and their teaching practices of reading lessons; however, in a few points some divergences were also noticed.

Pondering on the findings of the study, it can also be concluded that these teachers' beliefs are not static, they are very much influenced by what works well and unwell for them and they are practice-oriented in the given context. The beliefs and pedagogical practices of these teachers are inter-related; teachers try out their beliefs in their own pedagogical practices and give shape to other beliefs from those practices. Consequently, beliefs originate from teachers' own learning experiences, their own classroom practices, their fellow colleagues, their school context and most importantly their own learners.

6.2 Reflections and Limitations:

The main limitation of this study centers on the background of the researcher as an expat teacher in the context under study. While it is hoped that the researcher's personal

experience of teaching reading to these learners at various levels enriches the study, his bias may affect his interpretation of the findings. The researcher offer ways to minimize its effect on the study.

Another limitation of the study is the lack of classroom observation as another method of data collection. Findings through teachers' interviews and questionnaires may not necessarily match findings that are collected through classroom observation. In other words, teachers' self-reported beliefs about teaching and learning may be different from their classroom practices.

The limited number of interview participants can also be recognized as a limitation. However, this might be compensated with high number of questionnaire respondents. Finally, the findings may not be generalized and applied to other populations.

6.3 Findings:

Following are the significant findings of this study;

- There seems to be a clear consensus about the significance of teachers' beliefs in teaching reading.
- A clear agreement in the teachers' beliefs is seen that the authorities should consider their beliefs while making decisions on the class size, learners' proficiency level and teaching methodology.
- It seems that teachers have no doubt about the significance of reading in the learners' overall English language learning.
- Another important point is teachers' belief about the significance of teacher training programs. There is an outstanding consensus that teacher training programs are very fruitful and they equip teachers with effective strategies of teaching reading.
- The teachers working in the Saudi EFL context face various challenges with respect to teaching reading, such as learners' limited vocabulary of English language, learners' low level of motivation, learners' poor reading background, absence of reading culture in Saudi society and some authoritative issues.
- When we evaluate the responses of the respondents of the study about reading theories, it is noticed that the respondents believe that they apply both top-down and

bottom-up techniques of teaching reading to suit the needs of their learners. Thus it seems that the interactive view of teaching reading is applied by these teachers and they adjust their teaching strategies to the purpose of reading lesson of the day.

- It can particularly be noticed that the teachers teaching in Saudi EFL context give a considerable significance to pre-reading activities such as discussing the title and topic of the reading lesson, pictures and images on the reading lesson, pre-teaching some relevant vocabulary, scanning and skimming the text, and pre-questioning the learners about the subject of the reading lesson.
- A general consensus is also observed when it comes to the significance of and emphasis on training the learners in the reading sub-skills like scanning, skimming and summarizing for the Saudi EFL learners.
- The respondents of the study seem to have an agreement on the significance of ‘while reading activities’ such as asking the learners to distinguish the main idea from minor ones, to deduce meaning from the context, to take notes, highlight or underline the important points in the reading text, and to give active roles to the students in the reading lessons.
- The main emphasis of the teachers seems to be on comprehension activities in a reading lesson. Because of the low level of learners’ motivation and poor vocabulary, teachers seem to suggest that they have to make some extra effort to make the learners comprehend the reading lessons.
- The respondents of the study seem to suggest that they are quite flexible and adjust their teaching of reading strategies based on factors like learners’ proficiency level, course objectives, level of difficulty of the given text, etc.
- Almost all the respondents of this study seem to believe theoretically that a teacher’s role should be of a facilitator; however, practically a teacher has to perform a very active role and lead the reading activities in a reading class. Thus, reading classes in this particular context seem to be predominantly teacher centered and learners are not as active and independent as teachers appear to want them to be.
- The study respondents seem to have clear understanding about teaching reading in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Reading activities, teaching methodologies, assessment in reading, learners’ level of proficiency as well as

motivation, all these factors vary when the context changes. It looks that the teachers working in Saudi higher education are well aware of different aspects and the needs of teaching in this EFL context and adjust their reading lessons accordingly. A key aspect is that in an EFL context two languages are involved, Arabic and English in this context and a decision has to be made about how to use these in the learning context.

- Learners' level of motivation, their proficiency level in English language, learners' feedback, fixed curriculum, teachers' own learning experiences, and the teacher training as well as professional development programs are the main factors that seem to mostly shape up teachers' beliefs about teaching reading in this particular context.
- With the exception of one point of incongruence in teachers' beliefs and practices, the findings of this study seem to be like the ones in Chou's (2008) studies. Chou (2008) also concluded that there were no significant differences between the participants' beliefs and their use of each reading approach. The results of this study seem quite unlike the finding of Basturkmen, Loewen, & Ellis' (2004) study. They found indications of incompatibilities between teachers' stated beliefs and their classroom practices related to form-focused instruction based on the classroom observations.

6.4 Recommendations:

1) Understanding the Significance of Teachers' Beliefs:

The outcomes of this study seem to suggest that comprehensive and coordinated efforts both inside as well as outside the classroom are needed to encourage enhanced reading skills among the learners. In this scenario, teachers' beliefs assume a crucial role and that is why; they should be considered in all the decision makings related to teaching of reading.

2) *Teacher Training Programs:*

A consensus is seen among the respondents of this study on the significance of teacher training programs. Such programs should focus on effective strategies of teaching reading. Likewise, the worth of in-service training programs and continuous professional development programs cannot be underestimated because they allow teachers to easily identify and address particular needs of the learners. Ongoing professional development keeps teachers up-to-date on new pedagogical research as well as on emerging strategies and latest technology tools for their classrooms.

3) *Teacher Autonomy:*

Given the importance of teachers' beliefs, teachers should have enough freedom to have their say in important decision making related to their reading classes such as class size, learners' proficiency level, teaching methodology, curriculum design or selection, assessment etc. Too much authoritative administration, where teachers act merely as deliverers of certain set curricula, can limit the outcome of the whole learning and teaching system.

4) *Material of Learners' Interests:*

Almost all the research respondents seem to suggest that the learners read well if the reading material matches to the topics of their interest. Even if the reading material is not related to the things of learners' interest, a good teacher can connect it to such things and make the topic interesting and attractive for the learners. Not only the material should be related to the interest of the learners, it should also be lively and life-like. If the things of daily use are incorporated in the reading text, where the learners can apply the newly learnt ideas in their everyday life, the learning can be much effective and life-long. Furthermore, reading material appropriate and suiting to the Saudi culture should be selected so that the learners feel a sense of relevance and interest in it.

5) *Easy Access to Graded Readers:*

Graded readers for various levels of learners can be of fruitful for the learners, especially in motivating them for reading. After all, the short text passages normally covered in class

are not enough to really get these learners reading. Graded readers are an amazing complement as they are short versions of books that have been adapted to different levels of learners. With glossaries and limited vocabulary, graded readers not only keep the anxiety low, they also allow students to understand how language is constructed. The study respondents seem to suggest that appropriate graded readers suitable to the learners' culture and interests should be made available for an easy access to these learners.

6) *Early School Experiences:*

As it was mentioned by more than one respondents of this study in their interviews, reading habit needs to be built at a very early age. It should start with a good reading model at home and school. The study respondents seem to suggest that learners should be taught right from the primary schools how to read. Early age habit formulation can go long way in life and can make good readers out of these learners.

7) *Applying Interactive View of Teaching Reading:*

Interactive view of teaching reading seems to work well with these learners. They need to be engaged in variety of activities like focusing on phonics, vocabulary items, sentence structure, guessing the meaning of unknown words using context clues and above all good comprehension strategies. The teachers should adjust their teaching strategies to suit the learners' needs as well as the requirements of the reading lessons.

8) *Three Stages of Reading:*

The class teachers should set the stage for interactive reading tasks by dividing each task into three stages i.e. pre reading, while reading, and post reading. Also, learners should be given enough time to spend on these three stages. This technique will make them strategic readers. Such strategies make reading more interactive and the learners are able to comprehend the text easily and properly. However, it is noted that emphasizing on the pre-reading tasks is helpful for the Saudi learners. Setting the stage with effective pre-reading activities and letting the learners read in groups and then coming back with comprehension questions and discussion seem to be good strategy of teaching reading, especially in this context.

9) Positive Role of the Class Teachers:

In developing good reading habits, the role of good teachers cannot be under-estimated. Teachers can use a variety of strategies like silent reading, skimming, and scanning followed by group discussions and pair-work to make their class activities interesting for the students. Teaching of the spelling and sound system is also very important but these skills should be taught in a very lively and interesting way. The learners can be taught fluent reading and phonic rules of English language in a dynamic way by making them practice reading and writing.

10) Exposure to Reading:

One of the main challenges faced by the Saudi EFL learners seems to be a little exposure to English language. Extra efforts are therefore needed inside as well as outside the classrooms to fill up the gap. There can be variety of techniques to help solve the issue. For instance, in classrooms, pair and group work can be very effective. Also, learners should be encouraged to visit libraries and read books, magazines and journals of their interests.

11) Building Vocabulary:

It was reiterated by almost every respondent of the study that good vocabulary serves as a good baseline for good reading. That's why; focus should be laid on effective vocabulary building techniques. Using pre-fixes, suffixes, word-roots and contextual clues should be assimilated in reading lessons to improve vocabulary and word-recognition among the Saudi EFL learners.

12) Use of Communication Technologies:

On account of the changing nature of reading due to today's communication technologies, it is also recommended that this aspect should be taken into consideration in initial teacher education. This implies that the teachers should acquire methods for making students proficient in the reading skills required by continually emerging new media.

13) Recommendations for Future Study:

The researcher believes that this study yields important data regarding teachers' beliefs about teaching reading in the Saudi higher education context. However, this area needs more attention and some recommendations for future study should be deliberated. First, as almost all the respondents of this study have pointed out the poor reading background of the Saudi EFL learners, it seems logical to investigate the root causes of the issue at the school level and study why reading culture does not get developed in these learners.

This present study does not take into account a lot of vital elements such as the respondents' age, years of experiences, nationalities, gender etc while collecting and analyzing the data. A case study of a number of teachers representing a range of years of experience might reveal intricacies of beliefs and could explore more fully the relationship revealed in this study between innate ability, quick learning, and teachers' years of experience. Novice and veteran teachers, as well as those in mid-career might comprise the sample. A rich data for recreating the stories of how teachers adopt and examine their beliefs, and how they align their beliefs and practices could be quite interesting as well as informative. Furthermore, a study is recommended to document whether and how teachers' beliefs evolve and change as they think, reason, reflect, and problem solve with regard to implementing reading instruction. Thus, an observational study looking at the teachers' teaching reading practices is recommended.

Conclusion:

To conclude, this study can be taken as an addition to the small number of studies which are conducted to investigate teachers' beliefs in this particular setting. It can be considered as one of the starting points for further investigations on teachers' beliefs on the reading challenges and the strategies to confront them. It is also suggested that further research on the issue should be conducted to expand the horizons and to explore the possibilities of creating better and more useful strategies for teaching reading.

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APPENDIX (I)

QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is designed by the researcher to explore the EFL teachers' beliefs about teaching reading in Saudi EFL context. My research title is "Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching Reading to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Students in Saudi Higher Education". The questionnaire is divided into four categories related to teachers' beliefs and classroom practices of teaching reading.

The purpose of the study is to find out what the EFL teachers believe about teaching reading. The study also aims at exploring the relationship between teachers' beliefs about teaching reading and classroom practices. This questionnaire is designed for the purpose of an academic research only.

Your responses are considered to be highly valuable for the study. Kindly be assured that your chosen responses will be kept confidential.

This questionnaire contains 50 items, subdivided into four categories, on a five-point scale, in the form of agree/disagree statements. After reading each statement, please choose (✓) to indicate whether you reflect

(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) neutral (4) agree (5) strongly agree

Category 1: Beliefs about Teaching Reading:

No	Statements	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	While making decisions on teaching reading, the authorities should consider teachers' beliefs on the class size.					
2	While making decisions on teaching reading, the authorities should consider teachers' beliefs on learners' proficiency level.					
3	While making decisions on teaching reading, the authorities should consider teachers' beliefs on teaching methodology.					
4	Proficiency in reading helps EFL learners to improve their writing skill.					
5	Proficiency in reading helps EFL learners to improve their speaking skill.					
6	Proficiency in reading helps EFL learners to improve their listening skill.					
7	Proficiency in reading helps EFL learners to improve their thinking.					
8	Teachers' pre-service and in-service training should prepare them for teaching reading.					
9	Teaching of the word recognition is an important aspect of teaching reading.					
10	Teaching phonics is an important way of helping learners learn to read.					
11	Teaching of comprehension is an important thing in learning to read.					
12	EFL learners learn to read English as they acquire other language skills.					
13	Recognizing different parts of speech is among the signs of proficient reading.					
14	EFL learners should be taught how to guess the meaning of unknown words, using the contextual clues.					
15	EFL learners should be taught the root forms and small words before they are introduced with longer words.					
16	EFL learners should be trained properly to command various reading sub-skills like scanning, skimming and summarizing.					

Category 2: Classroom Strategies for Teaching Reading (Pre-Reading Stage):

17	I ask students to look at the title and guess the subject of the text.					
18	I ask students to identify the topic (previewing).					
19	I ask students to read the text silently.					
20	I ask students to skim the text quickly before reading.					
21	I ask the students' experiences related to the topic.					

22	I pre-teach some relevant vocabulary before learners start reading the text.					
23	I encourage learners' to guess the meanings of unknown words in the text.					
24	I adjust my teaching strategies to the purpose for reading.					
25	I ask students to establish the purpose in reading text.					
26	I encourage my students to take notes of important points while reading the text.					
27	I use a fixed strategy for teaching all kinds of texts.					

Category 3: Classroom Strategies for Teaching Reading (While-Reading Stage):

28	I ask students to read the text only once.					
29	I encourage the students to pay attention to the parts of sentences such as phrases and clauses.					
30	I encourage students to pay attention to the sentence structure, such as subjects and objects.					
31	I encourage students to use parts of words (prefixes, suffixes, and stems) to work out the meaning of unknown words.					
32	I encourage students to translate the text into their first language L1 (Arabic).					
33	I encourage learners to think critically about the reading text.					
34	I activate learners' background knowledge related to the content of the text.					
35	I ask students to distinguish main idea from minor ideas.					
36	I encourage students disregard insignificant words.					
37	I ask students to deduce meaning from the context.					
38	I encourage students to benefit from relationships of cause and effect in the text.					
39	I ask students to take notes, highlight or underline the important points in the reading text.					
40	I give active roles to the students in my reading lessons.					
41	I ask the learners to use a newly learnt word again and again so that it is learnt well.					
42	I allow learners to use glossary or dictionary for finding the meanings and pronunciation of the new words in reading.					
43	I use word shapes (word configurations) to help learners understand the meaning. For example "ta " or "fa//".					

Category 4: Classroom Strategies for Teaching Reading (After/Post Reading Stage):

44	I ask students to look back over the text and summarize it.					
45	I ask comprehension questions about the text.					
46	I give students a quiz about the text.					
47	I ask students to discuss the text after reading.					
48	I ask students to evaluate and criticize the text.					

APPENDIX (II)

QUANTITATIVE DATA RESPONSES (CATEGORY 1)

N	Domain	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean %	Level
1	While making decisions on teaching reading, the authorities should consider teachers' beliefs on the class size.	4.33	0.81	86.6	High
2	While making decisions on teaching reading, the authorities should consider teachers' beliefs on learners' proficiency level.	4.41	0.59	88.2	High
3	While making decisions on teaching reading, the authorities should consider teachers' beliefs on teaching methodology.	4.2	0.82	84	High
4	Proficiency in reading helps EFL learners to improve their writing skill.	4.56	0.64	91.2	High
5	Proficiency in reading helps EFL learners to improve their speaking skill.	4.28	0.73	85.6	High
6	Proficiency in reading helps EFL learners to improve their listening skill.	4.03	0.99	80.6	High
7	Proficiency in reading helps EFL learners to improve their thinking.	4.59	0.59	91.8	High
8	Teachers' pre-service and in-service training should prepare them for teaching reading.	4.28	0.86	85.6	High
9	Teaching of the word recognition is an important aspect of teaching reading.	4.37	0.61	87.4	High
10	Teaching phonics is an important way of helping learners learn to read.	4.03	0.91	80.6	High
11	Teaching of comprehension is an important thing in learning to read.	4.55	0.55	91	High
12	EFL learners learn to read English as they acquire other language skills.	4.07	0.91	81.4	High
13	Recognizing different parts of speech is among the signs of proficient reading.	4.25	0.77	85	High
14	EFL learners should be taught how to guess the meaning of unknown words, using the contextual clues.	4.6	0.55	92	High
15	EFL learners should be taught the root forms and small words before they are introduced with longer words.	4.16	0.75	83.2	High
16	EFL learners should be trained properly to command various reading sub-skills like scanning, skimming and summarizing.	4.56	0.7	91.2	High

Table 5 (A): Means and standard deviations-overall percentage (category 1)

N	Domains	Frequency & %age	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	While making decisions on teaching reading, the authorities should consider teachers' beliefs on the class size	Frequency	2	0	4	34	35
		Percent	2.67	0.00	5.33	45.33	46.67
2	While making decisions on teaching reading, the authorities should consider teachers' beliefs on learners' proficiency level	Frequency	0	0	4	36	35
		Percent	0	0	5.33	48.00	46.67
3	While making decisions on teaching reading, the authorities should consider teachers' beliefs on teaching methodology	Frequency	0	5	4	37	29
		Percent	0	6.67	5.33	49.33	38.67
4	Proficiency in reading helps EFL learners to improve their writing skill	Frequency	0	1	3	24	47
		Percent	0	1.33	4.00	32.00	62.67
5	Proficiency in reading helps EFL learners to improve their speaking skill	Frequency	0	1	9	33	32
		Percent	0	1.33	12.00	44.00	42.67
6	Proficiency in reading helps EFL learners to improve their listening skill	Frequency	1	7	8	32	27
		Percent	1.33	9.33	10.67	42.67	36.00
7	Proficiency in reading helps EFL learners to improve their thinking	Frequency	0	1	1	26	47
		Percent	0	1.33	1.33	34.67	62.67
8	Teachers' pre-service and in-service training should prepare them for teaching reading	Frequency	1	4	2	34	34
		Percent	1.33	5.33	2.67	45.33	45.33
9	Teaching of the word recognition is an important aspect of teaching reading	Frequency	0	1	2	40	32
		Percent	0	1.33	2.67	53.33	42.67
10	Teaching phonics is an important way of helping learners learn to read	Frequency	1	4	12	33	25
		Percent	1.33	5.33	16.00	44.00	33.33
11	Teaching of comprehension is an important thing in learning to read	Frequency	0	0	2	30	43
		Percent	0	0	2.67	40.00	57.33
12	EFL learners learn to read English as they acquire other language skills	Frequency	2	2	10	36	25
		Percent	2.67	2.67	13.33	48.00	33.33
13	Recognizing different parts of speech is among the signs of proficient reading	Frequency	0	3	6	35	31
		Percent	0	4.00	8.00	46.67	41.33
14	EFL learners should be taught how to guess the meaning of unknown words, using the contextual clues	Frequency	0	0	2	26	47
		Percent	0	0	2.67	34.67	62.67
15	EFL learners should be taught the root forms and small words before they are introduced with longer words	Frequency	0	2	10	37	26
		Percent	0	2.67	13.33	49.33	34.67
16	EFL learners should be trained properly to command various reading sub-skills like scanning, skimming and summarizing	Frequency	0	2	3	21	49
		Percent	0	2.67	4.00	28.00	65.33

Table 5 (B): Means and standard deviations-individual response percentage (category 1)

APPENDIX (III)

QUANTITATIVE DATA RESPONSES (CATEGORY 2)

N	Domain	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean %	Level
17	I ask students to look at the title and guess the subject of the text.	4.55	0.6	91	High
18	I ask students to identify the topic (previewing).	4.51	0.55	90.2	High
19	I ask students to read the text silently.	4.2	0.87	84	High
20	I ask students to skim the text quickly before reading.	4.37	0.71	87.4	High
21	I ask the students' experiences related to the topic.	4.37	0.65	87.4	High
22	I pre-teach some relevant vocabulary before learners start reading the text.	4.36	0.8	87.2	High
23	I encourage learners' to guess the meanings of unknown words in the text.	4.49	0.6	89.8	High
24	I adjust my teaching strategies to the purpose for reading.	4.41	0.66	88.2	High
25	I ask students to establish the purpose in reading text.	4.23	0.78	84.6	High
26	I encourage my students to take notes of important points while reading the text.	4.25	0.84	85	High
27	I use a fixed strategy for teaching all kinds of texts.	2.85	1.22	57	Low

Table 6 (A): Means and standard deviations-overall percentage (category 2)

N	Domains	Frequency & %age	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
17	I ask students to look at the title and guess the subject of the text	Frequency	0	1	1	29	44
		Percent	0	1.33	1.33	38.67	58.67
18	I ask students to identify the topic (previewing)	Frequency	0	0	2	33	40
		Percent	0	0	2.67	44.00	53.33
19	I ask students to read the text silently	Frequency	0	5	7	31	32
		Percent	0	6.67	9.33	41.33	42.67
20	I ask students to skim the text quickly before reading	Frequency	0	1	7	30	37
		Percent	0	1.33	9.33	40.00	49.33
21	I ask the students' experiences related to the topic	Frequency	0	0	7	33	35
		Percent	0	0.00	9.33	44.00	46.67
22	I pre-teach some relevant vocabulary before learners start reading the text.	Frequency	1	1	6	29	38
		Percent	1.33	1.33	8.00	38.67	50.67
23	I encourage learners' to guess the meanings of unknown words in the text	Frequency	0	1	1	33	40
		Percent	0	1.33	1.33	44.00	53.33
24	I adjust my teaching strategies to the purpose for reading	Frequency	0	1	4	33	37
		Percent	0	1.33	5.33	44.00	49.33
25	I ask students to establish the purpose in reading text	Frequency	1	0	10	34	30
		Percent	1.33	0.00	13.33	45.33	40.00
26	I encourage my students to take notes of important points while reading the text	Frequency	1	1	10	29	34
		Percent	1.33	1.33	13.33	38.67	45.33
27	I use a fixed strategy for teaching all kinds of texts	Frequency	10	22	21	13	9
		Percent	13.33	29.33	28.00	17.33	12.00

Table 6 (B): Means and standard deviations-individual response percentage (category 2)

APPENDIX (IV)

QUANTITATIVE DATA RESPONSES (CATEGORY 3)

N	Domain	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean %	Level
28	I ask students to read the text only once.	2.61	1.08	52.2	Low
29	I encourage the students to pay attention to the parts of sentences such as phrases and clauses.	3.77	0.86	75.4	Average
30	I encourage students to pay attention to the sentence structure, such as subjects and objects.	3.68	1.04	73.6	Average
31	I encourage students to use parts of words (prefixes, suffixes, and stems) to work out the meaning of unknown words.	4.17	0.79	83.4	High
32	I encourage learners to think critically about the reading text.	4.37	0.65	87.4	High
33	I activate learners' background knowledge related to the content of the text.	4.49	0.58	89.8	High
34	I encourage students to translate the text into their first language L1 (Arabic).	2.87	1.23	57.4	Low
35	I ask students to distinguish main idea from minor ideas.	4.32	0.62	86.4	High
36	I encourage students disregard insignificant words.	3.67	1	73.4	Average
37	I ask students to deduce meaning from the context.	4.33	0.74	86.6	High
38	I encourage students to benefit from relationships of cause and effect in the text.	4	0.75	80	High
39	I ask students to take notes, highlight or underline the important points in the reading text.	4.47	0.6	89.4	High
40	I give active roles to the students in my reading lessons.	4.2	0.74	84	High
41	I ask the learners to use a newly learnt word again and again so that it is learnt well.	4.03	0.99	80.6	High
42	I allow learners to use glossary or dictionary for finding the meanings and pronunciation of the new words in reading.	4.05	0.98	81	High
43	I use word shapes (word configurations) to help learners understand the meaning. For example "ta " or "fa//".	4.07	1	81.4	High

Table 7 (A): Means and standard deviations-overall percentage (category 3)

N	Domains	Frequency & %age	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
28	I ask students to read the text only once	Frequency	8	34	17	11	5
		Percent	10.67	45.33	22.67	14.67	6.67
29	I encourage the students to pay attention to the parts of sentences such as phrases and clauses	Frequency	1	5	17	39	13
		Percent	1.33	6.67	22.67	52.00	17.33
30	I encourage students to pay attention to the sentence structure, such as subjects and objects	Frequency	3	8	14	35	15
		Percent	4.00	10.67	18.67	46.67	20.00
31	I encourage students to use parts of words (prefixes, suffixes, and stems) to work out the meaning of unknown words	Frequency	1	2	6	40	26
		Percent	1.33	2.67	8.00	53.33	34.67
32	I encourage learners to think critically about the reading text	Frequency	0	0	7	33	35
		Percent	0.00	0.00	9.33	44.00	46.67
33	I activate learners' background knowledge related to the content of the text	Frequency	0	0	3	32	40
		Percent	0.00	0.00	4.00	42.67	53.33
34	I encourage students to translate the text into their first language L1 (Arabic)	Frequency	11	19	24	11	10
		Percent	14.67	25.33	32.00	14.67	13.33
35	I ask students to distinguish main idea from minor ideas	Frequency	0	0	6	39	30
		Percent	0.00	0.00	8	52	40
36	I encourage students disregard insignificant words	Frequency	1	9	21	27	17
		Percent	1.33	12.00	28.00	36.00	22.67
37	I ask students to deduce meaning from the context	Frequency	0	2	6	32	35
		Percent	0	2.67	8.00	42.67	46.67
38	I encourage students to benefit from relationships of cause and effect in the text	Frequency	0	3	12	42	18
		Percent	0	4	16	56	24
39	I ask students to take notes, highlight or underline the important points in the reading text.	Frequency	0	0	4	32	39
		Percent	0.00	0.00	5.33	42.67	52.00
40	I give active roles to the students in my reading lessons	Frequency	0	1	11	35	28
		Percent	0	1.33	14.67	46.67	37.33
41	I ask the learners to use a newly learnt word again and again so that it is learnt well.	Frequency	2	3	14	28	28
		Percent	2.67	4.00	18.67	37.33	37.33
42	I allow learners to use glossary or dictionary for finding the meanings and pronunciation of the new words in reading	Frequency	2	5	7	34	27
		Percent	2.67	6.67	9.33	45.33	36.00
43	I use word shapes (word configurations) to help learners understand the meaning. For example "tall" or "fall"	Frequency	2	5	8	31	29
		Percent	2.67	6.67	10.67	41.33	38.67

Table 7 (B): Means and standard deviations-individual response percentage (category 3)

APPENDIX (V)

QUANTITATIVE DATA RESPONSES (CATEGORY 4)

N	Domain	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean %	Level
44	I ask students to look back over the text and summarize it.	4.08	0.73	81.6	High
45	I ask comprehension questions about the text.	4.69	0.46	93.8	High
46	I give students a quiz about the text.	4.35	0.69	87	High
47	I ask students to discuss the text after reading.	4.32	0.66	86.4	High
48	I ask students to evaluate and criticize the text.	3.97	0.93	79.4	Average

Table 8 (A): Means and standard deviations-overall percentage (category 4)

N	Domains	Frequency & %age	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
44	I ask students to look back over the text and summarize it	Frequency	0	2	11	41	21
		Percent	0	2.67	14.67	54.67	28.00
45	I ask comprehension questions about the text	Frequency	0	0		23	52
		Percent	0	0		30.67	69.33
46	I give students a quiz about the text	Frequency	0	1	6	34	34
		Percent	0	1.33	8.00	45.33	45.33
47	I ask students to discuss the text after reading	Frequency	0	0	8	35	32
		Percent	0	0	10.67	46.67	42.67
48	I ask students to evaluate and criticize the text	Frequency	1	5	12	34	23
		Percent	1.33	6.67	16.00	45.33	30.67

Table 8 (B): Means and standard deviations-individual response percentage (category 4)

APPENDIX (VI)

Interview 1

Interviewer: Thank you for your valuable time and sharing your professional expertise for this study. This interview is intended to explore your beliefs about teaching reading in the Saudi context and to give you an opportunity to elaborate how you carry out teaching of reading, what challenges you face, and how you make decisions about teaching reading in your class. It will be an active interview where you are free to express any ideas and thoughts related to teaching reading. Feel free to talk about ideas and thoughts that come to your mind as we proceed. To begin with, please tell me how do you make decisions about how you teach reading? Give some examples.

Respondent 1: Well, thank you for giving me this opportunity to express my beliefs about how to teach reading. First of all, you know that reading is the most important of all the language skills. It is said that whenever you read something, you sow a seed for future. When you teach students how to read, they learn new things and they not only become good human beings but they also get ready for exams and their practical lives.

For me, when I teach reading, I get my students ready for that. I give them some pre-reading activities. I ask them to think about the reading topic. I ask the learners to make reading circles. One student in each group becomes a speaker and another of them takes the role of time keeper. This way, reading becomes an interactive activity for them. One of them consults dictionary, if needed. The speaker may also contact the members of the other groups to ask any questions about the reading passage, if required. We know that reading is not very attractive for Saudi learners. They feel that

reading is quite boring, especially when it comes to reading large paragraphs. But, when we do it in this interactive way, they usually get involved in the reading process and I always find such method a useful one.

Interviewer: Do you apply any specific reading theory in your reading class? If so, which one?

Respondent 1: Well, I would say 'No'. I go my natural way. I like to use all the theories whatever suits the given circumstances of the class. We know that students have individual differences. So, I go my natural way to suit their needs.

Interviewer: Ok sir, you mentioned a while ago that Saudi EFL learners are not very much interested in reading so do you face any challenges in your reading classes?

Respondent 1: Well, sometimes there are some obvious challenges, like these students feel difficulty in pronouncing words. They have comprehension problems. They also find the meanings of lots of words. It means their vocabulary is very poor. In my view, these are the three main challenges in a typical reading class. But I believe if we co-relate reading with the learners' day to day life experiences, it becomes interesting for them.

Interviewer: Have you taught reading elsewhere as well? If yes, how is teaching reading in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere different?

Respondent 1: No, I started my teaching career in Saudi Arabia. So, I am not in a position to compare reading of Saudi EFL learners with learners of any other country.

Interviewer: That's all right. Please describe how you view your role in your students' reading instruction.

Respondent 1: I view my role, most of time, as a guide. When the students cannot pronounce a word, when they don't know meanings of any words, or when they need my help in finding the answers of any set questions, or to give them the pre-knowledge about the topic, I am always there to help and guide them. Most of the time, I let the students do the activities on their own, in groups or in reading circles. We have the mixed ability students and most of time, they help one another as well.

Interviewer: We are talking about teaching of reading here in Saudi Arabia but I would take you a few years back in time and would request you to think about your own experiences of learning to read when you were in your school or college. How would you describe your experiences? Are your current teaching practices the same as of your experiences or are there any differences? To what extent would you say your own experiences in learning to read influence your reading instruction?

Respondent 1: Actually, I have been and I am an extensive reader. Even in school days, I loved to read and used to read a piece many times. The same I advise to my students to read more than once. I tell them to read a paragraph may be 9 to 10 times to master reading skill. You know practice makes a man perfect so the more you read, the better it is. The same was my practice as a student and I apply the same strategy to teach my students.

Interviewer: Let's talk about your past a little more. Think of the time when you were getting trained to be a teacher, what type of teacher training programs you attended and to what extent would you say those programs influence your reading instruction?

Respondent 1: I believe professional training is the most important part of a teacher's life and every teacher should take part in professional development programs. Styles, methods and strategies keep

changing and we should keep ourselves up-to-date with new teaching methodologies. I took some teacher training programs as well. I believe I became more polished teacher and I believe these programs also affected my skills of teaching reading positively.

Interviewer: OK, Lastly, please describe what factors have most influenced your belief about reading instruction.

Respondent 1: Well, I would like to say that factors such as learners' motivation to read, their prior knowledge about the topic, their level of word recognition and vocabulary knowledge, and various teaching strategies have influenced my beliefs about teaching reading.

Interviewer: That's all. Thank you so much once again for your time and sharing your ideas with us. This is a very useful discussion. I thank you again for your time.

Respondent 1: You are most welcome!

APPENDIX (VII)

Interview 2

Interviewer: Thank you for your valuable time and sharing your professional expertise for this study. This interview is intended to explore your beliefs about teaching reading in the Saudi context and to give you an opportunity to elaborate how you carry out teaching of reading, what challenges you face, and how you make decisions about teaching reading in your class. It will be an active interview where you are free to express any ideas and thoughts related to teaching reading. Feel free to talk about ideas and thoughts that come to your mind as we proceed. To begin with, please tell me how do you make decisions about how you teach reading? Give some examples.

Respondent 2: Thank you for inviting me for this interview. It's pleasure being with you. Being an EFL teacher, our decisions about teaching reading are dictated by several factors. For example, we are bound by the set course objectives. We also have our individual lesson plans and target activities. Such things dictate the method or the way we adopt for teaching reading. For example, we have a reading text and the activities that have been designed for comprehension passage, if the activities are related to finding specific information like finding numbers, names, dates, we go for scanning. If, however, there are activities asking for inference, there would be some sort of critical thinking would be involved. So, learners' background training, lesson design, course objectives and learner's status as a reader, these are the factors which influence our decisions about our teaching methodology.

Also, in Saudi EFL context, we are teachers; we are not course designers or material developers. Mostly we are given pre-set

textbooks and we assume that there is some curriculum development committee at a higher level and that committee decides the course design and development issues. Teaching is simply delivering and teacher here in Saudi context has no autonomy to design the course or select the text. A teacher here delivers what he is provided with. Sometimes, he can adapt or customize some material or may use some supplementary material, using his experience and learner's need, but course outlines and learning objectives are set and a teacher cannot move out of these things.

Interviewer: Do you apply any specific reading theory in your reading class? If so, which one?

Respondent 2: It is quite an applied form of question. It depends on what you are aiming to achieve. For example, if you are focussing on specific information, then you might go for the bottom-up approach. If you are aiming that your students should be able to answer some open ended questions which involve some critical thinking, then you might go for top-down approach. However, for the beginner's level where not much higher-level thinking skills are involved, mostly we apply the bottom-up approach where discrete items multiple choice questions, true/false type of questions are used. But for a higher level, both approaches have to be used keeping in mind the needs of the learners on that specific class.

Interviewer: What challenges do you face in your reading classes in Saudi context?

Respondent 2: English is a foreign language here in Saudi Arabia. The first challenge is the student himself because the learning background he comes from does not support reading. In Saudi culture, they don't even read in their first language. So, reading is not part of their culture. So, my experience with Saudi EFL learners tells me that

some students have issues with reading speed, they have the ability to read but they cannot read fluently. Some of the students, on the other hand, cannot even read. Then, comprehension is impeded because of their limited lexical range. They have a very basic familiarity or lack of familiarity with the discourse features of English language text. That's why they face problem in understanding a text.

Then, because they don't have the habit of reading, they have very limited range of assimilation and that's why they feel tired and bored after reading a small passage. Because of limited vocabulary, unfamiliarity with the rhetorical structure of the text, they cannot decipher the meaning of the text. I believe these challenges we face in teaching reading.

Interviewer: I understand you have taught elsewhere as well. If yes, how would you compare your teaching reading in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere?

Respondent 2: I taught English in Pakistan for more than 14 years. The basic difference is that English is a second language (ESL) in Pakistan and when we compare Pakistani ESL learners with the Saudi EFL learners, we realize that Pakistani students have a lot of English language background input. This is of course not a case in Saudi Arabia. Saudi learners have very limited exposure to English language. Pakistani ESL learners are pretty much exposed to English and this affects their English reading positively.

Interviewer: OK, Please describe how you view your role in your students' reading instruction.

Respondent 2: Well, ideally, I mean as the book says, it should be of a mentor or a facilitator. But in reality it is not the case. In reality when a teacher enters a classroom, and situation demands that a teacher needs to use a lot of scaffolding, for example. I believe at various stages of

teaching reading, a lot of input from the teacher is needed in order to complete the reading exercises. Sometimes students ask the meanings of unfamiliar words or phrases, and they cannot work fully independently. Even when they are working in groups, they need teacher input. They need lot more training in reading to start reading independently.

Interviewer: We are talking about teaching of reading in the current scenario. However, I would like to take you a few years back when you were learning to read in school and college as a student. How would you describe your experiences as a learner when you learnt to read? How would you compare your current teaching practices with those of your school college days? To what extent would you say your own experiences in learning to read influence your reading instruction?

Respondent 2: When I reflect back, I realize that I am a product of traditional Grammar Translation Method (GMT). At that time, there were no such things as communicative or direct approach etc. the simple thing a teacher used to do, was asking a student to read aloud and then there would be someone else's turn. At the end, there used to be questions to answer. Most of the time, it was teacher who used to help find the answers. But, there was something positive about that. The reading tasks we used to do at schools and especially at college level were more focused towards developing critical thinking skills. The questions which were asked to us needed us to infer and answer open-ended questions and then we were asked to summarize the text. There was precise writing skill and there were some items based on objective type questions or MCQs. As compared to that experience, our current teaching practices here only have objective type questions. There is a reading text and when my students work in group and they choose the right answer and have tasks like true/false or gap-fill activities. Though our

teachers were practising traditional approach of teaching reading, I believe, that was more fruitful and productive. Reading also facilitated our writing skill when we were summarizing or precise writing.

Sometimes, I do try to employ some of the traditional methods and I find them quite fruitful rather more effective than the current approaches. Some of the things are universal. For example, elicitation techniques, they are the same. Mostly teachers use realia, visuals and questions. These are the three main sources. They were used 20, 30 years ago and they are being used presently. The main thing is how you design your activities, how you approach a text and what learning outcomes you set for the learners.

Interviewer: All right; and then when you think of your teacher training courses, I know that you are DELTA qualified teacher, how have these teacher training programs influenced your approach to teaching reading?

Respondent 2: First of all, such training programs are sort of awareness raising; such training programs or courses raise your awareness about the effectiveness of anything that you are doing whether it is listening or reading or whatever. Another thing is that such training courses give you a hand-on experience how to actually practice a certain strategy to use in class and what is rationale of using it and how to align your target learning with the assessment system that you have developed for that lesson or activity and how to provide feedback so that an optimum level of learning outcome is achieved. From awareness raising perspective and for equipping the teacher with some practical and practicable set of strategies, these courses are worth doing.

Interviewer: You have shared with us your beliefs about teaching reading. What do you think, which factors have most influenced your belief about reading instruction?

Respondent 2: I believe that for a teacher, the impact or influence comes from professional training and experience. I use my personal experiences as a learner and then I obviously try to take good things from my teachers who taught me at school, college and university. And then it is years' experience I have been through till now and then professional experience, basically all this is your professional training from different sources. There is another factor, which sometimes become a constraint and that is institutional practices. Different institutions have different preferences, for example, for reading courses. For instance, in my precious workplace, the focus was mainly on the writing courses which had very little room for reading and this in result also affected the learners' writing skill too. However, at my current workplace, the focus is predominantly on integrated skills. Here, we have equal opportunity for all four basic skills. So, institutional constraints or preferences influence a lot. Then, I would say learners' background is also a crucial factor. We have pre-set course design, we have prescribed textbooks and if we receive a group of learners below that level, that would be very too challenging for them. Or if the level of the learners is a little higher, that course would be quite boring and thus useless for them. So it is a very delicate and sensitive issue that level of learner or competence of the learner matches with the syllabus or course design that you have planned.

Interviewer: Yes, that is quite understandable. Well, this was a very useful discussion. I thank you again for your time and sharing your ideas and beliefs for this study.

Respondent 2: You are most welcome and I wish you all the best for this study!

APPENDIX (VIII)

Interview 3

Interviewer: Thank you for your valuable time and sharing your professional expertise for this study. This interview is intended to explore your beliefs about teaching reading in the Saudi context and to give you an opportunity to elaborate how you carry out teaching of reading, what challenges you face, and how you make decisions about teaching reading in your class. It will be an active interview where you are free to express any ideas and thoughts related to teaching reading. Feel free to talk about ideas and thoughts that come to your mind as we proceed. To begin with, please tell me how do you make decisions about how you teach reading? Give some examples.

Respondent 3: Ok, It depends on the level of the class, and the level of difficulty of the reading text. If the text is easy, then may be just a short introduction and an explanation of some of the vocabulary or doing exercises to explain some of the vocabulary as pre-reading exercise. If a text is more difficult, I might use some mind maps or some preparatory exercise before I do the reading so the students are more familiar with the topic and they are not encountering so much text that they don't know. They have some idea about the text before they read it. Also, we can do scanning and skimming the text for any specific information. Or using pictures before they read and look at the things as title and look at the first line of each paragraph before they can read and then they get basic idea about each paragraph before they do in-depth reading.

Interviewer: It seems you put a lot of emphasis on pre-reading activities, isn't it?

Respondent 3: Yes, it is. And then once they read the text, it is post reading where they do comprehension questions or sometimes do something extra with the text. I ask them about their ideas so if the text is talking about the sports, I may ask them which sports they like and why they like it? And hopefully they can reproduce some vocabulary from the reading text.

Interviewer: Do you apply any specific reading theory in your reading class? If so, which one?

Respondent 3: Not really, no, I mean I am not really upon theories to younger students. I am just practical whatever I can use practically in class, I suppose the only technique I use is jigsaw technique where something is missing in the text and all they have to do is to re-arrange or they have to fill in blanks or I might get them to predict what might happen in the text before they read it. Other than that, I don't use any particular theory.

Interviewer: Do you face any challenges in your reading classes in Saudi context?

Respondent 3: Yes, the students we have now, where we work right now, they are not particularly high level. They are beginners or may be low intermediate students but often the text that we use with them are difficult language is one thing, it has lots of new words for them, but the other problem is context. They are not culturally appropriate for the students. So, I have to teach them something of the culture, the context of the text. For example, my favourite one to complaint about is Charles Dickens in the current textbook. Because they don't read books anyway in Arabic, they don't read story books. They don't already know what a novel is and they have no idea who Charles Dickens is. The problem is that, if the text is difficult and is culturally distant from them; they won't understand the conventions there have been used. They are doubly difficult

because I don't only have to explain language only; I have to explain the cultural context as well. So, it makes it more difficult. Another problem is that if I ask a student to read, even if they are looking like that they are reading the text, you don't know if they are actually reading. So, I have to think of ways to check and make sure if they have actually read the text and understood the meaning.

Interviewer: We are talking about teaching reading in Saudi context. Have you taught elsewhere as well? If yes, how would you compare your teaching reading in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere?

Respondent 3: I have taught in the UK. But, I don't think it is really like a difference between Saudi Arabia and the UK. It is more difference of the students we have here in college. Some of the Saudi students are interested in reading and most of them are not. If I explain the difference more explicitly, in England, you have got the students who pay the money who come across from the world to learn English so they are very enthusiastic and self-motivated. Even if you tell them to read the text and don't tell anything else, they will read the text and automatically they would start doing things like underlining the words they don't know and start asking questions. Half of my job is done with this kind of students. All I have to do is to give them activities to help them to do and they will do the rest themselves. Mostly the problem with them is that they might ask you difficult questions or the questions that you might not think of before you enter the class. In our context here, mostly you try to get them to understand the text. If they have understood the text and vocabulary in the class, your job is done. The focus here is mostly on basic comprehension and not on critical thinking. You can try that, but the first hurdle for a teacher is to get them to comprehend the text. If you give them reading in the subjects they are interested in, they might engage a bit more.

Interviewer: OK, Please describe how you view your role in your students' reading instruction.

Respondent 3: My role in the reading class is to set up an activity. You make sure everyone understands what they have got to do and then let the students do the activity and your role is just to monitor and make sure that the learners are doing the activity. When they finish the activity, you can then come back and use concept questions, you get feedback from the students, and that's the role of the teacher as a monitor or facilitator.

Interviewer: We are talking about teaching of reading in the current scenario. However, I would like to take you a few years back when you were learning to read in school and college as a student. How would you describe your experiences as a learner when you learnt to read? How would you compare your current teaching practices with those of your school college days? To what extent would you say your own experiences in learning to read influence your reading instruction?

Respondent 3: This is a very difficult question! It is long time ago. I don't remember the first reading. I don't remember learning to read from the scratch. I remember learning very simple books from the age of 6 or 7 and we used to read lady bird books. We just used to read along the teacher. When we were old like 14 or 15, we used to read a whole book or may be 2 books in a whole semester. We literally all have the books in the class and everyone would read silently then teacher would choose one student to read aloud. I have never tried that in my class here. I don't know if it would work here. If you could pick a right book, the same technique might work here as well. I guess a teacher can take out 10 minutes of the class every day and ask students to read the text other than the textbook but that of children's book. But we need time and schedule for that and I am

not sure whether it is practically possible or not. I haven't done that but I guess this can be done because these Saudi students like watching Hollywood films and series. Now, books are not different than films. Actually, a lot of films are from books and novels. So, they can read books as well. But the problem is getting over that hurdle of understanding; being able to read all the time without stumbling over the vocabulary and the words they don't know. So, you have to pick the appropriate level of books for them. I ask students to get simple books but they don't listen.

Interviewer: Coming to the period of a little later than your school college days, when you think of your teacher training period, how have your teacher training programs influenced your approach to teaching reading?

Respondent 3: In terms of teacher training, whatever you do in class, whether it is reading or writing, it has to have some goals and tasks that you give them before starting an activity. There has to be reading for some reason. Whether they are reading to find some information from the text or they are reading to find what happened to a character in the text or they are reading to get an opinion about something; it has to be a task before. There has to be pre-reading exercises, even if it is something like doing a mind map. Say the text is about going to the seaside so you might do a mind map about the seaside. Before they look at the text, they do things like beach basketball etc. My teacher training programs have taught me all that. Without those programs, I wouldn't have known all that. So, we need to do all these things to prepare the students for the reading text. And then once you have pre-taught the vocabulary, you have done the pre-reading tasks, and you have given them a specific task to do in reading, then you leave them and let them read themselves. It is better especially here, but

even in England as well, to put the students in group instead a person reading alone. A single person can get struck with vocabulary but working in a group with his friends, he can progress. When the students are done, then you come back to them and check their answers and comprehension and so on.

Interviewer: You have shared with us your beliefs about teaching reading. Would you enlist the factors that have most influenced your belief about reading instruction?

Respondent 3: Probably teacher training is the most important thing. Other thing is if you try and put yourself in the students' position. For example, I did Arabic in university so I have been given the text in Arabic to translate or to write comprehension questions so my experience of learning Arabic taught me about context and it has taught me that you can't give students a text with too many unknown words or give them a text in the context which they don't know. The text should be similar to something they are learning. If it is not, do a lot of pre-reading exercises so that they understand. In Saudi Arabia, maybe you as a teacher intervene a little bit more sometimes. When you are at monitoring stage, you might often intervene a lot because students are not progressing or there is lack of motivation or the text is too difficult in some way for them.

Interviewer: Well, this was a very good discussion. I thank you again for your time and sharing your ideas and beliefs for this study.

Respondent 3: You are welcome and thank you too!

APPENDIX (IX)

Interview 4

Interviewer: Thank you for your valuable time and sharing your professional expertise for this study. This interview is intended to explore your beliefs about teaching reading in the Saudi context and to give you an opportunity to elaborate how you carry out teaching of reading, what challenges you face, and how you make decisions about teaching reading in your class. It will be an active interview where you are free to express any ideas and thoughts related to teaching reading. Feel free to talk about ideas and thoughts that come to your mind as we proceed. To begin with, please tell me how do you make decisions about how you teach reading? Give some examples.

Respondent 4: First of all, we have mixed ability classes here. There are students who cannot speak or read. They have very limited vocabulary. So, we divide them into level groups and start with basic, simple reading. We give them a short reading passage, not more than 4-5 sentences because normally they cannot read 3 or 4 syllable words. Then we encourage them to pronounce the words. The thing is that we have a pre-set syllabus and curriculum. The textbooks are already selected and we have a strict timetable to follow. Then, another issue is class size. I have a class with 36 students in it and there are 8 to 10 students with beginner level so it seems very difficult to cope up with things. On top of that, we have pacing schedule to follow. Institutions and stakeholders have other expectations and being teachers we have to fight our battle single handed. What we do is we select simple text and supplement it with the given textbook. I ask my students to work in group where they help one another. Their previewing, scanning and skimming

techniques are poor, so we have to work very hard to help them read.

Interviewer: Do you apply any specific reading theory in your reading class? If so, which one?

Respondent 4: I don't follow any specific strategy but I focus more on vocabulary skills, word building, phonics, pronunciation etc so I guess I am inclined towards bottom-up strategy.

Interviewer: Do you face any challenges in your reading classes in Saudi context?

Respondent 4: The number of students is very high in a class. Big class size is a challenge we have to face. The pacing schedule is another burden on a teacher and it is so demanding. For example, here in our university, we have to finish two units in a week. In a 5-day week, one day is for assessment so we have virtually two days to finish one chapter. Another thing is the learners' poor reading background from the school. It seems they don't read at all in school. I also believe that there is a huge gap in teaching and assessment strategies. We teach something else and we assess something else.

Interviewer: We are talking about teaching reading in Saudi context. Have you taught elsewhere as well? If yes, how would you compare your teaching reading in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere?

Respondent 4: I have taught for 4 to 5 years in England. In UK, they had different levels of readers or graded readers and those are very interesting for the learners. The reading texts provided to the learners here in Saudi Arabia are not relevant to their interests. For example, there is a text related to skiing and these learners hardly know what skiing is. Even if they know, they are not interested in it as we don't have snow here. The course books are void of their culture

and they are mismatched culturally with the learners' local culture and that's why; they are least interested in it.

Interviewer: OK, Please describe how you view your role in your students' reading instruction.

Respondent 4: I do a lot of pre-viewing and I want to make them comfortable and ready to read. I brainstorm some ideas related to the reading text and then we read and discuss the text in groups. I discourage grammar translation method and ask them not to worry about the word-meaning that much. I think I have quite an active role and I feel we have to motivate and encourage them to read.

Interviewer: Now, I would ask you to go back in time and think of the time when you were learning to read in school and college as a student. How would you describe your experiences as a learner when you learnt to read? How would you compare your current teaching practices with those of your school college days? To what extent would you say your own experiences in learning to read influence your reading instruction?

Respondent 4: This is very interesting! I remember I teacher in school used to interact with us in a very nice way. So, I believe if a teacher uses 'breaking the ice' technique, motivates the learners, they perform well. I try to do the same! The difference is, however, of technology. Today's classes are much more strongly equipped with technology and we can use it for better teaching to these learners. I feel that most of the Saudi students are visual learners and if we use technology to show them images, this can make reading interesting and effective for them.

Interviewer: Think of your teacher training period, how have your teacher training programs influenced your approach to teaching reading?

Respondent 4: I strongly believe that teacher training programs are very fruitful. Teachers learn from one another a lot in such programs. Also, teacher training programs help you meet the ever increasing demands of teaching pedagogy.

Interviewer: You have shared with us your beliefs about teaching reading. Would you describe the factors that have most influenced your belief about reading instruction?

Respondent 4: The first thing is understanding the needs and levels of the learners. I try to simplify the text for the low level learners in my class. I also believe that, for low ability learners, the use of the L1 can also be permitted. I think the teacher training programs I have attended have shaped such beliefs.

Interviewer: Well, that's all. I thank you once more for your time and sharing your ideas and beliefs for this study.

Respondent 4: You are welcome and thank you too!

APPENDIX (X)

Interview 5

Interviewer: Thank you for your valuable time and sharing your professional expertise for this study. This interview is intended to explore your beliefs about teaching reading in the Saudi context and to give you an opportunity to elaborate how you carry out teaching of reading, what challenges you face, and how you make decisions about teaching reading in your class. It will be an active interview where you are free to express any ideas and thoughts related to teaching reading. Feel free to talk about ideas and thoughts that come to your mind as we proceed. To begin with, please tell me how do you make decisions about how you teach reading? Give some examples.

Respondent 5: For most, I make decision about the strategy or method to use for my reading class on the basis of my diagnosis about the needs and interests of my students so that I can make connection like that in the schema theory. So, first I diagnose their interests and needs, their reading level, their level of vocabulary, their comprehension level etc and then I think of my strategy and I try to connect the text with their previous knowledge. I also consider the level of difficulty of the text and I see if the text is too difficult for them, I could device some strategy to help them comprehend the text. However, we cannot choose the text. It is there in the textbook and the textbooks are selected by the management. The teacher has to teach the text in the textbooks but a teacher has the freedom to supplement some reading text from internet or online resources, which are related to the theme of the particular topic.

Interviewer: Do you apply any specific reading theory in your reading class? If so, which one?

Respondent 5: In our context, I apply the top-down theory wherein I always begin my reading instruction with schema activation. I believe that when readers can connect their previous knowledge with the text, comprehension would be easier for them.

Interviewer: Do you face any challenges in your typical reading classes in Saudi context?

Respondent 5: I believe the most pressing challenge these Saudi learners face is their limited knowledge of vocabulary. We know that vocabulary is the building block of a reading comprehension. If they have a limited vocabulary, they can hardly understand the whole text. Also, their interest in reading is very poor. We know for a fact that Saudis don't have this culture of reading. So, aside from their limited knowledge of vocabulary, the lack of reading culture is a big challenge and it hampers their ability to comprehend the text. Moreover, their limited knowledge of English grammar and structure poses a challenge for them. The knowledge of grammatical structure helps a reader to deduce meaning from a sentence. As they lack culture of reading, their world knowledge is also limited and sometimes it also affects.

Interviewer: We are talking about teaching reading in Saudi context. Have you taught elsewhere as well? If yes, how would you compare your teaching reading in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere?

Respondent 5: Yes, I have taught reading in Philippines for some 8 years. As far the comparison of teaching reading in Philippines and in Saudi Arabia is concerned, the main difference is the difference of ESL and EFL contexts. In Philippines, English is a second language and here in Saudi Arabia is it a foreign language. In the ESL context, we assume that the learners have already got a certain level of vocabulary and comprehension so teaching reading is easier as compared to teaching reading here because we need to unlock a lot

of vocabulary here for our learners and this sometimes obstructs the flow of the learners' comprehension. So the main differences are the level of the learners in terms of the vocabulary they have and of course their interest in or motivation for reading. The Pilipino learners are quite motivated to learn and read while here the learners have lower level of motivation.

Interviewer: OK, Please describe how you view your role in your students' reading instruction.

Respondent 5: I like to have a learner centred class where a teacher serves as a facilitator; however, considering the level of students, it is very difficult to do here in Saudi context. We still go back to the teacher centred paradigm wherein a teacher has to do most of the things, like a teacher talks more or teacher's talk time is more than that of learners because of the learners we have. I have tried the learner centred approach many times in reading, but because of the limited vocabulary and world knowledge, I couldn't avoid having a teacher centred approach.

Interviewer: Now, I would ask you to go back in time and think of the time when you were learning to read in school and college as a student. How would you describe your experiences as a learner when you learnt to read? How would you compare your current teaching practices with those of your school college days? To what extent would you say your own experiences in learning to read influence your reading instruction?

Respondent 5: I have to admit that as an elementary school student, my weakness was reading because I was not exposed to the print rich environment. I belonged to a poor family and they couldn't afford to buy books or magazines for me to read. So, when I went to the high school, I really struggled in reading comprehension. I learnt reading word by word. I had to use dictionary to find out the

meanings of each single word. Though it was a handicap for me at that time, I take it as a blessing in disguise, as I can now connect to the poor reading of my Saudi students. I see myself now with my students. I teach some struggling Saudi learners the way I learnt to read during my early years.

Interviewer: Think of your teacher training period, how have your teacher training programs influenced your approach to teaching reading?

Respondent 5: I did my Masters in English language and literacy particularly on reading education. This was the program where I learnt how to teach reading. This was the program where I learnt different strategies and approaches of teaching reading. Moreover, I attended a lot of conferences related to teaching of reading, particularly on extensive reading. In these professional development programs, I grew as a language teacher and learnt a lot of new things about teaching reading.

Interviewer: You have shared with us your beliefs about teaching reading. Would you describe the factors that have most influenced your belief about reading instruction?

Respondent 5: I am a self-taught reader. I learned how to comprehend texts mostly by myself. I immersed myself in a print-rich environment where I can have ample opportunities to read voraciously. From a struggling reader when I was young to an effective reader when I turned adult, I would say that environment played a vital role in developing my ability to read and my passion to read. My personal experience on how I learned to read influenced my view of reading – that is, to teach a learner how to read, give him ample opportunities to read. Stephen Krashen’s comprehensible input hypothesis plays a major role in this view. Subscribing to Krashen’s theory coupled with my own experience in learning how to read, I believe that a learner can naturally acquire reading skill, as well as

the other linguistic skills when he is exposed to panoply of reading materials. This is why I strongly support such reading approaches as Extensive Reading (ER) Program, Literature-Based Reading Program, Sustained Silent Reading, Holistic Reading Program, Library Hour, and many more. For students to expand their vocabulary and world knowledge and to enhance their speaking, reading, writing, and critical thinking skills, they have to read extensively on their own. This is how I learned to read and I like my students to do the same.

Interviewer: Well, that's all. I thank you once more for your time and sharing your ideas and beliefs for this study.

Respondent 5: You are welcome and thank you too!