

INVESTIGATING READING STRATEGIES IN GOVERNMENT HIGH SCHOOLS
ENGLISH CLASSES IN RAS AL KHAIMAH

A THESIS IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

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ABSTRACT

Reading is a skill that involves more than decoding letters or recognizing words. It, in fact, integrates a variety of strategies, skills, and processes, and thus it is not as simple to describe as one might think. These strategies, skills, and processes operate together in a reading class to achieve the pre-planned objectives. Prior knowledge, for example, contributes a lot to text comprehension, and the application of the appropriate strategy in a reading class makes a difference. Students' attitudes towards L2, in general, and reading, in particular, affect students' reading progression, and so does the transfer of strategies from L1 to L2. It has been my experience that such variables have not been considered by many teachers and students in the government schools in Ras Al Khaimah (RAK) Educational Zone.

This study investigates teachers', supervisors', and students' attitudes toward teaching reading in English classes as it tries to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the challenges associated with teaching reading which teachers in RAK experience?
- 2- What techniques for teaching reading do students identify teachers in RAK using?
- 3- What are the challenges that students face in English reading classes?
- 4- How can teachers address these challenges?

To answer these research questions, I used surveys and interviews to collect data. I interviewed our Common Educational Proficiency Assessment (CEPA) instructor and our five English supervisors in Ras Al Khaimah. They provided me with useful input on how

they believed reading tasks should be approached and how reading challenges can be addressed in our context. The other subjects of my study included 30 male and 30 female English teachers from ten schools in RAK Educational Zone, and 40 high school students from Al Jawdah School for Secondary Education. I conducted structured interviews with 10 male students and administered a survey for the other 30 students to explore their attitudes on this issue. After that, I administered a survey for the teachers on the reading strategies used in reading classes at high schools.

The findings indicate that reading was a challenging task for these high school students. Moreover, the teachers realized the importance of applying various reading strategies in their classes. The study concludes with some implications that would address teachers' and students' concerns over reading challenges.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents, my wife and to my children whose support, love and patience I'd never fail to acknowledge. It is especially dedicated to my youngest son, Mohammed, who first saw the light during the time I was working on my proposal.

CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

I have noticed all through my professional life as a high school teacher of English that both students and teachers express concerns over reading tasks. Students complain that reading comprehension passages contain lots of new vocabulary and the topics are sometimes uninteresting. Some of them show their dissatisfaction with the way reading tasks are approached. Teachers, on their part, express concern over the negative attitudes students hold about reading and over the lack of interest on students' part to develop their reading skills. With the introduction of Common English Proficiency Assessment, better known by the acronym CEPA, the concern over reading has gained momentum.

CEPA was introduced in the UAE government schools in 2006. It aims to assess the English proficiency of students who wish to join the UAE higher educational government institutions like UAE University, Zayed University, and the Higher Colleges of Technology. To be admitted to these institutions, students have to achieve a minimum score of 150 out of 210 on the CEPA. Reading comprehension tasks in the exams constitute 20% of the total CEPA score. High school teachers have been instructed to train all students of grades 10-12 on the CEPA components. For this purpose, they were asked to attend a professional development program which was supervised by CEPA instructors. The program aimed to investigate and share ideas on how to improve various language skills. This program has been carried out on a weekly basis over the past three years.

Moreover, the results of the CEPA Model Exam held on the 24th of April, 2008, were frustrating to many students at our Al Jawdah School for Secondary Education in RAK and to other schools as well. Only 60% of our students got more than 50% of the

reading comprehension score, which was lower than our expectations. My colleagues have expressed their dissatisfaction with students' lack of interest in developing their reading skills. Students are reluctant to do reading tasks in class on the pretext that they are not included in the exam. This issue has led me to think extensively about this topic which concerns both students and teachers.

The research questions which my study aims to answer are the following:

- 1- What are the challenges associated with teaching reading which teachers and supervisors in RAK experience?
- 2- What techniques do students identify teachers in RAK using?
- 3- What are the challenges that students face in English reading classes?
- 4- How can teachers address these challenges?

To triangulate my findings, I used a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. I also conducted an analysis of data gathered from those multiple sources. The participants in my study were the five supervisors of English Language in Ras al Khaimah Educational Zone (RAKEZ) and the CEPA Instructor there. I also included in my study 30 female and 30 male teachers from RAKEZ. The student populations were all male students from Al Jawdah School for Secondary Education. The findings of my study indicate that reading is a challenge for high school students in RAKEZ as seen by teachers and students alike. The findings also indicate that vocabulary and lack of motivation pose the main challenges that hamper text comprehension. I conclude my study with some suggestions for teachers and students on the best ways to approach reading tasks.

Overview of the Chapters and Appendices

Chapter one presents the introduction, the problem statement, the significance of the study, the design of the study, the participants in the study, the organization of the study, and the research questions. Chapter two includes a review of the literature done on this issue. Chapter three discusses the methodology and the procedures used to collect and analyze data. Chapter four presents data analysis and the findings of data analysis. Chapter five contains the findings of the study and their implications, the conclusions and the limitations of this study. There are six Appendices which include suggested questions for interviewing CEPA instructor and English supervisors, teachers' survey, students' survey, questions for students' interview, teachers' survey results, and students' survey results.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Much research has been done on teaching reading, and much literature has been written about it. Though we all might agree with Smith (1997) that learners can “learn to read by reading” (p. 105), we might have different interpretations of what reading means, what it entails, and what makes a good reader. Reading is an important language skill which, though viewed as a distinct skill, forms with the other language skills an indivisible linguistic whole. It simply means learning how to approach textual information. One might argue that understanding the nature of reading comprehension and learning from a text might be the basis for evaluating and improving learning environments in general. Researchers have so far discussed a variety of issues that cover reading strategies and techniques from various perspectives. The issues this review investigates are the product of numerous studies done by researchers with different backgrounds from different countries providing a solid background in the issue of reading strategies.

Definition of reading

There might be no one specific definition for reading. Reading might mean, to some, the ability to pronounce words. It might also mean the ability to identify words and get their meanings. Reading might also mean bringing meaning to the text in order to get meaning from it. The three meanings are possible and applicable though they are not all comprehensive. Ur (2003) simply defines meaning as "reading and understanding" (p. 138). She points out that the learner who can read words but does not understand what they mean is not reading, according to her definition, but is "merely decoding –translating

written symbols into corresponding sounds" (p. 138). Having the above-mentioned definitions in mind, we can say that reading requires a variety of things. It first requires the knowledge of how speech sounds make words. It also requires the ability to decode words and read fluently. The definition of meaning grows wider to include background knowledge which is necessary to enhance comprehension. Motivation has recently become one more component of the reading process and so have the reading strategies that aim at achieving the highest level of comprehension. As we have seen, the definitions of reading are constantly changing to reflect the shifting sands in psychology in general and in language methodology in particular.

Overview of reading strategies

The definition of reading is constantly changing to reflect the learning theories that dominate the age. What was considered by the behaviorist theory might not have been in line with the cognitive theory or the communicative one. But we can say that there are some reading strategies that, as research has shown, have proved to be effective in enhancing reading comprehension and arousing students' interest in reading. Activating schemata is one strategy that, by connecting the text with the learner's past experience, makes the reading process purposeful and meaningful. Adopting the best approach is itself a strategy. Using a top-down or a bottom-up approach is significant and so is using writing to teach reading. As regards vocabulary, guessing meaning from context is one good strategy for permanent and effective vocabulary learning. Overlooking irrelevant words is another vocabulary-related strategy. Skimming and scanning should fit the type of the activity and the type of reading texts. Reading critically is also an important reading strategy which addresses a higher level of thinking than just comprehension. Assigning

extensive readings is a good step towards creating an efficient reader. Another reading strategy is activating prediction which draws the attention of readers and keeps them alert. Focusing on the purpose also makes the reading process purposeful. Reflection is another important strategy which makes the reading process meaningful. Motivating learners might be the most important strategy which affects not only the reading process but the whole learning enterprise. Such strategies and some other related issues are the topic of my thesis review.

Westcott (2006) suggests a tool for interactive reading which consists of “a set of ten questions eliciting pre-reading strategies” (p. 157). She thinks that making students aware of the reading strategies helps them to engage their minds in reading texts, and thus, achieve the desired level whether it is basic information, analysis, synthesis, application, or critical reflection. For example, she thinks that before starting reading, the readers should think of how they feel about themselves as readers, what languages they read, and what strategies they use. While reading, she suggests that the readers think of the title, read the first and last lines, write questions about the article, and finally write down any ideas related to the topic of the article. She thinks these strategies can establish a stronger relationship between the text and its readers without which reading tasks will be tedious and exhausting.

Westcott investigates through these questions a variety of rationales. She thinks that by asking readers how they feel as readers, they can assess their attitudes towards reading and thus put themselves in a strategic position to learn. She also thinks that asking students about the languages they read in may lead them to compare their abilities and pleasure in both their first and second language, and thus improve their performance by

transferring positive attitudes from first to second language. She adds that by asking students about their strategies, they can develop an awareness of those strategies which may lead to successful reading habits. Asking about the title makes students draw on their previous knowledge and makes associations between them. Moreover, reading the introduction and the conclusion shows the purpose, and provides an overview of the text which helps to “contextualize the sub-points” (p. 16). Westcott also believes that skimming and scanning through the article help students to activate their schemata to “integrate the new terms and ideas found in the text” (p. 161). She adds that by noticing the style, the author, and the audience, students can gain good comprehension of the text. Writing down some questions about the articles helps students to make predictions and “deepen their reading comprehension” (p. 162). Westcott also thinks that by drawing a picture of what comes to one’s mind and writing down related words and ideas, students can outline the main ideas and link the text with their prior knowledge. This interactive approach is helpful to students who wish to join a college or a university as it will guide them into the best strategy to read independently. Westcott thinks that it guides students’ reading and search for meaning.

Reasons for reading

Research has identified different reasons for reading. Harmer (2007a) identifies reading for careers, reading for study purposes, and reading for pleasure. Reading, he believes, is important for language acquisition. He adds that it has a positive effect on students' knowledge of vocabulary, spelling, and their writing as well. He also highlights the importance of reading texts as models for writing tasks on the level of making sentences, making paragraphs, and making whole texts. Reading texts, Harmer (2007a)

explains, can "introduce interesting topics, stimulate discussion, excite imaginative responses, and provide the springboard for well-rounded, fascinating lessons" (p. 99). Identifying the reasons for reading may be the first step toward applying the appropriate approach and using the suitable procedures in reading classes.

Extensive and intensive reading

Researchers have so far outlined two types of reading: extensive and intensive. Scrivener (2008) distinguishes between these two basic approaches to a text. By extensive reading, he means the type of reading which aims at "gaining an overall understanding of a longer piece of text.....when we worry less about individual words and sentences and get caught up in the general flow of a piece" (p. 152). By intensive reading, he means the accurate reading which is "used with short sections or sentences when we need to understand or study information or language use in detail" (p. 153). Scrivener thinks, in the context of his discussion of the main problems students face when reading, that it is not necessary for students to understand every single word in the text. This way, he adds, may improve their vocabulary and understanding of grammar, but does not "necessarily make them into better readers" (p. 153).

Extensive reading has been at the core of other researchers' interest. Hinkel (2006) points out that extensive reading is based on the assumption that reading large amounts of material for enjoyment can enrich readers' reservoir of vocabulary and facilitate the development of reading fluency. But, Hinkel is against using readings with huge amounts of new vocabulary. She, instead, suggests using graded readers with controlled vocabulary. This is an important point which the curriculum designers and teachers should take into consideration. Reading does not aim at just memorizing lots of words,

but achieving a high level of text comprehension and developing their communicative abilities.

In the context of having extensive readings or not, one might ask: Are extensive readings motivating enough to drive students to read more and more? To answer this question, Takase (2007) conducted an experiment to investigate the factors that motivate Japanese high school students to read extensively in English. The number of students who participated in the program was 219 female students. Takase found that the most influential factor to read extensively in both L1 and L2 was students' intrinsic motivation. The results also showed no positive relationship between L1 motivation and L2 motivation. The responses of students in the follow-up interviews showed that some students were not motivated to read in English due to the gaps in their abilities between both L1 and L2. The responses also showed that some enthusiastic students were intrinsically motivated to read in L2, but they showed no similar intrinsic motivation toward L1.

In addition to motivation, extensive readings can serve a variety of purposes. They can improve learners' fluency or reading rate. They can, in the long run, create fluent, independent, and confident readers. Iwahori (2008) conducted a study to measure the effectiveness of extensive reading on reading rates of high school students in Japan. Students were given graded readers and comic books, the sorts of things they found enjoyable. Pre-tests and post-tests were administered to measure the reading rate and reading proficiency of those students before and after the study. The results of the study which was conducted over a period of seven week in 2006 showed that extensive readings could effectively improve students' reading rate and proficiency. The students became

faster at decoding words and comprehending sentences than ever. They were also able to increase readers' vocabulary reservoir, improve their syntactic knowledge, and develop their general knowledge. In addition, extensive readings, as the study purported, could be incorporated in the national syllabus and given more weight in the grading system.

Harmer (2007a), on his part, differentiates between extensive and intensive readings from slightly different perspectives. Extensive reading, according to Harmer, is usually done for pleasure and it is initiated by students. Intensive reading is "teacher-chosen and directed" (p. 283). Harmer points out that intensive reading is usually designed to "develop specific receptive skills" (p. 283) while extensive readings are more comprehensive in scope and target.

The distinction between these two types of reading may be necessary in this context in order to identify the role assigned to teachers when they initiate either type. Though teachers are mostly aware of their role when they assign reading tasks for students at school, the same thing cannot be as clear to them when their students do extensive readings by themselves. Harmer (2007b) points out that the teacher's role should be wider enough to include offering suitable material and guiding students throughout the whole process. He highlights the understandability of the extensive materials the teacher recommends. Another important step to consider is that the teachers in cooperation with the administrative staff can set up a library at school. Harmer adds that the ESL teachers should try to persuade students of the benefits of extensive readings and encourage them to read on their own. To keep the reading process going on, teachers should encourage them also to "report back on their reading in a number of ways" (p. 285).

The teacher's role in intensive reading classes is slightly different. Harmer (2007 b) points out that teachers as organizers of intensive readings should tell students of the reading purposes. He thinks that teachers need to observe their students' progress without interrupting their reading process and "organize feedback session" (p. 286) to see if their students have completed tasks successfully. Harmer adds that teachers, as prompters, should get students to notice "language features" (p. 286) within reading texts or, as controllers, clarify ambiguities and direct them to make sense of all language features in the reading comprehension texts. The role of teacher in both cases, intensive or extensive readings, is undeniable. Though in extensive readings, teachers encourage and allow students to choose their own readings, they should stick, to a great extent, to the texts available in their textbooks when they do intensive readings. But in this case, teachers need to engage their students in the texts by letting them bring their own feelings and knowledge to the task. They can do so by asking students if they like the text, thus, "letting them give voice to feelings about what they have read" (p. 288). Provoking the "cuddle factor" (p. 288), Harmer concludes, is better than just going through a series of exercises.

Another way to "let students in" (p. 288) is by getting students to create their own comprehension tasks. This can be done by discussing the topic with students before reading and/or creating a chart about things they know, things they are not sure of, and things they would like to know as follows:

Things I know	Things I do not know	Things I would like to know

Such an activity, as Harmer points out, will activate their schema and make a good reason for them to read the text.

Harmer suggests another activity which is getting students to read different texts or parts of texts and then giving them time to share their findings. Students can make sense of their findings and put them together to make a complete story. Harmer thinks that this way, which is called jigsaw reading, gets students to work together and arouse their interest in their reading tasks.

The discussion of the importance of extensive readings will necessarily lead us to discuss the principles set by some researchers as tips for this approach in teaching reading. extended the principles developed by Ray Williams (cited in Day and Bamford, 2002) for teaching foreign language teaching. They extended the principles, which were put originally for intensive reading, and added some others to apply to extensive reading which, as the researchers pointed out, would be fruitless if students lacked this sort of motivation for reading. The first principle Day and Bamford worked out is the easy material principle. They explain that, for beginners to do better, more than two unknown words in a page would be a big challenge for them, and that five unknown words per page would be suitable for intermediate readers. Day and Bamford do not agree with those who advocate the use of authentic materials to accustom students to everyday language. They think that students need what will help them improve at this stage, and that the easier the material, the better. The second tip the researchers outlined is the varied material principle. They believe that varied materials arouse students' interests and motivate them to read. Varied materials, Day and Bamford add, would get students to read for different purposes and in different ways.

The third tip concerns students' selection of materials. Day and Bamford believe that giving the students the opportunity to select their own materials would be a good step toward personalizing reading, and thus be responsible for their own learning in the long run. The other important principle in this context is getting students to read as much as they can. Students need to read much and long in order to "establish a reading habit" (p. 138). The other principle teachers should have in mind is that extensive reading is "related to pleasure, information and general understanding" (p. 138). The purpose behind extensive reading is different from that of intensive reading. Extensive reading aims at achieving sufficient understanding whereas intensive reading seeks full understanding of a text. The sixth principle is reading as a reward of its own. Day and Bamford believe that reading is "an experience complete in itself" (p. 138). Students need not be asked comprehension questions, though, at times, they might be asked to do follow-up activities to monitor and keep track of the reading process.

The seventh principle is increasing reading speed. Extensive reading, Day and Bamford point out, aims at achieving general understanding of the text and, thus, achieve a higher level of fluency. They distinguish between two types of readers: weak and good. The weak reader, they add, does not read much, does not understand what he reads, does not enjoy reading, and does not read fast. On the other hand, the good reader, in their viewpoint, is the one who reads more, understands better, reads faster, and enjoys reading. Extensive reading, the two researchers think, can be an opportunity for readers to practice some reading strategies like predicting events, guessing meanings of words, highlighting content words, ignoring unknown words, and seeking general meaning. The eighth principle that Day and Bamford formulated is that reading should be "silent and

individual" (p. 139). While reading extensively, students select materials, work at their own pace, and interact with the text. The ninth principle worked out by Day and Bamford is that teachers orient and guide their students. Teachers need to explain to their students the benefits of extensive readings and keep track of what and how students work. They need to orient and guide them throughout the whole reading process and share their reading experience with them. The final principle to consider here is that the teacher should be a role model of a reader. Teachers should set a good example to their students by being good readers. They need to behave as good readers and be a part of their readers' community.

Two views: Top-down and bottom-up

In dealing with reading tasks, linguists point out that there are two ways of approaching them: top-down and bottom-up. For example, Hedge (2000) points out, in the context of her discussion of the interplay between the reader and the text, that the readers employ two types of knowledge when dealing with these texts: systematic, or linguistic, and schematic, or general knowledge about the world. She distinguishes between two reading strategies: top-down and bottom-up. She explains that the former refers to the application of prior knowledge on the text, and the latter refers to the process of decoding letters and words in the text.

Hinkel (2006) discusses the topic in terms of bottom-up and top-down skills and the relationship between reading and vocabulary. She thinks that bottom-up processing involves a variety of cognitive sub-skills like word recognition, spelling, phonological processing, lexical recognition, and access. She points out L2 readers with different L1 orthographies may be slower in attaining fluency in L2 reading due to the difficulty in

recognizing L2 words. Moreover, she extends her discussion to the relationship between L1 and L2. She points out that when the writing systems of the two languages are different, "positive L1-to-L2 transfer of reading skills does not occur" (p. 120). She also believes that similarity between L1 and L2 orthographies may hasten L2 readers' word-processing skills development. Such findings led many researchers to think of bottom-up processing without neglecting the top-down process at later stages. Hinkel (2006) thinks that before delving into top-down skills, teachers should work on the visual appearance of words, sound-letter relationships, and word-recognition development. Reviewing other researchers like Wallace (2001) and Birch (2002), Hinkel comes to the conclusion that decoding words is a prerequisite to reading and that reading achievement is associated with phonemic awareness as well as processing words rapidly and automatically. She concludes that although both bottom-up and top-down processing skills are very important, bottom-up skills should have priority in the first stages of teaching reading.

The dichotomy of bottom-up and top-down processes has been the focus of many other studies by cognitive and behaviorist scientists. Debat (2006) points out that the traditional bottom-up approach to reading has been historically related to behaviorism in which some language patterns are reinforced and others are not. Nowadays, phonics, which connects letters with sounds, is becoming the method which is associated with the bottom-up approach. Debat explains that language reading is viewed as a linear process in which readers decode words, link them together to form sentences, and join sentences to make sense of the text. This method views reading as a word recognition response to a stimulus which will be, in this case, the printed letters and words. Comprehension is constructed by adding the meanings of words to get the meanings of clauses and finally

the whole text. The skills involved in this process are recognition and recalling. There is nothing to explain what goes on within the mind. According to this model, strong emphasis is given to repetition and drilling, thus beginning with the sounds and words that make the text. Information is given and acquired in a way that allows no feedback and recast. Debat points out that the skills associated with this model include word recognition, recall of lexical and grammatical forms, and word decoding.

In the 1960s, a shift occurred from the behaviorist paradigm to the cognitive one, thus giving explanations as to how languages are acquired and how their representations develop in learners' minds. Debat refers to the distinction made between rote learning which is based on memorizing words and rules, and meaningful learning which highlights relevant context and prior knowledge. The information in the first type of learning is temporary, but it is permanent in the second one. Reading in the second model is an interactive process that involves both the text and the reader. Reading here is not only a matter of decoding words or extracting information from the text, but it is a process of connecting information in the text with that the readers bring with them. The purpose of reading is to make sense of the text rather than to just decode letters and sounds.

Amid all these debates, one might argue that both approaches have their own advantages. While bottom-up is more relevant for primary school students who will have first to recognize letters and sounds, top-down is appropriate for high school students who have wider knowledge of the world around them and who are able to recognize the structure of the sentence and the meanings of the words comprising it.

Background knowledge

The debate on top-down and bottom-up views leads to the discussion on the role of background knowledge, or schema as it is known among researchers. While the majority of researchers highlight the role of background knowledge in enhancing reading comprehension, some others do not give it much weight. In two separate studies done by Anderson (1999) and Stutt (2004), the role of background knowledge in familiarizing students with reading texts and facilitating reading tasks was examined. It was hypothesized that gaining prior knowledge about context would activate schemata and thus increase learners' motivation in reading comprehension passages. Anderson (1999) points out that reading is not a matter of recognizing letters or words as most people traditionally used to think, but it involves many factors like “activating prior knowledge” (p. 11) and formulating their assumptions about reading texts. He emphasizes the role of background knowledge, or schema, in comprehending reading texts and discusses how teaching reading should build on prior knowledge, and focus on reading strategies, reading rate, and motivation. He also supposes that learners can easily comprehend a text when they bring their own schema and that the recall of information in the text is highly affected by this prior knowledge. He concludes that teachers should teach for comprehension and not for letters and words. He also thinks that teachers should use a reading strategy that gets students involved in the reading process, and helps them to connect prior knowledge with the reading text at hand. This connection, he concludes, makes reading tasks easier, livelier, and, to a great extent, more comprehensible.

Some theorists make a distinction between formal schemata, which refers to the structure of the text, and content schemata, which refers to the knowledge of the subject

matter. Debat (2006) points out that these types of knowledge enable the readers to predict events and meanings from contexts, and even infer knowledge from wider contexts. Debat explains that since the reader plays a key role in the comprehension of the text, his/her age, experience, and culture are to be considered when textbooks are designed. He concludes that readers might find the text incomprehensible if they do not locate a schema that fits a text. Some researchers extend the discussion into identifying reading challenges and holding teachers responsible for activating students' preexisting schema or even building a new one.

In the context of this debate about the role of prior knowledge in teaching reading, Debat (2006) assigns a new role for ESL teachers. This role is providing meaningful text for students to understand the message by activating their prior knowledge or helping students to build a new schema. He points out that after the selection of new texts, a variety of activities can be used to activate or build a schema. He thinks that a teacher during the pre-reading stage should make sure that students have the relevant schema by engaging them in discussions about the topic. A variety of techniques like prediction, previewing, semantic mapping, in which information is elicited from students and displayed in a graphic map, and reconciled reading, in which pre-reading questions are offered first, can be used to achieve that goal. In the during-reading stage, the teacher can guide the interaction process between students and texts by asking them to take notes, summarize information, and record their reactions. In the post-reading stage, the teacher can evaluate students' adequacy of interpretation by asking a variety of questions that measure it.

Other researchers have argued that schemata might have a reverse effect on the reading process. Stutt (2004), for example, conducted a quantitative study which yielded completely different results. The study was conducted in an English class in a Japanese university. The number of participants was 20. They were divided equally into two groups. Both groups were asked to read an extract from a very famous novel and give a summary of it. They only had to recall information from the extract. The first group was given information about the author and the title, but the second group was given nothing. The study aimed at investigating the effect the context and prior knowledge had on gaining a better understanding of the passage. Strangely enough, the students who were not given clues about the extract scored higher than those who were given information about the text. Stutt (2004) attributed the result to the fact that "their familiarity with the topic may have interfered" (p. 349) or to their extensive "reliance on top-down processing" (p. 349) which makes them pay little attention to the form of the input and therefore not acquire anything new. The researcher added that "negative affective factors could have impinged on their motivation to read the passage (p. 349)." The arguments of Anderson and Stutt collide, and more empirical studies may be needed to support either argument.

Reading route map

The discussion of the theoretical approaches in reading leads us to talk about the practical steps that make a typical reading lesson plan. The general movement in a reading class is, as Scrivener (2008) points out, to begin with a global understanding and end with an understanding of specific details. He suggests a map which is made up of eight stages or techniques. The map begins with the introduction or the lead-in stage in which the

teacher discusses with students the key themes and links the topic with students' lives and experiences. Then the map moves to the first task or the pre-reading activity in which some sort of prediction is made from illustrations, headlines, or key words. After that, the map moves on to tasks that focus on the gist. This step can be achieved by asking students to guess the title, put events in the correct order and check predictions. The map then moves to focus on specific details by asking and answering questions about specific items of information, filling out a form, or finding out about the pictures described. The next step includes tasks that focus on individual language items like vocabulary, grammar exercises, using a dictionary or working out meanings of words from context. The seventh step includes follow-on tasks like role plays, debates, and writing tasks. The map ends with closing which can be a conclusion or a review. This logical sequence of activities can be applied to all reading activities with some alterations. The success of the reading class may be partly judged by following the stages already prescribed.

Critical reading

The aforementioned discussion leads us to the type of reading which we should seek in our classes: critical reading. Some researchers argue that the types of readings and the kinds of questions also count in the process of making critical readers. Correia (2006) points out that the most common types of questions in EFL classes are those that include multiple choice items, true/false statements, and vocabulary work. She thinks that these questions should not be the only type to be used because they encourage passive reading and do not encourage students to read between the lines. In addition, these questions, she believes, refer to parts of the texts and not to the whole text, and they lack challenge and fun. She distinguishes between two types of readings. Passive reading, she explains,

offers a limited potential for learning as it does not require students to read deeply, but just to locate answers to questions which might be multiple choice questions, true/false statements, and gap filling exercises. Active reading, Correia explains, involves more than superficial reading and it goes farther into the meanings between the lines. Students in this second type work together to negotiate answers to a variety of questions which might include diagrams and filling in tables. Such types of tasks help students to think logically, and thus enable them to distinguish important ideas from less important ones and be, in the long run, proficient readers. Correia advocates active reading tasks in the sense that they enable students to interact with each other and with the text as well. As a result, each student brings his/her own interpretation of the text at hand, thus making the discussion more interesting and fruitful. She adds that active reading tasks help students voice their opinions and contextualize reading which is seen in this case within a broader context that includes more than one variable but extends to include the writer, the reader, and the text.

Correia (2006) describes how she conducted a case study with eight advanced university students in Brazil. The aim of the study was to describe some critical reading activities. She chose materials that were familiar to students and suitable for their age. So, she provided them with a newspaper article. She started by asking her students to put themselves in the reader's position. To activate their prior knowledge, she asked students to read the headline and voice their opinion on the issue discussed. In the pre-reading activity, she asked students to prepare two questions they expected to be answered in the passage. This technique, which is known as reciprocal questioning, serves as a motivating tool and sets the purpose for their reading. In the while-reading activity, students read the article to answer the questions they had raised. Failing to answer the questions would lead

them to guess the answer from their previous knowledge. During this activity, the teacher might draw students' attention to any bias on part of the writer if he/she omitted information from the text. In the post-reading activity, Correia wrote a few questions on the board. The aim in this case was to help students read critically and to decide on the writing genre and purpose. The questions were mainly about the choice of words and verb tenses used in the text. Students were asked to discuss the implications of using such words and verbs. After that, students were asked to write a summary of the article. They, then, exchanged their summaries with each other. This further step generated more discussion, and, as a result, students developed their critical reading skills. Correia thinks that the novelty of the task was beyond the enthusiastic participation. Students became interested in what was beyond the lines and only the face value of what they read. She adds that critical reading skills were as time-consuming and difficult as they were beneficial.

Reading and writing

The literature on this issue will focus on the relationship between readers and writers on one hand, and on the types of writing activities that can be utilized in a reading class on the other. Some linguists think that reading can best be taught through writing. One might ask if there is a relationship between teaching reading and teaching writing. Leki (1993) thinks that skilled readers and writers have many things in common, and so do unskilled readers and writers. She points out that less skilled readers and writers focus on the text rather than on the meaning it conveys, and that they attend to words and letters rather than to the connections between them. Inefficient readers concentrate only on the text at hand and they fail to connect it with previous ones. Furthermore, they depend

heavily on the bottom-up strategies to decode the message embedded in the text. Less skilled writers, on their part, focus on word and sentence level at the expense of meaning. On the other hand, proficient readers and writers use strategies “interactively in reading and recursively in writing” (p. 10). In fact, they try to make connections between the various texts they read and between the texts they read and those they produce in writing. They are characterized by being flexible and able to use various strategies as they are called for.

In addition to Leki (1993), Reid (1993) argues that reading and writing are social activities in that there is an implicit sense of social interaction between the reader and writer, and both with the text. The social dimension cannot be overlooked. She thinks that there are communicative threads that establish a relationship between the reader and the writer in that the writer anticipates the needs of the reader and the reader anticipates the ideas of the writer. These threads overcome the imbalance of knowledge between both of them. She also points out that the communication between the writer and the reader can be stronger when they share the same schemata, experiences, and cuing systems. She adds that the writer should have in mind not only the linguistic conventions but also the rhetorical ones. Reid believes it is important to be aware of the constraints of how much writers know about readers as well as how much their readers know about them. This interplay between reading and writing, as Leki implies, highlights the social nature of literacy and provides the opportunity for readers to communicate with the writer through the text.

Leki (1993) indicates that teaching writing should not be reduced to writing topic sentences, examples, or conclusions. Likewise, reading a passage should not aim at

finding new vocabulary, finding synonyms or antonyms, or even identifying main ideas, but it should aim at discovering the combination of skills that works best in languages. She also points out that reading as well as writing should focus on the meaning or the message implied in the text, and not only on the form. It should be concerned with content over skills. Skills can facilitate the task, but they should not be the final goal in any reading or writing task. In addition, Leki stresses the importance of integrating reading and writing in the same classroom. They both facilitate each other. Reading can facilitate writing when we reconstruct or regenerate the ideas already expressed in the passage as we are trying to write. Similarly, writing can facilitate reading a text through interacting with the content when we, for example, introduce ideas or make dialogues.

Such a relationship between the reader and the text should not be overlooked. On the contrary, it should be enhanced through stressing reading as a recursive process in which, as Kern (2000) believes, one can “rethink one’s interpretation in the light of the new knowledge and experience” (p. 126). Kern believes that “reading is not simply an act of absorbing information, but a communicative act that involves creating discourse from text” (p. 107). He also thinks that there is a sort of tacit agreement of shared conventions between readers and writers. He explains that text comprehension can suffer a lot if this relationship between the writer and the reader breaks down. Kern also argues that teachers should take into account the linguistic, cognitive, and socio-cultural domains when they approach a reading task. He points out that reading texts are embedded in the cultural and social contexts. He thinks, therefore, that teachers should be concerned not only with teaching reading practices but with selecting and teaching texts as well. Reflecting on this, teachers should highlight this relationship between the writer on one hand and the

students on the other by getting their students to recall their prior knowledge about the topic at hand. They should also help their students to formulate their predictions about reading texts.

Given the above connection between reading and writing, some researchers have made suggestions about what techniques and writings can be employed in teaching reading. Al-Issa (1998), for example, suggests training students to summarize what they read in order to improve not only their writing, but also their reading proficiency. This proposition is consistent with Leki's (1993) article, but Al-Issa provides examples of activities teachers can do in class. He suggests that a teacher prepare and photocopy reading texts. The teacher can, then, ask students to read texts silently, underline key words, and justify their choices. He suggests another activity in which the teacher prepares questions on texts which students read silently and answer the questions on the text in full. The answers of the questions make a summary of the text. Another activity includes silent reading after which the teacher and students hold an open discussion about the main points or events found.

Khan (1999) has proposed another important aid for teaching reading. Note-taking, as he points out, enables learners to preserve information they learn from the text for future use. He states that good notes should have some qualities like brevity, relevance, and clarity. He also adds that they may take a variety of forms like note forms, abbreviations, and symbols. He advocates the use of note forms because they not only preserve relevant information, but they enable students to reach a high level of text comprehension.

The issue of teaching reading through writing has dominated TESOL literature in the past few years. Day (2004), for example, thinks that writing activities can help learners improve their writing skill and their reading proficiency. He suggests, therefore, two activities to achieve those purposes. The first activity is timed repeated thinking and writing in which students are asked to write about a topic they like or a predetermined one without attending to grammar, spelling, and punctuation within a time limit. This type of focused free-writing, as it is called, helps students to improve their reading and writing proficiency, measure their reading comprehension and, more importantly, give them the opportunity to get started in writing. The other activity suggested by Day is timed repeated skimming and writing which aims at improving learners' reading fluency. Students are asked to read a text more than once, marking the last word each time they read. This method can be extended to include a book instead of a short text. Students in this last case skim a book for a limited period of time, summarize it, and finally read what they have written. This activity, Day thinks, improves both students' reading and writing skills.

Related to the domain of teaching reading through writing is using task journals with independent readers as suggested by Bray (2002). Independent reading, as seen by Bray, not only improves students' reading skills but also serves as a predictor of their achievement in future tests. Bray thinks that independent reading should be associated with some sort of record keeping and comprehension-based tasks, though some argue that such things are counterproductive. Bray suggests a journal be integrated into the reading class. This journal aims at stimulating students' thinking about the text, promoting reflection, helping in vocabulary building, and serving as a basis for assessment. Bray

indicates that the task journal he uses includes record keeping that takes the forms of summary, prediction, opinion, reflection, and vocabulary work. He explains that students should not only be content with summarizing what they have read, but also explore the ideas provided in the text. In prediction, Bray points out that students can use their background knowledge in the sense that they relate their content schemata (what they know about life) to formal schemata (what they know about writing genres).

Background knowledge plays a vital role in constructing meaning through interaction with the text. Bray concludes that prediction activates schemata which make reading easier and, hence, enhance reading comprehension. The other component of task journals is opinion which requires students to think of what happened and react to the text. Bray thinks that students show sympathy with story characters, react to their actions, consider new viewpoints, and see connections between the story and the real world. Such things might also shed light on the students' beliefs and attitudes. The fourth task in the journal is reflection which requires students to report on their experience with the text including such things as the level of difficulty, students' relation to the story, familiarity of content, and the types of problems they face. This task is more related to the reading process than any other task. The fifth task in the proposed task journal is about new words. Bray thinks that there are two ways to learn new vocabulary. They include incidental vocabulary learning, where students guess meaning from context, and direct vocabulary study. In either case, students keep notes of the words they want to learn or remember. They, then, write them down in their journal combined with dictionary definitions or in phrases with new words underlined or highlighted. Bray concludes that the success of any task journal depends on how well it is integrated in reading classes. He

adds that in order for the task journal to be successful, students should be informed of the way it is used, the reason for its use, and the purpose for each task. Task journals should be collected from time to time to be observed and evaluated by teachers.

Integrating reading and writing has been the focus of many other studies in TESOL. In her study about this issue, Abu Rass (2001) points out that including some writing tasks like reading logs and worksheets was a great success for her students in her teacher training college. She indicates that previous research studies demonstrated better performance by participants of book-based programs in New Zealand than those in traditional classrooms. She also points out that other research studies showed significant gains in language proficiency in classes where students were exposed to a massive amount of reading and where language was integrated with content. Abu Rass designed a program in which her students had to read lots of literature and, after that, write essays about their readings. She explained that including literature not only improved their proficiency but developed cultural awareness of their second language. She prepared reading logs and worksheets to be completed by students about assigned readings. She also prepared monthly journals for her students to write about their personal reading experiences. This program was successful in both encouraging students to read and improving their writing skill.

Reading attitudes between L1 and L2

There are some studies that have examined the relationship between L1 and L2 due to the fact that such topics deeply affect reading comprehension and influence readers' attention. Cross-lingual use of reading strategies, as it is described in Kamhi-Stein (2003), was at the centre of many studies in the past decade. This area has shown similarities

between L1 and L2 reading strategies. This area has also revealed that background knowledge can make up for low proficiency in L2 reading comprehension.

A study was conducted by Kamhi-Stein (2003) about the relationship between L1 and L2 in terms of reading strategy use and affective factors, which include readers' views of reading in their mother tongue. The participants were bilingual L2 readers of both Spanish and English. Those readers were of Spanish background and were considered underprepared for college academic demands. Their English linguistic levels were lower than their English peers. This qualitative study, which utilized think-aloud protocols, open-ended interviews, and self-assessment inventories, aimed to explore the relationship between reading behaviors of those readers when reading Spanish and English and their affective factors which included their attitudes toward their mother tongue and their beliefs about reading in both languages. It also aimed to investigate the relationship between the reading strategies in both languages.

The participants were selected according to their ability to speak English and Spanish, their willingness to participate in the study, their prior participation in a summer program, and their representation of the total population. They were given two excerpts in English and Spanish. Then, they were assessed on prior knowledge by answering questions on the topics and defining some key vocabulary terms. Next, they were interviewed and asked some questions about their views on reading in Spanish and English. After that, they were asked to complete an inventory on their attitudes on reading in both languages and the problems they faced. Their comprehension was assessed by retelling stories and a variety of questions that included true/false, multiple-choice, and fill-in-blanks questions.

Kamhi-Stein's (2003) study of 12 bilingual participants shows that "readers' attitudes toward their home language influenced their reading behavior" (p. 35). It also shows that readers' beliefs about reading affected their reading behavior. More in-depth studies may be needed to investigate the role of affective factors in reading and support the findings of this study. Another area which may need more investigation is the extent to which mental translation is related to readers' views about their home language, their proficiency, and the difficulties they may face.

Another study was conducted by Yamashita (2007) on the topic of transfer. It discussed "the transfer of reading attitudes from L1 to L2" (p. 81). This study investigated both the general reading ability and reading strategies. It is similar to Kamhi-Stein's (2003) study in the sense that both deal with the affective factors toward reading in L1 and L2. The transfer of reading attitudes and strategies from L1 to L2 has been highlighted because it helps researchers and teachers identify the difficulties L2 learners face. Yamashita points out that the scope of the study expanded to include the affective domain which is scarce in other research studies. She adds that "not many reading models have incorporated the reading attitude as an important component" (p. 83). University-level Japanese students were involved in the study. A Likert scale was used to estimate their reading attitudes, and a test was used to measure their L2 proficiency.

Yamashita's (2003) study deals with reading attitudes from two various perspectives: cognitive, which has to do with evaluative beliefs, and affective, which is associated with feelings. This study, which included 291 EFL Japanese learners with varied academic backgrounds, aimed to discover the differences in reading attitudes between L1 and L2, and those differences among learners at different levels of L2

proficiency. It also aimed to discover how far L1 reading attitude and L2 proficiency contribute to L2 reading attitude. Moreover, it tried to explore whether L2 proficiency affects the contribution of L1 reading attitude to L2 reading attitude. Yamashita used a three-part questionnaire in which the first part collected demographic information about participants and the other two parts included five-item questionnaire questions about the "students' affective reactions toward reading in L1 and L2" (p. 87). TOEIC was used to measure students' proficiency in reading.

Yamashita's (2003) study provides a variety of pedagogical implications. Results have shown that learners with positive attitudes toward reading in L1 usually keep the same attitude in L2 even though, at times, their level was not good in L2. Learners with such attitudes are likely to improve in the future. On the other hand, learners with negative attitudes toward reading in L1 lack the potential to develop in the future even if their level was satisfactory in L2 at a certain stage. Understanding learners' attitudes toward reading is very important in both L1 and L2. Yamashita points out that positive attitudes toward reading should be nurtured as much as possible. The study also demonstrates that L2 reading is influenced by L2 proficiency. Yamashita suggests, as a result, that teachers should provide learners with reading materials at the appropriate linguistic levels. Reading attitudes, as this study has shown, affect not only how learners should read, but also how much they should read. Both Yamashita and Kamhi-Stein come nearly to the same conclusion when they both emphasize the role of learners' attitudes toward reading, but Kamhi-Stein's study went farther in exploring also the role of background knowledge in reading comprehension.

Reading and vocabulary

Reading is linked traditionally with acquiring vocabulary, and vocabulary is mainly associated with dictionaries. The reader's main aim when reading is to understand the text at hand and such understanding cannot usually be attained by L2 learners when the text is full of new ambiguous words. Researchers and teachers have extensively studied this issue of vocabulary attainment and dictionary use. While teachers insist that students read texts for comprehension, students try to know the meanings of all words in the text. Harmer (2007b) suggests a sort of compromise between teachers who would like their students to understand texts and students who would like to know the meaning of every single word in the text. He suggests setting a time limit during which students may enquire about the words they do not know. He also suggests a word limit for this activity in which students ask no more than five or six questions. Instead of directly giving the meanings of words students seek to look up, the teacher can get students to share the lists of words they have made and discuss them in pairs or groups. In this case, understanding every word, as Harmer states, has become "a cooperative task in its own right" (p. 287).

Using a dictionary and declining to use it has been the focus of argument between researchers and teachers for a long time. Some instructors urge their students to use dictionaries excessively and others ask them not to use it at all. Prichard (2008) examined how often a dictionary is selectively used by Japanese university students when reading nonfiction English texts for general comprehension. Prichard defines the selective use of dictionary as "looking up words that are either useful to learn or relevant to the passage's main points or the reading tasks" (p. 28). The findings of the study showed that, in contrast with the traditional views that educators held about students' inefficient use of

dictionaries, the majority of students, up to two-thirds of the participants, were often selective about deciding to look a word up or not. One-third of the participants in the study used dictionaries excessively. About 25% of the words looked up in the dictionary were not essential or relevant to the main points of the reading comprehension passage. Prichard (2008) came to the conclusion that most proficient readers were able to use other vocabulary strategies to find meanings of words and not depend solely on dictionaries. This study gives us an implication that though new vocabulary can be a barrier against understanding texts, other strategies, rather than dictionaries, can be used to overcome this barrier. Such strategies may include guessing word meanings from context, word formation, and collocations. Another implication is that the most proficient readers are those who can guess the meanings of words from context and not those who use dictionaries excessively. The study also implies that we do not need to know the meaning of every word in order to understand reading texts. This study also shows that students need help on "selective dictionary use" (p. 229). They need to decide how frequent and how useful the new words in the text are.

The techniques for teaching vocabulary have also been at the core of methodology due to the close connection between reading and vocabulary. Hinkel (2006) points out in the context of the debate about teaching vocabulary in the past two decades that "explicit teaching represents the most effective and efficient means of vocabulary teaching" (p. 122). On the other hand, some researchers, as Hinkel points out, have cautioned against this type of incidental learning of vocabulary which, they argue, leads to lower rates of "vocabulary retention" (p. 122). A lexical item, they point out, should be encountered lots of times to be learned. Research comes to the conclusion that, for new lexical items to be

learned, they should meet a variety of conditions that include "interest, repetition, deliberate attention, and generative use" (p. 122). Hinkel also refers to teaching word families as an effective way to increase the rate of vocabulary learning. Amid these debates, we come to the conclusion that teaching vocabulary is closely related to reading, and that reading provides a rich background for the generative use of vocabulary.

But one might argue that not all contexts provide the same clues for vocabulary recognition. Webb (2008) conducted a study about the effects of context on incidental vocabulary learning. The study which aimed at measuring the effect of context on the knowledge of form and meaning was conducted with 50 Japanese native speakers learning English as a foreign language in four second year university classes in Fukuoka, Japan. The students, in both experimental and comparison groups, were given short contexts that were rated differently on the amount of information necessary to infer the meanings of the target words. A surprise vocabulary test was administered afterwards to measure the recognition of form and meanings of target words. The results of the test showed that the students who read the most informative contexts scored higher on the test of meanings. Context, as the study showed, affected the acquisition of meaning, but it had little effect on the acquisition of form. The study also indicated that it was the number of encounters with target words, and not the contextual clues, affected the acquisition of form in those texts.

Efficient and inefficient reading

Linguists have done extensive research on reading and the way it should be approached. This research concludes that reading is associated with understanding. To read words, we, first, need to perceive and decode letters, and in order to understand the

text, we need to understand the words that make it. We should seek the overall meaning of the text, not just the meanings of individual words. Ur (2003) distinguishes between efficient readers and inefficient ones in terms of a variety of issues as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Efficient and inefficient reading (Ur, 2003)

	Efficient	Inefficient
Language	The language of the text is comprehensible to the learners	The language of the text is too difficult
Content	The content of the text is accessible to the learners; they know enough about it to be able to apply their own background knowledge	The text is too difficult in the sense that the content is too far removed from the knowledge and experience of the learners
Speed	The reading progresses fairly fast: mainly because the reader has automatized recognition of common combinations, and does not waste time working out each word or groups of words anew.	The reading is slow: the reader does not have a large vocabulary of automatically recognized items.
Attention	The reader concentrates on the significant bits, and skims the rest; may even skip parts he or she knows to be insignificant.	The reader pays the same amount of attention to all parts of the text.
Incomprehensible vocabulary	The reader takes incomprehensible vocabulary in	The reader cannot tolerate incomprehensible vocabulary items:

	his or her stride: guesses it meanings from the surrounding text, or ignores it and manages without; uses a dictionary only when these strategies are insufficient	stops to look every one up in a dictionary, and/or feels discouraged from trying to comprehend the text as a whole
Prediction	The reader thinks ahead, hypothesizes, predicts	The reader does not think ahead, deals with the text as it comes.
Background information	The reader has and uses background information to help understand the text.	The reader does not have or use background information
Motivation	The reader is motivated to read: by interesting content or a challenging task	The reader has no particular interest in reading.
Purpose	The reader is aware of a clear purpose in reading; for example, to find out something, to get pleasure.	The reader has no clear purpose other than to obey the teacher's instruction.
Strategies	The reader uses different strategies for different kinds of reading.	The reader uses the same strategy for all texts.

Ur believes, in the light of the differences between efficient and inefficient reading, that the improvement in reading skills is measured by the accessibility of the texts. Difficult texts may increase the reservoir of vocabulary or the amount of general

knowledge, but they do not improve reading skills. With regards to speed, Ur thinks that teachers need to provide students with the opportunities to do as much successful reading as possible in order to easily recognize common words or word combinations, and thus contribute to reading speed. Reading selectively is one characteristic of efficient reading. Students do not have to read every word in the text, but focus on the significant bits. Using a dictionary is essential for readers, but it should be cautiously used; students need not look up every word in the text. They can use the dictionary either to "confirm or disprove a preliminary guess of their own, based on understanding of the context" (p. 149). Ur adds, in the context of her comment of the characteristics of efficient and inefficient reading, that the tasks to be chosen should encourage prediction and give readers the opportunity to "apply their background knowledge and their experience to the reading of texts" (p. 149). For the purposes of motivating students and getting them to be aware of the aims of the reading activity, Ur thinks that teachers need to give the reading task in advance to their students. But in the case of extensive reading, the material itself can be interesting enough to arouse their interest.

Ur (2003) recommends that teachers give students the opportunity to choose their simplified readers in order to enhance the students' reading experience. Ur adds that, in intensive reading, teachers should make sure that the new lexical items used in the texts are familiar and can be "easily guessed or safely ignored" (p. 149). To help students become more efficient readers, teachers need to provide them with a variety of texts to give them practice. They also need to train students to manage texts without knowing every single word through scanning tasks. Teachers also need to get students to be

concerned about the main meaning and not focus on the meaningless and trivial points in reading texts.

Authentic texts

The use of authentic texts in English language teaching has sparked controversy among linguists and researchers. Some researchers believe that authentic texts which serve as texts in their own right and as models for output tasks, as Linder (2000) believes, are helpful in the sense that they simulate the type of language mainly used by native speakers. Some others think that they are "frustrating and counter-productive" (Ur, 2003, p. 150). Authentic texts, as Ur (2003) points out, are more sophisticated than academic ones and they involve more complex thinking as well. She adds that using authentic texts entails designing appropriate activities to measure the skills those texts address.

But authentic texts should be chosen wisely. Karpova (1999) thinks that authentic materials should meet a variety of criteria in order to establish a socially rich environment for students to interact and learn. The content should be appropriate and the activities should be task-based. The authentic texts should improve students' cognitive abilities and develop students' social values and attitudes. These authentic texts, if handled properly, can bring life to the classroom and enrich students' cultural background as Karpova points out.

To sum up, this literature review has explored a variety of strategies and techniques that give insights into what types of reading challenges students face and how those reading challenges can be addressed. Teachers should be aware of the above mentioned techniques and strategies and should raise their students' awareness of who a successful reader is and what successful reading entails. The findings of the studies

already mentioned could provide a basis for teachers to develop a well-planned reading class and for students to establish good reading habits which would, undoubtedly, make them good and independent readers.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This study aimed at investigating reading strategies in government high school English classes in Ras Al Khaimah (RAK). It sought to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the challenges associated with teaching reading which teachers in RAK experience?
- 2- What techniques for teaching reading do students identify teachers in RAK using?
- 3- What are the challenges that students face in English reading classes?
- 4- How can teachers address these challenges?

To achieve the purpose of this study and the purposes of triangulation, data were collected from a variety of sources that included supervisors' interviews (see Appendix A), a teachers' survey (see Appendix B), a students' survey (see Appendix C), and students' interviews (see Appendix D). Teachers' surveys were filled in by 30 male and 30 female teachers from Ras Al Khaimah Educational Zone (RAKEZ). These teachers were all high school teachers who attended the professional development program mandated by the Ministry of Education in the UAE and supervised by the National Admissions and Placement Office (NAPO). This program, which has been around since 2006, aims at training teachers on the best way to teach English as set by the Common English Proficiency Assessment (CEPA). The teachers were given enough time by the CEPA Instructor to do the survey, and they, in turn, actively and enthusiastically filled in all items and answered all the questions in it. In fact, the participating teachers constituted about 75% of all high school English teachers in RAKEZ.

I also conducted interviews with the five English Language Supervisors in RAKEZ and the CEPA Instructor there. They provided me with a clear picture of the reading challenges and the way reading tasks are approached in the classes they attend. They never hesitated to do the interviews and answer the questions about the issues raised. I also administered a survey of 30 male students at Al Jawdah School for Secondary Education in Ras Al Khaimah. I limited my study to male students because, as a male teacher, it was not easy for me to get access to female students in the UAE where female teachers teach at girls' schools and male teachers teach at boys' schools. I also conducted interviews with other ten students from the same school. I selected the students who volunteered to participate in the interview after explaining the purpose of the study and the procedures I was going to follow. The student volunteers, I can say, participated at their convenience.

Data Collection

I collected the data from teachers in November 2008, during the professional development sessions with the help of the CEPA Instructor, who was cooperative and understanding. He distributed and collected the surveys across the various sessions that were held throughout the week. It took one week to collect all surveys from teachers who attended those various sessions which were held on three different days every week. I also conducted the interviews during November 2008 in RAKEZ. I conducted the interviews with the English supervisors over three sessions in the RAKEZ office, which is not far away from my school. I took notes instead of making audio tapes or video tapes to respect both the local culture and the supervisors involved.

The students' surveys were administered in November with the help of my colleagues at school. Participation was voluntary in both the surveys and the interviews. I informed the participants about the purpose of the study which posed no risks whatsoever for them. I made it clear that their responses would be reported collectively and anonymously. Some students expressed their concerns that their responses might not please their teachers, but I assured them that their responses "would be kept in strict confidence" (Berg, 2001, p. 58) and that it was an opportunity for them to make their voices heard. Being one of the teachers whose teaching style would be evaluated by students via this survey, I exercised no authority on them and made it optional to decline to answer the questions that would be embarrassing to them.

With regards to the interviewees, I did my best to ensure their rights and privacy which Berg (2001) strictly suggests in the context of his discussion of the ethical issues of qualitative research. I told them that their names would not be disclosed and that their responses would be anonymous. Instructions were made clear to them and they were allowed to use their mother tongue or the target language, English. I made it voluntary for students to participate in the interviews and kept the door open for them to withdraw whenever they liked. In doing so, I was in line with Berg who considers the subjects' consent for participation an ethical issue which concerns both the researchers and their subjects as well. I also informed my subjects about the purpose of my study. In line with Richards (2003) who points out that "a good interviewer is a good listener" (p. 53), I listened more and talked less. I took notes instead of recording interviews upon their request and to make them feel relaxed. I offered "supportive feedback" as Richards (2003, p. 54), puts it, and I gave my interviewees enough time to discover things themselves.

Furthermore, I did not interrupt interviewees unreasonably, nor did I dictate to them the responses.

The Characteristics of the Researcher

Being a teacher of English for 20 years in the UAE, I am aware of the UAE learning context. I have taught, so far, a series of syllabi and have attended, during the past twenty years, lots of seminars on methodology and presented many times in local seminars in Abu Dhabi and Ras Al Khaimah. I have dealt with a variety of students over the past two decades. I am sensitive to the needs and the interests of both my students and my colleagues. I show a deep respect for all stakeholders in the learning enterprise and I work with them for the best of the students. I am objective in collecting data and analyzing them. I am a good listener and I can develop good rapport with my students.

The Participants

The participants in my study were the RAKEZ CEPA Instructor, supervisors, teachers, and students. These constitute the main players in the teaching/learning process. The number of supervisors involved was five. There were two female supervisors and three males. The CEPA Instructor was an ex-university professor from the United States. He is now the CEPA Instructor in RAK. He is a professional of long experience in the field of methodology. The supervisors have a good knowledge of the UAE context and they all worked as teachers in the UAE for a long time. The teachers I included in my study are all high school English teachers who worked more than five years in the UAE. They all have a long experience as EFL teachers and have attended lots of seminars on methodology. The fourth group constituted male students from Al Jawdah School for

Secondary Education. They were aged between 17-18 years. The number and the type of participants in the survey are shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2: The number and type of participants from RAKEZ from government high schools in my study

No	Participants	Males	Females	Total
1-	Supervisors	3	2	6
2-	CEPA Instructor	1	-----	1
3-	Teachers	30	30	60
4-	Students	40	-----	40

The number of teachers who participated in the study was 60, divided into 30 males and 30 females. Male teachers were all Arabs from various nationalities that included Egyptians, Palestinians, Tunisians, Syrians, and Jordanians. They had long experience in teaching English as a foreign language in the Arab world. Female teachers were mainly from the UAE. Most of them had experience in teaching English as a foreign language that ranged between 5 to 30 years. Table 3 summarizes the collected demographic data of teachers who participated in the survey.

Table 3: Demographic data of teachers who participated in the study (n=60)

Gender	Teaching Experience			
	0-5 years	6-10 years	10-20 years	More than 20 years
Males (30)	2	7	10	11
Females (30)	8	10	8	4

The number of students who participated in the study was 40 from both the grade 12 Arts and the Science sections. Their age ranged between 17 and 19 and they were from various nationalities that included Emirati, Jordanian, Egyptian, Yemeni, and Syrian. I limited the study to male students from one school because, as a male teacher, it was not easy to get access to female schools in the Gulf context since only female teachers teach at government girls' schools and male teachers teach at government high boys' school. On selecting students, I made sure that it was a sample of convenience. Participation was voluntary, so I selected only students who volunteered to participate.

Table 4 summarizes the collected demographic data of students who participated in the survey.

Table 4: Demographic data of students who participated in the study (n=40)

Section	Nationalities				
	Emirati	Palestinian	Egyptian	Yemeni	Syrian
Arts (20)	10	4	3	1	2
Science (20)	2	6	7	1	4
Total	12	10	10	2	6

Survey data were collected by using a Likert scale. Teachers were given five options that ranged from "agree" to "disagree." For students, the first part included five options that ranged from "agree" to "disagree," and the second part included five options that ranged from "usually" to "never." All teachers filled in the first part of the survey, and all of them, except for two, did the second part of the survey which included open-ended

questions. As for the survey designed for students, all of them completed the two parts of the survey.

Design of the Instruments

This study was mainly designed to explore the participants' opinions and attitudes over a variety of issues that are related to reading strategies. To gather information from the populations involved, I used a variety of tools and instruments.

Interviews

The first instrument was conducting interviews. The first interview (see Appendix A) was designed for the CEPA Instructor and the English supervisors in RAKEZ. I tried to explore their opinions over a variety of issues on reading tasks. I conducted the interviews with them individually in the RAKEZ office during the daytime on Thursday when they usually stay in the Educational Zone. I asked them about the main reading challenges that students face. They answered my questions and I took notes. I explored their opinions on a variety of issues like the responsibility of students and teachers in addressing reading challenges and the role of current textbooks in intensifying or addressing such challenges. They also talked about the importance of using authentic materials in reading classes and the best approach, bottom-up or top-down, to deal with reading tasks. They also expressed their opinions on using writing to enhance reading tasks and on focusing on either form or meaning in reading classes.

The second interview was designed for high school students (see Appendix D). I conducted interviews with other ten high school students from Al Jawdah School for Secondary Education in RAKEZ. I selected the students who volunteered to participate. I interviewed them one by one in our computer room during the break. In the interview,

some interviewees expressed their wish to talk in English while others preferred Arabic. I provided the opportunity for both to talk in the language they felt comfortable with. For those who preferred the target language, I paraphrased some questions like questions four and five in the students' interviews (see Appendix D). I also used some other strategies like repetition and miming to get my message across in English. It took me ten days to carry out the task. Each interview lasted for about 15 minutes. The interview was made up of seven questions. I asked them about the reading class they like best and to what extent they and their families like reading in both Arabic and English. I also asked about the main challenges they face when approaching reading tasks and the things they focus on when they read. I also wanted to know what their teachers do in class and what they would like their teachers to do for them in order to improve their reading skills.

Interviews are generally data collection tools which aim, according to Shono (2006), to "help empower these learners by honoring their voices" (p. 298). To achieve this purpose, I developed a variety of strategies that could "facilitate the interview process while at the same time ensuring the trustworthiness and integrity of the research" (Shono, 2006, p. 298). First, I made my questions straightforward and to the point. I also avoided asking questions which might reveal something about the intended responses. Following the techniques recommended by Shono, I asked follow-up questions, asked open-ended questions, and asked for concrete details to consolidate their answers. I did my best to build rapport with my interviewees and establish a good understanding of them before and during the interviews. In line with the techniques mentioned by Shono, I listened not only to the substance of the interviewees' responses, but also practiced active listening by paying attention to the interviewing process in terms of the amount of time that passed,

the energy they demonstrated, and the nonverbal cues my interviewees provided. The interviews were conducted in a friendly atmosphere and the students responded actively to all questions. To consolidate and strengthen my findings, I also conducted interviews with 10 students from grade 12 from both the Arts and Science sections. I had prepared the questions before the interviews. I tried to be as friendly as possible with them and I assured them that their responses would be used for research purposes only. No coercion was enforced on the students and they were allowed to decline whenever they wanted. The interviews were conducted in November, 2008 in the computer room in our school during the break. Each interview lasted for about 15 minutes. I took notes down and did not use recorders or videos upon their request. Interviewees were allowed to respond in Arabic or English, but eight of the ten students interviewed preferred to speak in Arabic because they said they would be able to express themselves more easily.

Surveys

I also designed two surveys: one for teachers and one for students. The teachers' surveys (see Appendix B) required teachers to express their agreement, partial agreement, neutrality, disagreement, or partial disagreement on the ten statements (1-10) given in the survey. On the back of the survey, teachers were asked to answer the questions, 11-15, and to add their own comments if there were any. To avoid any misunderstanding about items in the surveys and the interviews, I submitted them for approval to my thesis committee members at AUS. They made their own comments on the surveys and the interviews which I, then, incorporated. I also piloted it with the four teachers from the English staff at our school. I made sure then that the survey questions were clearly understood. I also piloted the students' survey with my grade 12 Arts students at Al

Jawdah School for Secondary Education in RAKEZ. I came to realize then that the survey and the interviews should be translated into Arabic so that the questions could be easily understood and answered.

The teachers' survey was made up of four parts. The first part gathered information about teachers in terms of name, gender, teaching grades, and teaching experience. Such information might help in deciding how credible their responses would be. The second part consisted of ten statements which teachers were asked to respond to in terms of agreement and disagreement, according to a Likert scale. Teachers were asked to tell if reading was a challenging task for high school teachers. They were also asked to express their opinions about a variety of issues. The third part was made up of five questions which the respondents were to answer in detail. The questions investigated the teachers' viewpoints about reading challenges and techniques. The fourth part was designed to provide the opportunity for respondents to write their own additional comments if there were any.

With regards to the students' survey, it was made up of three parts (see Appendix C). The first part consisted of personal information about students such as educational zone, school, and age. The second part was made up of 15 statements. The students needed to read the first ten statements that indicate when they thought they can do reading tasks better. They needed to respond to them in terms of agree, partially agree, not sure, partially disagree, and disagree. The statements describe students' reading behavior and their teachers' techniques in a reading class. They needed to indicate if they can do reading tasks better when the teacher explains the meanings of words or when the topics are interesting or common. They also needed to express their opinions about connecting

pieces of information or summarizing texts. Moreover, they needed to express their opinions about modifying authentic texts and using a variety of techniques. They were asked to indicate if using technology, reading for enjoyment, and focusing on meaning would help in a reading class.

In statements (11-15), which describe current teachers' techniques and activities, students were asked to indicate how often their teachers use those techniques and activities. The statements investigate if their teachers teach them to think critically and/or they connect reading with writing tasks. They also explore if their teachers give them supplementary readings to enhance their reading habits and if they use technology in class. Students needed to indicate if their teachers use a variety of techniques and strategies like prediction, guessing, questioning, summarizing, highlighting texts, and focusing on writers' voice.

The third part of students' survey was made up of three questions which the students were asked to answer in detail. Students needed to indicate if they enjoy reading in English and, if yes, give the types of readings they like. They needed also to list the reading challenges they face while reading and list the advantages or disadvantages of their textbooks.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The aim of my study was to explore students', teachers', and supervisors' perceptions of reading strategies currently applicable in high school reading classes in RAK. The main questions that guided this study were:

- 1- What are the challenges associated with teaching reading which teachers and supervisors in RAK identify?
- 2- What techniques for teaching reading do students identify teachers in RAK using?
- 3- What are the challenges that students face in English reading classes?
- 4- How can teachers address these challenges?

This chapter describes the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, and reports the results. It is divided into four sections. This first section presents the introduction to the data analysis. Section two presents reading challenges as identified by teachers and supervisors. Section three outlines the techniques and challenges as identified by students, and section four discusses the ways to address challenges as seen by the participants.

Reading challenges as seen by teachers and supervisors

An analysis of the data collected from teachers' surveys and supervisors' interviews revealed three major challenges in the following categories: students' motivation, unsuitable materials, and linguistic challenges. Teachers' responses to questions 1 and 2 on the survey indicate that reading is a challenging task for high school students and that it is related, as the majority of teachers pointed out, to classroom environment. As Figures 1 and 2 show, reading is undoubtedly a challenging task for high

school students as seen by both male and female teachers. 56 teachers of the 60 surveyed either agreed (32) or partially agreed (24) that reading is really a challenging task for high school students, while only one disagreed and two partially disagreed (see Figure 1).

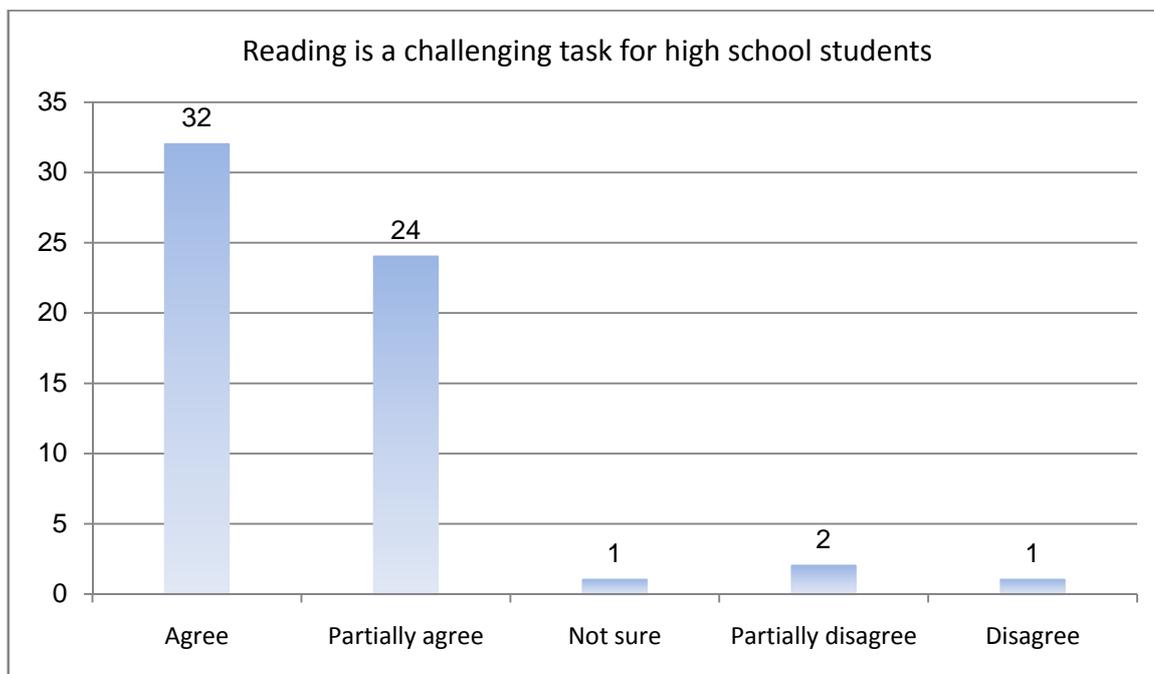


Figure 1: Teachers' responses to statement 1 (n= 60)

Teachers' responses to question 2 revealed that 20 teachers of those surveyed agreed and 19 teachers partially agreed that reading challenges are connected with classroom management. Although it was not the focus of the study, the responses showed a discrepancy between males and females in this area (see Figure 2 below). The majority of male teachers (27 out of 30) either agreed (18) or partially agreed (9) that there is a relationship between reading challenges and classroom environment, while only 12 female teachers out of 30 (8 agreed and 4 partially agreed) shared the same opinion. The discrepancy between their responses could be a topic for a new study to be done in the

future. Figure 2 shows teachers' responses to the statement about the relationship between reading challenges and classroom management.

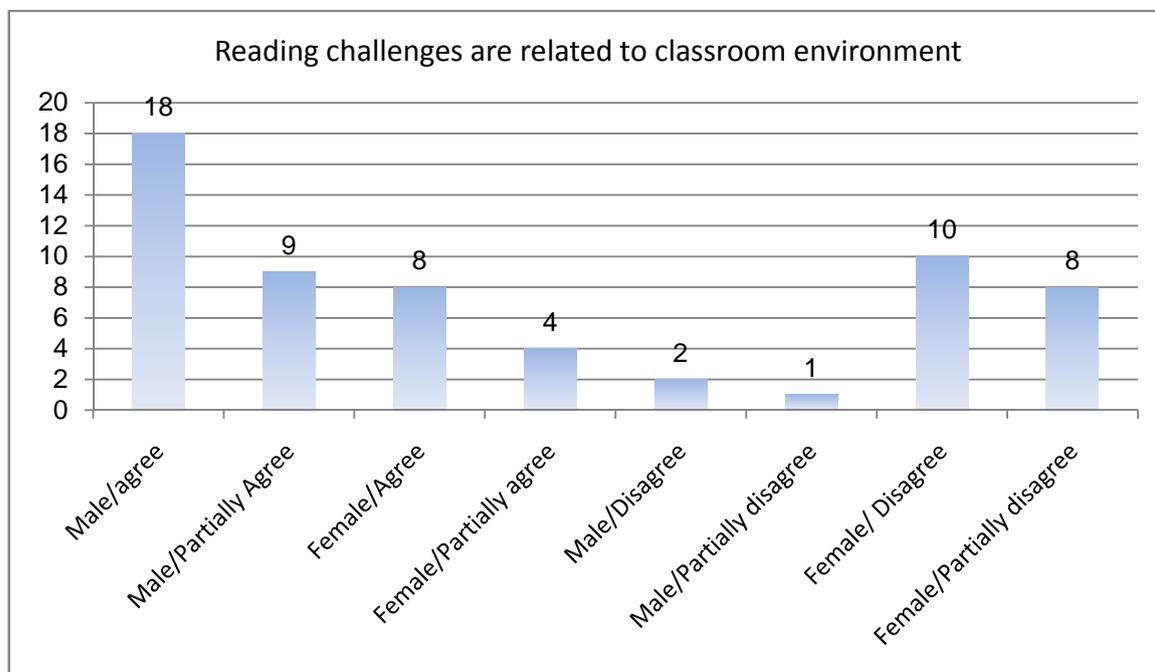


Figure 2: Teachers' responses to statement 2 (n=60)

After determining that the teachers believe that reading is challenging for students, the rest of the teachers' and supervisors' data were then analyzed to see what the challenges of teaching reading are. The three main categories which emerged from the teachers' responses over reading challenges are students' motivation, linguistic reasons, and unsuitable reading materials.

Students' motivation

The responses from the teachers' surveys revealed that students' motivation is the main challenge they face when teaching reading. 26 teachers agreed and 22 partially agreed that high school students lack motivation for reading.

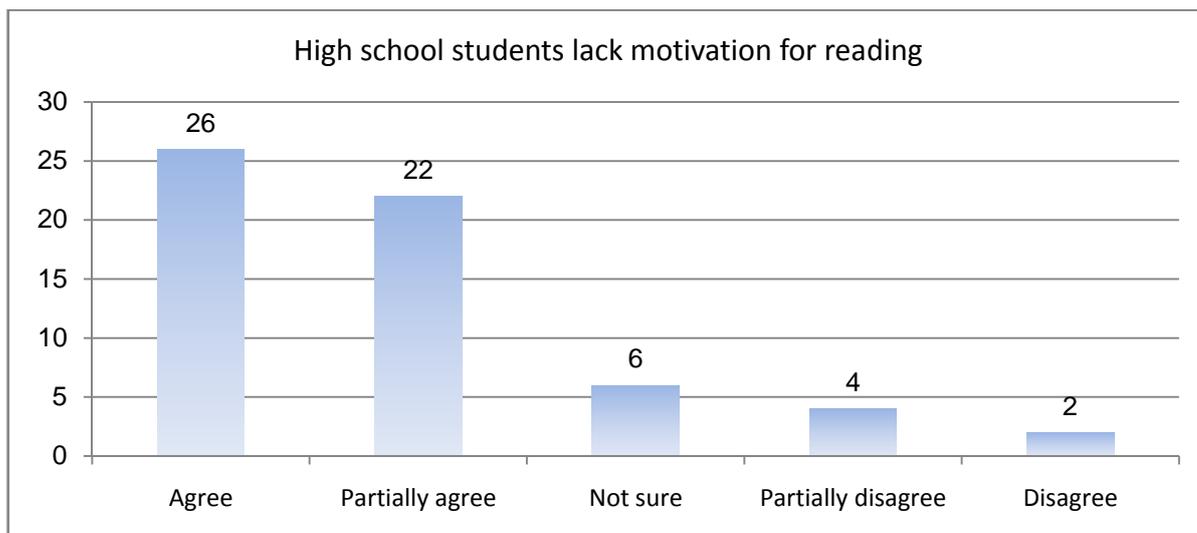


Figure 3: Teachers' responses to statement 5

Reading materials

Reading materials could be a motivating factor for students. The argument over what syllabus to use and the criteria that it should meet has been around for many years. I have recently observed that during the twenty years I have worked in the UAE, the syllabus has changed five times. The textbook we are teaching this year is New English for the Emirates, but it will be replaced with a new one next year. Furthermore, the argument over using the current textbooks or other authentic materials has been the topic of many discussions among teachers, supervisors, and researchers. Closely related to this is the issue of whether to adapt authentic materials or keep them untouched. All these issues were investigated in the teachers' survey.

To start with teachers' assessment of the current textbook, teachers' responses over this issue were not encouraging. Only ten teachers of those surveyed agreed with the third statement that the reading passages in the textbook are varied and motivating. Two

other teachers partially agreed with this statement. One teacher wrote on the back of the survey,

Reading passages are boring. They might address students' linguistic needs but they do not address their communicative ones. I wonder what students need to know about deserts or world festivals. They might need reading passages with pictures about world championships, mobile phones, films, and fancy cars. They need something that draws their attention, not anything that distracts them.

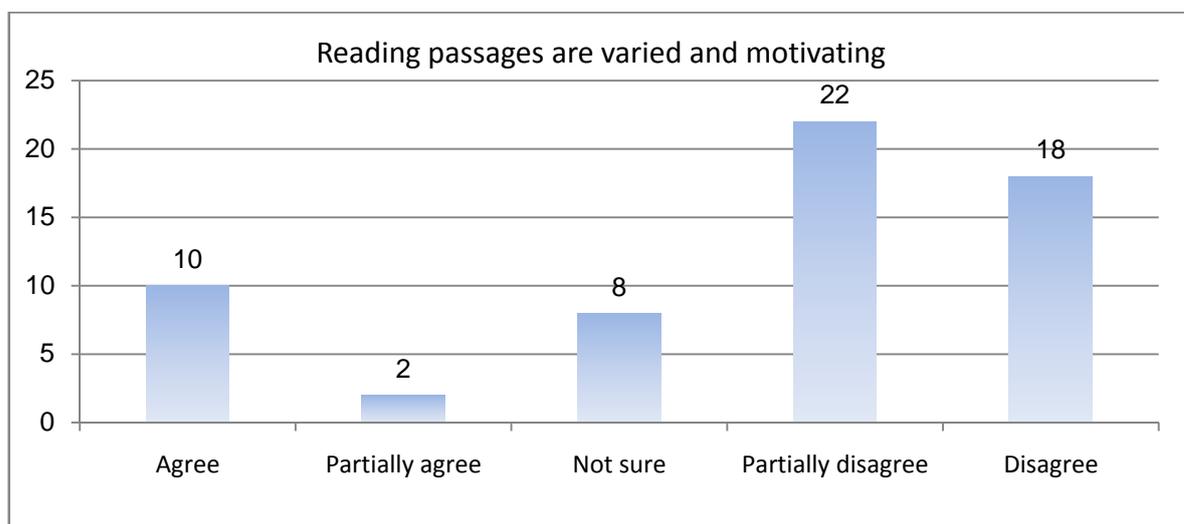


Figure 4: Teachers' responses to statement 3 (n=60)

Linguistic reasons

The qualitative data I collected from the supervisors' interviews revealed a different set of challenges. In response to a question about the main reading challenges that students face, one supervisor pointed out that the challenges depend on the level of the students. They sometimes include the alphabet, the phonemes, the words, and the paragraph level of understanding. Another supervisor considered the mechanics and the decoding of meanings as the main challenges. A third supervisor thought of vocalization

and sluggishness as reading challenges. The other three supervisors identified appreciation, inference, transfer from students' first language to their target language, and expressing opinions of what students read. Teachers' and supervisors' responses revealed some minor differences between both. While most teachers believed that textbooks are a big challenge, most supervisors believed that a bad textbook in the hand a good teacher can pose no challenge. Supervisors thought that teachers currently have the freedom to choose their reading materials, so "the issue of textbooks should not be exaggerated" as one of them pointed out.

To sum up, the data from the teachers' survey and the supervisors' interviews presented a variety of viewpoints over the reading challenges. It outlines three main reading challenges: lack of motivation on the students' part, unsuitable reading materials, and other linguistic challenges that range from the inability to decode letters and words, to the inability to infer meaning from the reading texts.

Reading techniques and challenges as identified by students

Students' surveys and interviews are essential tools to allow the voices of students', being one of the stakeholders in the learning process, to be heard for future reflection. The first part of the students' survey included ten statements in a 5-point Likert scale about when they can do reading tasks better. The second part, statements 11-15, asked the students about their teachers' techniques and strategies. The third part included three questions about students' reading preferences, reading challenges, and the advantages or disadvantages of their textbooks. The students' responses were gathered to answer the second and the third questions of my study: "What techniques do students

identify teachers in RAK doing? What are the challenges that students face in English reading classes?"

Table 5 summarizes students' responses to statements 1-10

I can do reading tasks better when:

No.	Statement	Agree	Partially Agree	Not sure	Partially Disagree	Disagree
1	The teacher explains the meanings of words.	15	14	1	-	-
2	The topics are interesting.	12	10	6	1	1
3	The topics are common.	9	8	3	6	4
4	We connect pieces of information together.	15	12	3	-	-
5	We summarize and discuss what we read.	14	12	3	1	-
6	The teacher uses simplified and modified authentic materials.	16	10	3	1	-
7	The teacher uses a variety of techniques.	10	12	2	1	-
8	The teacher uses technology in reading class.	14	13	2	1	-
9	When the teachers focuses on the meaning rather than form.	18	10	-	2	-
10	I read for enjoyment.	10	8	4	5	3

Table 6 summarizes students' responses to statements 11-15

My teacher's techniques and strategies

No.	Statement	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
11	Our teacher always teaches us to think critically and look for the message.	14	10	4	1	1
12	Our teacher connects reading with writing tasks.	13	10	3	2	2
13	Our teacher tries to enhance our reading habits by supplying us with supplementary readings.	8	7	-	7	8
14	Our teacher uses technology in class effectively.	13	12	-	3	2
15	Our teacher uses a variety of reading techniques and strategies (prediction, guessing, questioning, summarizing, writer's voice, highlighting texts..)	10	10	3	4	3

The overall responses to the issues in the survey could be summarized in the following two categories: Techniques and challenges.

Techniques

Students' responses to the issues in the survey and the interviews revealed a variety of techniques that the students either see as helpful to them or that they identify their teachers using.

To begin with the techniques students see as helpful in their classes, their responses to the first part of the survey showed the majority of students surveyed either

agreed (15) or partially agreed (12) that they can do reading tasks better when their teachers connect pieces of information together. In addition, students think that summarizing and discussing readings can help them do reading tasks better, as their responses to statement five showed (14 agreed and 12 partially agreed out of 30). Simplified and modified authentic materials were also investigated in the survey. Most of the students surveyed agreed (16) or partially agreed (10) they can do better when the teacher uses simplified and modified authentic materials.

The other issue which was investigated in the survey was using various techniques on the teachers' part. Teachers' various techniques, as students' responses to statement 7 (10 agreed/12 partially agreed) revealed, are helpful to them when they do their reading tasks. Furthermore, using technology in class by teachers, as students' responses to statement 8 showed (14 agreed/13 partially agreed), also helps students do reading tasks better. Students' responses (18 agreed/10 partially agreed) to statement 9, which is about focusing on meaning rather than on form, revealed that they can do reading tasks better when the teacher focuses on meaning.

Students' responses over connections between pieces of information correspond with what some researchers said about activating prior knowledge and connecting texts together (Anderson, 1999 a; Debat, 2006; Hedge, 2004,).

Regarding their attitudes towards the techniques students identify teachers using in class, their responses to statements 11-15 show that, except for supplementary readings (8 agreed/7 partially agreed), students' responses over the other four issues in the second part of their survey were, to a large extent, positive. Students thought that their teachers teach them to think critically and look for the message, as their responses to statement 11

revealed (14 always/10 usually). Most surveyed students (13 always/10 usually) thought that their teachers connect reading with writing tasks. Regarding using technology, the majority of students (13 always/12 usually) believed that they use technology in class effectively. Reading techniques and strategies were also investigated in the survey. Two-thirds of the students surveyed (10 always/ 10 usually) thought that their teachers use a variety of techniques and strategies, as their responses to statement 15 revealed.

Regarding supplying students with supplementary readings, 15 students of those surveyed (8 always/ 7 usually) said their teachers try to enhance students' reading habits by supplying them with supplementary readings.

Students' responses to statements 1-10 show clearly the techniques that students identified as helpful to them, like explaining the meanings of words, connecting information together, summarizing and discussing what they read, using simplified authentic materials, using a variety of techniques, using technology in class, and focusing on meaning. Their responses to the second part of the survey revealed the techniques that their teachers really use in class and how frequently they do so.

Challenges

Students' responses to statements and questions in both surveys and interviews revealed two major challenges which students face when learning to read. They are classified under new words and identifying main idea or the writer's message.

New words

One of the big challenges that I could identify from the students' survey and interviews is understanding the meanings of new words. 29 students of the 30 surveyed either agreed (15) or partially agreed (14) that they can do better when the teacher

explains the meanings of words. Students' responses to open-ended question 17 also revealed that the majority of students surveyed classified understanding the meanings of new words as a big challenge. In addition, the sixth question in the interview was also about the most challenging thing they face when they read in English. Three students mentioned in the individual interviews that the meanings and the pronunciation of new words pose a challenge, and added that even with dictionaries they cannot identify the intended meanings or pronounce words correctly. The overall responses show the meanings of words as the most challenging when reading in English. One student said in Arabic,

I cannot access a text without understanding the meanings of all words available in it. I cannot read all words, and even if I have the ability to read, I fail to get the meanings. Meanings of words are the cornerstone in the reading process, so I think that those who have a good store of vocabulary can easily understand what the text is about.

But when I asked him if he thought that all words are of the same significance, he replied that some might not be as necessary as others. Students' and teachers' views are consistent over considering new words as a big challenge. But students' responses over solving this problem are inconsistent with literature review in this respect. Students think that explicit teaching of every single words is helpful, while, it is not necessary, as shown in the literature review, to do so because this way "does not necessarily make them into better readers" (Scrivener, 2008, p. 153). On the other hand, students' responses are in partial

agreement with Hinkel (2006) who states that "explicit teaching represents the most effective means of vocabulary teaching"(p. 122) when they are encountered lots of times.

Identifying the main idea or message

The second challenge I concluded from students' responses is identifying the main idea or message. Students' responses to the sixth question in the interview revealed that some students find the identifying of the main idea and the message the writer is trying to convey challenging. Five students mentioned that identifying the main idea was not an easy thing, nor was the writers' message. One student said that even if he knows the meanings of words, he fails to get the main ideas or the writers' message.

The responses from both teachers and students demonstrate different types of challenges. While teachers and supervisors think of motivation, reading materials, and other linguistic factors as the most challenging, students acknowledge the meanings of words and identifying the main idea as the most challenging.

The ways to address challenges as seen by participants

Teachers' and supervisors' responses outlined motivation, unsuitable materials, and other linguistic factors as the challenges that students face when they do their reading tasks from the teachers' and supervisors viewpoints. Students' responses outlined the meanings of words and identifying the main idea as the most challenging as seen by students, and delineates the techniques that teachers do as identified by students. This section answers question four in my study, "How can teachers address these challenges?" from the participants' viewpoints. I collected the data to answer this question from the survey designed for teachers, students' survey and interviews, and finally from the interviews I conducted with the supervisors.

The data that I collected from surveys and interviews give clues as to the strategies and techniques that can be used to address reading challenges. To make it more readable, I have divided this section into a variety of sub-sections: reading materials/tasks, using writing to teach reading, using technology, using authentic materials, adapting materials, grading reading tasks, developing a positive attitude towards reading, learning new words, and using different reading strategies.

Reading materials/tasks:

Reading materials, as realized by the current textbooks, are seen by teachers and students as a big challenge. The supervisors interviewed showed a slightly different viewpoint. The question on the evaluation of the textbooks yielded different but interesting responses. One supervisor said, "Any text will help if the student is truly motivated." Another supervisor said, "A bad book in the hands of a good teacher yields good results." He added that the textbook should not be the only source of information in the learning process. The other four supervisors expressed their dissatisfaction over this point and said that textbooks do not pose a big challenge to good students and good teachers. Such responses are slightly incongruent with those of teachers and students who both held a slightly negative attitude about the current textbooks. Such variations in textbook evaluation between supervisors and teachers could be another topic for a future study.

Students' assessment of their textbook was not encouraging. Their overall responses to question 18 in the survey showed that the disadvantages of the book outweigh its advantages. Students' overall responses revealed that there are "much words", as one student put it, which they mostly fail to understand, exercises do not lead

to critical thinking, grammar exercises are insufficient, and pictures are not "expressive" as one student said in Arabic. Both teachers' and students' responses are consistent over this issue.

On the other hand, students' responses to the second and third statements in the survey revealed that they believe they can do reading tasks better when the topics are interesting (12 agreed/10 partially agreed) and common (9 agreed/8 partially agreed). Their responses to the tenth statement in the survey revealed that they can do better when they read for enjoyment. This suggests that giving them supplementary reading of their choices might help in this respect.

The fourth question in the students' interview was about the type of readings, in terms of familiar or unfamiliar ones, that, students think, are better for reading. The responses were mostly in favor of common readings while only some responses were in favor of uncommon ones. The criteria students identified as common or uncommon are those that are related to the content of the topic they are familiar with. One student said in English, "I can do better when the lesson is about something I know well, but when it is about, say, festivals worldwide, I do not think it helps a lot." Another student said in English, "Sometimes, we study lessons we know very little about. I believe those lessons are not helpful." Their responses are consistent with Anderson's (1999a), theory which highlights the role of background knowledge in such contexts. But students' responses collide with Stutt (2004), who found that familiarity with topic would not be an advantage at times.

With such findings in mind, we can say that one way to solve the reading challenges as identified by the teachers, students, and supervisors is to prepare reading materials that not only motivate students, but also cater for linguistic needs.

Using writing to teach reading

The other issue which might help in solving reading is whether or not writing could be used to teach reading. 42 teachers of those surveyed thought that writing could be used to teach writing while the other 18 thought it would be ineffective to use writing to teach reading. One teacher commented on this issue by saying that writing should be the ultimate goal of teaching the other three skills. Another teacher said that the four skills should be integrated together in the whole learning process. The overall responses of the teachers surveyed were in favor of using writing to teach reading.

Supervisors' responses over this issue were to a large extent similar to the teachers'. In response to the sixth question, which is about what they think about using writing to teach reading, four supervisors said that the four skills should be integrated and not really separated in the learning process. One of the supervisors interviewed said it is the other way around. He said that nothing should be written before it has been read about. The overall responses over this issue are congruent with Leki (1993) who stresses the importance of integrating reading and writing in the same class and in line with lots of studies that advocate using writing in reading classes (Al-Issa 1998; Day, 2004; Kern, 2000; Khan, 1999). In the light of the research findings on this issue, I think that writing, when incorporated in reading classes, can be a good technique to enhance students' comprehension of reading text, thus addressing some aspects of the linguistic challenge supervisors identify in the interview.

Using technology

Another issue which might be related to motivation in class and which might affect the reading process is a teacher's use technology in class. Figure 5 shows that teachers' responses to statement nine, which is about technology, revealed that 20 teachers agreed that technology improves students' level and develops a more positive attitude towards reading, and another 28 teachers partially agreed. One teacher wrote, "Technology is not only a luxury, but also a necessity for education." Another teacher said, "It is not a waste of time. Technology can facilitate reading." This, of course, points to the importance of asking teachers to utilize technology in class and be well-acquainted with the latest developments in this important area.

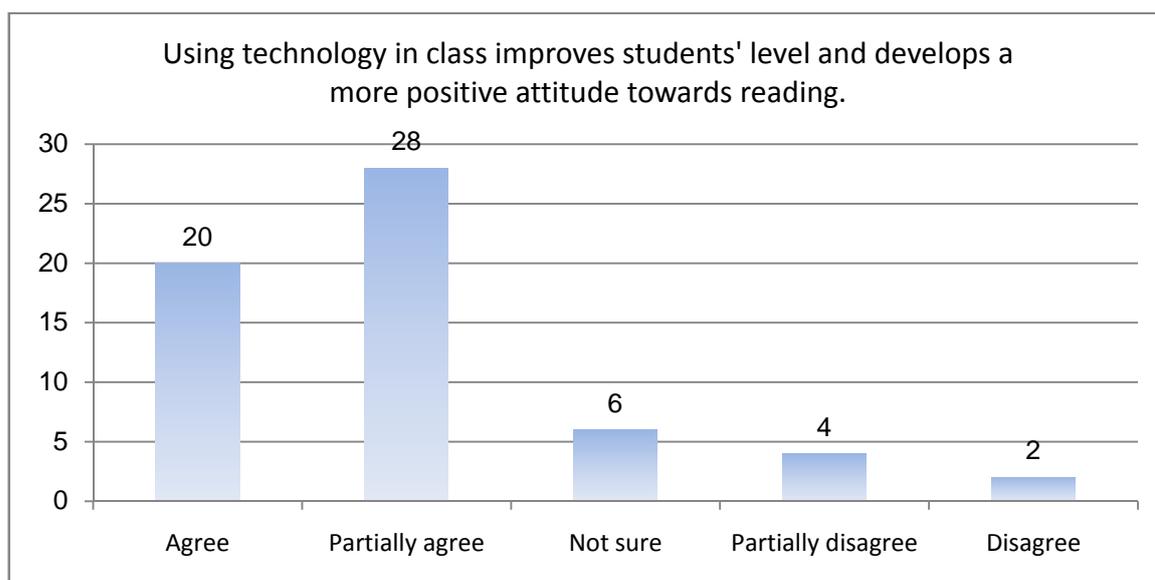


Figure 5: Teachers' responses to statement 9 (n=60)

Using authentic materials

The supervisors in their interviews unanimously showed preference for authentic materials over textbooks. They thought that the authentic materials provide "cultural background" and that they reflect real life situations. In addition, authentic materials, as

one supervisor explained, give relevance to students' learning. Supervisors' opinions on this issue were in line with what most teachers said (32 agreed/18 partially agreed) as figure 6 below shows.

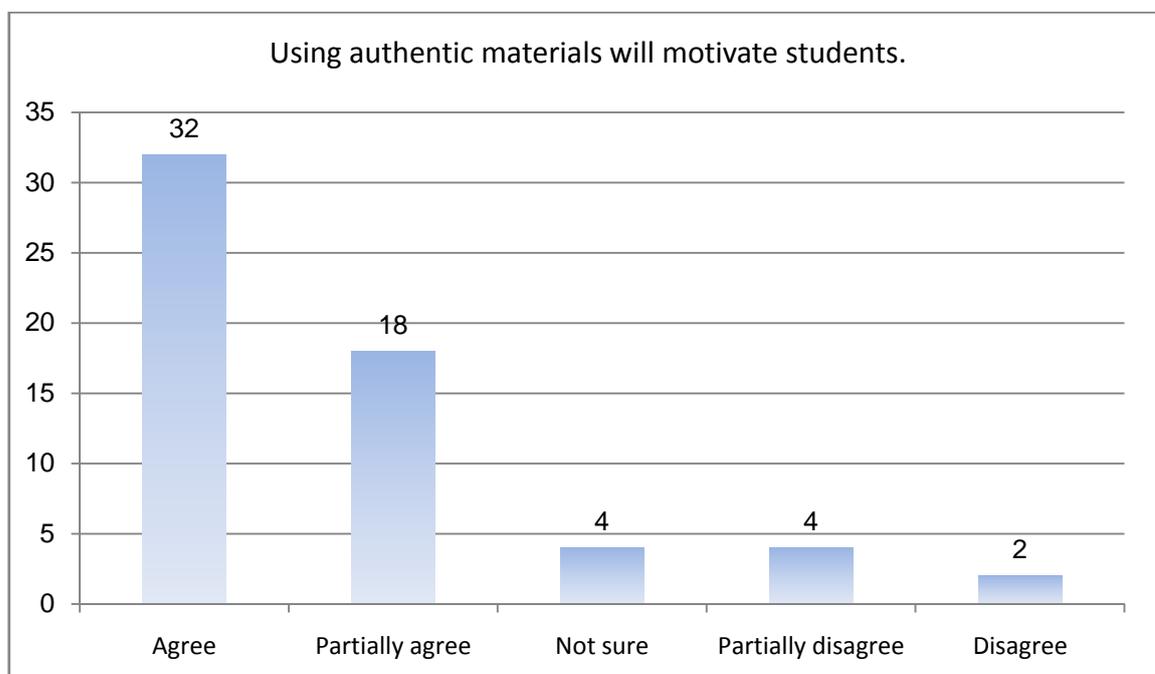


Figure 6: Teachers' responses to statement 7 (n=60)

Using authentic materials, we can say, might be one way of addressing the reading challenges of motivation and unsuitable reading materials identified by teachers in their survey.

Adapting authentic materials

Students' responses (16 agreed/10 partially agreed) to the sixth statement in the survey revealed that they felt they can do better when they use simplified authentic materials. This result might be in line with those who argue that reading texts should be adapted to facilitate reading tasks. Figure 7 shows that 30 teachers also agreed that reading texts should be adapted and another 24 partially agreed with that. One teacher

commented on this issue," Instead of adapting texts, we can use authentic ones. Adapting texts spoils them." On the other hand, another teacher wrote, "Adapting texts preserves meaning, but facilitates tasks." But one might wonder how teachers advocate the use of authentic texts and, at the same time, think they should be adapted. It might be that some of the teachers surveyed might have failed to acknowledge that adapting authentic texts could deprive them of their authenticity. This could be a topic for a future study: "Would adapting authentic texts render them unauthentic?" In light of these results, we come to the conclusion that adapting authentic materials might be helpful in addressing the reading challenges of motivation and unsuitable reading materials. But whether to use authentic materials or adapted authentic ones might be determined by the context.

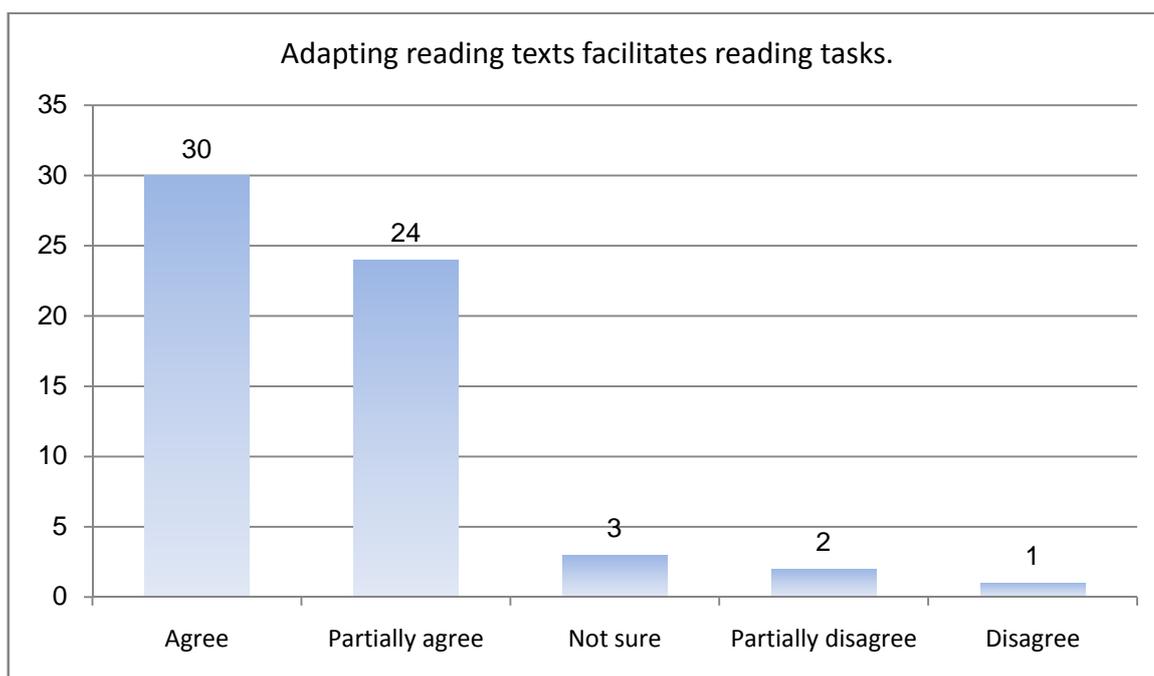


Figure 7: Teachers' responses to statement 10 (n=60)

Grading reading tasks

One way of motivating students to read is to grade their readings, both intensive and extensive. The issue of grading reading tasks was explored in the teachers' survey. Figure 8 clearly shows that students' responses to statement 4, which is "Students do reading tasks only when they are graded" revealed that the majority of the teachers surveyed (25 agreed/20 partially agreed) thought that students do reading tasks when they are graded while only 9 (5 partially disagreed/4 disagreed) held a different viewpoint. One teacher commented, "We need our students to appreciate reading, and this cannot be attained with grading." On the other hand, another teacher wrote, "Unless we grade reading tasks, our students will not care a lot about reading."

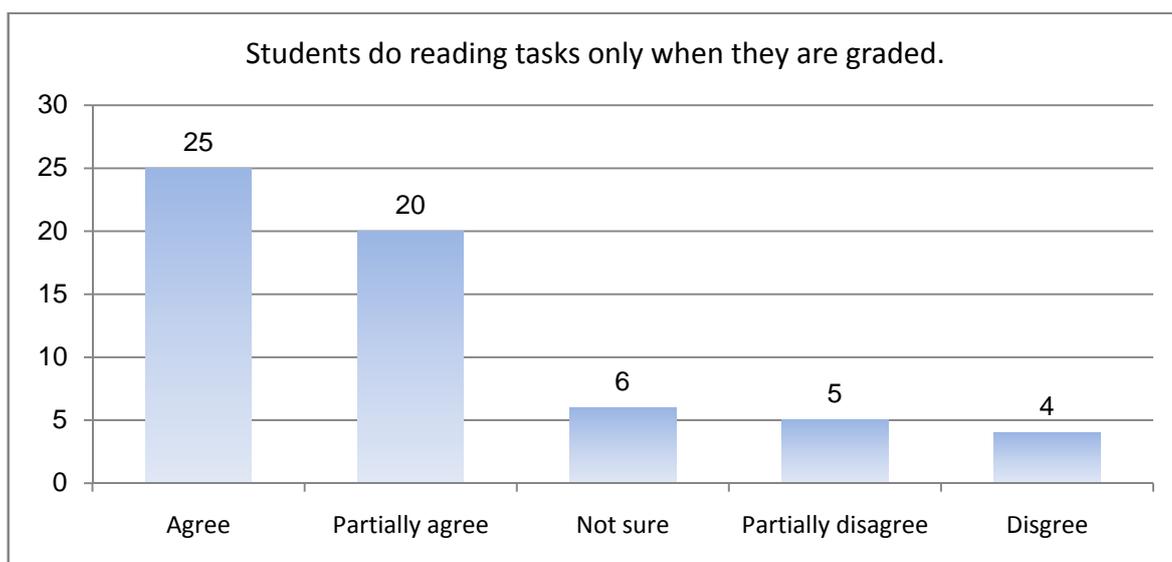


Figure 8: Teachers' responses to statement 4 (n=60)

The issue of grading reading tasks might lead us to the argument over the grading system which was explored in the teachers' survey. As shown in figure 9, the teachers surveyed (20 agreed/25 partially agreed) believed that the current grading system should give more weight to reading tasks while 6 (3 agreed/partially agreed) of them showed

their disagreement over this issue and 9 of them were unsure of that. The responses to this issue are in line with responses to statement four in the survey which states that students do reading tasks only when they are graded.

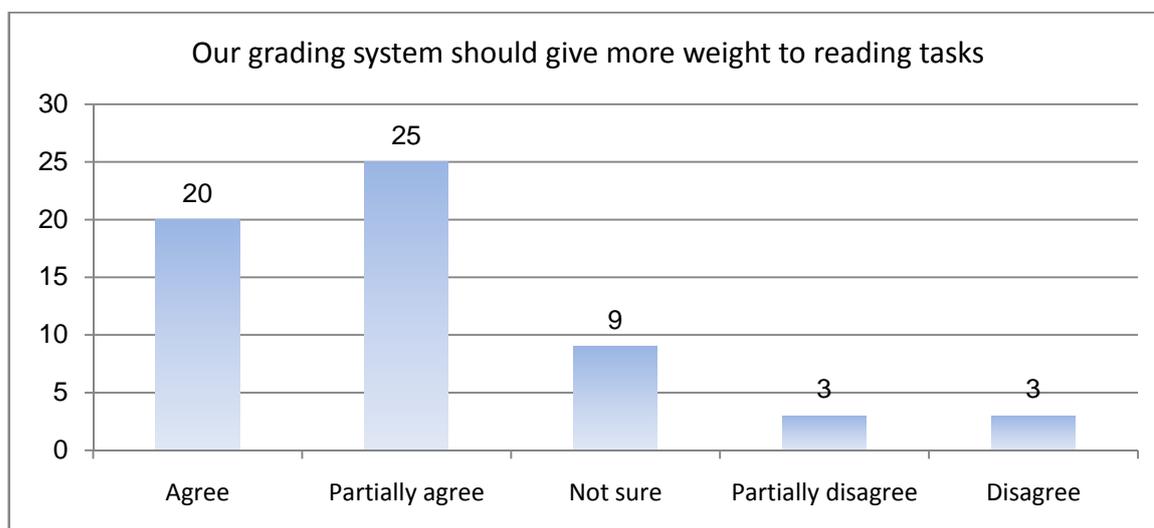


Figure 9: Teachers' responses to statement 8 (n=60)

The responses to the grading issue indicate that grading reading tasks can suggest one way of addressing the reading challenge of extrinsic motivation. Even extensive readings can be graded to enhance students' reading abilities and get them to establish their reading habits.

Developing a positive attitude towards reading

The second question in the students' interviews was about their family's interests in extensive reading. I asked students if their family members are interested in free reading. They all said that their family members generally like reading. They added that their parents, brothers, and sisters usually log into websites for this purpose. One student reported in Arabic, "My family members have various interests, but there is only one common thing. It is reading". Another student said in English "I, like my family members,

enjoy reading."The question was very important because it would shed light on the history of the individuals and the influence of their family members on students.

The third question in the interview was related to question two in that it investigated the types of readings students are interested in. Students were asked if they like reading in Arabic, their mother tongue, and in English, their target language. All interviewees said that they like reading mainly in Arabic and, to a lesser degree, in English. Interviewees gave examples of their readings which include a variety of genres: short stories, magazines, newspapers, and novels.

Students' responses to question 3 in the interview showed that 4 students of the ten interviewed said they like reading in English. Those who responded positively gave examples of websites, magazines, advertisements, and short stories. In response to question 16, which was about whether or not they enjoyed reading and what types of readings they liked, some students said they like to read in English though they sometimes fail to do so due to linguistic reasons. The responses show that some students generally have a positive attitude towards reading in English.

The purpose behind this third interview question was to explore the relationship between both their first language and their target language. The responses show that there is no strong relationship between both in our context. Students' responses to this question are not in line with the results of a previous study done by Yamashita (2007), which shows that learners with positive attitudes toward reading in L1 usually keep the same attitude in L2. My interviewees might not be as interested in English as they are in Arabic, as their responses show. This may be due to affective factors or their insufficient linguistic ability. When we investigate their overall responses, we find no traces of any

negative attitudes towards learning English, but it is a matter of understanding meanings of words and other linguistic and technical issues.

Learning new words

Learning new words poses a big challenge as the analysis of data in section three of this chapter showed. The first question in the students' interview was about the reading class they like best. The interviewees gave different responses but they mostly focused on giving the meanings of words. One student said that he likes lessons in which the new words are introduced clearly, and both reading and listening tasks are done side by side. Another student said he would enjoy a lesson in which the meanings of all words are given, the visual and auditory aids are available, and in which the interaction between students and teachers are established. In the context of his description of the class he likes best, one student said in Arabic,

I really enjoy a lesson in which we, as students, read texts intensively, with the help of our teacher, of course. We ourselves need to identify the main ideas and recognize the meanings of words from context.

This might develop our reading skill day by day. Relating the current text to the previous materials might provide us with the impetus to do more readings.

Recognizing new words and connecting texts with previous ones were reiterated by another student who considered the benefits students get from a reading text a marker of a successful reading class. Another student of those interviewed said he likes a lesson in which new words are explained, logical thinking is sought, and speaking and listening are practiced.

The seventh question in the interview was about what the teacher does to help students in their reading classes. The responses generally focused on giving meanings of words, correcting mistakes, assigning selective readings, and using various techniques. The eighth question in the students' interview was about what they think the teacher should do to help them. Six students focused on explaining meanings of words. The findings of the questions about techniques are mostly consistent and they give clues as to how the students feel a reading class not only should look but also should sound.

Students' responses over the issue of new words show how important this issue is to students. Learning new words is the input which students need to work out reading texts, but it is not the teachers' responsibility to explicitly teach their meanings. Teachers might need to direct students on the best strategies in this respect, but students need to work out meanings through context or use dictionaries themselves.

Using different reading strategies

Using different reading strategies like activating prior knowledge, cultivating vocabulary, using top-down or bottom-up processing, using inference, and summarizing what students read is an important issue which the teachers need to consider in their reading classes. As shown in figure 10, teachers' responses to statement six in the survey, which is about whether or not using different reading strategies and activities can arouse students' interest in reading tasks, revealed that 46 teachers agreed about this issue and another 11 partially agreed about it. The results overwhelmingly showed how important it is to use various techniques in reading classes and engage students in the various stages of the reading process, as Westcott (2006) points out.

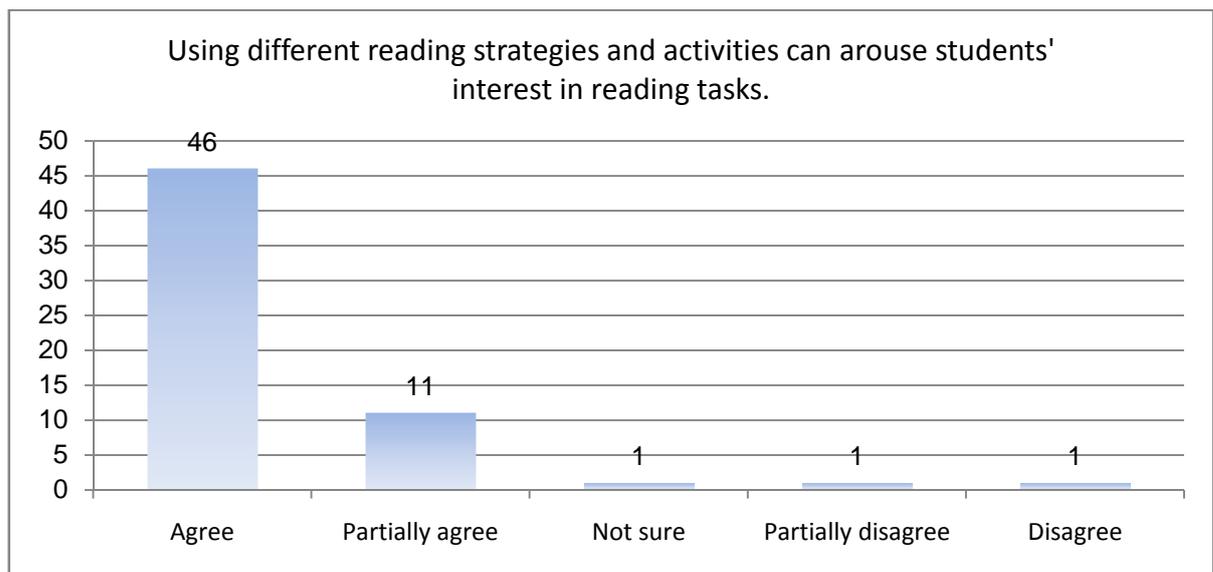


Figure 10: Teachers' responses to statement 6 (n=60)

In conclusion, the findings of my study, whether those I collected from surveys or interviews, clearly show what reading challenges students, teachers, and supervisors identify. In addition, the data indicate what reading strategies both teachers and students could work on to enhance reading skills and develop positive attitudes towards reading.

Amid the context of all these findings, we come to the conclusion that reading challenges are various and so are the pertinent reading strategies. They are, in fact, connected with the students, the texts, and the teachers. But to address these challenges, all stakeholders need to be involved in the reading process.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter discusses the conclusions drawn from this research and the implications of these conclusions on the teaching of reading. It has six sections: summary of the teachers' survey results, summary of supervisors' interview results, summary of students' survey and interview results, implications for EFL teachers in the UAE, implications for students, implications for the Ministry of Education, the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research, and a final thought.

Summary of the teachers' survey results

The teachers surveyed acknowledge that reading is a challenging task for high school students. This is generally in line with the literature review in this thesis which outlines a variety of studies over this issue. The studies included in the review were mainly designed to address the issue of reading challenges and reading strategies. The findings of this study do not contradict what is generally known and what has previously been found out about this issue.

The data I collected from the teachers' survey (See Appendix B) identify a variety of reasons for reading challenges. One of the reasons is the lack of motivation on the students' part. Unfamiliar and uninteresting reading materials, which are realized by the current textbooks, also pose a challenge in the sense that they lack variety and thus fail to attract students' attention.

Summary of the supervisors' interview results

The responses from the supervisors' interviews yielded some interesting findings which overtly touch on the variables that operate in the reading process. First of all, they

agreed that there are reading challenges for students in RAK, though they were not unanimously in agreement over the types of those challenges. This indicates that the reading challenges are varied, and, as a result, the responses to the challenges by the teachers in their classrooms must be varied as well. The findings of the interviews also showed that the supervisors interviewed also believe in the integration of the four language skills which means that they do not object to using writing to teach reading. The supervisors were also in favor of using authentic materials instead of the textbooks, which some of them see as inappropriate and de-motivating. The responses also indicate that the context plays the biggest role in deciding whether to focus on form or meaning and whether to follow the top-down or the bottom-up approach. The overall responses of the interviewed supervisors over teaching reading challenges are varied enough to include many issues like textbooks, teachers, students, and learning environments. This entails that the solutions to these challenges will not surely be confined to one variable, but all those variables that operate in the process of teaching reading.

Summary of the students' survey results

The findings of the students' surveys and interviews revealed that the main reading challenges that the students identify are recognizing meanings of new words and identifying the main idea or message the writer is trying to convey. In addition, they identified a variety of things which they think might be helpful to them in their reading classes. Students think that authentic materials can help them do better. Such materials, as some students pointed out, need to be simplified and adapted to meet their needs and their levels. Students also think common and interesting topics are helpful. The findings revealed that the reading materials should be varied and motivating for students to work

on. Technology, they believe, can play a positive role and so can being taught various strategies and techniques like prediction, guessing, questioning, and highlighting important points in the text.

Implications of the Study

Implications for teachers

All the participants in this study acknowledged that teaching/learning reading is challenging for students, and thus teachers need to realize the importance of identifying their students' learning challenges in general and the reading challenges in particular. The findings also give clues to teachers about what might work with their students. They can enhance their students' learning by creating an appropriate learning environment, selecting appropriate materials, and adopting appropriate learning strategies. Using authentic materials of various genres might make a difference. The rationale beyond that should be usefulness, motivation, and practicality. The findings also give clues to the teachers that they need to focus on both form and meaning when they deal with reading tasks. Moreover, teachers need to utilize technology in class and decide on the learning strategies that work with their students.

Implications for students

Students need to realize that reading is an important skill and that they cannot progress in their learning without developing this important receptive skill. They, more importantly, need to realize that reading can be learnt through reading. This entails that they should read as much as they can. Day (2004) states in the context of his argument of the two writing activities for extensive reading,

Good things happen when EFL students read extensively. Studies

show that they not only become fluent readers, but they also learn new words and expand their understanding of words they know before. In addition, they write better, and their listening and speaking abilities improve. Extensive reading activities . . . make student reading a resource for language practice in reading, vocabulary learning, listening, speaking, and writing.

The students surveyed and interviewed talked a lot about what they think their teachers need to do, but little about their responsibilities as high school students. They think that their teachers need to introduce all new vocabulary; however, students need to develop their own reading strategies with the help of their teachers. They need to identify the main idea and guess the meanings of main words from the context. They should, for example, focus on the underlying meaning of the text and the message the writer tries to convey. They need to predict what might happen in the course of events, connect the parts of the text together, and connect all with the local environment.

Implications for the Ministry of Education

The results of the study suggest that reading is a major challenge for high school students and that this challenge can be addressed by consolidating the efforts of all stakeholders in the learning process. The Ministry of Education needs to design syllabi in a way to address students' needs and interests. One way of achieving this purpose is through providing teachers with authentic materials which can motivate students and build their confidence, as Csabay (2006) points out.

Another important issue in this context is that the Ministry needs to consider students' and teachers' voices about what works with their students. In addition to its role

in designing syllabi, the Ministry needs to provide schools with the equipment and tools needed to facilitate teachers' work. The Ministry could also emphasize the value of reading by, for example, holding reading competitions among students and rewarding the winners, which might motivate other students to read and participate in the future.

Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research

The study investigated the reading strategies in high school reading classes in RAKEZ. The study included most English teachers, males and females, in RAK and all supervisors who work there. But it included students from only one school due to reasons related to accessibility. The results of the study would have been more comprehensive if it had included more students from other schools. Moreover, having female students might have added variety to my study in the sense that having more data from various sources might have strengthened the findings. Girls are usually more disciplined and more committed to reading as my general observations reveal, so they might have different interpretations of reading challenges and strategies especially over issues of classroom environment and extensive reading.

The reading process involves a lot of variables that include, in addition to students, teachers, and textbooks, parents, and curriculum designers. The study would have been enhanced if it had included some parents to shed light on the reading history of their children which may have had an effect on their reading behavior. The data I might collect from parents could reveal the extent to which the other family members could influence students. The data could also disclose how parents think they could help their children in establishing their reading habits. Moreover, including curriculum designers might help in

investigating the criteria applied in selecting these textbooks and the possibility of developing the current textbooks.

Final thought

Reading poses a challenge to high school students in RAKEZ. Identifying these challenges might be the first step towards addressing them and adopting the appropriate reading strategies. The surveys and the interviews identified a variety of reasons for these challenges which can broadly be categorized under lack of motivation on students' part, unsuitable reading materials, ineffective teaching practices, and other linguistic reasons.

To overcome such reading challenges entails cooperation among all stakeholders: teachers, students, parents, administrators, and researchers. It is a joint responsibility of them all. One might argue that it is mostly the teachers' responsibility to guide the process because they are aware of what works with their students. This argument might be true as long as the teachers have the authority and the means to develop their own philosophy of teaching and apply it in their reading classes.

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6- Some might argue that reading should be taught through writing. What do you think?

7- In a reading class, what do you think teachers should focus on: meaning or form?
Why?

8- Are you for or against using authentic materials? Give reasons.

9- Who is a successful reader, in your opinion?

10- Some believe that bottom-up is the best approach for teaching reading. Others take the other way around and defend top-down. Which one do you prefer for high school students? Why?

Appendix B: Teachers' Survey

Please complete the following survey. You can add your comments on the back.

Teacher's name:..... Male...../ Female.....

Teaching Grades:..... Teaching Experience:...years.

A= Agree PA= Partially agree N= Not sure PD: Partially disagree D: Disagree

No	Statement	A	PA	N	PD	D
1-	Reading is a challenging task for high school students.					
2-	Reading challenges are related to classroom environment.					
3-	Reading passages in the textbooks are motivating.					
4-	Students do reading tasks only when they are graded					
5-	High school students lack motivation for reading					
6-	Using different reading strategies and activities can arouse students' interest in reading tasks.					
7-	Using authentic texts will motivate students.					
8-	Our grading system should give more weight to reading tasks.					

9-	Using technology in class improves students' level and develops a more positive attitude towards reading.					
10-	Adapting reading texts facilitates reading tasks					

11- As a high school teacher, what are the challenges that hamper text comprehension?

.....

12- Do you recommend using textbooks or authentic materials in high schools? Why?

.....

13- Do you think that reading tasks are approached appropriately in our classes? Why or why not?

.....

14- Do you focus on meaning or on form when you teach reading? Why?

.....

15- Do you think that writing can be used to teach reading? Why or why not?

.....

Any additional comments:

.....

Appendix C: Students' Survey
Investigating Reading Strategies
Students' Survey
إستبانة حول أفضل الطرق لتعليم مهارة القراءة في اللغة الانجليزية
استبيان للطلبة

Grade:	الصف:
Educational Zone:	المنطقة التعليمية:
School:	المدرسة
Age:	العمر

Please complete the following survey. Tick the appropriate response for statements 1–15 and respond to questions 16, 17, & 18. You may use the backside for additional comments.

الرجاء إكمال الإستبانة التالية وضع علامة عند أفضل اختيار للأسئلة من 1-15 ثم الرجاء الإجابة على الأسئلة 16، 17، 18

I can do reading tasks better when:

يتحسن أدائي في مهارة القراءة عندما

No.	Statement	Agree موافق	Partially Agree موافق جزئياً	Not sure غير محدد	Partially Disagree غير موافق جزئياً	Disagree غير موافق
1	The teacher explains the meanings of words. يشرح المعلم معاني كل المفردات					
2	The topics are interesting. المواضيع ممتعة					
3	The topics are common. المواضيع المطروحة مألوقة.					
4	We connect pieces of information together. نربط المعلومات بعضها مع بعض					
5	We summarize and discuss what we read. نلخص و نناقش ما نقرأ					
6	The teacher uses simplified and modified authentic materials. يستخدم المدرس مواد سهلة ومبسطة ومعدلة					

7	The teacher uses a variety of techniques. ينوع المدرس في اساليبه					
8	The teacher uses technology in reading class. يستخدم المدرس التكنولوجيا في حصة القراءة في الصف					
9	When the teachers focuses on the meaning. يركز المدرس على المعني					
10	I read for enjoyment. أقرأ للمتعة					

ب-أساليب وإستراتيجيات المعلم. My teacher's techniques and strategies.

No.	Statement	Always دائما	Usually عادة	Sometimes أحيانا	Rarely نادرا	Never أبدا
11	Our teacher always teaches us to think critically and look for the message. يدرنا المدرس على التفكير النقدي والبحث عن المغزى					
12	Our teacher connects reading with writing tasks. يربط المدرس دروس القراءة بالمهارات الكتابية					
13	Our teacher tries to enhance our reading habits by supplying us with supplementary readings. يسعى المدرس لتعزيز مهارة القراءة عن طريق تزويدنا بالقراءات الإضافية					
14	Our teacher uses technology in class effectively. يستخدم المدرس التكنولوجيا بشكل فعال في الصف					
15	Our teacher uses a variety of reading techniques and strategies (prediction, guessing, questioning, summarizing, writer's voice, highlighting texts) يستخدم المدرس مجموعة من الاساليب والاستراتيجيات المتمثلة في التخمين، التنبؤ، الاستفهام، التلخيص، موقف الكاتب وتحديد النصوص					

16. Do you reading in English? If yes, mention the types of readings you like. If no, mention the reasons?

16. هل تحب القراءة؟ إذا كانت الاجابة نعم، أذكر أنواع القراءات التي تحبها؟ وإذا كانت الاجابة بالنفي، أذكر الاسباب؟

17. What are the reading challenges (if any) that you face while reading?

17. ما هي المعوقات التي تعترضك عند القراءة؟

18. What do you think of your textbook in terms of advantages and disadvantages?

18. ما هو تقييمك للكتاب المدرسي؟

Appendix D: Questions for Students' Interviews

1) What is the reading class that you like best?

ما هي حصة القراءة الناجحة في رأيك؟

2) Are any of your family members interested in extensive reading?

هل يهتم أحد أفراد عائلتك بالقراءة الذاتية؟

3) Do you enjoy reading in Arabic? Do you like reading in English? If yes, give examples.

هل تحب القراءة باللغة العربية؟ وهل تحب القراءة باللغة الانجليزية؟ هات بعض الامثلة.

4) Which is better for reading: a passage with a familiar topic or the one with an unfamiliar topic?

ايها أفضل برأيك : قراءة الموضوع المألوف أم غير المألوف لديك؟

5) What do you mainly think of when you start reading: the meanings of words or the message the writer is trying to convey?

بماذا تفكر عند القراءة: معاني الكلمات أم مغزى الموضوع؟

6) What do you find most challenging about reading in English?

ما هي أكبر التحديات التي تواجهك في حصة القراءة؟

7) What does your teacher do that helps you in your reading classes?

ما الذي يفعله المدرس لمساعدتك في حصة القراءة؟

8) What would you like your teacher to do to help you improve your reading?

ماذا تود ان يفعل المدرس لمساعدتك في تحسين قراءتك؟

Thank you
شكرا

Appendix E: Teachers' Questionnaire Results

Please complete the following survey. You can add your comments on the back.

Teacher's name:..... Male...../ Female.....

Teaching Grades:..... Teaching Experience:...years.

A= Agree PA= Partially agree N= Not sure PD: Partially disagree D: Disagree

No	Statement	A	PA	N	PD	D
1-	Reading is a challenging task for high school students.	32	24	1	2	1
2-	Reading challenges are related to classroom environment.	20	19	-	10	11
3-	Reading passages in the textbooks are varied and motivating.	10	2	8	22	18
4-	Students do reading tasks only when they are graded	25	20	6	5	4
5-	High school students lack motivation for reading	26	22	6	4	2
6-	Using different reading strategies and activities can arouse students' interest in reading tasks.	46	11	1	1	1
7-	Using authentic texts will motivate students.	32	18	4	4	2
8-	Our grading system should give more weight to reading tasks.	20	25	9	3	3

9-	Using technology in class improves students' level and develops a more positive attitude towards reading.	20	28	6	4	2
10-	Adapting reading texts facilitates reading tasks	30	24	3	2	1

1- As a high school teacher, what are the challenges that hamper text comprehension?

2- Do you recommend using textbooks or authentic materials in high schools? Why?

Response	Percentage
Textbooks	20%
Authentic materials	80%

3- Do you think that reading tasks are approached appropriately in our classes? Why or why not?

Response	Percentage
Appropriately	30%
Fairly	30%
Inappropriately	40%

4- Do you focus on meaning or on form when you teach reading? Why?

Focus	Percentage
Meaning	25%
Form	15%
Both	60%

5- Do you think that writing can be used to teach reading? Why or why not?

Response	Percentage
Yes	70%
No	25%
Not sure	5%

Appendix F: Students' Survey Results
Investigating Reading Strategies
Students' Survey
إستبانة حول أفضل الطرق لتعليم مهارة القراءة في اللغة الانجليزية
استبيان للطلبة

Gender:	Male	Female	انثى	ذكر	الجنس:
Grade:	الصف:				
Educational Zone:	المنطقة التعليمية:				
School:	المدرسة				
Age:	العمر				

Please complete the following survey. Tick the appropriate response for statements 1–15 and respond to questions 16, 17, & 18. You may use the backside for additional comments.

الرجاء إكمال الإستبانة التالية وضع علامة ضع علامة عند أفضل اختيار للأسئلة من 1-15 ثم الرجاء الإجابة على الأسئلة 16، 17، 18

A) I can do reading tasks better when:

يتحسن أدائي في مهارة القراءة عندما

No.	Statement	Agree موافق	Partially Agree موافق جزئياً	Not sure غير متأكد	Partially Disagree غير موافق جزئياً	Disagree غير موافق
1	The teacher explains the meanings of words. يشرح المعلم معاني كل المفردات	15	14	1	-	-
2	The topics are interesting. المواضيع ممتعة	12	10	6	1	1
3	The topics are common. المواضيع المطروحة مألوفة.	9	8	3	6	4
4	We connect pieces of information together. نربط المعلومات بعضها مع بعض	15	12	3	-	-
5	We summarize and discuss what we read. نلخص و نناقش ما نقرأ	14	12	3	1	-
6	The teacher uses simplified and modified authentic materials. يستخدم المدرس مواد سهلة ومبسطة ومعدلة	16	10	3	1	-

7	The teacher uses a variety of techniques. ينوع المدرس في اساليبه	10	12	2	1	-
8	The teacher uses technology in reading class. يستخدم المدرس التكنولوجيا في حصة القراءة في الصف	14	13	2	1	-
9	When the teachers focuses on the meaning. يركز المدرس على المعني	18	10	-	2	-
10	I read for enjoyment. أقرأ للمتعة	10	8	4	5	3

My teacher's techniques and strategies.

ب-أساليب وإستراتيجيات المعلم

No.	Statement	Always دائما	Usually عادة	Sometimes أحيانا	Rarely نادرا	Never أبدا
11	Our teacher always teaches us to think critically and look for the message. يدربنا المدرس على التفكير النقدي والبحث عن المغزى	14	10	4	1	1
12	Our teacher connects reading with writing tasks. يربط المدرس دروس القراءة بالمهارات الكتابية	13	10	3	2	2
13	Our teacher tries to enhance our reading habits by supplying us with supplementary readings. يسعى المدرس لتعزيز مهارة القراءة عن طريق تزويدنا بالقراءات الاضافية	8	7	-	7	8
14	Our teacher uses technology in class effectively. يستخدم المدرس التكنولوجيا بشكل فعال في الصف	13	12	-	3	2
15	Our teacher uses a variety of reading techniques and strategies (prediction, guessing, questioning, summarizing, writer's voice, highlighting texts..) يستخدم المدرس مجموعة من الاساليب والاستراتيجيات المتمثلة في التخمين، التنبؤ، الاستفهام، التلخيص، موقف الكاتب وتحديد النصوص	10	15	3	1	1

16. Do you reading in English? If yes, mention the types of readings you like. If no, mention the reasons?

16. هل تحب القراءة؟ إذا كانت الاجابة نعم، أذكر أنواع القراءات التي تحبها؟ وإذا كانت الاجابة بالنفي، أذكر الاسباب؟

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18. What do you think of your textbook in terms of advantages and disadvantages?

18. ما هو تقييمك للكتاب المدرسي؟

Vita

Walid M. Jawabreh is an English teacher at Al-Jawdah School for Secondary Education in Ras Al Khaimah in the UAE. He is from Palestine, where he finished his secondary education. He got his B.A. from the University of Jordan in 1985. He worked in Jordan for three years and moved to the UAE in 1988, where he has been teaching English since then.